



## CITY OF STRATFORD

# STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR LEISURE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REPORT



## STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 2005



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1-1</b>
1.1	Overview .....	1-1
1.2	Background Research .....	1-1
1.3	Strategic Master Plan for Leisure Services and Facilities Plan Development and Format .....	1-2
<b>2.</b>	<b>STRATEGIC THEMES .....</b>	<b>2-1</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>PLAN FOUNDATION .....</b>	<b>3-1</b>
3.1	Corporate Alignment.....	3-1
3.2	Vision Statement .....	3-2
3.3	Mission Statement.....	3-3
3.4	Principles .....	3-5
<b>4.</b>	<b>LEISURE SERVICES DELIVERY POLICY AND STRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>4-1</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	4-1
4.2	Leisure Services Delivery Policy .....	4-1
4.2.1	Overview .....	4-1
4.2.2	Recommendation - City of Stratford Leisure Services Delivery Policy.....	4-2
4.3	Leisure Services Delivery Strategies.....	4-4
4.3.1	Partnerships and Joint Ventures .....	4-4
4.3.2	Recommendation - Partnerships and Joint Ventures .....	4-5
4.4	Policy Development Initiatives.....	4-5
4.4.1	Overview .....	4-5
4.4.2	Recommendation - Policy Development Initiative.....	4-5
4.5	Facility Project Development Process .....	4-6
4.5.1	Overview .....	4-6
4.5.2	Recommendation - Facility Project Development Process.....	4-7
4.6	Multi-Use Facility Development .....	4-8
4.6.1	Overview .....	4-8

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT'D)

4.6.2	Recommendation - Multi-Use Facility Development .....	4-8
4.7	Reciprocal Agreement .....	4-9
4.7.1	Overview .....	4-9
4.7.2	Recommendation - Reciprocal Use Agreement .....	4-9
4.8	Volunteers.....	4-9
4.8.1	Overview .....	4-9
4.8.2	Recommendation - Volunteers .....	4-10
4.9	Natural Areas.....	4-10
4.9.1	Recommendation - Natural Areas.....	4-11
4.10	Sports and Leisure Activities Council.....	4-11
4.10.1	Overview .....	4-11
4.10.2	Recommendation - Sports and Leisure Activities Councils .....	4-12
4.11	Leisure Services Communication Plan .....	4-12
4.11.1	Overview .....	4-12
4.11.2	Recommendation - Leisure Services Communication Plan .....	4-12
<b>5.</b>	<b>LEISURE FACILITIES.....</b>	<b>5-1</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	5-1
5.2	Sport Tourism Potential and Economic Considerations .....	5-1
5.2.1	Overview .....	5-1
5.2.2	Recommendation - Sport Tourism Policy.....	5-2
5.3	Arenas .....	5-3
5.3.1	Overview .....	5-3
5.3.2	Recommendation - Arenas.....	5-4
5.4	Trail Extensions and Development.....	5-5
5.4.1	Overview .....	5-5
5.4.2	Recommendation - Community Trails .....	5-6
5.5	Outdoor Pool .....	5-6
5.5.1	Overview .....	5-6
5.5.2	Recommendation - Lions Outdoor Pool .....	5-7

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONT'D)

5.6	Sports Fields.....	5-7
	5.6.1 Overview .....	5-7
	5.6.2 Recommendation - Soccer Fields.....	5-9
5.7	Indoor Pool .....	5-9
	5.7.1 Overview .....	5-9
	5.7.2 Recommendation - Indoor Pool.....	5-10
5.8	Stratford Public Library .....	5-11
	5.8.1 Overview .....	5-11
	5.8.2 Recommendation - Stratford Public Library.....	5-11
5.9	Stratford-Perth Museum, Gallery Stratford and Stratford-Perth Archives .....	5-12
	5.9.1 Overview .....	5-12
	5.9.2 Recommendation - Museum, Art Gallery and Archives.....	5-12
5.10	Kiwanis Community Centre.....	5-13
	5.10.1 Overview .....	5-13
	5.10.2 Recommendations - Kiwanis Community Centre .....	5-13
5.11	Leisure Facilities Renewal.....	5-13
	5.11.1 Overview .....	5-13
	5.11.2 Recommendation - Leisure Facilities Renewal .....	5-14
5.12	Parks and Open Spaces .....	5-14
	5.12.1 Overview .....	5-14
	5.12.2 Recommendation - Parks and Open Space .....	5-15
<b>6.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>6-1</b>
6.1	Financial Operating Impact .....	6-1
6.2	Plan Review .....	6-1
	6.2.1 Recommendation - Plan Review .....	6-2

### APPENDIX I - Situational Analysis Report; Conclusions and Strategic Themes

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

In the spring of 2005, the City of Stratford initiated the development of the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities. A need for a new Master Plan resulted from the completion of the previous 1989 Master Plan which guided the City of Stratford's investments in parks and leisure services and facilities for some fifteen years. Other factors influencing the need for a new long-term Plan included aging facilities; utilization / participation growth; recognition of changing population demographics; and specific proposals for a new arena, aquatics and other leisure services development.

The focus of this 2005 leisure services planning initiative was on leisure facilities in terms of arenas, aquatic facilities, arts and culture, sports fields, trails, community centres and related considerations, with the golf course being assessed through an independent review process. The Strategic Master Plan's directions and recommendations are focused on the 2006 through to 2018 period.

## 1.2 Background Research

The first phase of the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities in Stratford involved a comprehensive research-based work program for which the inputs, analyses and results are available under a separate cover entitled - ***Situational Analysis Report for the City of Stratford, Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities***. The conclusions and strategic themes from this report are contained in Appendix I of this document. The research phase involved the following key inputs as a basis for the Leisure Services and Facilities Master Plan's development:

- A population profile and projections review, along with community population profile and related community development perspectives;
- A current policies and plans review;
- Current leisure facilities and programs participation profiles, utilization, etc.;
- Review of relevant planning policies and related strategic and policy documents for the City of Stratford;

- A 300-unit random selection survey of City of Stratford household residents focusing on participation patterns, future perspective's, services and facilities awareness and value ratings;
- Some sixty focus groups, interviews and a public meeting involving over 100 community and organized group representatives soliciting their input on the challenges, issues and opportunities of the leisure services and facilities available, the services delivery model and future services perspectives and needs.
- A financial review of operating costs and of the City's ten-year capital forecast for leisure facilities;
- A facilities inventory, along with a review of available building condition studies for the primary recreation facilities in the City of Stratford;
- A trends analysis relative to leisure services delivery models and participation;
- Public briefs;
- Other key inputs and assessments.

### 1.3 Strategic Master Plan for Leisure Services and Facilities Plan Development and Format

The Situational Analysis Report was used as the basis for the development of a series of leisure services and facilities strategy alternatives and recommendations. The recommendations within the City of Stratford Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities have been developed on four levels, moving from a strategic foundation through to specific service and facility initiatives:

#### **Level 1**

##### **Plan Foundation**

Section 3 provides the philosophical and conceptual basis of the Plan through a Vision, Mission and Principles.

#### **Level 2**

##### **Leisure Services Policies and Delivery Strategies**

Section 4 focuses on the establishing of a policy foundation for the City of Stratford's development, delivery and evaluation of leisure services, as well as the variable delivery approaches that may be utilized by or participated in by the City of Stratford.

**Level 3  
Specific Leisure Service and Facility  
Initiatives**

Section 5 identifies actions, investments and approaches that are proposed to be undertaken by the City of Stratford over the next twelve years for the delivery of specific leisure services.

**Level 4  
Implementation Plan**

Section 6 provides an implementation plan related to priorities, timing, capital cost projections and related details.

This document is the Strategic Master Plan for the City of Stratford. It was presented to the Project Steering Committee and City Council in December, 2005 for review. A community meeting will be held in January 2006 to solicit further input from community members before the Plan is finalized.

## 2. STRATEGIC THEMES

From the Situational Analysis Report, a series of conclusions and strategic themes were developed that established a foundation upon which the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities was based. The conclusions are available in the Research Report. The following material represents the key strategic themes that emerged from the conclusions and research phase of this project.

- Work with community service providers to develop program and service initiatives that are reflective of changing societal trends and demographics, involving:
  - A population increase of potentially 1,500 individuals over the next twelve to fifteen years;
  - Potential increase in residents who come from other cultures and may not have the awareness levels or understanding of the leisure opportunities that are available;
  - An aging population that will see potentially up to 50% more seniors in the next twenty years, while at the same time, the number of early years children and youth likely being stable or marginally declining.
- Focus on sustaining and growing the range and quality of leisure programs, on a more integrated and partnered basis, reflecting health, education, leisure and community development benefits
- Continue the development of the trail system to provide broader linkages in the community and focus open space priorities on the development of neighbourhood parks in emerging areas.
- Develop strategies, in partnership with community organizations, that enhance the recruitment, training, recognition and positive experiences for volunteers, as a primary resource in sustaining and growing the range and quality of leisure programs available across the community



CITY OF STRATFORD  
STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR LEISURE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REPORT

- Develop strategies for the ongoing renewal of major leisure facilities through the use of reserves and related strategies, moving from project-based renewal to sustainable renewal. The initial focus needs to continue the current capital planning associated with:
  - Allman and possible Dufferin Arenas
  - National Stadium
  - Future directions for the Fairground facilities
  - Lion's Pool
- Develop sports fields reflective of the key trends and participant registration levels being experienced, providing different levels of field quality, related to recreational and competitive, youth and adult. Also, ensure appropriate strategies are in place if soccer field capacity was reduced due to the loss of any of the privately owned venues.
- Undertake consideration for the development of major leisure facilities to reflect current capacity constraints, aging physical plant investment challenges and participation trends related to:
  - A new public library facility that is able to respond to growth in population, increased delivery of group-based programs, enhanced use of technology and new collection services.
  - The development of a twin pad arena, with one pad replacing the Rotary Arena, which is not a re-investment opportunity, and a second pad to respond to the current latent demand and changing utilization patterns, such as female hockey, skating activities, etc.
  - The redevelopment of the existing indoor Y pool to a 25 metre, six to eight lane pool or alternate design equivalent that is reflective of contemporary standards, and is better positioned to respond to current and future participation needs and constraints.
  - Potential consideration for improving museum, archives and art gallery facilities, both for resident benefit, and as an enhancement to the cultural directions of the community, possibly in a partnership arrangement.
- The need to develop programs and facilities within maximized partnership agreements and multi-use formats in order to use all the community's assets, to achieve capital and operating economies of scale and to improve user convenience and accessibility
- Based on the physical configuration and the population growth forecasts, to emphasize locational preferences in the central part of the community for one of a kind facilities, ensuring linkages with the trail system and public transit where possible; and to distribute

and ensure sports fields, arenas, playgrounds and neighbourhood parks throughout the community to facilitate both access and non-programmed utilization.

- Ensure assessment of all major leisure facility and park investments related to their potential to support sport tourism activities that could bring strategic synergies and positive economic opportunities to the community.

### 3. PLAN FOUNDATION

#### 3.1 Corporate Alignment

A Vision, Mission and Principles have been identified for the City of Stratford Strategic Master Plan. They have been developed based on the themes and content that emerged from the City's Vision Statement for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Community Services Department roles and responsibilities, the community input received in the research phase, trends in the development of leisure services and other sources.

One of the primary foundations for the Strategic Master Plan's Vision, Mission and Principles was alignment with the City of Stratford's Community Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The following is the City of Stratford's credo: This credo enables Stratford to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century bringing forward its valued heritage while simultaneously driving progress.

**We are a caring and sharing community that:**

- **Wants everyone to feel welcome and to have a sense of belonging;**
- **Values community involvement to connect all citizens to each other while encouraging individuality;**
- **Respects diversity and works together with energy and imagination despite our differences.**

This credo focuses extensively on creating a sense of welcoming, connecting all residents through community involvement, and working collectively with enthusiasm and imagination to enhance the quality of community life.

Also connected with this credo within the Community Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are the following commitments to a unique community lifestyle.

**We offer a unique community lifestyle because we are committed to:**

- **A strong work ethic and a balanced way of living;**
- **Creating and maintaining safe, healthy living and working environments;**
- **Accessibility for everyone to community resources and supports;**
- **Building a local economy that honours our heritage, traditions and**

**achievements, while adapting to new opportunities.**

There are many key components of these commitments that potentially connect directly with the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities, such as working with community members and agencies, increasing green space, providing opportunities for new and / or re-investing in leisure facilities, environmental improvements and other actions. The Strategic Master Plan's Vision, Mission, Principles and Values, and Goals have been developed in concert with these commitments.

## 3.2 Vision Statement

A Vision Statement sets a horizon towards which all stakeholders can gravitate. It should be a statement which is both inspirational and which creates a common bond and sense of direction for the entire community. The Vision Statement establishes a direction for the Strategic Master Plan and is a basis upon which the Plan evolves both in terms of its development and its ongoing application.

**A creative community that collectively offers its members:**

- **A diverse array of accessible and quality leisure participation opportunities;**
- **A sense of belonging and values community involvement;**
- **Respect for their diversity of ideas, needs and perspectives;**
- **Initiatives to work together to enhance resident health, well-being and personal development;**
- **A unique community lifestyle.**

The first dimension of the Vision for this Plan is to create a diverse array of accessible and quality leisure participation opportunities for Stratford residents. A diverse and balanced array of leisure opportunities needs to be available to meet the varied and evolving interests of Stratford residents. These opportunities also need to be accessible and at quality levels that achieve positive outcomes for both the participants and the City as a whole.

Leisure participation opportunities are the core of the leisure services delivery system. The benefits they provide are the fundamental rationale for Stratford's investment in the provision of these services, either directly or via partnership with other service providers.

The Vision also identifies several rationales for the City investing in leisure services and why residents benefit from participation in various leisure activities. One benefit is creating a sense of belonging. This speaks to the purpose of community and ensuring that all members feel welcomed and see themselves as participating members. This direction also entails valuing community involvement and personal investment through participation, volunteerism, leadership and other activities, whether as coach for sporting activities, an instructor in an art class or contributing to a Sports Council or Leisure Activities Council in Stratford.

Another benefit speaks to the health and well-being of the residents themselves. Active participation involves fitness, the development of new skills, enhanced personal development, the development of the mind, the pursuit of one's interests and ongoing development of the whole person. This statement recognizes both the person individually, and as being a contributing member of the broader community. A further benefit is generating respect for the diversity within the population while fostering individuality.

An additional benefit identifies the ongoing creation of a unique community lifestyle. This unique community lifestyle is identified in the Community Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It identifies how the community needs to evolve in order to serve the needs of its residents. The City sees itself as committing to a strong work ethic, maintaining a safe and healthy living environment and facilitating accessibility to services. The Strategic Master Plan aligns itself within this Vision and these commitments in order to contribute to the creation of an unique community lifestyle in Stratford.

### 3.3 Mission Statement

A Mission Statement voices the fundamentals and focus of what will be achieved via a Strategic Master Plan. It articulates the intent and broad strategic approaches that will be utilized in the years ahead.

**The City of Stratford Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities guides the City's vision of a balanced array of accessible and participation-based leisure opportunities for residents and tourists. The Strategic Master Plan assembles all of the community's leisure capabilities and resources that enhance residents' quality of life, using partnerships with community groups, public agencies and direct delivery strategies that:**

- **Support improved resident's health, well-being and personal development.**
- **Contribute to the development of a unique community lifestyle and resident sense of belonging and engagement in their community.**
- **Support improved community and economic capacity development and stewardship.**

This Mission Statement is targeted at guiding and directing the City's ongoing efforts in the delivery of leisure services. This is a City-based plan that works with the community on the achievement of the identified outcomes. It is designed to bring together significant community capacities and resources and not depend exclusively on City capacity. Therefore, the implementation of the Plan involves both direct City action, as well as the City working through partnerships, joint ventures and other initiatives in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

The key direction of this Plan involves enriching the quality of life for the City of Stratford residents, i.e.: residents will have the opportunity to enhance the quality of their day to day life by having access to leisure facilities and services across a broad spectrum of activities that touch their unique evolving interests.

The first objective of this direction involves three concepts. First, the Plan and its strategies focus on improving resident understanding of the benefits of leisure participation as a significant part of life within the community for both themselves and their families. It is from a strong belief in the need for leisure services that the framework of positive values is created, allowing the community to work together to ensure it has an effective array of leisure facilities and services.

Enhancement of resident health, well-being and personal development is also part of this objective. This focus could involve fitness in terms of physical activity; well-being in terms of reducing stress; or being able to socialize and relax with others in the community. It could also involve personal development with respect to artistic interests; participating as a volunteer; or making a contribution back to the community.

The second objective identifies the community as a collective of its residents. There is an opportunity for strengthening residents' sense of community through leisure activities. These activities can create a stronger identity and sense of community via a unique community lifestyle. They can also support a deeper sense of community spirit and ownership.

Another focus within this objective is that leisure services offer unique opportunities for people to serve the City of Stratford through voluntary roles that contribute to enhancing the quality of life for individuals and the overall community itself.

The third objective focuses on building leadership capacity and the connecting points necessary for the City to create and maintain a safe and healthy living environment. From a City-wide perspective, a need exists to be able to contribute to the City's community and economic development roles and initiatives related to its investments in leisure services.

This outcome can be achieved through parks providing significant urban form resources or the ongoing physical development of a community trail system that connects along the Avon River to other parts of the community as alternative transportation systems. Economically, sport tourism and other economic activities within a leisure services mandate can be important to the community in terms of job creation, economic sustainability, enhancing revenue generation capacities at key facilities and increasing tourism to Stratford.

The Plan's Mission is designed to be supportive to both the Community Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Vision for the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities. It is designed to ensure that the Plan is broad-based in servicing community members, supports building a unique community lifestyle and creates real value amongst the residents relative to leisure services being an important part of a healthy, active and successful community on a sustainable basis.

### 3.4 Principles

The following principles have been developed and are recommended as a basis for the directions, strategies and recommendations contained within the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities in Stratford.

At this level of planning, the principles are applied in three ways. First, they provide an opportunity to elaborate on key items identified in the Mission. Second, they identify how the Plan and the leisure service providers need to interact with client groups and the types of relationships that need to be developed for future success. Third, they provide the opportunity to identify key accountability and outcome areas.

**The Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities for Stratford will focus on....**

- **The provision of a balanced mix of leisure opportunities including recreation, education, arts and culture, with linkages to social, health and related services and outcomes.**
- **The provision of fair and equitable leisure opportunities that encourage participation by all dimensions of the community in terms of ability, economic, geographic, cultural and related interests and backgrounds.**

Continued...

- **The development and implementation of leisure operations, programs and resources that are evaluated relative to the outcomes achieved and how they effectively respond to evolving resident needs.**
- **Maximizing the use of existing resources and facilities through their regular maintenance, rehabilitation and renewal.**
- **The continuation of services tailored for seniors, youth, the disabled, early years children and other targeted populations, to enhance their citizenship and quality of life through improved access to and participation in leisure services.**
- **The Community Services Department maintaining a leadership role in the planning, development, facilitation and provision of supports for leisure services availability, using a spectrum of innovative, cost effective delivery strategies including but not limited to partnerships, joint ventures, direct delivery and community-based service provider approaches.**
- **Ensuring the continued protection and community value of the City's parks, open space, stream corridors, natural areas and the Avon River, through effective conservation strategies, sustainable public access and enhancing their urban form capacities.**
- **Developing leisure facilities that are linked to wider community strategies and initiatives with linkages to health, economic development, education, transportation and community growth management.**
- **Leisure facilities that are sustainable over the longer term through creative designs and effective operations which offer adaptable and flexible space, environmentally sound features, affordable to build, and operate, provide ease of maintenance and actively support inclusion.**



CITY OF STRATFORD  
STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR LEISURE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REPORT

The first Principle identifies the importance of a balanced mix of facilities and services that include recreation, education, arts, culture and other service areas. It is through this mix that a wide range of services are available to meet the variety of needs and interests of residents. Leisure services are not designed for one particular segment of the community. They need to be reasonably available for the array of resident interests that constitute the community.

It is significant that today, leisure services do not stand alone. Generally, they have important inter-connectivity to social, health, educational and other related services and benefits. The focus needs to be on the holistic development of each person, viewing them as a whole person not just through specific needs. It is through this collective approach that individuals are best served and have greater opportunities to achieve enhanced outcomes. An example that Stratford has practiced and continues to develop, is the Reciprocal Agreement amongst the City and the Boards of Education and the YMCA, where each group has an opportunity to tailor programs to unique needs of their user groups across a spectrum of servicing requirements.

Another principle supports the need for the fair and equitable provision of leisure services so that there is a reasonable opportunity for all residents to access and participate in these services. Efforts need to be made to encourage participation, as this does not simply occur in its own right. This encouragement may be generic, in terms of the whole population, but may also be targeted, to specific groups with barriers that need to be overcome to ensure fair and equitable access. These barriers may be related to information, resources or other considerations. The communications and encouragement processes become more important and diverse in order to include an increasingly multi-cultural community whose members may have financial barriers and other challenges.

Another principle, focuses on renewing existing facilities and ensuring that maximum use is being made of what already is available, not just investing in new leisure facilities. Often, the planning view moves towards the new facility development and loses sight of the existing facilities. This is especially significant, as many municipalities, Stratford included, have aging facilities that have existed for twenty to fifty years. These facilities, may offer reasonable opportunities for rehabilitation and renewal, and is therefore an important approach to consider. However, such a strategy also needs to recognize that facility replacement is sometimes the preferred economic approach on a lifecycle basis.

Many groups within the population have unique needs and could achieve significantly enhanced benefits from leisure activity participation. To-date, seniors, youth and the disabled have generally been recognized as important populations for health, social development, economic and other considerations. Many times the participation of these individuals is linked to specific outcomes, such as improved socialization, keeping seniors active so they are healthier and more connected to

the community, along with achieving greater inclusion for those with disabilities and those who experience real barriers and may be left out of the community.

The next Principle speaks to the Community Services Department's leadership role in the planning, development, facilitation and support of leisure services. The Department, through the parks, open spaces and forestry; facility maintenance; and community programs, represents a significant resource in terms of physical assets, technical skills, experience and other inputs. These roles are key components in the delivery model. They can support both direct delivery and community organizations. These assets also provide a framework in which participants in the Minor Sports Council and the Leisure Activities Council can make significant contributions within the overall provision of leisure services. The Community Services Department has the ability to effectively develop leadership strategies, involving both partnership and joint venture initiatives and direct community services delivery.

The Avon River and its tributaries will continue to be a valuable natural resource for the City of Stratford. The River dramatically impacts the urban form and development patterns of many parts of the community. It provides opportunities for hiking, walking trails and water sport activity. The natural areas and open spaces provide a valued connection between residents and natural areas that encourages health, ecological and environmental balance. These are significant areas to the extent they provide for both programmed and non-programmed activities associated with the Stratford Festival, organized team events and other leisure and tourism activities. The key areas of consideration within this Principle include trails along the Avon River which are well used and the T. J. Dolan Natural Area where a network of hiking trails is established.

Another Principle identifies the development of leisure facilities that can be linked to broader community strategies and initiatives. Leisure facilities need to be directly linked to health, economic development, education and transportation benefits and priorities. The Plan must be seen as complementary to these and other strategic initiatives.

A Principle focusing on sustainable leisure facilities and services is important for the City of Stratford in order to ensure lasting, high quality facilities and services. This can be achieved through forward thinking designs and efficient operations of facilities, parks and sports fields. There are a variety of matters in facility design to ensure long-term sustainability that maximizes flexibility, user and economic benefits.

## 4. LEISURE SERVICES DELIVERY POLICY AND STRATEGIES

### 4.1 Introduction

A Leisure Service Delivery Policy and associated strategy recommendations represent the next tier of the Master Plan. These recommendations provide the framework upon which decisions for new leisure services and facilities can be developed and assessed. These policies and strategies are based on two dimensions:

- The Leisure Services Delivery Policy recommendation provides guidance as to the City's roles, actions and investments;
- The delivery strategy recommendations focus on how the achievement of the desired initiatives occurs.

### 4.2 Leisure Services Delivery Policy

#### 4.2.1 OVERVIEW

There is an increasing demand on and expectation of municipalities to deliver a wider range of leisure opportunities. These expectations often involve more sophisticated facilities that result in potentially growing long term capital and concerns around operational and financial sustainability. In society generally, there are broader leisure activity interests in which residents want to be involved. These activities often involve small clusters or segments of people within the community whose interests can range from simply trying a new leisure to high performance opportunities.

These trends in leisure activities and participants are generating a more complex service delivery environment. As a result, plans to develop additional leisure services or proposed facilities need to be based on better feasibility assessments, evaluation of outcomes / benefits and the ability of a group or community to sustain the leisure resources. The Community Services Department of the City of Stratford can not be seen as the only responsible group for leisure services delivery and that all decisions and initiatives can not lead back solely to the City. At the same time, the Leisure Services Policies needs to recognize the Community Services Department as having a unique position within the delivery model with respect to skills, capacity, assets, leadership and financial resources. An appropriate balance of roles and responsibilities is required as a vital part of the long-term planning and delivery process for leisure services and facilities in the City of Stratford.

**4.2.2 RECOMMENDATION - CITY OF STRATFORD LEISURE SERVICES DELIVERY POLICY**

The following Leisure Services Delivery Policy is recommended for the City of Stratford which is to be implemented through its Community Services Department.

**That the City of Stratford through its Community Services Department be a leading agency for the planning development, delivery and evaluation of leisure services needs and services based on the following policy directions:**

- **Recognized and support the value of and need for community service providers to successfully operate leisure services and facilities and be a catalyst to expand the accessibility, availability, affordability and mix of leisure services available in the City.**
- **Support development of leisure programs, services and facilities which focus on providing services to City of Stratford residents as the primary users within the following participation framework:**
  - **Leisure services that provide for and encourage broad-based participation by City residents at a recreation level of activity, including inter-city and regional competitively oriented activities involving youth.**
  - **Leisure services and accessibility programming that links to the unique needs of targeted populations, including those with disabilities, seniors, early years children, youth, teens and new immigrants.**
- **Implement a planning, development and delivery role for leisure services using the following hierarchy of municipal involvement:**
  - **First, actively work to facilitate and support community groups in the development and delivery of leisure services through technical support, information, volunteer training and recognition, access to facilities and related strategies.**

- **Second, enter into partnerships, joint ventures and other collaborative initiatives, resulting in shared responsibilities for leisure facilities or service deliveries based on the following three criteria:**
  - **The interest of Stratford residents are fully realized;**
  - **There is a clear demand for the type and level of programming proposed; and**
  - **There are reasonable sustainability prospects for the program within acceptable accessible and risk parameters.**
- **Third, undertake the direct delivery of leisure services and facilities utilizing direct capital investment and annual budget support where other delivery approaches are not available or feasible and demand / benefits warrants the investment.**
- **New leisure services decisions should be based on the following criteria:**
  - **Identification of need based on demonstrated participation levels;**
  - **Preparation of long-term sustainability and strategy for facilities;**
  - **Assurances of public access, inclusive participation and affordability;**
  - **Participation by the City at a level which closely matches the benefits to be achieved by both the participants and the community-at-large.**
  - **Use of business case analysis as a foundation to support municipal decisions on investments in leisure services and facilities.**

The first part of this policy focuses on the principle that the overall community is best served if community organizations and individuals with an interest in the program are integrated into the delivery of leisure services. The City cannot provide all the desired services to all people, and therefore, groups with a specific interest need to be involved in leisure programs and facilities.

The City has a role in providing technical support and knowledge to overcome challenges that may occur. Assistance may include marketing, registration, volunteer training and development, access to grants, assessments of new opportunities and other inputs.

The second policy direction indicates the City will consider alternative approaches to direct service delivery. Partnerships, joint ventures or collaborative initiatives are alternative delivery approaches to be considered. The existing Reciprocal Agreement amongst the City, School Boards and YMCA is an excellent example of these types of partnerships. These opportunities may not always be apparent to groups initiating new leisure ventures but can provide a catalyst for and enhance the feasibility of new initiatives.

The third level of the policy is that the City, based on a defined need and absence of any supporting community organization, decides to make a direct investment in a leisure facility or service. This approach is needed when no other alternatives are reasonably available and the need is apparent and beneficial to the City.

The City's Leisure Services Policy goes on to identify key criteria and related considerations prior to the City's involvement in new leisure services or facilities. These criteria include affordability, accessibility and sustainability as primary criteria for the City's participation. The City must balance the benefits to be realized with the level of investment to be made by the City of Stratford, These investments are to be assessed within a business case analysis process.

### 4.3 Leisure Services Delivery Strategies

There are multiple approaches with respect to leisure service delivery in the City of Stratford. The following sections provide the basis for a services delivery strategy.

#### 4.3.1 PARTNERSHIPS AND JOINT VENTURES

The City of Stratford has a strong history in terms of partnerships, joint ventures and collaborative initiatives. These include the Reciprocal Agreements, the Discovery Centre and joint initiatives with various community clubs and organizations. Partnerships and joint ventures have the ability to expand the array of opportunities, reduce financial pressures and provide significant benefits to the community. Based on the past success of partnership and joint venture approaches, there is a significant base of skills in terms of contract management, partnership review and evaluation and changing perspectives on the value of this form of service delivery.

#### 4.3.2 RECOMMENDATION - PARTNERSHIPS AND JOINT VENTURES

**To continue to use partnerships, joint ventures and related initiatives where:**

- **Need is identified;**
- **Public access and affordability are assured**
- **Financial sustainability is reasonably achievable; and**
- **The scope of the City's investments is reflective of the benefits to be attained by the residents of Stratford.**

## 4.4 Policy Development Initiatives

### 4.4.1 OVERVIEW

The City of Stratford has policies with respect to their involvement in the provision of leisure services and facilities investments. During the course of situational analysis, it was identified that a comprehensive policy framework to support leisure services investment decisions would be appropriate. A framework for development of these policies will assist in future decisions by the City of Stratford.

### 4.4.2 RECOMMENDATION - POLICY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

**That the City develop policies with respect to improving accessibility to and the availability of leisure services, in Stratford, focusing on the following themes:**

- **Fairness and accessibility parameters**
- **Affordability criteria and supports**
- **Economic impact expectations from City investments**
- **An evaluation and monitoring program with identifiable benchmarks**

- **Naming rights, corporate sponsorships, grant applications and related third party funding approaches.**
- **Other relevant strategies and criteria that support enhanced accessibility and availability to leisure services.**

## 4.5 Facility Project Development Process

### 4.5.1 OVERVIEW

Business Plans are an evaluation tool to assess the feasibility and specifics for the individual leisure facility recommendations proposed in the Master Plan. The Master Plan is the overarching, long-term Plan covering the direction and development of Leisure Services sector. Business Plans move the individual facility recommendations of the Master Plan towards implementation. Over the life of the Master Plan, community growth patterns may change, leisure services trends, evolve and the municipality's financial resources can be impacted. The Master Plan, therefore sets a facilities development framework upon which individual Business Plans are undertaken based on the timelines established in the Plan. Business Plans should focus on the following parameters and content:

- Relationship to the City and the Department's Vision and Mission Statement, policies, etc.
- Need and demand profiles, marketing requirements and feasibility assessments;
- Locational characteristics and requirements unique to the facility;
- Governance and management plan for the facility;
- Identification of the space and size needs for the facility in terms of building and site area, along with conceptual floor plans;
- Confirmation of the total floor area to support the preparation of detailed capital cost estimates;
- A three-year operating pro forma in order to identify anticipated revenues and expenses related to the facility, sources of income, etc.;
- Anticipated capital cost sourcing;



- Review of alternative development approaches, including use of existing facilities, undertaking additions and other approaches in comparison to building new facilities.

The Business Plan strategy helps to ensure major capital investments are targeted with clear outcomes, defined capital cost projections, identified revenue sources and have a strong identified relationship between the costs to and benefits for the community.

#### 4.5.2 RECOMMENDATION - FACILITY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- **That the City of Stratford Community Services Department require a Business Plan for all leisure facility project proposals as follows:**
- **That an a Business Plan be prepared in support of any investment in a new leisure facility or major additions to an existing leisure facility with a potential capital cost of more than \$250,000;**
- **That the undertaking of Business Plan, be directed by the City, and involve broad-based public consultation, working in partnership with community proponents as required;**
- **That the Business Plans, when finalized and accepted, form the basis for incorporating the new or expanding facility capital costs into the capital budget forecast for the City related to timing, cost projections, financing, alternative revenue sources, etc.;**
- **That these capital cost projections be updated annually to reflect cost adjustments based on the potential impact of inflation and other impacts.**
- **That any alteration in project design clearly articulate the rationale and need for the changes between the time of the Business Plan's development and the time of final project approval.**

## 4.6 Multi-Use Facility Development

### 4.6.1 OVERVIEW

Examples across Ontario confirm, that over the last decade, municipalities have moved towards the development of community facilities using multi-use / multi-partner models. The supporting rationales for this approach are as follows:

- Potential capital cost savings in the range of 10% to 25%;
- Significant potential for operational savings in the order to 25%;
- Improved visibility and community identification based on larger critical mass;
- Opportunities for enhanced facilities relative to their scope, quality and the volumes of participants that can be served.

The City of Stratford has utilized this model in conjunction with Northwestern Secondary School and St. Michael's Secondary School via the development of the Stratford Education Recreation Complex (SERC) in northwest Stratford. The sports field facilities are shared between the municipality and the School Boards through the Reciprocal Agreement providing greater access for the schools and the community to outdoor recreational opportunities. This example can be extended to include other facilities, such as arenas, community centres, libraries, museums, emergency services, etc.

The continued use and enhancement of this strategy serves as an excellent leisure facilities delivery approach for Stratford. Opportunities exist to improve user satisfaction and quality of leisure experiences, as well as to achieve economies of scale for capital and operating costs.

### 4.6.2 RECOMMENDATION - MULTI-USE FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

- **That the City of Stratford undertake extensive research on the potential for a creative and extended range of multiple use / multiple partner opportunities within its leisure facility venues exploring partnerships, joint ventures and related strategies for all major facility renewal and new leisure facility developments.**

## 4.7 Reciprocal Agreement

### 4.7.1 OVERVIEW

Investments in community leisure facilities are made through various municipal, school and institutional sources. Each of these organizations has both specific and shared goals and objectives for their client groups. Unfortunately, in the past this has often resulted in stand alone or explicit use facility designs and operations that have had variable community accessibility outcome.

It is significant that the City of Stratford, the Avon Maitland District School Board, the Huron-Perth District Catholic School Board and the Stratford-Perth YMCA have entered into an Agreement amongst all of the parties for the sharing of their community facilities. This agreement is an effective and creative response to the limited and shrinking resources available to these service providers. The result of this agreement has been to significantly increase the leisure services capacity across the municipality, resulting in greater opportunities for leisure services for each of the participating agencies.

In the summer of 2004, the Province of Ontario announced an initiative to encourage increased use of publicly funded schools by community organizations. This initiative complements similar activities currently underway in the City of Stratford.

### 4.7.2 RECOMMENDATION - RECIPROCAL USE AGREEMENT

- **That the four organizations party to this Agreement continue to participate and where possible, expand the scope of the Agreement to increase the effective use of public facilities for leisure services and to reduce pressures for new public investments in stand alone facilities.**

## 4.8 Volunteers

### 4.8.1 OVERVIEW

Through the community consultation process, many groups emphasized the importance and strength of volunteerism in the City of Stratford. It was noted that hundreds of volunteers provide significant leisure services support in terms of marketing, promotion, administration, fundraising, registration, coaching and other roles. The range and extent of leisure services and programming

available in the City of Stratford is made possible through time and talents given by community volunteers.

The Strategic Master Plan recognizes this valuable resource in the community. The Community Services Department has an opportunity to continue to support the volunteer sector. These supports may involve training on governance; supports related to registration, budgeting, volunteer training and recognition; marketing; trends assessment; and other inputs. The costs to the City to supporting the success and sustainability of volunteering organization is relatively low compared to the risks should these organized groups falter or disappear and the service replaced within the City's direct delivery model.

On this basis, it is important for the City to invest in the sustainability of organized volunteer-based delivery groups. This role directly supports community development, capacity building and reduces pressure on the City's finances.

#### 4.8.2 RECOMMENDATION - VOLUNTEERS

- **That the City of Stratford develop strategies, in partnership with community service organizations, to enhance the recruitment, training, recognition and positive experiences for volunteers as a primary resource in sustaining the availability, quality and affordability of leisure services available to Stratford residents.**

## 4.9 Natural Areas

Within the City of Stratford, natural areas are a vital resource connected to the Avon River corridor, City parks and natural heritage areas. They are used by residents, largely on a self-directed basis, for a variety of passive outdoor recreation activities including walking, hiking, cycling, nature interpretation and other non-programmed activities.

Based on the adopted Secondary Plans for northeast Stratford and the proposed Secondary Plan for northwest Stratford, a policy framework for the ongoing acquisition, maintenance and utilization of these and future resources is required. The purpose of this policy is to ensure their continued long term ecological and environmental sustainability as an important part of the urban fabric and leisure resources for City residents.

#### 4.9.1 RECOMMENDATION - NATURAL AREAS

**That the City of Stratford consider Natural Area Management Plans for both future acquired natural areas and the existing T. J. Dolan Natural Area in support of venue conservation and long-term public enjoyment. The following strategies are proposed:**

- **Ensure the continued natural heritage significance of the areas.**
- **Incorporate a multi-disciplinary format which balances the site's conservation needs and leisure opportunities through planning and engineering approvals for newly developing areas in the northeast and northwest Secondary Plans.**
- **Provision of infrastructure that supports the use of these areas by the public, including trails, signage, interpretative facilities, parking, litter and garbage control, security and safety.**
- **Allocation of the Managements Plans operational and capital funding necessary to maintain and enhance the site's natural heritage significance.**

## 4.10 Sports and Leisure Activities Council

### 4.10.1 OVERVIEW

Over fifty organizations, in Stratford, across health, sport, culture and community sectors, provide a broad range of leisure services for Stratford residents. Without these groups, there would be a significant loss to the community in terms of leisure services opportunities. Two primary coordinating and planning organizations exist to support service delivery, the Stratford's Sports Council and the Stratford and District Leisure Activity Council. Together these two organizations, along with City staff and volunteers, enhance the range and depth of leisure services in the City of Stratford. This model of service delivery, coordination and planning has worked well and should continue to be supported by City of Stratford through the Community Services Department.

The following recommendation is designed to reinforce the relationship between these existing community organizations and the City of Stratford's Community Services Department, as well as to continue organizational support for these two groups.

**4.10.2 RECOMMENDATION - SPORTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES COUNCILS**

- **That the City's current model of organizational support to the Sports Council and the Leisure Activities Council be sustained, and enhanced where possible, as the base for improving the planning, coordination and delivery of leisure services in Stratford.**

**4.11 Leisure Services Communication Plan****4.11.1 OVERVIEW**

A Leisure services Communication Plan provides the City with an opportunity to increase participation in leisure services and programs through various communication media. The purpose is to provide information on the value of leisure activities, increase participation, promote community awareness and encourage a healthy lifestyle. A Communication Plan can help to bridge communications, between targeted groups including seniors, teens, youth, early-years children, new immigrants and others.

The City, through various printed promotional material, public service announcements, community groups and other media, can have a positive impact on participation for all groups. There are opportunities to enhance the existing communication tools and develop new methods, to enhance participation. An annual plan allows staff and service providers to develop participation themes or priorities for the upcoming year. The following recommendation is intended to build an existing communication tool and create greater participation rates particularly for targeted groups.

**4.11.2 RECOMMENDATION - LEISURE SERVICES COMMUNICATION PLAN**

- **That the City of Stratford prepare and implement an annual Communication Plan for the purpose of creating broader public awareness of the leisure services and facilities opportunities; to promote healthy lifestyles; and encourage increased participation from targeted groups and others.**

## **5. LEISURE FACILITIES**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The following material provides the need, rationale and strategies associated with the future development of major leisure facilities and services recommendations for the City of Stratford. These recommendations have been developed based on the Situational Analysis Report and will be further refined based on Steering Committee and City of Stratford Council meetings and further public input.

### **5.2 Sport Tourism Potential and Economic Considerations**

#### **5.2.1 OVERVIEW**

The City of Stratford has enjoyed hosting various levels of regional sporting events over a number of years. There have been significant investments at the Packham Road Sports Complex providing for softball tournaments. Stratford is also well known for its hockey tournament hosted annually between Christmas and New Years. Stratford Memorial Boys Softball has taken advantage of its three lit diamonds at the Stratford Fairgrounds where it hosts a number of softball tournaments, providing funding for its programs.

These tournament activities offer an opportunity to complement the tourism activities of the Stratford Festival and increase the level of tourism's economic impact to Stratford from the visitor spending on food, accommodations, retail activities, etc.

Sport tourism is an investment many municipalities have made or are considering. Facilities in Hamilton, London, Burlington, Woodstock, Chatham and Barrie have been designed to accommodate large events. Stratford should consider a Sport Tourism Policy that targets a level of sport tourism that they wish to attract and that reflects the realistic range of facility and operational investments available to the municipality. This Policy and the decisions that emerge from an assessment of sport tourism, will be important in determining the quality and scale of the leisure facilities to be delivered on a city-wide or regional basis. Before committing to facilities or programming targeted to sport tourism activities, the City needs to engage the public and sport interest groups in establishing reasonable expectations and investment return potential.

## 5.2.2 RECOMMENDATION - SPORT TOURISM POLICY

- **That the City of Stratford complete a market and economic assessment of its possible roles and the potential benefits of a sport tourism initiative for Stratford, and develop a policy that supports a clear strategic direction that the City will actively pursue**
- **Based on the Sport Tourism Policy selected, the City consider appropriate investment levels to achieve the policy's direction as it impacts the roles of the Packham Road Sport Complex; National Stadium; Optimist Soccer Park and the proposed leisure facilities.**

Before investing in significant city-wide or regional recreation facilities, the City needs to complete an assessment of how it wishes to or not participate in the sport tourism market. The results of this assessment should lead to a policy that becomes part of the rationale for leisure facility investment decisions the City will consider over the next ten to fifteen years. This review will focus on regional and provincial tournaments, meets and events.

The scale and focus of this recommendation is beyond the scope of a master planning process, because of the need to tailor the initiative to the specific interests of the community. It will be important to balance the benefits realized by the City of Stratford from such a policy in comparison to the subsidization that the City will need to invest and the opportunity costs that could occur if other leisure initiatives are deferred or not pursued. In moving forward with this initiative, the following issues should be considered:

- Sport tourism facilities should be integrated with local community use, and support multi-use capacity.
- The investment horizon in sport tourism should consider ten to twenty-year time lines and not be seen as a short-term investment; and
- A Sport Tourism Policy should not result in the loss of current local community events as long as they are sustainable.

Any investment in a city-wide or regional type facility will need to be based on the beneficial economic impact for the community and needs to be seen as a long-term investment. A Sport Tourism Policy will need to be comprehensive and set clear direction, identifying the reasonable / feasible opportunities and risks associated with the overall initiative.



## 5.3 Arenas

### 5.3.1 OVERVIEW

The City of Stratford has a long history and tradition of support for ice-based activities. It owns and operates three arenas involving three single ice pads. The Allman Arena built in 1924 is one of the oldest operating arenas in Canada. It is scheduled for major capital improvements through to 2009 in the amount of \$4.2 million. The Rotary Arena was constructed in the 1940's and is located at the Stratford Fairgrounds. The third facility, Dufferin Arena, is a single ice surface and is used as primarily a practice facility. It was built in 1969. Capital improvements to the Dufferin Arena have been scheduled for 2007 for facility renovations and upgrades to the dehumidification system at an estimated cost of \$822,000.

The following trends are important to note with respect to a development strategy for arenas in Stratford:

- There has been a strong tendency to develop municipal arenas in twin-pad configurations. This layout is approximately 25% less costly to construct and 25% per year less costly to operate, as only one ice resurfacers and staff team are required, compared to two stand alone single pad facilities.
- Based on the travel times within Stratford, most user groups are comfortable traveling to arenas anywhere within the City. New arenas in a twin pad configuration are generally developed on arterial or collector routes providing good visibility, easy access and are treated as destination venues.
- There has been an increase in demand for ice usage over the last number of years as women's hockey has grown annually 15% to 30% in most urban areas. In addition, there is growth in terms of disabled athletes participating in ice sports, such as sledge hockey. In the adult leagues, there is more segmentation occurring by age groups, encouraging older participants to continue playing into their fifties and sixties.
- There is also an increasing expansion of skating activity with the addition of precision skating, rhythmic skating and other team oriented skating activities, thereby increasing demand levels for ice time.

Community focus groups involving ice users have indicated an existing latent demand of between forty and sixty hours of prime-time ice. Current utilization rates for the arenas during prime time are at 96.1%; and 37.1% during non-prime time hours. These figures indicate virtually full utilization of prime time hours and relatively high demand during non-prime time hours. There is sufficient latent

demand to book the prime time ice hours of a fourth ice pad, considering sixty-five hours per week of prime time ice.

Furthermore, through the community survey, responding residents identified, Dufferin and Rotary Arenas as being facilities with poor to fair ratings, one out of two (1:2) times. The perceived adequacy of the arenas in meeting household need for the next six years, received the lowest scores of all facilities, with four out of ten (4:10) prospective users awarding low scores.

The Allman Arena has opportunities to expand its utilization during off-ice season times. Strategic capital improvements related to access, washrooms and kitchen facilities may facilitate and improve the utilization rate for non-ice activities. With these upgrades, this arena could provide more attractive venue space for craft, art, home and garden shows; antique shows; and other expanded use initiatives.

#### 5.3.2 RECOMMENDATION - ARENAS

- **That in 2006, the City develop a twin pad arena facility, with one pad replacing Rotary Arena, and a second pad developed in response to existing latent demand and changing utilization patterns on the site adjacent to the Stratford Fairgrounds.**
- **That a Business Plan be developed for this project and include a decommissioning strategy for Rotary Arena.**
- **That ice utilization rates at Dufferin Arena be monitored for the next three years, and then consider renewal or decommissioning of that arena relative to the demand levels achieved, with facility renewal undertaken if the demand levels continue to support four ice surfaces.**
- **That proposed capital investments in Allman Arena be undertaken with an emphasis on opportunities to expand multi-use, off season utilization through strategic capital improvements.**

## 5.4 Trail Extensions and Development

### 5.4.1 OVERVIEW

The development and use of trails has become an increasingly utilized and valued community asset. They provide corridors for walking, hiking, bicycling, rollerblading etc. Fitness trends identify walking as one of the most prominent leisure activities, and this activity will continue to grow in popularity as the population ages. Various inputs to this Plan indicated the need to encourage and create incentives for walking as one of the primary means to achieve health and wellness goals for both the community and on a personal user level.

The use of trails can also be an important transportation alternative to automobile use. The strategic development of trails connecting suburban locations with Stratford's downtown could support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy consumption and lessen road congestion.

The existing trail system along the Avon River is a significant aesthetic amenity for the Festival Theatre. Tourists often enjoy a stroll along the river, either before an evening performance or after an afternoon performance, taking a picnic basket to enjoy the outdoors. For Tourism Stratford, the trail network is a complementary feature to the Festival Theatre, which could lengthen a visitor's stay and enhance their overall Stratford experience.

Input from broad sectors of the community focused on developing and maintaining a network of trails extending throughout the City. This concept was also supported via the community survey, where six in ten households with children had used the walking trails within the past year. The same ratio selected the use of trails in the next five years as one of their highest future use / participation preferences. Trails are accessible to all members of the population; have no fees; provide flexibility of use as to type and time; and offer other benefits. Consideration however, will be needed through design and other strategies to effectively respond to conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists on the trails and the development of a safe on road bicycle lane system.

#### 5.4.2 RECOMMENDATION - COMMUNITY TRAILS

The following recommendations have been developed for a community trail system along the Avon River corridor and the linked watercourses and natural areas within Stratford:

- **To develop a Walking and Cycling Trails Master Plan focusing on enhancing the existing trails, and developing and linking new trails within a network model throughout the City and the Northeast and Northwest Secondary Plan areas.**
- **To ensure that Community Trails connect suburban locations with key points in the Downtown areas to provide an alternative transportation connection;**
- **To update annually, the “Take a Hike” Guidebook, describing the walking and biking trails available, access points, and points of interest and related information.**
- **To host an Annual Stratford Trails Celebration Day**
- **To design trails to be primarily multi-purpose walking and cycling travel modes, with areas around the Avon River designated exclusively for pedestrian use to avoid possible safety conflicts within high tourism usage zones.**
- **To develop trail entranceways which provide visibility, a guide map, information and educational guides to the trail and its features**

These recommendations focus on promoting the long term interests and commitments for an integrated trail system connecting the key natural areas along the Avon River. There is also an opportunity to raise the awareness and use of the existing trails system through special events and promotions. Expanding the trails network to facilitate commuting from suburban parts of Stratford will facilitate healthier transportation modes that are suited to their physical size and configuration characteristics of the Stratford community.

## 5.5 Outdoor Pool

### 5.5.1 OVERVIEW

The Lions Outdoor Pool was first opened in 1932 with the support of the Lions Club of Stratford. It is a highly valued and visible landmark in the City of Stratford, with strong connections to the community.

In 2005, the Lions Pool had 280 hours of public swimming over ten weeks, 160 hours of swimming lessons over eight weeks and a total of twelve private rental hours. Approximately 800 children participated in swimming lessons. The total number of bathers for weekly non-programmed swims was 7,342 for an average of ninety persons in the pool on a daily basis.

The City of Stratford Building Condition Report has identified needed upgrades to the Lions Pool in term of mechanical systems, filtering capacity and pumps and motors to accommodate bather loading capacity. Staff identified the need to replace the pool liner in the next several years. There were no upgrades identified for the main building.

The City of Stratford has also considered development alternatives beyond maintaining the existing pool format. It has considered a splash pad, water slides and a lazy river facility as a retro-fit to the existing pool. Reformatting of the existing Lions Pool could provide opportunities for tourist usage, provide for continued but limited swim lesson and recreational lap swimming, and maintain a significant landmark in proximity to the Festival Theatre. The broader water play park concept would involving retaining a lap swimming and a lesson area, and reformat a majority of the pool area for recreational, slide, lazy river and splash pad uses.

#### 5.5.2 RECOMMENDATION - LIONS OUTDOOR POOL

- **That Lions Outdoor Pool be renewed, giving consideration to the reformatting of the Lions Outdoor Pool to a splash pool / pad with a lap pool, to service both strong resident interest and to provide complementary tourist opportunities, especially for visiting families.**

## 5.6 Sports Fields

### 5.6.1 OVERVIEW

From the consultation process, trends and related research, a number of points were identified related to sports fields. The most significant one is the growth in soccer, both at the minor and adult levels for both men and women. Minor soccer registration across Canada has expanded to over 500,000 players which is now higher than for minor hockey. In a recent forecast from Soccer Canada, they expect one million registrants by the end of the decade. Stratford has a strong soccer program based on the cultural background of its residents and increased growth in adult, women's and master's soccer teams.

Youth soccer has more than doubled in Stratford from 1994 to the present, with over 1300 youth involved in soccer. There are an increasing number of girl's soccer teams, along with a growing

number of adult women's and men's teams in Stratford. In the community survey, households with children indicated that over 30% used outdoor sports fields for soccer or rugby use.

Soccer attributes that are attracting increased participation include:

- Lower participation costs;
- Structured times during the summer months;
- Aerobic activity intensity
- Connections to immigrant populations.

In the City of Stratford, there are currently nineteen soccer fields, of which eight are municipally-owned and eleven are located on private lands. The field inventory includes nine mini-fields and ten full sized soccer fields. The utilization rate for each field is between five to twelve hours per week for youth soccer programs.

The current ownership of sports fields on private lands reduces the likelihood of investment in ancillary facilities, such as lighting and improvements to the sports fields by user groups. There have been past experiences where these private soccer pitches have been sold by their owners, putting a strain on user groups to find alternative locations.

Public ownerships of a larger proportion of these fields would respond to anticipated growing participation levels and provide a higher level of certainty for the continued availability of these soccer pitches. In addition, the introduction of lighting at several fields would increase capacity and provide opportunities for tournaments and support sport tourism directions.

The renewal of soccer fields and re-investment in publicly-owned lands is a planned response to current and growing demand locally for soccer venues. The move to providing lit soccer pitches will increase the capacity of publicly-owned facilities in response to the anticipated growth.

### 5.6.2 RECOMMENDATION - SOCCER FIELDS

- **That development of two to four new soccer pitches on publicly-owned lands is undertaken, using existing park resources or acquiring the existing site at Standard Products or developing new sites in the City's Secondary Plan areas over the next three to four years.**
- **That renewal / reinvestment in new or existing soccer pitches involve the lighting of two of the senior soccer fields in order to increase the capacity of these fields.**

## 5.7 Indoor Pool

### 5.7.1 OVERVIEW

In the City of Stratford there is one indoor pool operated by the Stratford-Perth YMCA and an indoor therapeutic pool operated by Spruce Lodge. The Spruce Lodge Pool is used 80% by the community and 20% by Spruce Lodge residents. The YMCA pool facility is nearly forty years old, having been opened in 1968. The YMCA currently has an average of 3,600 members per month, and had 75,199 pool users in 2004. The current aquatic facility is a 25 yard pool with four lanes.

Deficiencies at the YMCA pool have been identified relative to limited deck space, poor air and water circulation, limited viewing areas and the pool dimensions which limit opportunities to host competitive swim meets, offer inadequate training space for the competitive swim team and constrain the number of participants able to use the pool at one time.

The capacity of the pool is seventy-five bathers on the deck at any one time. An analysis was completed estimating the actual number of persons in the pool at any given time. The capacity ranged from just over 30% for family swim to over 100% for Special Olympic activities. The demand levels for swimming lessons were just over 80% of capacity.

In speaking with focus groups related to indoor pool use, there is a strong desire in renewal of the existing indoor pool to offer a twenty-five metre, six to eight lane pool. This would provide additional capacity for competitive swimming and the possible hosting of competitive swim meets. There were indications of latent pool time demand by secondary school competitive swimming groups, the competitive Dragon Boat group for pool training and improved training and swimming hours for the SKYAC Swim Team.

Through the community survey, the YMCA pool was identified as having a poor to fair overall rating, three out of nine (3:9) times. With respect to the perceived future adequacy of the YMCA pool, it received the lowest score with four out of ten (4:10) users awarding low scores, similar to Dufferin and Rotary Arenas.

With respect to trends in indoor pools, partnerships between the YMCA and municipal governments are evolving. Municipal investment in the capital costs for indoor pool development and the YMCA providing the operating and management of the facility create synergies that provide a high level of service and reduce operational and financial risk to the municipality. This strategy also avoids the risk of competition between two pools in a small market resulting in potential financial challenges for both pools, with their organizations experiencing significant operating deficits. Annual operating deficits can accrue in municipal pools ranging between \$100,000 to \$200,000 in larger markets. Examples in Sarnia and Goderich demonstrate opportunities for successful partnerships in providing indoor pool facilities, while Woodstock indicates the challenges of two indoor pools in a smaller market.

The location of an indoor pool should reflect its use as a one of a kind community facility. Redevelopment of the YMCA pool on the existing site or elsewhere in the core area is preferred. A multi-use facility, combining an indoor pool and a possible new public library provides opportunities for reduced capital cost, reduced operating and facility development costs associated with shared parking, common grounds maintenance, reduced building heating and cooling costs etc. Opportunities to create a multi-use facility should be explored to provide for maximizing synergies that benefit both facility users and funders.

#### 5.7.2 RECOMMENDATION - INDOOR POOL

- **That a new indoor pool be developed in partnership between the City of Stratford and the Stratford-Perth YMCA in the core area of Stratford.**
- **That preferably, this facility be part of a larger multi-use project that could potentially involve a new public library and other partners.**
- **That a Business Plan be completed for the proposed indoor pool, either as separate entity or as part of a pool / library complex for opening by approximately 2010.**



## 5.8 Stratford Public Library

### 5.8.1 OVERVIEW

The existing Stratford Public Library offers a broad range of reading, program and information services at a central location. It is a significant contributor to the vibrancy of the core area.

Public Library services are growing in terms of both scope and use levels, including internet access; collections of videos and DVDs; group programming; access to computers; etc. The Stratford Public Library has completed facility assessments that identify a projected overall space need of 25,000 to 27,000 square feet or an increase of 60% over the existing space available. The existing Stratford Public Library has not been expanded for some thirty years.

Comments from the community survey identified use of library facilities by adults during the past year as seven out of ten (7:10) respondents. This usage rate was the same for households with children. Future interest in the use of leisure facilities over the next five years was highest for the Library, at six out of ten (6:10) respondents, similar to walking trails.

The Library could look at an array of partnerships and multi-use initiatives to facilitate development of a new facility. The development of a single facility library service delivery model supports a location in the core area of the City to provide easy access for all residents. In partnership with the YMCA, the Library would provide synergies with respect to the level of servicing, ancillary parking, recreation programming and other multi-use activities. Alternatively there may be opportunities to partner with the Stratford-Perth Museum and the Stratford Gallery on a shared use location if opportunities with the YMCA were not available. Depending on site size and configuration, a partnership of all the groups could be considered.

### 5.8.2 RECOMMENDATION - STRATFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

- **That the City of Stratford undertake the development of a new centrally located Public Library for the year 2010, preferably as part of a multi-use complex associated with a Stratford-Perth YMCA renewal program subject to the acquisition of an appropriate location in the core area.**
- **Alternatively, that a new Public Library could be located centrally in Stratford, in conjunction with the possible future development of a new Stratford-Perth Museum, Art Gallery and Archives.**

## 5.9 Stratford-Perth Museum, Gallery Stratford and Stratford-Perth Archives

### 5.9.1 OVERVIEW

The existing Stratford-Perth Museum is located in the Discovery Centre venue, which is owned by a non-profit incorporated body governed by a Management Board. The Museum currently has 9,000 square feet of space, down from 12,000 square feet two years ago. The Museum currently has over 2,000 children visit the Museum annually, with a general public attendance of 5,000 people.

Gallery Stratford is also located in the Discovery Centre, but has inadequate office, storage and support spaces, and is removed from the Downtown area. The Stratford-Perth Archives are located in the Registry Office in a small space, with off-site storage spread around Perth County.

A new venue for the Museum, Archives and Art Gallery links well with the strategic cultural direction of the community. They complement Stratford's cultural branding and could be possible tourism and visitor enhancements.

The forging of a partnership, involving the Museum, Gallery and Archives, possibly with the Stratford Public Library initiative could resolve space challenges, reduce capital and operating costs and create a new cultural venue for community-based activities that may also support tourism.

### 5.9.2 RECOMMENDATION - MUSEUM, ART GALLERY AND ARCHIVES

- **That the City of Stratford consider enhancing Museum, Archives and Art Gallery services through a facility initiative involving either a joint facility of the three groups, or possibly a partnership arrangement involving a future addition to a new Public Library;**
- **That such a facility, whether a stand alone or a multi-use facility within a partnership arrangement, be located centrally to provide ease of access to residents and tourists; be highly visible; and contribute to the cultural branding and positioning of the City;**
- **That a Business Plan be completed to assess its financial costs, feasibility, timing and governance approach.**
- **That this initiative be viewed as a longer term development strategy beyond 2012.**

## 5.10 Kiwanis Community Centre

### 5.10.1 OVERVIEW

The Kiwanis Community Centre, located on Lakeside Drive, was built in 1977 as an addition to an existing facility formerly known as the Casino. The facility was designed to accommodate an increased number of user groups in the community. Activities currently accommodated at the site include the Tom Patterson Theatre during the summer, volleyball and badminton courts during the winter and significant usage by the Stratford Lakeside Seniors Group who provide a broad mix of activities and programs designed for seniors groups.

The Kiwanis Community Centre is in a prominent location overlooking the Avon River and is close to Downtown. Through the community survey, the Kiwanis Community Centre was used by three out of ten (3:10) adults in the past year. With respect to overall ratings, the Kiwanis Community Centre was given excellent to good rating four out of five (4:5) times. The community survey respondents provided support for its continued use and investment for long term sustainability.

### 5.10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS - KIWANIS COMMUNITY CENTRE

- **That continued investment and renewal, within a long term sustainability plan, be undertaken for the Kiwanis Community Centre as the primary venue for seniors programming and community-based activities.**
- **That seniors programming be reviewed with the community to ensure a broad mix of activity and program opportunities, involving fitness, socialization, health and well-being, social services and related dimensions that support seniors.**

## 5.11 Leisure Facilities Renewal

### 5.11.1 OVERVIEW

The renewal of leisure facilities captures existing investments in facility locations and infrastructure. To-day there is a tendency to often focus on developing new facilities without a full review of what has been invested already, and how it can be effectively renewed. Existing infrastructure has certain investment life expectancies. However, a renewal strategy can be a key tool in extending the life, utility and value of the significant investments already made.

The need for facility renewal strategies is based on trends within the baby boomer generation and society generally that exhibit increasing expectations as to the quality and amenities that need to be available in leisure facilities. As a result, leisure facilities are often significantly upgraded every fifteen to twenty years rather than thirty to forty years. In this context, facility renewal goes beyond capital repairs to include improved amenities, capacities and flexibility.

Sustaining existing facilities through renewal also allows the City to invest in heritage oriented facilities, maintaining these facilities as cornerstone in the history and presentation of the City, while reformatting them to meet contemporary user needs and expectations.

#### 5.11.2 RECOMMENDATION - LEISURE FACILITIES RENEWAL

- **That the City of Stratford continue to undertake Building Condition Study reports on major facilities every ten years, and that where renewal of a facility is the preferred alternative, that the recommendations of the Conditions Study be incorporated into the capital works forecasts of the City.**
- **That the City of Stratford adopt a policy of allocating between 2.0% and 2.5% of the annual replacement cost of its leisure facilities, based on annual insurance coverage rates, as a charge against operations in order to generate sufficient capital facility rehabilitation and renewal reserves.**
- **That Community Services staff prepare Parks and Open Space Renewal Plans that support the long-term rehabilitation, maintenance and capital budgeting forecasts for its primary facility and site resources.**

## 5.12 Parks and Open Spaces

### 5.12.1 OVERVIEW

The Official Plan of the City of Stratford sets out the policies for the development of parklands and their location, size and range of recreational activities. The Plan refers to the previous 1989 Master Parks and Recreation Plan as establishing the standards for parks development. These policies identify neighbourhood, city and specialized open space categories. The analysis of parks indicated the current parkland and open space classification system and standards are suitable for the next twelve year time horizon for the City of Stratford.

Official Plan Amendment No. 11 provides a parks direction for newly developing areas of the City of Stratford. These are to be linked to the existing open space system through existing watercourses connecting to the Avon River. These directions are to be incorporated into the Master Plan and support the Official Plan.

#### 5.12.2 RECOMMENDATION - PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

**That the following parks and open space provisioning strategies be implemented:**

- **Maintain the current parks classification and service levels identified in the Official Plan and the 1989 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, continuing to focus on parks that are a minimum, of 1.2 – 1.6 ha or larger.**
- **Develop trails system along watercourses in Secondary Plan areas as community trails**
- **Dedications of parkland be in accordance with Official Plan Amendment No. 11.**
- **Maintain and enhance the existing framework of open space use for informal non-structured recreational uses for both residents and visiting tourists.**

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Table 6-1 profiles the leisure facility specific recommendations from Section 5.0 of the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities related to their implementation. This table provides specific facility identification, the year or range of year for their development, rationales, strategy alternatives and preliminary capital cost estimates.

Table 6-2 provides a specific implementation approach for the aquatics centre and public library partnership initiative.

### 6.1 Financial Operating Impact

The Plan's recommendations will have a range of future financial operating impacts involving both reductions and increases depending on the type and scale of facility proposed. For new capital investments, these impacts will not be known until a Business Plan is completed. In some cases the operation expenses will be partially or fully offset by the closure of other facilities and / or the opening of new, more efficient and effective facilities. Operating costs will also be influenced by the range of partnerships, funding sources or joint ventures available to a specific initiative. The operating costs, including staffing, maintenance, utilities, etc., is a project evaluation factor within each Business Plan.

### 6.2 Plan Review

It is important to review the Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities in relation to the continually evolving leisure services operating environment. It is important to consider short, medium and long range reviews, each addressing the relevant priorities within that time horizon. These long term reviews are intended to keep the Plan relevant and up to date in ensuring an ongoing delivery of leisure services and facilities over the next ten to fifteen years.

**6.2.1 RECOMMENDATION - PLAN REVIEW**

- **That the Strategic Master Plan be updated in terms of Table 6-1 every year in order to maintain an active list of recommendations before Council, the community and staff on an on-going basis.**
- **That the Strategic Master Plan be part of a planning session / workshop involving Council and staff every three years, to undertake a review of the recommendations in relation to the changes occurring in the service delivery environment, emerging leisure services trends, municipal financing opportunities / constrains, priorities and other parameters.**
- **That the Strategic Master Plan be subject to a major review at its ten-year anniversary, to evaluate whether the long-term perspectives of the Plan remain focused on the key trends and rationale, or whether new considerations have emerged resulting in a need to redevelop the Plan.**

TABLE 6-1  
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Initiative	Location	Description	Year Proposed	Rationale/Need	Alternatives (if available)	Estimated Initial Capital Costs (\$000)
<b>Sport Tourism Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packham Road Sports Complex</li> <li>• National Stadium</li> <li>• SERC</li> <li>• Twin Pad</li> <li>• Pools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy development</li> <li>• Focus on regional and provincial events</li> </ul>	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complement tourism priorities and strategies</li> </ul>		\$30
<b>Twin Pad Arena</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stratford Fairgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twin pad format with meeting and tournament rooms</li> </ul>	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace existing facility</li> <li>• Respond to latent ice demands</li> </ul>		\$ 9,000
<b>Trails Master Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avon River corridor and natural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term development of trails</li> </ul>	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for non-programmed leisure activities involving walking, hiking, etc.</li> </ul>		\$30 annually
<b>Allman Arena</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing location in the core area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility upgrades to extend non-ice season use</li> <li>• Renewal of existing infrastructure</li> </ul>	2006 - 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewal and sustaining existing facility</li> <li>• Reposition for a more flexible public venue</li> </ul>		\$4,235
<b>Lions Pool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing location on Avon River</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renovation of existing tank to lap pool / splash pad</li> </ul>	2008 - 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in liner and infrastructure</li> <li>• Improved tourist attraction</li> </ul>	Replace liner and retain existing format	\$1,000
<b>Soccer Field Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suburban or Industrial areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two to four publicly owned senior pitches</li> <li>• Two lit senior pitches to double capacity</li> </ul>	2008 - 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring more pitches into public ownership</li> <li>• Respond to increasing demand</li> </ul>	Continue public access fields on private lands	\$500 to \$1,000 including land



**TABLE 6-1  
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Year Proposed</b>	<b>Rationale/Need</b>	<b>Alternatives (if available)</b>	<b>Estimated Initial Capital Costs (\$000)</b>
<b>Indoor Pool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing YMCA site or other site</li> <li>• Central location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New indoor pool with a minimum 25 m and 6 to 8 lanes or equivalent</li> <li>• Partnership with the Library</li> </ul>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace aging facility</li> <li>• Provide competitive venue</li> <li>• Respond to community needs</li> </ul>		\$7,000 to \$8,000
<b>Public Library</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing YMCA site or other site</li> <li>• Central location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New library 25,000 to 27,000 sq. ft of useable library space</li> <li>• Possible partnership with an indoor pool initiative</li> </ul>	2010 or later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of new library services</li> <li>• Upgraded space for collections and services</li> </ul>	Multi-use complex with the Museum/ Archives/ Art Gallery	\$7,000 to \$8,000
<b>Museum/Archives/ Art Gallery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centrally located</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New multi-use building</li> </ul>	2012 or later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembling complementary uses</li> <li>• Enhanced tourism potential</li> </ul>	Create a multi-use partnership with the Library	To Be Determined

Table 6-2

**Implementation Planning For New YMCA,  
Aquatics Facility and Public Library**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. City of Stratford to Host Exploratory Meeting of Potential Partner Representatives</b>   | <b>February 2006</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.1 Review Master Plan Recommendations</li> <li>.2 Identify Other Possible Partners</li> <li>.3 Explore Partner Interests in a Joint Venture</li> <li>.4 Develop Tentative Work Program</li> <li>.5 Partners to Affirm Participation Approval from Boards, Etc., and Assign Project Representative(s)</li> </ul>   |  |
| <b>2. Establish Project Team Membership</b>  | <b>February 2006</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.1 Leadership</li> <li>.2 Resources</li> <li>.3 Meeting Schedule and Processes</li> </ul>   |  |
| <b>3. Develop Project Work Program and Priorities</b>  | <b>March 2006</b>  |
| <b>4. Complete the Following Key Tasks:</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.1 Partnership Framework</li> <li>.2 Feasibility Study               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Space requirements profile and features</li> <li>b) Venue alternatives assessment</li> <li>c) Capital cost projections</li> <li>d) Operating cost pro forma</li> <li>e) Management and partnership plan and responsibilities</li> <li>f) Implementation Plan</li> <li>g) Two to four concept graphics</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 2006</li> <li>December 2006</li> </ul> |

Table 6-2  
Continued...

.3	Fundraising Preparedness Study	Spring 2007
.4	Fundraising Campaign Launch	Fall 2007 / Spring 2008
.5	Business Plan Review	Spring 2008
.6	Project Approvals	2008
.7	Architect Selection and Land Acquisition	2008
.8	Facility Commissioning	2010

# APPENDIX I

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## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC THEMES

## CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC THEMES

### Introduction

The following material summarizes the key points that emerge from various research assessments and inputs. The first section provides a summary of key points and observations, while the second section focuses on strategic perspectives that will be the foundation for the development of a Strategic Master Plan for Leisure Services and Facilities in the City of Stratford.

### Key Points and Observations

#### .1 Policies and Plans

- The Official Plan establishes goals for providing parkland for existing and future residents.
- The Avon River will be the focal point for open space connectivity;
- The parks classification system identifies three classes of parks, including neighbourhood, city and specialized open space.
- The overall City goal is 5 hectares of parkland per 1000 persons
- The Northwestern Secondary Plan incorporates 157 hectares of land into the City with a projected population of 5,000 residents, 2,165 households and 9.2 hectares of parkland
- Suburban based growth in the northwest and northeast sectors of the City are expected to be the focus of future growth.

#### .2 Community Population Profile

- The 2001 population of Stratford was 29,675 persons.
- The projected population from 2001 to 2016 is expected to increase to between 31,360 and 32,528 persons, or 1,700 to 2,800 additional residents.
- The proportion of persons over 55 years has stayed constant from 1986 to 2001 at 24.9%.
- The proportion of persons in the 45 to 54 age group has increased by 5.3% reflecting the aging baby boom persons. This aging trend will continue for at least fifteen to twenty more years.

- The proportion of children 5 to 19 years of age has remained relatively constant at 20% from 1986 to 2001 and will likely decline proportionately in the future, though the absolute numbers could remain relatively constant or decline marginally.

### .3 Leisure Service Delivery Framework

- The Department of Community Services is responsible for parks open space and outdoor facilities; the maintenance and operation of arenas, an outdoor pool and community centres. It is organized around parks, open space and forestry; facility maintenance and community programs.
- Non-profit leisure service providers are an integral component of the delivery model, ensuring a wide range and mix of leisure activities.
- The key values-based/benefit considerations of the Parks and Recreation Division services are quality of life; working with the community; and providing maximum effectiveness within the available resources.
- In 2005, the City provided grants to not-for-profit groups of \$264,600 to five organizations.
- The City of Stratford, YMCA and CAS provide sponsorship and discounts to qualified households to reduce income accessibility problems.
- In 2004, the expenditures for Parks and Recreation Services were \$5,733,579, with revenues of \$2,943,478 for 51.3% revenue coverage.
- Capital forecasts from 2006 to 2009 include \$18 million in expenditures. The largest costs identified are for the construction of a twin pad arena at \$9 million, and the Allman Arena renewal, projected at \$4.23 million over four years.

### .4 Leisure Facilities Condition Studies

- Condition reports have been prepared to determine the long term investments needed for selected existing facilities. They form the basis for the capital cost forecasts;
  - \$1.2 million for Agricultural Society Buildings, particularly with respect to the Rotary Arena roof repairs;
  - Lion's pool requires a new liner for the tank, and mechanical upgrades to bring the systems to current code.
- There are significant investments required in aging facilities to meet the rising expectations of the public.

#### .5 Leisure Resources Availability

- The City owns 45 parks with a total area of 142.4 ha for a distribution of 4.8 ha per 1,000 residents. There are 31 ha of School Board lands, as well as 43.7 ha of privately owned park space in the City. This represents 5.8 ha per 1,000 residents and exceeds the 5.0 ha per 1,000 target.
- When all the parks and open spaces are combined, the total amount of open space/parks available is 7.3 ha per 1,000 residents.
- Generally, the parks are well distributed throughout the city, providing easy access for most residents.
- The parks and sports field equipment on publicly owned sites is generally well maintained and in good condition.
- Sports fields are used at 70% to 80% of the available time periods, which represents a high utilization level.
- 11 of 19 soccer fields are located on private lands, which could create a future capacity vulnerability if lands were sold or used by their owners.

#### .6 Major Recreation Facilities and Utilization Rates

- The City of Stratford operates three arenas, one outdoor pool and a community centre.
- The utilization rates for the arenas during prime time is 96.1% and 37.1% during non-prime time, which indicates high demand rates for ice time, virtually full for prime time hours.
- The YMCA operates an indoor pool and Spruce Lodge, a senior's community, operates a therapeutic indoor pool.
- The YMCA pool has an average annual hourly number of bathers, ranging from 4.8 bathers for School Board use to 31.3 bathers for Open Swims, with an average of 13.7 bathers per hour for all programs.
- The utilization of the Y pool by different programs, ranges from 108% of capacity for Special Olympics to 32% of capacity for Family Swims. Pool capacities range from 12 bathers per hour for lane swimming to a maximum of 75 bathers allowed in the pool area at any one time for Open Swims.
- YMCA lessons are provided to some 800 children per session, with approximately 23 children in the pool per hour. The Y indicates they are at 80% of capacity for the program area.

- The Lions pool operates for 10 weeks of the year providing lessons to some 800 children per season.
- The Lions pool is available for non-programmed swims for an average of 9 hours per day and had a total of 7,342 bather visits over 83 days for an average of 10 bathers per hour.
- Through reciprocal agreements with the City of Stratford, the YMCA and the Boards of Education share existing facilities at no cost. This agreement has provided public use of elementary schools for 5,451 hours annually for indoor and outdoor activities.
- The most significant programs identified were for the after school programs, with the next highest being volleyball use.

#### .7 Focus Groups and Interviews

- Significant identification of the value and importance of trails currently and in the future, the community's connectivity to the Avon River, and the parks and open space system generally.
- General satisfaction with the number of sports fields, though upgrading of quality on selected fields could be considered. National Stadium renewal was cited as an important initiative
- The popularity and sustaining of Lions Pool was identified as important.
- Programs available for seniors and those with disabilities were seen as particularly good.
- The Stratford Public Library was identified as a key community resource/asset, but in need of renewal and enlargement. It was seen as continuing to be important to the overall mix of services in the community, with an emphasis on being in the core area.
- The Lakeside Seniors Association and the Kiwanis Community Centre were highlighted as unique and successful operations within the community, though parking problems do exist at the Centre.
- User groups identified that there is a wide array of facilities and programs, which creates a range of opportunities for residents. The Leisure Council was seen as a significant contributor to facilitating communications, partnerships and other supports that sustain and grow the range of opportunities.
- The Leisure Guide was generally seen as an important communication tool, but could be improved through broader interpretation of what entails leisure services beyond organized sports.



- Utilization of school-based facilities is significant. The community has a strong history of using all its potential leisure resources across the school board, YMCA, City, service club and other facilities and resources.
- Many participants in the focus groups identified the unique connectivity of tourism, culture and recreation in Stratford. The need to ensure effective integration of these themes collectively is important in terms of maximizing utilization, deriving broader-based benefits to the community and achieving cost economies.
- A number of groups identified sport tourism as a rationale for facility investment, particularly related to sports fields, an indoor aquatic centre and arena development and renewal. They viewed the opportunities to bring in tournaments and meets as a way to facilitate enhanced economic impact for the community in terms of visitor expenditures, as well as the raising of funds for sports groups. Tourism Stratford also recognized this potential, particularly related to the shoulder seasons.
- Key leisure facility considerations put forward by the various participants were:
  - The need for an expanded Public Library;
  - Potential enhancements of Museum and Archive facilities, along with a more visible Art Gallery;
  - National Stadium renewal;
  - A larger indoor aquatic facility to support broadened use;
  - Renewal of existing arenas;
  - Rotary Arena was questioned relative to further investments in an aged and undersized facility;
  - Additional ice capacity;
  - Renewal of Agricultural Society buildings, reflecting their significant contributions to the community in terms of being an events and fundraising centre.

#### .8 Public Meeting

- The participants indicated the following strengths:
  - a beautiful parks system;
  - a strong volunteer base;
  - a well used Library system;

- trails along the Avon River; and
- a large number of active seniors programs.
- The participants indicated the following challenges and issues:
  - keeping and attracting volunteer participants;
  - lack of and aging leisure facilities, including arenas, indoor and outdoor pools, indoor and outdoor track;
  - lack of off road biking trails;
  - affordability and accessibility of services;
  - better communications with the public on events and activities.
- The participants indicated the following key directions:
  - interest in more trails throughout the community;
  - finances and ability for the public to pay for the new facilities;
  - existing community division needs to be resolved with respect to facilities;
  - maintenance of existing facilities;
  - additional open space lands;
  - ability to put original ideas into action, and
  - fundraising and bringing the community together.

## .9 Community Survey

- One in two respondents felt the number and quality of recreational facilities provided by the City and the number and quality of leisure programs and classes provided by the City were good or excellent. This indicates a generally good assessment by respondents.
- Approximately six out of ten respondents felt that the City had done a good or excellent job in providing facilities and programs that meet the needs of Stratford residents and in communicating them to the public, indicating enhanced performance in the area.
- Facilities were rated by respondents who had used them personally or had children who had used them;

CITY OF STRATFORD  
STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR LEISURE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REPORT

- Excellent/ good ratings were given 4 out of 5 times for the Kiwanis Community Centre; Lions Pool; walking trails; Stratford Library; indoor gyms and tennis courts.
- Poor/fair ratings were given to the YMCA, 3 out of 9 times; and more than 1 out of 2 times for the Dufferin and Rotary Arenas. These facilities were widely seen as aging and challenging.
- Forty-five percent of respondents providing unaided input did not identify any additional needs. Some 10% mentioned building a new arena; and 9% suggested a new indoor pool.

#### .10 Documents Review

- The 1989 Stratford Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommended conditions for a new pool as being part of a shared recreation complex; that half of the time was committed to by the School Boards for usage; a feasibility study being completed; and the Lions Pool being closed.
- The report noted ice time demand exceeded available time and recommended an improvement in scheduling and monitoring of demand;
- The leisure delivery system was identified as highly effective. More joint efforts between the City and service providing agencies were recommended.
- The Stratford Public Library Space Needs Study was completed. It determined the extent of additional floor area needed to deliver programs and services. The projection was for 19,000 to 20,000 sq. ft. of efficient net square feet or 25,000 to 27,000 sq. ft. gross floor area.
- If the planning for Library renewal was to go to the year 2027, a larger space of 22,500 to 30,000 sq. ft would be a target.
- The City of Stratford Natural Heritage Inventory was prepared in 2004 by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. This study recommended initiatives be developed at a watershed level in partnership with upstream and downstream municipalities to improve the aquatic habitat of the Avon River.

#### .11 Trends

- As a result of the aging population, there will be an increased interest in walking and related health/ fitness/ wellness oriented activities;

- An increasing demand for ice time will be fuelled by growth in women's hockey, disabled participation in ice sports, changing forms of figure skating activities and increases in masters-based activities, such as skating clubs. There is significant growth in soccer participation based on its low cost to participate; more structured times during the summer months; enhanced aerobic activity and connection to immigrant populations. A decline in minor and adult baseball registrations is being experienced across the province. The result is an increasing focus on soccer field development, ice surfaces and related supports.
- A consistent consideration of the "boomer generation" is higher expectations associated with leisure facility quality and ancillary supports, such as large dressing rooms with showers, warming areas, food courts, multi-pool complexes, fitness areas, etc.
- There is a strong trend towards the integration of education, social, health and leisure services that look at all the needs of families and/or individuals. This approach is more holistic and creates changing user expectations and opportunities for partnered services.

## .12 Strategies

- Municipalities are looking to fund a higher proportion of cost of delivery through user fees and charges. On the revenue side, targets of 60% to 75% cost recovery for children's and youth services and 100% on adult services are evolving.
- As a result of market segmentation, there are an increasing number of target audiences and an increasing trend to charge different fees or rates for different qualities of facility. This creates a more competitive business model focused on different intensity, interest and ability to pay levels.
- There is increased connectivity between sport, recreation, arts, culture and tourism in regards to economic development strategies/priorities.
- User demands for more one window/coordinated accessibility to services are growing.
- There is a concern about the continued sustainability of volunteer service organizations, due to the challenge of recruiting committed and/or skilled volunteers. Strategies to better recruit and support volunteers are increasingly important
- The use of partnerships is a service delivery strategy that allows organizations and individuals with expertise and capacity to more effectively deliver service, expand service opportunities and achieve greater cost efficiencies.
- The role of the Parks and Recreation Divisions in the Community Services Department will grow as an identifier and qualifier of needs, trends and directions;

facilitator/ broker of partnerships; and as a provider of organizational and technical supports to partnership proposals.

- There is a wider mix of capital funding sources available than in the past. Key financing strategies which could be considered include:
  - Use of development charges directly attributable to population growth;
  - The role of user fees and/or surcharges to fund the capital portion of leisure programs;
  - Fundraising and corporate sponsorships will become increasingly involved;
  - Ancillary income strategies, including concessions and catering, advertising, competitive pricing and sales, etc., will be employed to off set operating costs;
  - Municipal debentures / tax supported debt many not be preferred but will continue as a strategy.
  - Possible federal and provincial government funding in local communities through capital grants is a continuing possibility.
- Evaluation of leisure facilities is a strategy to improve service delivery, support decision-making and enhance the outcomes of capital investments. The results are more flexible, multi-use and integrated facility designs and operations.
- Multi-use facilities, which bring together the most number of uses that have demonstrated need and have the right compatibilities, should be a basic facilities development strategy within this Plan. Such strategies significantly reduce operating and capital costs and enlarge user convenience and experiences.
- Balancing new facility development with the rehabilitation of existing facilities should be part of the evaluation framework for every leisure facility initiative.
- Capital facility maintenance is a significant cost over 20 year periods. The Department should assess the opportunities for new facilities or facility redevelopment in conjunction with the maintenance program, in order to reduce overall costs and improve customer service, as well as program expansion.
- The City may consider land banking to acquire sites 8 to 10 years in advance of their required use to secure the necessary size and locational preferences, and to purchase the land at a lower cost.

## Strategic Themes

The following strategic themes emerged from the observations and conclusions and create the framework for the preparation of the City of Stratford Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities.

- A focus on sustaining and growing the range and quality of leisure programs, on a more integrated and partnered basis, reflecting health, education, leisure and community development benefits
- Ensure assessment of all major leisure facility and park investments related to their potential to facilitate sport tourism activities that could bring positive economic opportunities to the community.
- Continue the development of the trail system to provide broader linkages in the community, along with the development of neighbourhood parks in emerging areas.
- Develop strategies, in partnership with community organizations, to enhance the recruitment, training, recognition and positive experiences for volunteers, as a primary resource in sustaining the range and quality of leisure programs across the community
- Develop strategies for the ongoing renewal of major leisure facilities through the use of reserves and related strategies, moving from project-based renewal to sustainable renewal. The initial focus needs to continue the current capital planning associated with:
  - Allman and Dufferin Arenas
  - National Stadium
  - Future directions for the Fairground facilities
- Develop sports fields reflective of the key trends and participant registration levels being experienced, providing different levels of field quality, related to recreational and competitive, youth and adult. Also, ensure appropriate strategies are in place if soccer field capacity was reduced due to the loss of private lands.
- Work with community service providers to develop programs and services initiatives that are reflective of changing societal trends and demographics, involving:
  - A population increase of potentially 1,500 individuals over the next twelve to fifteen years;
  - Potential increase in residents who come from other cultures and may not have the awareness levels or understanding of the opportunities that are available;

CITY OF STRATFORD  
STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN TO PROVIDE FOR LEISURE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REPORT

- An aging population that will see potentially up to 50% more seniors in the next twenty years, while at the same time, the number of early years children and youth likely being stable or marginally declining.
- Undertake consideration for the development of major leisure facilities to reflect current capacity constraints, aging physical plant investment challenges and participation trends related to:
  - A new public library facility that is able to respond to growth in population, increased use of group- based programs, enhanced use of technology and new collection services.
  - The development of a twin pad arena, with one pad replacing the Rotary Arena, which is potentially not an investment opportunity, and a second pad to respond to the current latent demand and changing utilization patterns, such as female hockey, skating activities, etc.
  - The redevelopment of the existing indoor Y pool to a 25 metre, six to eight lane pool or equivalent that is reflective of contemporary standards, and is better positioned to respond to current participation constraints.
  - The potential consideration for enhancing museum, archives and art gallery facilities, both for the residents benefit and as an enhancement to the cultural direction of the community, possibly in a partnership arrangement.
- The need to develop programs and facilities within maximized partnership agreements and multi-use formats in order to use all the community's assets, to achieve capital and operating economies of scale and to improve user convenience and accessibility
- Based on the physical configuration and the population growth forecasts, to emphasize locational preferences in the central part of the community for one of a kind facilities, ensuring linkages with the trail system and public transit where possible; and to distribute and ensure sports fields, arenas, playgrounds and neighbourhood parks are distributed through the community to facilitate both access and non-programmed utilization.