

Section 4

Outdoor Recreation Facility Assessments

The City's parks contain a broad range of outdoor recreation facilities. Facilities to be examined through this Section include the City's supply of:

- Rectangular Sports Fields;
- Ball Diamonds;
- Splash Pads;
- Outdoor Pools;
- Tennis Courts;
- Basketball and Multi-Use Courts;
- Skateboard Parks;
- Playgrounds;
- Golf Courses; and
- Leash Free Dog Parks.





4.1 Rectangular Sports Fields

Supply:

St. Catharines provides 31 rectangular natural turf sports fields at twenty-three parks, in addition to one artificial turf field (Kiwanis Field) located at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre. The City's rectangular sports fields are categorized into three classes – Type A, Type B, and Type C. Type A fields are premier facilities (in terms of field size, surface, irrigation/drainage, frequency of maintenance, etc.) and are lit. Type B fields may have similar level of quality though they are unlit. Type C fields tend to be smaller and best suited for practices.

- Type A Fields: eight senior fields, one artificial turf field (note: the mini fields overlapping Berkley Park Field #1 and the Bogart Street field are not included to avoid double-counting in the supply)
- Type B Fields: eight senior soccer fields and ten junior fields
- Type C Fields: five junior fields

In recognition that a lit field or an artificial turf can accommodate more use than a standard unlit grass field, due to extending play into the evening or after inclement weather, an equivalency factor is applied to the field supply. Each lit natural and artificial turf field is assumed to provide the equivalent capacity of 1.5 and 2.0 unlit natural fields, respectively. With eight lit natural fields and one lit artificial field, St. Catharines maintains an 'effective' supply of 37.0 unlit equivalent rectangular fields.

Of note, Ridley College also has five outdoor soccer fields and two outdoor field hockey fields (all unlit), some of which are well used by local minor and adult soccer organizations throughout the week (largely between 6pm and 8:30pm). Brock University also has a number of sports fields (for soccer, lacrosse, rugby, and intramurals) though it is understood these are primarily used by its student body. Local sports field organizations also make use of fields located on school board property and privately held lands (e.g. churches).

Service Level:

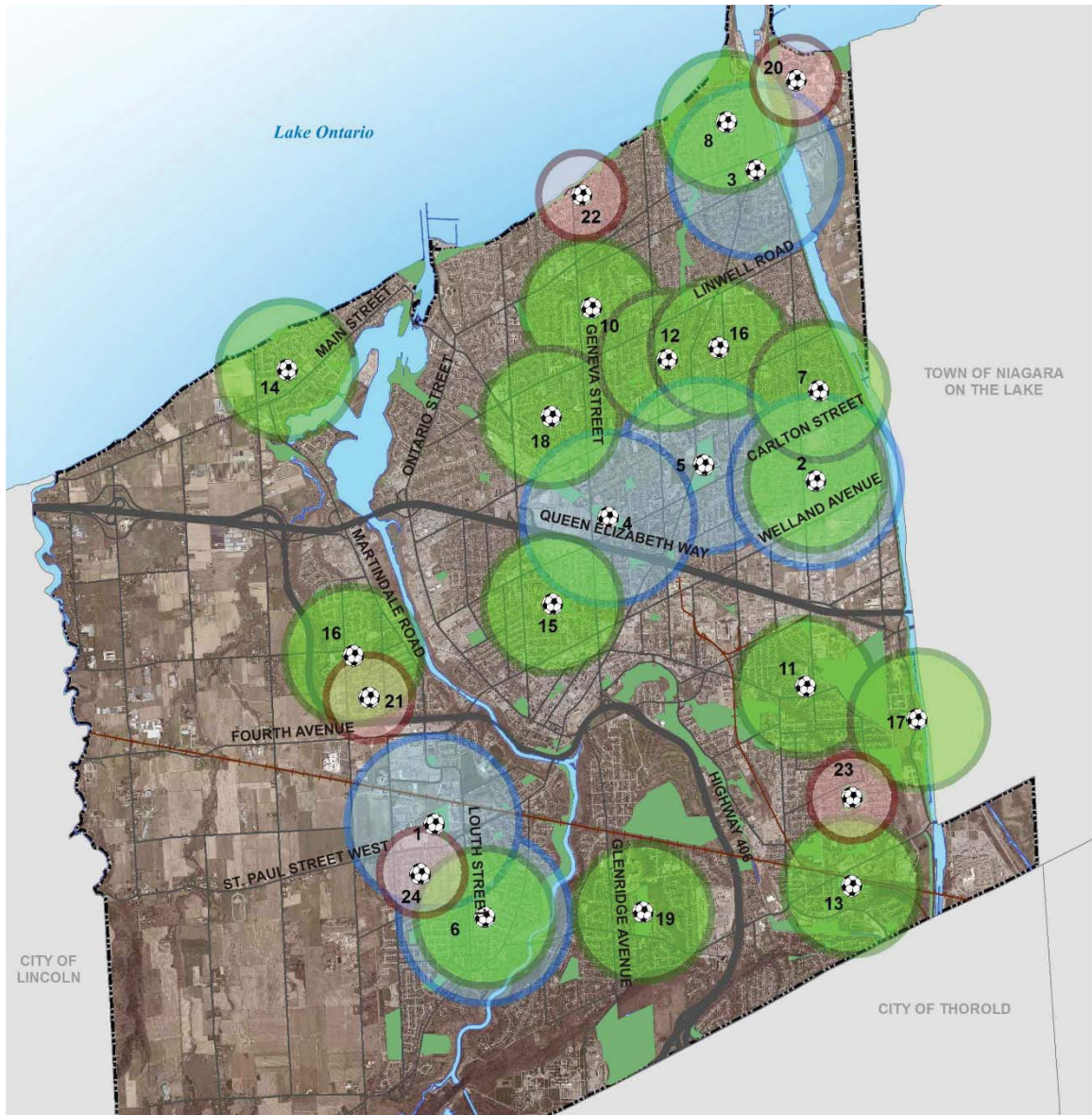
The effective supply translates into a service level of approximately one rectangular field per 3,800 population or 145 soccer participants, the latter of whom are the primary users of such fields. Although rectangular fields are primarily used for soccer throughout the majority of the operating season, certain fields are also utilized by other field sports such as football, field lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, etc. throughout the core and shoulder seasons. It is noted that for uses occurring in the spring and fall shoulder seasons, there is a greater degree of wear and tear on the fields due to usage during wet weather impacting the field condition for summer sport usage (e.g. soccer).

Distribution: The City's distribution of rectangular sports fields is fairly satisfactory, particularly in the north east where there is a strong concentration of fields. The most notable gap area is in the central core and just south of Highway 406, where there are limited opportunities to develop new fields due to their built-up nature, though these are well established residential communities where the population of children and youth is likely less than in the peripheral urban areas, the latter of which appear to be generally well served by fields.




Consultation: Input from rectangular field users was largely received through the user group questionnaire and the outdoor facility user focus group, with participation largely from soccer and football users. There was a general consensus among soccer groups regarding improvements to the City's supply of rectangular sports fields. The most important concern that was identified, was the need for the City to provide appropriate field sizes that align to Ontario Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development (LTPD) standards, generally for additional micro and mini fields. Requests were also made for enhanced levels of field maintenance and waste collection, as well as a general need for more fields to accommodate growth of each organization. A desire for a more equitable distribution of field time was also expressed.

The statistically significant survey identified that over half (54%) of households supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new soccer fields.

Map 5: Distribution of Rectangular Sports Fields



Rectangular Sports Fields

-  Artificial Turf / Type A Fields with a 1km Service Area
-  Type B Fields with an 800m Service Area
-  Type C Fields with a 500m Service Area

Artificial Turf Field

- 1. Kiwanis Field

Senior Type A

- 2. Berkley Park
- 3. Grantham Lions Park
- 4. Lancaster Park
- 5. Lester B. Pearson Park (2)
- 6. West Park (2)

Senior Type B

- 7. Bermuda Park
- 8. Bogart Street Park
- 9. Grantham Avenue Park
- 10. Guy Road Park
- 11. Kernahan Park
- 12. Realty Park
- 13. Trapper Leo Park
- 6. West Park

Junior Type B

- 2. Berkley Park
- 14. Cambria Drive Park
- 15. Catherine Street Park
- 16. Grapeview Park
- 17. Myles W. Pic Leeson Park (2)
- 18. Linlake Park (2)
- 13. Trapper Leo Park
- 19. Woodgale Park

Junior Type C

- 20. Eastport Park
- 21. Fairhaven Park
- 22. Lakeview Park
- 23. Secord Woods Park
- 24. Shauna Park



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Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

Participation: Soccer continues to be a growth sport in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (G.G.H.), however, there are indications that participation rates are stabilizing. Data provided by the Ontario Soccer Association indicates that enrolment in outdoor soccer activities peaked in 2007 (at just under 400,000 players) and has slightly declined in each year since. While the sport remains popular, participation reductions are most apparent in younger age cohorts.

The household survey in St. Catharines recorded nearly one-fifth (19%) of residents participating in soccer during the past twelve months. This represents a decrease from the 2006 household survey conducted for the previous Master Plan, which recorded household participation in soccer at 25%, and is thus consistent with the overall stable to declining scenario occurring provincially.

A review of group surveys suggests that soccer registrations have plateaued or declined in some local organizations over the past three years as well as when compared to data compiled in the previous Master Plan. Registration data has been provided by Club Roma Soccer, the Concord Soccer Club, Port Weller Soccer League, Niagara Rec. Sports and the St. Catharines Jets who collectively report 5,310 players between them for the 2014 season. Registration data from the Merritton Athletic Association was unavailable at the time of writing (it is noted that City Staff attempted to obtain the data from this group).

Utilization: An analysis of hours booked in the peak months between June 15 and August 15 for the 2014 season reveals that Type A natural fields were booked 81% of available weekday prime hours (6pm to 11pm factoring field lighting), which is an acceptable level of use relative to other communities due to periods when a field may be unavailable due to weather. Type B and C field were booked 60% of weekday evenings, suggesting capacity exists at these facilities but their usage could be impeded by their size or quality if not to the expectation of organized users. Weekend bookings at all types of fields were nominal, though it is normal for fields to be rested for at least one day per week to allow turf regeneration.

With respect to the Kiwanis Field, it has generated steady increases in rentals since opening in 2011 (with 130 hours booked) to the 2013 season's 400 hours rented. That being said, under 40% of all prime hours between April and November were rented resulting in unused capacity exceeding 600 hours.

While the 2008 Master Plan projected a declining number of soccer field players (something that appears to have materialized), growth may once again be expected due to new population projections from the Region of Niagara that forecast growth in the 9 to 18 age group between the years 2021 to 2026. Whereas master planning standards across Ontario typically utilize market-driven service level of one



rectangular sports field per 80 to 90 registered soccer players to achieve an optimal balance between supply and demand. Application of the less aggressive standard (i.e. one field per 90 players), however, yields a field deficit between 22 and 25 unlit equivalents.

The one field per 90 player service level continues to be applied in St. Catharines, carried forward from the 2008 Master Plan due to the capacity available within the rectangular field supply (particularly among Type B and C fields), user groups stating focus on field quality more so than quantity, and continued aging of the population. Based upon registration data, the City's current deficit is estimated to be approximately 22 unlit equivalent fields.

	2014	2016	2021	2026
Forecasted Number of Registrants	5,310	5,297	5,300	5,565
Number of Rectangular Fields Required (based a provision target of 1 field per 90 registrants)	59.0	58.9	58.9	61.8
Field Deficit (based on a current supply of 37.0 fields)	22.0	21.9	21.9	24.8

Given the available capacity demonstrated through field rental data (particularly on weekends as well as for Type B/C fields throughout the week), user groups stating a preference for greater field quality (in terms of dimensions of play) more so than quantity, and continued aging of the population, there is concern that building to the one field per 90 player standard would result in addressing a peak demand and thus potentially create an oversupply. In addition, the availability of fields on institutional lands which appear to be well used by St. Catharines soccer organizations (e.g. Brock University, Ridley College and local schools) cannot be over-looked in terms of their contribution to helping to meet rectangular field needs. Since the previous Master Plan, the City has made strides in augmenting its field supply to 37.0 equivalents (the field supply was recorded at 25.5 in 2006) including provision of the artificial turf Kiwanis Field.

To avoid building to an oversupply or peak scenario associated with growth of the 9 to 18 year old cohort, particularly when factoring increasing scarcity of developable land within the City's built urban boundary, the following actions are recommended over the master planning period.

- a) Exploring the potential to install field lighting and/or irrigation systems** at appropriate Type B and C rectangular fields, which will require site-specific investigations that at a minimum consider site servicing capabilities (including ability to provide hydro, install

lighting standards, install irrigation and drainage systems to accommodate the additional use, etc.) and ensure sufficient buffers to nearby residential land uses (to mitigate light spillage). Enhancing the existing supply through strategic field improvements is a cost-effective way to provide additional capacity without having to incur the cost of new land acquisition and facility development.

b) Preparing a Sports Field Allocation Policy in consultation with local user groups to create a transparent, rationalized framework aimed at improving the way in which rectangular fields (and ball diamonds) are scheduled. Such a policy would also provide greater clarity regarding the scheduling of the Kiwanis Field. After such a policy is implemented, the City will be in a better position to understand local field needs since part of the process would be to require user groups to submit registration information. Through this Allocation Policy process, sports field users renting time at municipal fields should be required to annually provide their registration information to the City, including by age group/division and by place of residence, which has the added benefit of allowing the City to evaluate the mix of sports fields required to serve St. Catharines' residents as the City develops new facilities over time. Furthermore, a Sports Field Allocation Policy would alleviate the concerns of some sports field users who noted that the historical 'grandfathered' approach to allocating field times does not reflect the needs of all organizations, and expressed frustrations regarding fields not being used despite being permitted when there are organizations seeking times on fields.

c) Reconfirming the targeted supply of rectangular fields within three years. Should the need be confirmed for additional fields, the preferred implementation strategy would be to collaborate with rectangular field users and develop the majority of new fields as micro, mini and/or intermediate size that facilitates the five versus five to nine versus nine standards of play set forth through the provincial LTPD model. Further, it is recommended that fields be co-located together and designed in a manner that allows them to easily be used as, or converted to, a full size field (as the City has accomplished with the two minis that span the width of Berkley Park Field #1). This strategy recognizes that younger children using these small fields will eventually grow into divisions requiring senior size fields.

d) Monitoring field utilization rates as new rectangular fields are developed to ensure that they are being adequately utilized (i.e. a minimum of 75% of prime times defined through the Sports Field Allocation Policy) prior to continuing to build up the supply. Further, Ridley College indicates that they are in the process of undertaking a planning exercise for its campus, which should be monitored by the City as any change to community access to the sports fields could impact existing user groups' usage. Any change in utilization patterns or quality of fields located on school board property should also be examined for any potential impact to serving local needs through the municipal sports field supply.

e) Maintain dialogue with institutions (such as Brock University, Ridley College and local schools) to better position the City to understand the level of service provided by these institutions in helping to meet the overall rectangular sports field needs of St.



Catharines' sports groups. While the assessment suggests a need for additional municipal fields, the continued use and availability of fields provided by these institutions alleviates the need for the City to provide all fields needed.

In addition to soccer fields, multi-use fields form part of the rectangular field supply. The Kiwanis Field accommodates a number of sports field users due to its ability to be programmed during the spring and fall shoulder months when sports such as lacrosse and football begin their seasons. Combined with the fact that Ridley College makes its two field hockey pitches available for community rental along with the availability of certain school fields for sports such as football, the supply of multi-use fields in the City is deemed to be sufficient at present time.

Recommendations

- #14. Undertake an evaluation of Type B and Type C rectangular fields to determine the feasibility of installing field lighting, irrigation and/or drainage systems as a means to increase the playable capacity.
- #15. Prepare a Sports Field Allocation Policy to effectively manage scheduling and booking practices in a manner that maximizes the utilization of all Class A, B, and C sports fields and ensure operational sustainability within the sports field supply. As part of this process, sports field user groups should be required to submit annual registration data to the City to aid in allocation and trend tracking efforts. In addition, the City should maintain dialogue with institutions such as Brock University, Ridley College and local schools to ensure that the rectangular fields they provide that are utilized by St. Catharines' sports groups are incorporated into the assessment of supply/demand for future fields.
- #16. If rationalized through successful implementation of the proposed Sports Field Allocation Policy and ongoing monitoring of field utilization rates, explore opportunities to increase the number of fields through partnership agreements with local school boards and/or other sports field providers. If these agreements are not feasible, develop up to 25 additional unlit field equivalents, strategically co-located to the greatest degree possible. Local sports field users should be consulted prior to construction to facilitate standards of play required through the Ontario Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development model.

4.2 Ball Diamonds

Supply: There are 22 ball diamonds located in fourteen parks throughout St. Catharines, which are categorized into Type A, Type B, and Type C facilities. Type A diamonds are the City's premier ball fields (in terms of field size, surface, irrigation/drainage, frequency of maintenance, etc.) and are lit. Type B diamonds may have a similar level of quality and amenities though they are unlit. Type C diamonds tend to be smaller, may not have formalized infields, and are best suited for practices and informal neighbourhood use.

- Type A Diamonds: two baseball diamonds (one senior and one minor) and nine softball diamonds (all senior size).
- Type B Diamonds: eight baseball diamonds and three softball diamonds (all minor size).

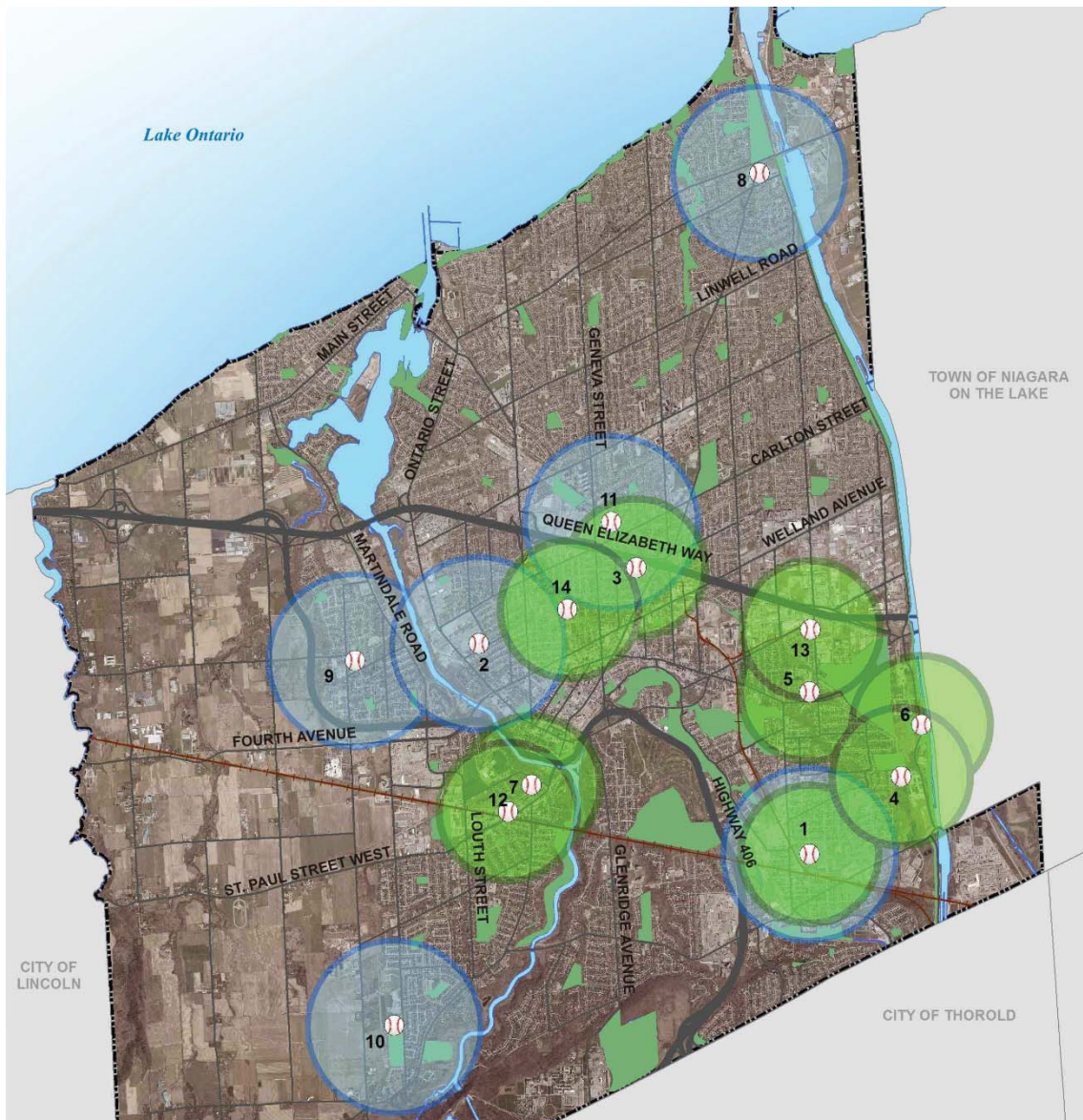
In recognition that a lit diamond can accommodate more use than an unlit grass field, due to extending play into the evening, an equivalency factor is applied to the field supply. Each lit diamond is assumed to provide the equivalent capacity of 1.5 unlit diamonds, respectively. With eleven lit diamonds, St. Catharines has an 'effective' supply of 27.5 unlit equivalent diamonds.

Also contributing to the local supply are four diamonds (one of which is lit) that are owned and maintained by the Grantham Optimist Club, which receive a high degree of use according to City Staff. It is also worth noting that the City provides 14 informal diamonds and backstops that are not permitted for organized use but contribute neighbourhood-level opportunities for play.



Service Level: St. Catharines supply of 27.5 unlit equivalent diamonds translates into a service level of one ball diamond per 5,115 population or 72 local ball participants.

Distribution: Ball diamonds are generally concentrated in the central and southeast areas of St. Catharines. With just three municipal diamonds and the Grantham Optimist Club located north of the Q.E.W., a number of parks in these (and other) areas contain backstops within grassy open areas of the park that can facilitate a degree of casual, spontaneous play (backstops have not been mapped as they are not permitted to organized users).

Map 6: Distribution of Ball Diamonds



Ball Diamonds

-  Type A Diamonds with a 1km Service Area
-  Type B Diamonds with an 800m Service Area

Hardball

Senior Type A

- 1. Community Park

Minor Type A

- 2. Alex Mackenzie Park

Minor Type B

- 1. Community Park (2)
- 3. Fitzgerald Park
- 4. John Dempsey Park (2)
- 5. Kernahan Park
- 6. Myles W. Pic Leeson park
- 7. Walkinshaw Park

Softball

Senior Type A

- 1. Community Park
- 8. Grantham Lions Park
- 9. Grapeview Park
- 10. Joseph McCaffery Park (4)
- 11. Lancaster Park (2)

Minor Type B

- 12. Cameron Park
- 13. Douglas Park
- 14. St. Patrick's Park



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Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

Consultation: A broad range of comments were received from the public and user groups regarding the provision of ball diamonds. Requests were received from the Community Launch Event for larger ball diamonds that are suitable for adult play, while focus groups with ball users identified the desire for more hardball diamonds. Several ball user groups also completed the User Group Questionnaire and again inferred the need for both youth and adult diamonds to support the growth of their organizations, as well as a request for additional multi-diamond complexes. Improvements to existing diamonds were also expressed such as infield resurfacing, replacement of aging facility components (e.g. fencing), and more supporting amenities such as parking and lighting. Furthermore, concerns were also raised regarding the current fee structure that groups feel has been a challenge for them having to pass on a greater share of costs to their membership.

The household survey identified that 44% of residents supported additional public investment in improving or developing new baseball or softball diamonds, which ranked relatively low as the sixteenth priority (out of twenty-one recreation facility types). This finding may suggest that although ball users identified areas of improvements with respect to the supply of ball diamonds, the general public feels that there are other recreation facilities that should be higher priority.

Participation: The household survey identified that 13% of residents participated in baseball over the past twelve months, ranking as the fourteenth most popular activity. Compared to 2006 when the last household survey of recreation was conducted for the previous master plan, ball participation has dropped as at that time 18% of households reported participation and it ranked as the eleventh most popular recreation activity.

Nationally and provincially, ball associations report that participation appears to be stabilizing after years of decline. In St. Catharines, ball participation has decreased with some major ball organizations reporting lower registration numbers than they had reported in 2006. Similar to provincial trends, local organizations may have hit their low point and have begun to rebound although not to the levels of ten years ago.

Registration data collected for the current master plan relies upon information provided by the Niagara Metros, Niagara Regional Men's and Co-ed Slo-Pitch, St. Catharines Cobras, St. Catharines Ladies Softball, Merritton Alliance Seniors Baseball and the St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association who collectively report approximately 1,980 registered players (a 27% rate of growth in the last three years after a general decline in the years before then). The registrations translate into a capture rate of 2% for children and youth, and 1.5% for adults.



Utilization:

Review of ball diamond utilization data during the peak period between June 15 and August 15 of the 2014 season reveals that Type A diamonds are used 37% of the time (weekday usage at these diamonds is 53% while weekend usage is a nominal 15%). Usage of Type B and C diamonds is less, with 35% of weekday hours rented and 23% of weekend times in use. In terms of overall trending, between 2010 and 2013 there were fewer hours booked system-wide driven by a 12% decline in lit diamond rentals. While inclement weather conditions and inclusion of shoulder months may contribute to the lower rate of utilization, the capacity available at Type 'A' diamonds suggests diamond quality is not necessarily impacting opportunity for play except for perhaps hardball (of which there is just one senior and one minor Type A diamond City-wide). As such, it appears there is capacity within the system to accommodate additional use.

Consistent with master planning standards across Ontario, a market-driven service level of one ball diamond per 100 registered players is applied. With an estimated 1,980 players in the City, this results in the need for 20 ball diamonds and thus a surplus of approximately 7.5 unlit equivalents at present time. With fairly low capture rates at present combined with modest population growth projected over the next decade, registration numbers and consequently ball diamond needs are expected to remain fairly flat.

	2014	2016	2021	2026
Forecasted Number of Registrants	1,980	1,988	2,004	2,004
Number of Ball Diamonds Required (based a provision target of 1 diamond per 100 registrants)	19.8	19.9	20.0	20.0
Surplus Ball Diamonds (based on a current supply of 27.5 fields)	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.5

Based upon the projections and surplus rental capacity, no additional ball diamonds are recommended for development within the master planning period. In fact, ball diamond deficits have grown since the 2008 Master Plan due to a substantial decrease in user registrations (noting that the upward registration trend in the last three years has not offset the losses over the past ten years). The City has already converted some ball diamonds and reduced its supply to a more sustainable level, as was recommend in the previous plan.

A strategy of no net additions to the supply is consistent with input received from ball organizations, however, these groups express a desire for better quality in the supply. Of particular mention was the lack of regulation size diamonds for older youth and adults, going back to the point that the City's three hardball diamonds may not be sufficient. The City should explore the conversion of at least one of its softball diamonds to a size that is conducive for hardball users.

With preceding pages projecting a deficit in rectangular sports fields, the City should also continue to explore conversion of lower quality, underutilized and/or informal ball diamonds to address other priority needs. Priorities beyond rectangular fields may also include off-leash areas, splash pads, and/or placing a greater focus on creating passive gathering spaces within neighbourhood parks that are responsive to the evolving demographics of nearby homes (particularly in well-established areas that have a growing number of older adults). As was articulated in the rectangular sports field discussion, the City should develop a Sports Field Allocation Policy that provides a rational and consistent process for determining the times that groups can access certain ball diamonds.

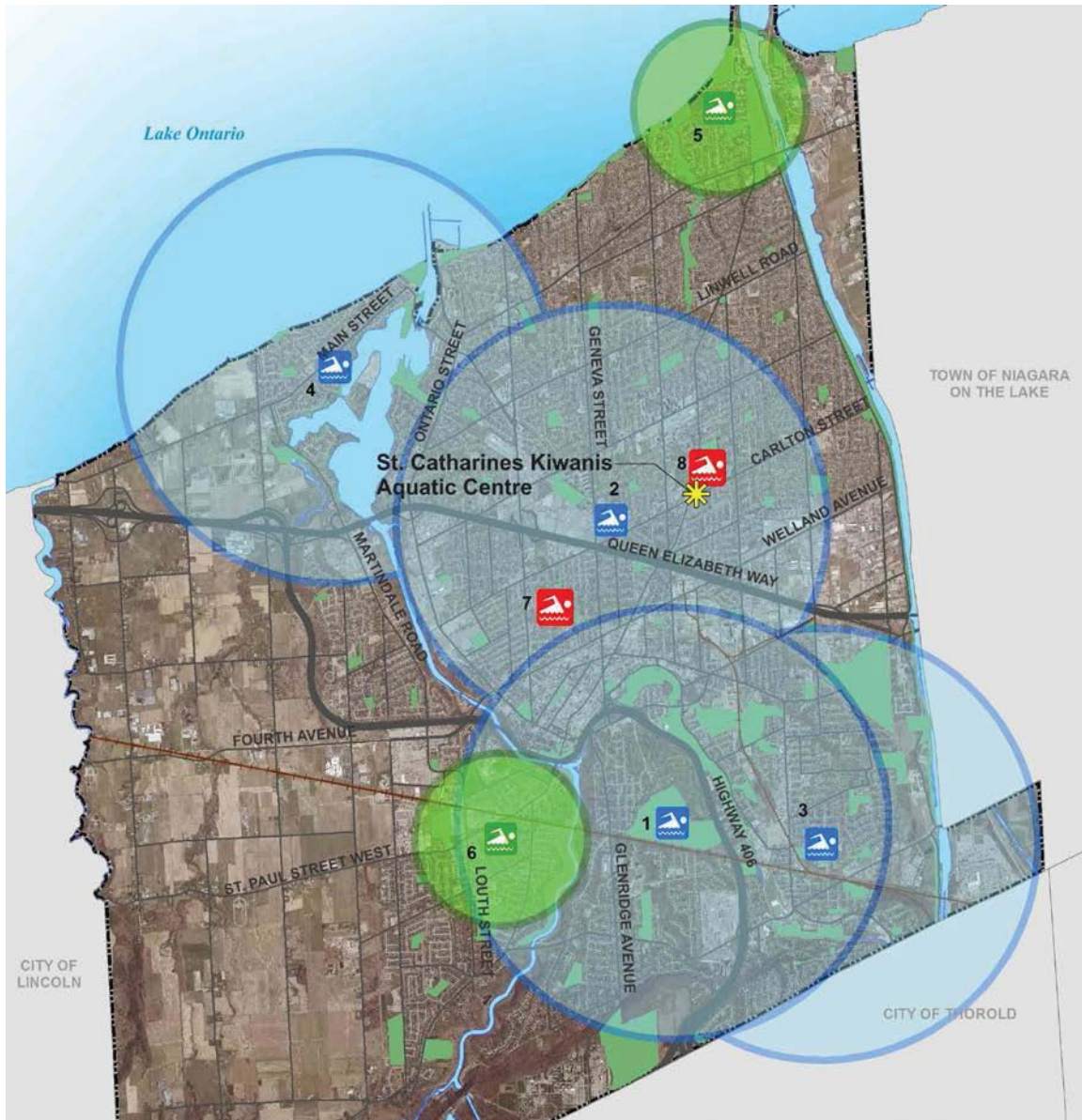
Recommendations

- #17. Redesign at least one softball diamond to a size and specification that is capable of accommodating hardball programming among older youth and adult players.
- #18. Explore opportunities to repurpose lower quality, underutilized or informal ball diamonds to other needed uses.

4.3 Splash Pads

- Supply:** The City operates two outdoor splash pads at Catharine Street Park and Lester B. Pearson Park. Both locations feature a broad range of sophisticated water features such as tipping buckets and interactive components. A splash pad is also located at the Walker Family Y.M.C.A.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' splash pads translates into one splash pad per 70,330 population or 6,260 children under the age of 9. While this level is lower than observed in other G.G.H. municipalities, the City has historically focused its outdoor aquatic services around outdoor pools to a greater degree than other communities and is thus the likely reason for a lower than average splash pad provision level.

Map 7: Distribution of Outdoor Pools and Splash Pads



Outdoor Aquatics

-  Rectangular Pools with a 2.5km Service Area
-  Small Stand-Alone Pools with an 800m Service Area
-  Splash Pads

Rectangular Pools*

1. Burgoyne Woods Park
2. Lancaster Park
3. Community Park / Lion Dunc Schooley Pool
4. Port Dalhousie Lions Park

Stand-Alone Small Pools

5. Arthur Street Park
6. Lincoln Park

Splash Pads

7. Catherine Street Park
8. Lester B. Pearson Park

* Rectangular pools contain a large pool and a small pool, with the exception of Community Park, which contains a large pool and a wading pool.



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Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

- Distribution:** The City's two splash pads are centrally located in St. Catharines. The size and design of these water play sites are largely reflective of a neighbourhood-level facility, leaving gaps outside of the City core. These gaps, however, are fully reconciled by the service areas of the outdoor pools.
- Consultation:** Persons attending the Community Input Event emphasized a desire for more splash pads, in addition to the provision of associated amenities such as change rooms and seating. Further, 58% of households sampled through the statistically representative survey supported additional spending to improve or develop new splash pads (whereas 19% were opposed), ranking as the ninth highest priority for recreation facility investment in St. Catharines.
- Participation:** The statistical survey recorded 27% of households making use of a splash pad during the past twelve months, ranking its popularity above all organized sports. Apart from some usage for summer camps, splash pads are not actively programmed by the City but instead are intended for drop-in, spontaneous usage.
- Utilization:** St. Catharines does not formally record utilization of its splash pads, though anecdotally the facilities were well used during the time of site visits conducted as part of the master planning process. As neighbourhood facilities, trends suggest that splash pads are generally well used during the summer as they provide residents with a free, quick, and easy way to cool off.

Most urban municipalities in the G.G.H. target the provision of splash pads at a minimum rate of one per 3,000 children under the age of 9 while also considering geographic distribution. On the basis of population to target market, the City would require a minimum supply of 4 splash pads over the master planning period based upon the projected age structure of the future population. However, as noted above, a number of municipalities are now providing splash pads on the basis of maximizing distribution so that each quadrant, ward or planning district has at least one such facility. With this comes a clear differentiation in quality/scale of facilities servicing a City-wide versus a neighbourhood or community level service area.

The splash pad provision strategy must be considered in tandem with the implementation strategy for the City's outdoor pool supply (which is discussed in subsequent pages). Experience in many municipalities reveals a preference to phase out outdoor pools and replace them with splash pad facilities for a myriad of reasons including:

- available capacity in their indoor pools to accommodate lessons and other swims;
- splash pads respond very well to growing demands for unstructured, spontaneous forms of recreation as users can simply drop-in whenever is convenient and make use of the facilities;



- with spray jets, water cannons, buckets, and other amenities, splash pads are more interactive for young children and persons with disabilities/special needs than traditional outdoor pool templates and are viewed as fun destinations often incorporating universal designs that also provide an important social element for both the users and their caregivers;
- most well designed splash pads have a similar (if not lower) cost of capital construction as a rectangular outdoor pool but the true savings are realized on the operational side with savings resulting from eliminating lifeguarding and program delivery costs, and reductions in certain utility costs and resources required to treat standing water; and
- public health and safety that reduces mosquito-borne disease (e.g. West Nile) with the elimination of standing water.

It is recommended that the City provide a minimum of one splash pad per ward. Doing so carries forward the City's historical philosophy of having well-distributed outdoor aquatics opportunities and allows the City to begin phasing out aging outdoor pools. This is deemed to be a financially sustainable approach and is discussed further in the subsequent outdoor pool assessment. On this basis, a total supply of up to 6 splash pads would be required (equating to the addition of 4 new splash pads), depending upon the number of outdoor pools that are retained. At the moment, the Lester B. Pearson Park splash pad serves the St. George's Ward while the Catherine Street Park splash pad services the St. Patrick's Ward, albeit for the latter it is recognized that Twelve Mile Creek poses a natural transportation barrier for those residing west of that waterway (although these residents would have some proximity to an outdoor aquatics facility in Port Dalhousie).

The size and scale of proposed splash pads is contingent upon a number of factors including (but not limited to):

- Whether the City wishes to maintain a neighbourhood serving scale consistent with its existing template at Lester B. Pearson and Catherine Street Parks.
- Whether the City wishes to offer a thematic or child-oriented play experience, or a dual-purpose facility dictated by urban design (e.g. a fountain-based facility within a civic node).
- Whether instead, the City wishes to construct a larger, community or City serving facility that can provide a greater number of interactive waterplay elements than offered at its existing splash pads.
- The type of park (e.g. Neighbourhood, District, or City-wide) that the facility will be located in, along with whether such a location will have sufficient on or off-street parking suitable for the anticipated level of the splash pad.

Another point of consideration is the type of mechanical and/or filtration system that will be installed as this will have capital and ongoing operating cost implications. The City's existing splash pads meter and directly discharge water into the storm sewer, which is the most economical approach as the costs borne are strictly relegated to water consumption. Unlike a recirculating water system, there are no water treatment costs though there is an environmental impact associated with the volume of water that is used and discharged over the course

of the season. While there is a capital cost element with the direct discharge system, it is not usually as significant as with the sophisticated mechanical systems that treat and recirculate the water. Recirculating systems have a greater operating cost as the equipment and treatment processes are similar to those used for indoor pools, albeit on a smaller scale, which adds costs related to water treatment and staff time. The decision as to which system to employ will need to be weighted upon financial and environmental objectives of the municipality, though some municipalities have sought balance in these objectives by designing their meter and discharge systems in a manner that reuses 'grey water' for municipal operations (e.g. irrigation).

Recommendation

- #19. In tandem with the Master Plan's outdoor pool implementation strategy, splash pads should be distributed in a manner that ensures each of the six municipal wards have reasonable geographic access to a splash pad or continue to have access to an outdoor pool. The preferred location of future splash pads is within District or large Neighbourhood level parks.
- #20. Undertake usage and monitoring program at the two existing splash pads to collect information that can be used to rationalize the level of future investment relative to the costs associated with construction and operation of these facilities.

4.4 Outdoor Pools

Supply: The City operates ten outdoor pool tanks at six locations in St. Catharines. This supply consists of four large rectangular pools, each of which is supported by a smaller pool, while two additional small outdoor pools are also available at parks as stand-alone templates.

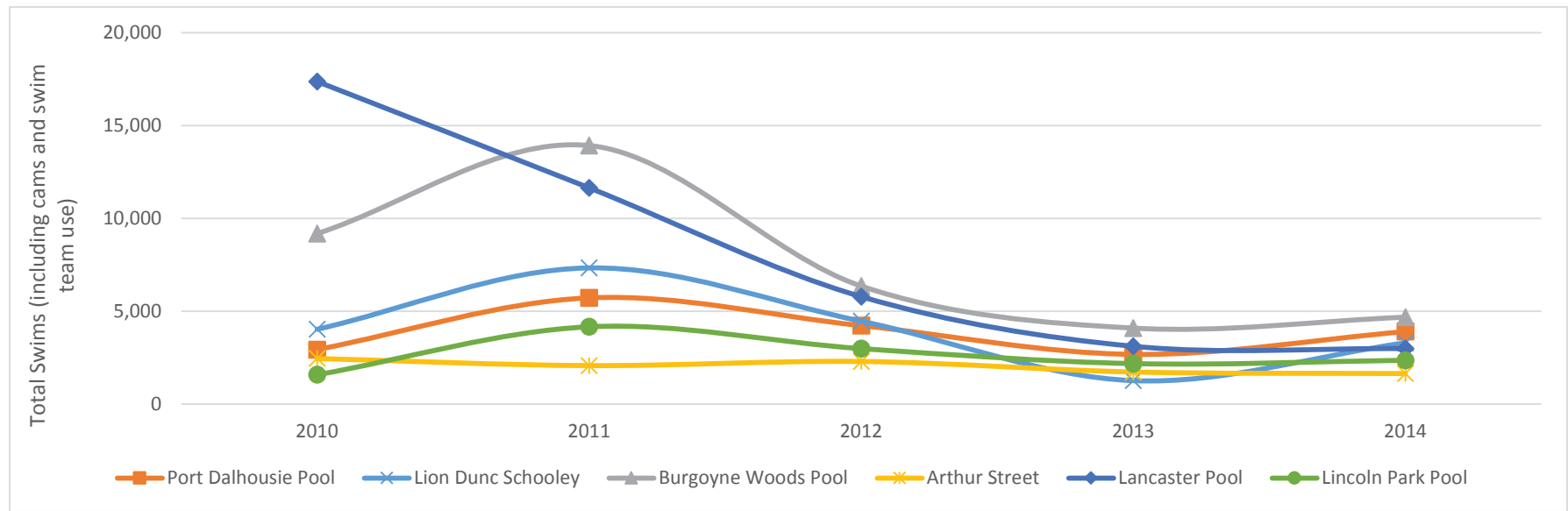
- Rectangular Pools – provided at Burgoyne Woods, Community Park (Lion Dunc Schooley Pool), Lancaster Park, and Port Dalhousie Lions Park
- Small Pools – provided at Arthur Street Park (stand-alone), Burgoyne Woods , Lancaster Park, Lincoln Park (stand-alone) and Port Dalhousie Lions Park
- Wading Pool – provided at Community Park (in tandem with a rectangular pool)

Service Level: The supply of outdoor pool tanks translates into a supply of one outdoor pool per 14,066 population. This is an above average level of service compared to other municipalities, largely because many have transitioned away from outdoor pools towards splash pads.



- Distribution:** Map 7 applies a 2.5 kilometre service area around each outdoor rectangular pool and a 1 kilometre radius around the stand-alone small pools, thereby achieving strong coverage throughout the City.
- Consultation:** Little interest was expressed for outdoor pools through in-person consultations with the general community, however some participants highlighted that the distribution of certain pools is conducive to serving some lower income households who may otherwise be unable to travel beyond walking distances to access indoor or outdoor swimming opportunities. The household survey also yielded some insights with 47% of the sample supporting additional investments in outdoor pools and 24% opposed to such spending, making it the twelfth most popular facility choice and suggesting that the provision of outdoor pools may be a lower priority compared to other recreation facilities. Interest, as expressed through the consultation process, was far greater for additional splash pads as is discussed in preceding pages.
- Participation:** Outdoor pools were once a key part of Ontario's community fabric, with many municipalities constructing them in the 1960s and 1970s. With greater affordability and popularity of backyard pools, usage of the typical rectangular outdoor pool has diminished in many parts of the province. While 53% of the household survey sample reported swimming during the past twelve months, making it the second most popular activity, this number does not differentiate between indoor and outdoor swims nor does it distinguish between swims in City pools, private facilities, backyard pools or beaches.
- Utilization:** Data collected by the City reveals that swimming at its outdoor pools has declined significantly over the past three years, as shown in Figure 4. In 2014, St. Catharines' outdoor pools drew nearly 19,000 public swims (including day camps and swim rentals), which is down 58% (or 26,000 swims) from 2011. Based upon this, it can be inferred that the City is operating more outdoor pools than is required by the community and is confirmed by comparisons with many other communities who do not provide the level of service as in St. Catharines.

Figure 4: Total Number of Swims at City of St. Catharines Outdoor Pools, 2010-2014



Note: total swims include drop-in recreational swims, camp swims, and swim team usage

Source: City of St. Catharines, 2014

Trends in municipal service delivery suggest that municipalities are moving away from providing outdoor pools altogether due to the high operating cost relative to the short three month usage season (usually June to August), and the ability to offer lessons and other programming within their indoor pools. Municipalities who have chosen to provide new outdoor pools or replace their aging pools have usually done so on the basis of providing a differentiated experience oriented to fun through waterpark designs, sport tourism or rentals, or as part of overarching municipal economic development strategies.

Demand and usage for the City’s ten outdoor pools appears to be waning for a variety of reasons:

- None of the facilities are heated, which considerably lowers their appeal and shortens the operating season. St. Catharines’ outdoor pools are only open two months of the year from the last week of June until Labour Day weekend, with one facility opening on weekends during the month of June.
- From an aquatics programming and rental perspective, there is significant redundancy in the local pool supply particularly when considering the geographic proximity of indoor and outdoor pools in relation to each other. When the majority of the City’s



outdoor pools were originally constructed over forty years ago, there were few indoor pools in St. Catharines resulting in outdoor pools being the focus of City aquatics provision for many years. Now, the presence of the S.K.A.C. and the Y.M.C.A. indoor pool easily address the needs of the local aquatics market for recreation swims and learn-to-swim programs. Most notably, the S.K.A.C. has heavily impacted the nearby Lancaster Park outdoor pool where the number of public swims has decreased by 84% (14,400 fewer swims) since 2010.

- St. Catharines' outdoor pools do not have interactive or fun elements which lessens the appeal to young children and family users. Competition from splash pads or the indoor pools, which offer such interactive waterplay features, has reduced recreational use of the outdoor pools.
- The prevalence of backyard pools has grown considerably in Ontario, not only in terms of the traditional in-ground and above-ground pools but also in terms of very affordable inflatable pools. This has reduced recreational swim demand at municipal pools while learn-to-swim opportunities that would continue to be sought by backyard pool users are now accommodated within indoor pools operated by the City, the Y.M.C.A., Brock University and to a lesser extent Ridley College.
- St. Catharines' outdoor pools and change room buildings are not accessible to persons with disabilities, thereby limiting usage by these individuals.

In addition to diminishing usage of the outdoor pools and the considerable challenge to facilitating use by persons with disabilities, there are a number of mechanical and structural limitations within St. Catharines' outdoor pools. In fact, most the City's outdoor pools rely upon aging mechanical systems that are not as effective and efficient as current systems. The condition of a number of pools and surrounding concrete decks is deteriorating due to their age, as are many of the change room structures supporting the pools.

Compounding the financial reinvestment costs of bringing the outdoor pools back up to a modern standard is the fact that revenue received through the pools has eroded along with the usage. Further, the City's six outdoor aquatic facilities required an operating subsidy of over \$500,000 in 2014 (though this has come down by nearly \$100,000 since 2011) which are over and above the noted capital reinvestment requirements.

Although the City's original strategy of providing a well distributed supply of outdoor pools across St. Catharines has worked very well from a historic standpoint, diminishing community usage resulting from functional limitations and competition from other facilities give ample reason to reconsider the required outdoor pool supply, particularly given the multi-million dollar capital reinvestment cost associated with structural and mechanical remediation. In positioning St. Catharines to sustainably manage its outdoor pool supply, a new course of action must be considered.

The intrinsic value of St. Catharines outdoor pools are recognized, though such value is much more apparent for some pools rather than others particularly in the wake of such a dramatic reduction in use. Some outdoor pools are located in neighbourhoods characterized by a considerable number of ‘vulnerable’ populations (e.g. low income, single parents, at-risk youth, etc.) and are critical pieces of the ‘social’ infrastructure. For this reason, it is recommended that the City consolidate the number of outdoor pools in tandem with the splash pad implementation articulated in the preceding pages. This strategy involves ensuring that there is at least one splash pad or outdoor pool per ward, with a view towards phasing out aging pool facilities. Essentially, the goal is to convert the historical provision of outdoor pools by geography to a similar distribution strategy for splash pads.

In support of a renewed outdoor aquatics provision strategy, one to two outdoor pools should be retained while splash pads would replace decommissioned outdoor pools in their respective wards. Table 2 articulates the high level merits and limitations associated with each outdoor pool location though the City will have to undertake subsequent analyses as part of a comprehensive outdoor pool strategy that looks at which pool(s) to retain. One notable criteria is based upon the social vulnerability of the surrounding population within the pool’s reasonable catchment area. As identified in Section 2.2 of the Master Plan, the Region of Niagara mapped out marginalized populations based upon quintiles associated with the ‘Material Deprivation’ dimension of the Ontario Marginalization Index. The criteria infers that there may be a stronger basis of retention in areas of greater marginalization since a number of residents in those communities may not have the ability to readily travel longer distances as compared to residents who have low levels of marginalization (e.g. lone parent households, persons with disabilities, those unable to afford regular trips using taxis or transit, etc.).

Table 2: Outdoor Pool Considerations

Location	Major Considerations
Arthur Street Park	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None rationalized at this time. <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1). • Located in proximity to other outdoor aquatic opportunities including the beach. • Limited programming options due to size/design of pool • Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a sizeable concentration of backyard pools. • Small size and topographical constraints of the park, along with no onsite parking. • Public swims have decreased by 800 (-33%) since 2010 (excluding camps and rentals). • Capital reinvestment costs.



Location	Major Considerations
Burgoyne Woods	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large site with ability to expand footprint and already contains onsite parking. • Located in a destination park with multi-use components. • Hosted the greatest number of public swims (3,350) of all outdoor pools in 2014 (excluding camps and rentals). <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1). • Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a sizeable concentration of backyard pools. • Presently no sanitary servicing at this location which could add significant infrastructure costs. • Had the second highest rate of attrition with over 5,800 fewer public swims (-64%) between 2010 and 2014. • Capital reinvestment costs.
Community Park (Lion Dunc Schooley Pool)	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in an area that has a high proportion of marginalized residents who may not otherwise be able to access aquatic programming (refer to Map 1). • Located in a destination park with multi-use components. • Hosted the second greatest number of public swims (3,300) of all outdoor pools in 2014 (excluding camps and rentals). <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public swims have decreased by 730 (-18%) since 2010 (excluding camps and rentals). • Capital reinvestment costs.
Lancaster Park	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in a destination park with multi-use components. • Centralized location with strong access to the Q.E.W. and multiple transit routes. <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in close proximity to S.K.A.C. and Y.M.C.A. pools, resulting in service overlap and competition with these pools. • Addition of another sports field could improve tournament opportunities and league play. • Had the greatest attrition with over 14,400 fewer public swims (-83%) between 2010 and 2014. • Capital reinvestment costs.

Location	Major Considerations
Lincoln Park	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in an area that has a high proportion of marginalized residents who may not otherwise be able to access aquatic programming (refer to Map 1). <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small size of park limits expansion abilities. • No onsite parking. • Limited programming options due to size/design of pool • Capital reinvestment costs.
Port Dalhousie Lions Park	<p>Possible Reasons to Retain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None rationalized at this time. <p>Possible Reasons to Decommission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in an area that has a lower proportion of marginalized residents (refer to Map 1). • Located in proximity to other outdoor aquatic opportunities including the beach. • Aerial scans of the immediate area shows a notable concentration of backyard pools • Public swims have decreased by 1,150 (-40%) since 2011 though the City has offset this through directing a greater share of swim team rentals. • Capital reinvestment costs

In reinvesting in an outdoor pool, the City should ensure that functional design limitations are eliminated to the greatest extent possible. At a minimum, a pool and its supporting structure should comply with AODA standards to provide barrier-free access and service. The pool should ideally be attractive and comfortable to facilitate use by the full spectrum of ages and abilities through the provision of heated water, interactive waterplay elements, viewing areas, etc. A pool should also be supported by onsite parking and is preferably located in proximity to major transit routes and arterial road corridors to enable ease of access. A redevelopment of this magnitude should be supported by a comprehensive business plan that identifies at a minimum, target market to be served (including whether a pool is intended to function as a regional destination), the optimal design and placement within the park (through an architectural/engineering analysis), the short and long-term capital costs of reinvestment, and the estimated operating costs using a Zero Based Budgeting approach (that should account for heating and/or additional lifeguarding costs among other costs).



With respect to decommissioned outdoor pools, splash pads are recommended to take their place so that each City ward has at least one splash pad unless otherwise served by an outdoor pool (noting that a maximum of two outdoor pools should be retained, and that a splash pad may be provided in tandem with a retained pool). While it may make sense to provide splash pads at decommissioned pool sites themselves, there may be merit in relocating splash pads to an alternative location within the City ward in question. For example, instead of constructing a splash pad at Port Dalhousie Lions Park, it may be better to provide a splash pad at a park that already contains complementary child-focused features. Further study would need to be undertaken to confirm the ability of another park to accommodate the added intensity of use and the space requirements associated with a splash pad (e.g. parking, washrooms, etc.) and Port Dalhousie Lions Park would need to be redesigned.

Again, it is important to emphasize that the rationale for shifting the focus of outdoor aquatics services to splash pads from outdoor pools is largely based on input provided through the Master Plan's initial consultations and the fact that usage of the pools has eroded considerably over the past decade. This RFPMP finds that the degree of investment required to bring the pools up to code and modern expectations is not a priority in terms of meeting community recreational needs since the City's investment in the S.K.A.C. created a premier aquatics destination, while investing in splash pads would be a cost-effective way of meeting a strongly stated community need.

Actual capital costs associated with improving any retained outdoor pool(s) would need to be established through architectural and/or engineering studies as there is great variability depending upon the scope of work to be undertaken (not only for the pool but any associated buildings). Experience across the province suggests that typical outdoor pool refurbishments (to maintain a similar level of service) can be upwards of \$1 million while complete pool and building redesigns can range from \$1.5 million to \$3.5+ million depending upon size, scale, number of pool tanks or waterplay features, inclusion/scale of changerooms, etc. (some examples of municipalities recently constructing or renewing outdoor pools in recent years include Ajax, Mississauga, London, Kingston and Strathroy). Any multi-million dollar investment into one or two outdoor pools may be rationalized on the basis that it is a conscious and strategic decision to create a destination pool(s) as a means to offer residents an enhanced level of service (and thus over and above what is considered a 'need') and/or furthering economic development objectives.

Recommendations

- #21. Develop criteria to be used to establish the feasibility of operating outdoor pools in certain locations by factoring remediation costs related to building code and accessibility standards, heating and projected operating costs.

- #22. In tandem with the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, initiate a business plan associated with the rejuvenation of outdoor rectangular pools selected for retention on the basis that they are to provide a more inclusive leisure and destination-themed experience.
- #23. Subject to the results of the recommended capital and operating budget exercises and the results of the performance analysis, leverage current outdoor pool sites and identify locations for splash pads to replace aging and non-compliant assets.

4.5 Tennis Courts

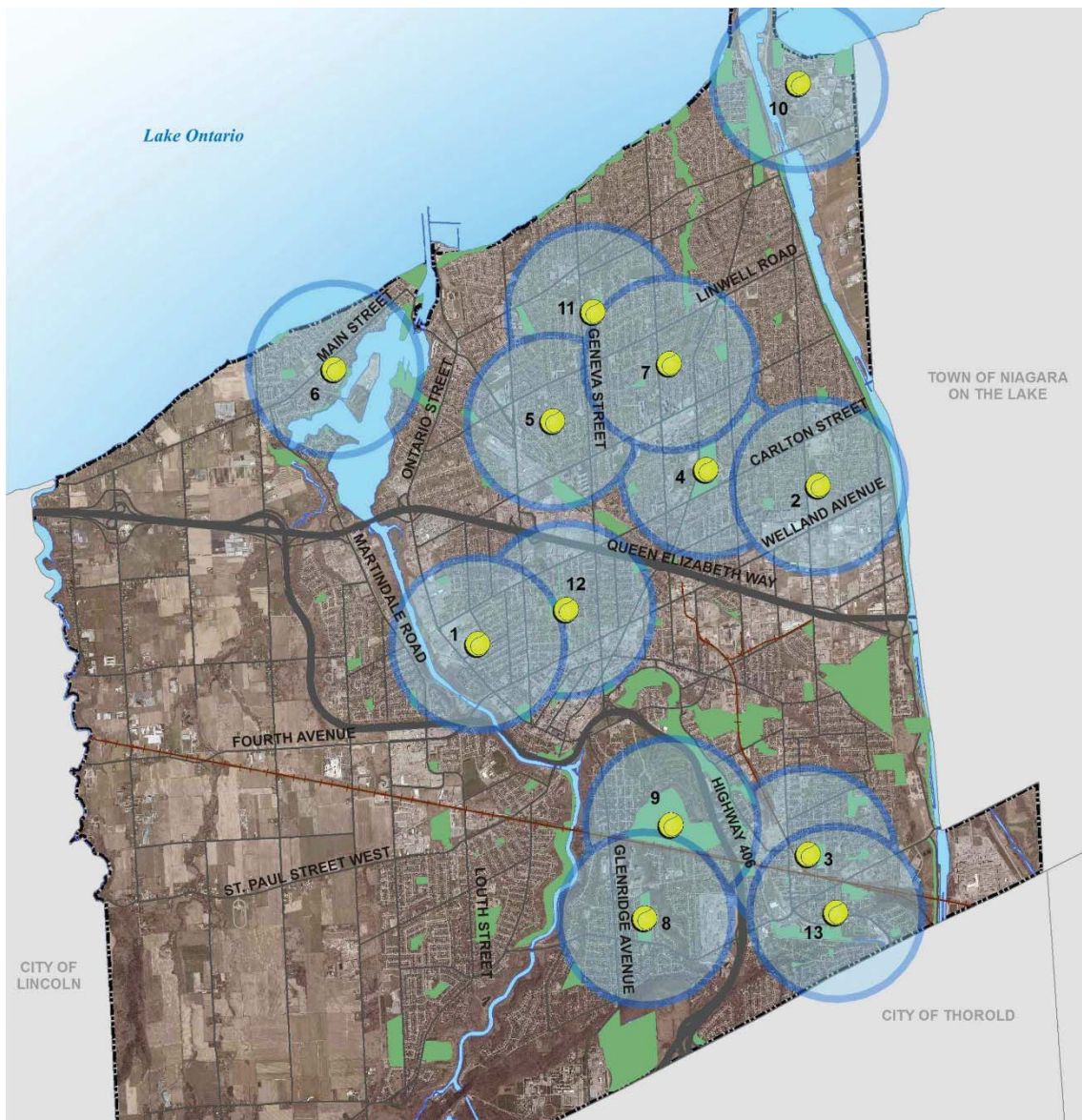
Supply: St Catharines provides 28 tennis courts located in thirteen municipal parks, 18 of which are lit and 10 are unlit. All of the City's tennis courts are provided in pods of two with the exception of Community Park and Realty Park, both of which are three court templates. The Realty Park courts are available only on a membership basis for interested members of the public, of which annual dues are remitted directly to the City. All other courts are publically-accessible courts oriented to free, casual play.

Of note, the supply does not include the tennis courts at Bogart Park or West Park. Nets are no longer installed at the two tennis courts at Bogart Park (posts and line markings remain) as they are heavily used for handball. Nets are no longer installed at the four tennis courts at West Park because of issues with vandalism; one of these courts is now used for ball hockey. The supply also does not include non-municipal courts such as those at Brock University, the BallHockey.com Athletic Centre, or other courts located on private or institutional lands.

Service Level: St Catharines' supply translates into a service level of one tennis court per 5,025 population, which is generally consistent with other similarly-sized communities.

Distribution: Application of a one-kilometre service area suggests that the supply of tennis courts are generally well distributed throughout St. Catharines, though there some gap areas in the southwest corner of the City as well as the area immediately south of Queen Elizabeth Way, east of Geneva Street.

Map 8: Distribution of Tennis Courts



Tennis Courts

 Tennis Courts with a 1km Service Area

Lit Tennis Courts

- 1. Alex McKenzie Park (2)
 - 2. Berkley Park (2)
 - 3. Community Park (3)
 - 4. Lester B. Pearson Park (2)
 - 5. Linlake Park (2)
 - 6. Port Dalhousie Lions Park (2)
 - 7. Realty Park (3)*
 - 8. Woodgate Park (2)
- * Membership required for access

Unlit Tennis Courts

- 9. Burgoyne Woods Park (2)
- 10. Eastport Park (2)
- 11. Guy Road Park (2)
- 12. St. Patrick's Park (2)
- 13. Valleyview Park (2)



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Data provided by the City of St. Catharines.
Map prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

- Consultation:** Through the community consultations, a notable emphasis was received with respect to a desire for the Realty Park courts to be managed by a non-profit community tennis club, an entity that presently does not exist in St. Catharines but one that is being contemplated by interested individuals with support of the Ontario Tennis Association. Individuals interested in forming a club participated in the Community Input Event, provided email submissions, and completed a stakeholder survey for consideration. The household survey participants did not place a high priority on further investments in the tennis court supply, with the 45% level of support ranking as the fifteen most important priority out of twenty-one recreation facility types.
- Participation:** The household survey found that over the past twelve months, 12% of residents participated in tennis. Realty Park membership data reveals that adults represent three-quarters (75%) of all memberships sold with other membership types including Family (14%), Youth (10%), and Child (2%). It is noted that adults tend to make up the largest users of membership-based courts and thus this age breakdown is not necessarily reflective of the age profile of persons using the City's free courts.
- Utilization:** As is common in other communities, the City does not track casual, spontaneous use of its free tennis courts. Membership data provided by the City reveals that the 52 memberships sold in 2014 at Realty Park represents a decline of 26% over the past four years, however, it is worth noting that Realty Park memberships are unlike most community tennis clubs as there is no structured programming or leagues included in the dues – instead, it is up to members themselves to organize play with others as the dues simply permit access to the courts (which receive a greater level of investment and maintenance than the City's free courts).

The City has maintained its tennis court supply in fairly close alignment with a one court per 5,000 population service level. Carrying this level of service forward throughout the master planning period suggests that the existing supply of tennis courts is largely sufficient based upon a population metric (though not necessarily from a geographic distribution standpoint).



	2015	2016	2021	2026
Forecasted Population	140,660	141,100	142,500	142,800
Number of Tennis Courts Required (based a provision target of 1 tennis courts per 5,000 population)	28	28	28.5	28.5
Tennis Court Deficit (based on a current supply of 28 tennis courts)	0	0	0.5	0.5

The City’s focus with respect to tennis courts, therefore, should not be based upon new court development (unless done so on the basis of geographic distribution, such as west of Twelve Mile Creek). Instead, it should be largely to facilitate ways in which to grow the sport particularly with the decline in members at Realty Park. Research conducted across the province suggests that organized tennis, largely through tennis clubs, is the most effective way to increase participation levels in the sport. On this basis, the City should engage individuals interested in forming a non-profit community tennis club for their potential interest in leasing and/or managing the Realty Park courts.

Allowing a community tennis club to utilize these courts benefits the City in that it does not have to devote resources to marketing or managing opportunities for organized play. A partnering club would be able to organize, administer and deliver programming highly sought after by most membership-based players such as leagues, round-robins, tournaments, skill development clinics, etc. With a declining and relatively low membership at present, the City’s risk to transfer membership-based tennis opportunities to a third party is fairly small in comparison to the opportunity for club’s ability to grow the number of persons using the Realty Park courts.

The City has been approached by representatives of the Ontario Tennis Association (the sanctioning body for community tennis clubs) who have shown an interest in forming a local tennis club which is a model that is common across Ontario. Furthermore, as non-profits many community clubs have been able to leverage external funding (e.g. Trillium grants) to reinvest into their courts and often partner with their host municipalities to direct proceeds from memberships and fundraising into the court improvements as well. In exchange, these clubs seek dedicated times for their members at municipal courts, either exclusively year round or at specific times of the day thereby restricting access to the general public (although this is already the case at Realty Park). By empowering the community to deliver quality tennis programming, the City will be able to shift the existing resources it devotes to maintaining its own membership-based system to other priority areas.

Additional consultations will be required with those interested in forming a community club, as well as with the current 52 members of the City-administered group in implementing this strategy. Important to discuss will be financial and usage agreement envisioned for a club's access to the courts, whether additional front-end investments are required (and who will fund them), roles and responsibilities regarding court maintenance or reserve fund contributions, and whether a transition period is required for City members to receive allocated times in conjunction with community tennis club members (though it is emphasized that the City should absolve itself from administering its own membership-based system shortly after a non-profit club is formed). It is noted that there are a couple limitations with Realty Park for a community club, notably the lack of a clubhouse structure which is often sought for socialization, and the lack of a fourth court which is often crucial for the long-term sustainability of a club as it allows for small tournaments with a round robin format that is deemed to be essential for establishing regular participation. These and other limitations could potentially be reconciled through subsequent funding agreements with a club through grant applications, facility improvement surcharges, fundraising, etc.

Recommendation

- #24. Engage persons and organizations interested in forming a community tennis club, along with existing Realty Park members, to discuss how best to transition responsibilities to a qualified community provider that delivers organized tennis programming out of Realty Park on a non-profit basis.
- #25. Explore opportunities to construct tennis courts in strategic gap areas, such as in the St. Andrew's Ward and the northern Merritton Ward, while ensuring existing tennis courts are maintained to facilitate an acceptable quality of play (see Recommendation #27).

4.6 Multi-Use Courts

Supply:

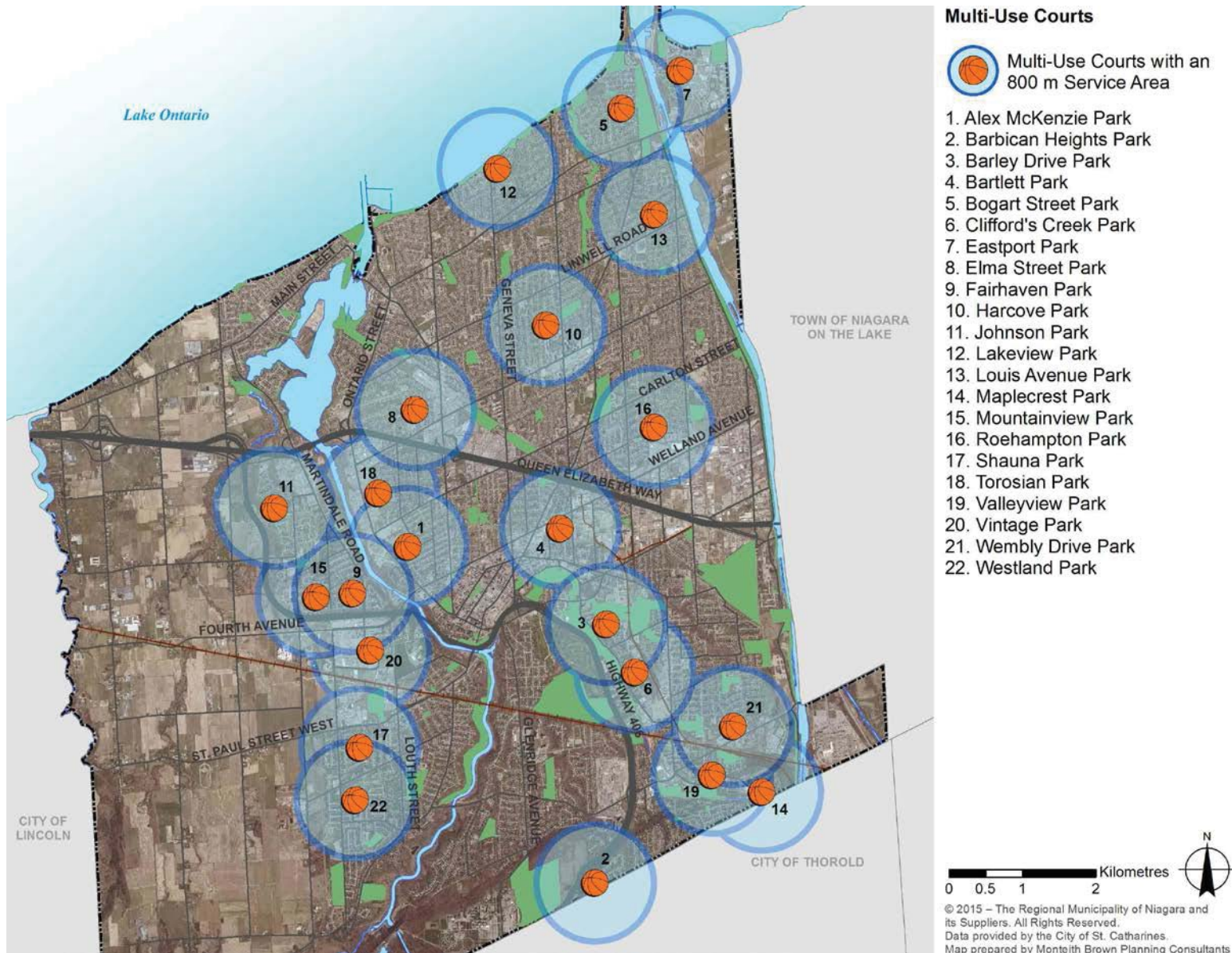
The City maintains 22 full size multi-use courts at municipal parks, all of which allow for full court basketball play, with the exception of Barley Drive Park and Westland Park that only have one hoop along with the multi-use pad at Harcove Park where the hoops have been removed (although the painted surface markings remain).

Of note, tennis courts were formerly provided at Bogart Street Park. While the posts and line markings remain (along with a basketball hoop), the courts are presently used for handball (with programs delivered by a community group), and thus these courts are actually more oriented as 'multi-use' courts that can facilitate a range of activities and are thus included in the multi-use court supply. The supply excludes basketball courts located on school sites though it is recognized that these courts contribute to meeting self-directed opportunities for play.



- Service Level:** The City provides one multi-use court per 6,400 population or 685 youth between the ages of 9 and 18. The youth service level is consistent with the range targeted across the province (one court per 700 to 800 youth), though many municipalities also target balanced geographic distribution of such facilities since they are frequented by children and youth who rely on active forms of transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, etc.).
- Distribution:** Application of an 800 metre service area (generally representing a 10 minute walk) around each municipal multi-use court shows generally satisfactory distribution though there are some overlapping coverage on the west side of Twelve Mile Creek, as well as in the southeast corner in the area south of Queenston Street and east of Glenridge Avenue. Some notable gap areas are also observed in Port Dalhousie and the area south of the CN Railway and east of Twelve Mile Creek, although these and other gaps may be served by schools.
- Consultation:** The household survey identified that 43% of residents supported public investment in improving or developing new basketball courts, ranking seventeenth among facility types, suggesting that there are other higher priority facilities to consider (though this must be considered in light of a higher than average age of respondent who may not consider courts a priority compared to a youth).
- Participation:** The household survey recorded 11% of its sample as having played basketball (indoors and outdoors) over the past twelve months. Over the past decade, research has shown a healthy participation in basketball particularly among male youths due to its regional appeal (including a large Toronto Raptors fan base). The popularity of basketball is also driven by low barriers to participation; compared to other organized sports such as hockey, basketball is easy to learn, safe and inexpensive to play, and can be played with one person or in small groups.
- Utilization:** Due to its drop-in, self-directed format of multi-use courts, it is difficult to quantify the degree to which local basketball courts are used though the site visits conducted as part of the master planning process anecdotally revealed use of these facilities for basketball, ball hockey or general 'hang out' space largely among teens.

Map 9: Distribution of Multi-Use Courts





Similar to other recreation facilities that are targeted to specific age groups, an age-specific provision level target is used. St. Catharines' multi-use courts are presently provided at one per 685 youth which is a strong level of service that is due in part to the City's proactive emphasis distributing these facilities across the City. Further, the level of service is consistent with the one court per 700 youth standard established in the 2008 Recreation Facility Master Plan, a level of service that is appropriate to carry forward for the current master planning period.

Doing so will require two new multi-use courts to be developed around the year 2026. In deciding where to locate these future courts, it is recommended that the City evaluate potential park sites in the identified gap areas to provide at least one new multi-use court. Key areas that should be considered are gap areas with a higher proportion of youth or gap areas that lack existing school courts. Consideration should also be given to new growth areas, as well as co-locating new multi-use courts with existing or proposed tennis courts given the similarities in facility footprint, construction methods, and uses. New multi-use courts should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of activities, but should utilize a full size basketball court template with two basketball nets, at a minimum.

	2015	2016	2021	2026
Forecasted Youth Population (ages 9 to 18)	15,112	14,874	14,852	15,956
Number of Multi-Use Courts Required (based a provision target of 1 multi-use court per 700 youth)	21.5	21	21	23
Deficit Multi-Use Courts (based on a current supply of 21 multi-use courts)	0.5	0	0	2

Recommendations

- #26. Construct 2 new multi-use courts, located in a manner that reconciles existing service gaps and/or where required to service new areas of residential development. Multi-use courts should be flexibly designed to accommodate a range of hard surface court activities, but should utilize a full size basketball court template with two basketball nets, at a minimum, as per the City's current design specification.

#27. Create a capital renewal strategy for the City's hard surface courts (consisting of basketball and tennis courts) that defines the cost of replacing aging facilities and the proposed timeframe for doing so, while also exploring ways in which to fund these reinvestments potentially through partnerships, fundraising, and other means.

4.7 Skateboard Parks

- Supply:** St. Catharines provides one large concrete skateboard park at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre. Beyond skateboarding, this facility is used by BMX cyclists, children on scooters, and inline skaters which demonstrates its broad appeal to a range of children, youth and younger adults. Complementing St. Catharines' skatepark is SUD Skates, a private indoor skatepark located approximately 2 kilometres from the Seymour-Hannah Sports & Entertainment Centre.
- Service Level:** The City's supply of skateparks represents a service level of one skatepark per 140,660 population or 15,112 youth. This service level for youth is low compared to other similar communities, although the provision of skateparks is often dependent on a number of factors such as the demographic make-up of each community and the distribution of youth.
- Distribution:** The City's skatepark is located in the southwest area of St. Catharines, while the privately-operated SUD Skates is located a short distance away. While the Seymour Hannah skateboard park generally serves youth in the immediate area (as the majority of users come from within walking distance of their home or school), its design accommodates a degree of City-wide demand as it is a high quality destination facility known by the local skateboarding community, and it is located along transit routes.
- Consultation:** Consultation with the public revealed relatively modest levels of demand for skateboard parks. However, the household survey's 37% level of support for investments in these facilities represents an increase in support compared to the survey undertaken in 2006 where 28% supported new skateboard parks. This may be a result of community perception seeing the benefits of such facilities in providing positive opportunities for youth, and the negative stigma associated with skateparks diminishing. That being said, 33% of the current household survey sample opposed additional spending on skateboard parks generally splitting the support (30% were indifferent on spending for this facility type).
- Participation:** The household survey identified that 7% of residents participated in skateboarding in the past twelve months, which ranked as the second least popular activity out of 21 facility types. This may indicate that skateboarding is not a very



popular past time in St. Catharines though it may also be a result of a higher than average age of persons that responded to the household survey.

Utilization: As skateboarding and similar pursuits are informal, self-directed activities, the City does not formally track utilization of the skatepark. Anecdotal observations, however, suggest a good degree of use occurs at the skateboard park during the summer months.

Once viewed as a fad in pastime leisure, skateboarding has demonstrated sustained longevity. This is driven by several factors, including youths' desire for more informal activities that can be structured around their schedules. The previous Master Plan recommended a provision target of one skatepark per 7,500 youth, which is lower compared to other communities that utilize a standard of one skatepark per 5,000 residents. Given that the consultation process did not reveal any latent demand for this type of facility, it is recommended that the City continue to use the target of one skatepark per 7,500 youth for this Master Plan.

	2015	2016	2021	2026
Forecasted Youth Population (ages 9 to 18)	15,112	14,874	14,852	15,956
Number of Skateboard Parks Required (based a provision target of 1 skateboard park per 7,500 youth)	2	2	2	2
Deficit of Skateboard Parks (based on a current supply of 1 skateboard park)	1	1	1	1

Although the projected number of youth is expected to grow into the future, and so thus the need for skateparks, the fact that the Seymour Hannah skateboard park was designed to a larger than typical specification (it is approximately 17,000 square feet) means that this facility is anticipated to serve City-wide needs for the foreseeable future. The preferred strategy moving forward is to develop one additional skateboard park that is smaller in size than the Seymour Hannah skatepark template but still provides an intermediate level (or above) experience (e.g. it may contain a concrete or asphalt pad with modular components, it could be a smaller-scale concrete bowl template, or it could be a 'plaza style' skatepark that replicates an urban environment). The design of this skateboard park should be formed in consultation with local youth and the skateboard, BMX and inline skating community. Its location should consider a number of factors including a strong degree of visibility from the street, proximity to an area with a high concentration of youth, along active

transportation or public transportation routes, co-location with other appropriate recreation facilities (community centre sites with a full time staff presence can also lend additional supervision capabilities) or amenities (e.g. where water fountains or benches exist), etc.

It is also recommended that the City develop a number of “skate zones” or “micro” skateboard parks, which contain one or two basic curbs and rails in a designated area of a park, in strategic gap areas of the City. These minor skateboarding areas can be integrated fairly easily within neighbourhood-level parks and provide venues where beginner to intermediate level users can hone their skills and gain confidence to transition to the Seymour Hannah or proposed new skateboard park. It is important to note that these are not to be considered as skateboard parks in the traditional form but instead a few components or features to hone one’s skills.

This strategy is deemed to be the most cost-effective approach given the historical and forecasted aging trends in the City, and the fact that lower cost skate zones can be better distributed with only a finite amount of resources to devote to the facility type. The enhanced distribution is also a benefit since these skateboarding areas are targeted to children and youth who rely upon amenities located within walking/cycling distance. Priority areas for skate zones are largely City-wide since skateboarding opportunities do not exist beyond the Seymour Hannah Sports Centre, while the proposed new skateboard park is preferably located in a manner that allows youth living north of the Fourth Avenue/Welland Avenue corridor to have access to such a facility.

Recommendations

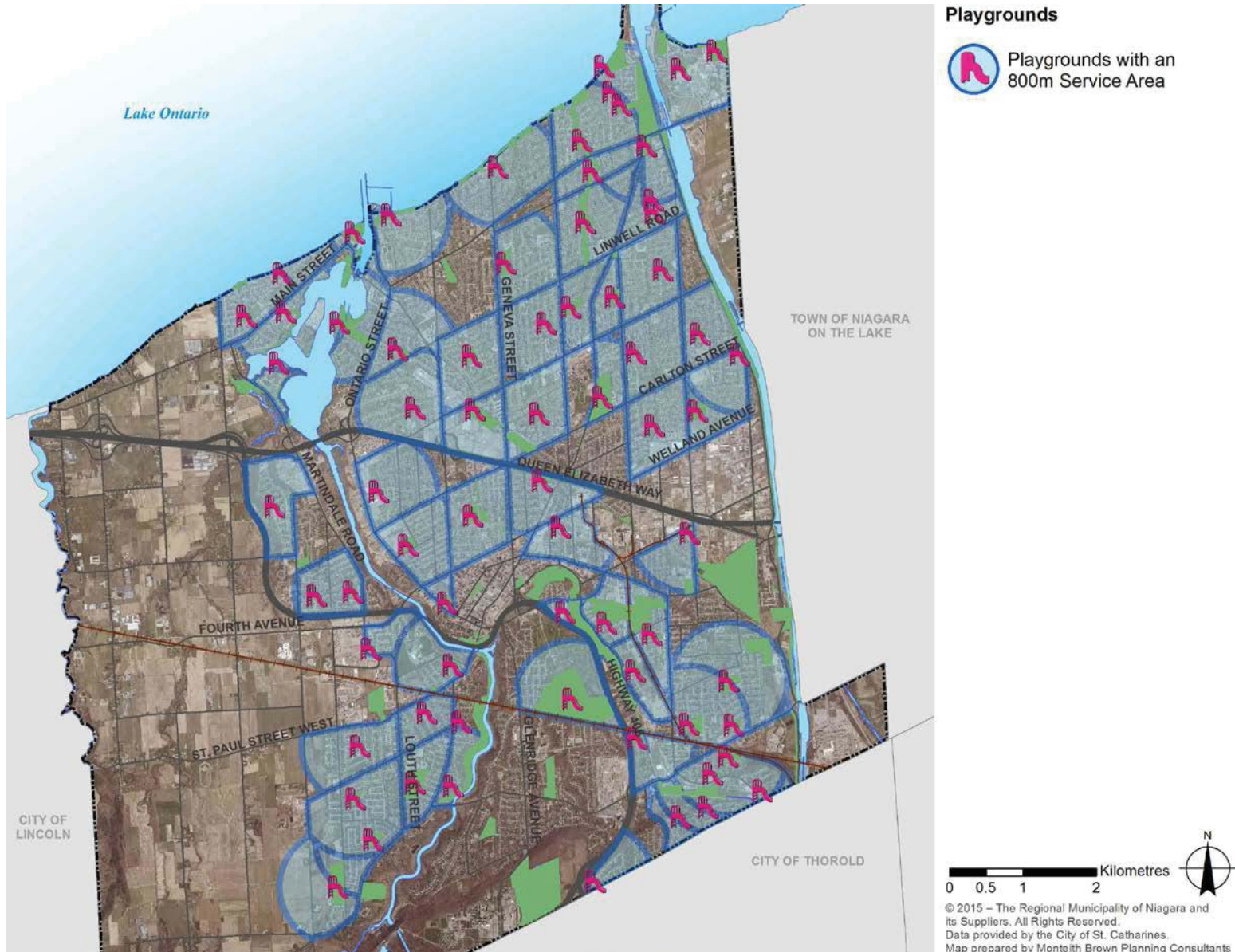
- #28. Construct one new skateboard park in a location that permits a better degree of geographic accessibility to populations residing north of the Q.E.W. This skateboard park should be a smaller-scale facility, as compared to the skatepark at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre, and should be designed in consultation with local youth.
- #29. Integrate beginner level “skate zones” or “micro” skateboard parks into appropriate neighbourhood-serving parks as the existing skateboard park at the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre is expected to meet intermediate to advanced level needs over the long term.



4.8 Playgrounds

- Supply:** A total of 90 playground structures are provided across 70 parks, comprising of senior and junior creative play equipment. Most playgrounds are supported by swing sets with ground surface of mulch, pea stone, or sand, although a few playgrounds have a rubberized surface. An accessible playground structure is located at Lester B. Pearson Park, which offers play equipment integrated with on-grade ramps, contrasting colours, and tactile elements while certain other sites offer a smaller degree of accessible play features. Local schools also provide play equipment though these are not factored into the supply.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' supply of playground locations represents a service level of one playground location per 2,705 residents or 264 children under the age of nine.
- Distribution:** Map 10 utilizes an 800 metre service area (generally representing a 10 minute walk) around each playground, with service coverage cut-off by major pedestrian obstructions such as arterial roads and highways, railways, and waterbodies. Doing so illustrates a notable gap area in the south end of the City, generally south of the CN railway line to the east of Twelve Mile Creek, although this gap is partly addressed by a number of school sites such as Oakridge Public School, and St. Peter Catholic School (and recognizes that there is a large university student housing component in this area). Select pockets of gap areas are also observed in St. Catharines' north end that are also addressed by schools such as Pine Grove Public School, Saint Alfred Catholic School and Heritage French Elementary School.
- Consultation:** The consultation process revealed that playgrounds are highly valued and desirable in St. Catharines. The household survey found that nearly three-quarters (74%) of residents also supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new playgrounds, ranking as the second highest investment priority for recreation facility provision.
- Participation:** The household survey reported that over the past twelve months, 38% of residents reported using playground equipment, which ranked as the fifth-most popular recreation activity.
- Utilization:** No utilization data is available for playgrounds as they are intended for drop-in, self-directed use.

Map 10: Distribution of Playgrounds





Maintaining equitable access to playgrounds in St. Catharines supports healthy development among children by facilitating leisure opportunities and community interaction. St. Catharines' previous master plan utilized a standard of one creative playground within an 800 metre radius of built-up residential areas, without crossing major barriers, which is a similar standard utilized in comparable communities. In fact in some communities, proximity to playgrounds range from 400 metres to 800 metres as walkability becomes a higher priority. It is recommended that the City continue to maintain an 800 metre level of service to ensure that residents have reasonable walkable access to these neighbourhood level facilities to allow the City to concentrate on exploring opportunities to provide creative playground structures in the identified gap areas, where possible, as well as in emerging growth areas.

The modern design template for playgrounds focuses on providing safe creative structures that are consistent with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) guidelines. The majority of the City's playground supply has been built within the past 15 years, with a cursory review of municipal inventory data estimating that the average age of playground structures is about 12 years old. The City conducts regular inspections of its playground equipment in line with safety standards and as part of these audits, identify where replacements may be required. This is considered to be best practice and should be continued.

While the City regularly inspects its playgrounds for safety, part of the evaluation process should also be to explore potential upgrades to allow for greater accessibility among persons with disabilities and special needs. Site visits conducted as part of the master planning process revealed instances where the playground structure appeared to be conducive for use by children and caregivers with a disability but where there was a barrier to accessing the structure itself. For example, the Vintage Park and Wembley Drive Park playgrounds integrate internal ramps and appears suitably designed for children with disabilities, however, there is no barrier-free entryway from the pathway into the playground (their entry ramps are not flush with the ground). Another example is the playground at Montebello Park, which has a rubberized surface but the lack of a ramp into the playground structure reduces its potential to be even more inclusive. While accessible playgrounds are desirable, such as the one at Lester B. Pearson Park, augmenting the ability of neighbourhood-serving playgrounds with accessible components is a cost-effective way to be more inclusive across the entire City. The Accessibility Advisory Committee should be engaged to assist in determining how playgrounds (and the parks in which they are located) can be more inclusive to persons with disabilities. To align safety, inclusivity and other related improvements with funding capabilities and long-range financial planning, the City should create a capital renewal strategy specific to playground structures. This will allow the City to prioritize investments through a rationalized decision-making and planning process that will also distribute replacement costs over a defined period of time.

Recommendation

#30. Provide creative playground structures in underserved areas and emerging growth areas, so that built-up residential areas have access to a playground within an 800 metre service radius, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers.

- #31. As part of the playground inspection process, identify opportunities to integrate accessible/barrier-free components as a means to improve access to and within the playground structure for children and caregivers with disabilities.
- #32. Prepare a playground renewal strategy that defines the cost and timeframe associated with replacing aging structures, while considering needed improvements to facilitate safe, inclusive and interactive play. This renewal strategy should also include a community engagement component to engage neighbourhoods in the design process of playground structures and/or other elements within the broader park.

4.9 Golf Courses

- Supply:** Two municipal golf courses are located in St. Catharines, known as the Garden City Golf Course and Fairview Golf & Mini-Putt. Garden City Golf Course is an 18-hole, par 60 executive course, while Fairview Golf & Mini-Putt is a 9-hole, par 27 course with an 18-hole mini putt course (parking at the latter is leased from a neighbouring property). These municipal golf courses are complemented by the private sector St. Catharines Golf & Country Club, a premier 18-hole, par 72 course with a 6-sheet curling rink, fitness centre, pool, and full service clubhouse.
- Service Level:** St. Catharines' supply of municipal golf courses translates into a service level of one golf course per 70,330 population. Golf courses are not normally provided within the scope of municipal service provision (though there are some provincial examples such as Hamilton, London, Burlington and Mississauga), and as a result there is limited data available to review against comparable municipalities.
- Distribution:** Residents of St. Catharines are well served with municipal golf courses as these facility types generally serve not only local residents, but draw from regional user markets.
- Consultation:** No comments regarding municipal golf courses were received through any of the public engagement sessions that were undertaken, which suggests that demand for this facility type is not a high priority at this time.
- Participation:** The household survey found that approximately 37% of residents participated in golf within the past twelve months. This represents a considerable increase since 2006 when the survey conducted for the previous Master Plan recorded a participation rate of 11%. Further, the current survey finds that at least 20% of golfers have participated in this activity outside of the City.



Utilization:

A total of 15,000 rounds were played at the Garden City Golf Course in 2014, representing an increase of 1,000 rounds played over the previous year. The 1,250 rounds played in 2014 on Fairview's 9 hole course represented a slight decline from the year before (4% or 50 rounds) while the 4,250 mini putt rounds decreased by 5% (250 rounds). In 2014, the City initiated a soccer golf initiative at Fairview that generated 700 rounds played, offsetting the decline in traditional golf rounds (the time dedicated to soccer golf may also have contributed to the aforementioned decline). Although only 23 memberships were sold across both golf courses, the City has traditionally focused more towards selling 'activity packs' (e.g. packages of 10, 20, 30 or 45 rounds) rather than memberships.

By all indications, the City's public golf courses are adequately utilized and provide access to any resident interested in golf-related opportunities, thereby promoting the City's objectives surrounding inclusion. It is believed that municipal involvement in golf course operations is appropriate at its current level and there is no need to expand the number of municipal golf course given the existing public and private opportunities available regionally, and the fact that municipal investment may better be suited for other and more needed leisure activities. The City should continue to look for innovative opportunities to maximize use of its golf courses, and could potentially explore partnership opportunities with other institutions or agencies that may have an interest in utilizing the facilities (e.g. creating a 'teaching' course for a postsecondary golf course management program).

Studies regarding the operations of both golf facilities have been undertaken in the past ten years (the Fairview Golf Course and Mini Putt Land Use Options Study, and the Garden City Golf Course Master Plan). These studies, along with any future business plans that may be prepared if deemed necessary due to future operating circumstances, should form the basis that guides municipal decision-making in these assets.

Recommendations

- #33. Monitor key performance and utilization indicators for both the Garden City Golf Course and the Fairview Golf Course to determine their long-term viability and revenue contributions to the City. In the event that future market conditions and operating profile of either golf course is not deemed to be favourable to the interests of the community, consideration may be given to repurposing the lands to another form of passive and/or active parkland provided that this is supported through a comprehensive business plan regarding municipal golf course operations.

4.10 Leash-Free Dog Parks

- Supply:** Two leash-free dog parks are currently provided at Burgoyne Woods and Catharine Street Park. The leash free dog parks are situated on municipally-owned lands and both are operated by PALZ (People Advocating Leash-Free Zones), a local community group that works in partnership with the City of St. Catharines.
- Service Level:** The City provides one-leash free dog park per 70,330 population. The provision of this type of facility differs in each community due to the variation of the service delivery model. Some dog parks are operated by the municipality, while others are operated by a local community group as is the case in St. Catharines.
- Distribution:** Both of St. Catharines' dog parks are located south of Queen Elizabeth Way and north of the CN railway. Although these facility types generally serve the entire community, a gap exists in the north area of the City for residents seeking a dog park within walking distance or a short drive.
- Consultation:** Moderate support for dog parks was expressed through the consultation inputs for this Master Plan. The household survey reported that 45% of residents supported spending additional public funds on improving or developing new dog parks whereas 32% of the sample was opposed. Through the user group questionnaire, PALZ expressed that there is a need to provide more dog parks in St. Catharines (suggesting one per ward would be most desirable), as well as shade shelters at existing dog parks to better serve the growing the rapidly growing number of dog park users.
- Participation:** Participation data for off-leash areas is not formally tracked, though if any indication, PALZ has nearly doubled its membership within the past three years, growing from 350 people in 2011 to 600 people in 2013. Further, research across the country has shown that older adults are forming a greater share of dog owners and are seeking off leash areas as a way to exercise their pets as well as to gain social opportunities for dog owners. This trend may be part of the reason that nearly half of the household survey sample were in support of off-leash areas. It is important to note that dog parks should not be viewed as being facilities strictly for pets as input provided by PALZ confirms that these areas are as much a venue for exercise and social interaction among humans (consistent with observations in other communities).
- Utilization:** The City does not collect utilization data on its leash free dog parks.



Off-leash areas have become much more common in Ontario municipalities over the past decade, though there are no measurable provision standards for the development of leash-free dog parks, as this facility type is generally assessed based on qualitative needs. Municipalities typically consider the provision of leash-free dog parks on a case-by-case basis if significant local demand exists for such a facility and if there is a willing community organization with the ability and resources to operate a leash free dog park. The partnership with PALZ appears to have been a success with the development and management of two off-leash areas.

If PALZ has the capacity to fundraise for the capital costs, and has the resources necessary to operate a third off-leash area, then the City should explore the establishment of one additional off-leash park in the near-term with a medium to longer-term need for additional dog parks based upon evidence of increased demand, a reasonable distribution across the City and the ability of the existing or other third party to maintain operations. To balance geographic distribution, the proposed third dog park should be located north of the Q.E.W. pending the results of a site-selection process to evaluate and identify the preferred location in consultation with the public and local stakeholders (such as PALZ, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, local neighbourhood associations, etc.). This site-selection process should consider a number of criteria including, but not limited to:

- safety of other park users and residents;
- appropriate zoning and compatibility with adjacent land uses;
- providing an appropriate buffer from residences, schools and environmentally sensitive areas (buffers can range anywhere from 15 metres to 100 metres);
- ensuring long-term access for dog parks (i.e. a site should not be chosen if it is intended to be redeveloped in the short to medium term);
- the park is of appropriate size (1.0 to 1.5 hectares is an ideal size for high volume dog parks) – as an example, the previously noted surplus in ball diamonds may create an opportunity through adaptive re-use;
- the site is accessible from an arterial or primary collector road, and provides sufficient parking, provision of benches, water fountains, waste containers, etc.

Ongoing monitoring of the existing and proposed off-leash areas should subsequently be undertaken to determine whether additional off-leash areas need to be provided within or after the current master planning period.

Recommendation

- #34. Establish a third leash-free dog park provided that a local community organization can demonstrate a commitment to maintaining ongoing operations of the dog park as per the terms of the current agreement with PALZ. The location of the proposed off-leash should be determined in consultation with the public and local stakeholders, and should be located north of the Queen Elizabeth Way in order to balance geographic distribution across the City.
- #35. Continue to monitor utilization of existing and proposed dog parks with a view of providing additional off-leash opportunities based on distribution and ability of a third party to maintain operations (also refer to Recommendation #34).

4.11 Parks, Beaches and Trails

The City of St. Catharines maintains 562.5 hectares across 129 parks. Input provided through consultations generally suggested satisfaction with the parks, beaches and trails with noted improvements generally centred upon making these spaces more accessible to persons with disabilities, incorporating best practices in terms of safe designs, offering greater assistance to those hosting special events in parks (particularly when having to contact multiple City Departments), and integration of comfort and wayfinding features such as benches, maps, shade structures, etc. The Master Plan's household survey showed that 71% are satisfied with the location of parks and open spaces in St. Catharines, and supported further investments in parks/open spaces as the highest priority (76%). Support for nature trails (69%) and paved trails (58%) ranked as the fourth and eighth highest priorities, respectively.

The parks system is guided by the City's 2005 Parks Policy Plan that establishes strategies for the planning, maintenance and management of the municipal parks, open space, and trails system. St. Catharines parks are categorized as per Section 13.1 of the Garden City Plan (the City's Official Plan) into the following typologies:

- i) **Neighbourhood Parks and Playgrounds** - designed primarily for children's activities and passive recreation;
- ii) **District Parks and Playfields** - primarily designed with emphasis on facilities for organized and non- organized active outdoor playing fields, with opportunities for passive recreational use and provision for public art and cultural expression;
- iii) **City-Wide Parks and Regional Open Spaces** - designed for opportunities that may include passive and active indoor and/outdoor recreation, social, and cultural activities, and promotion and preservation of natural and cultural heritage amenities, cultural expression and public art, and may include multi-purpose or specialized facilities;



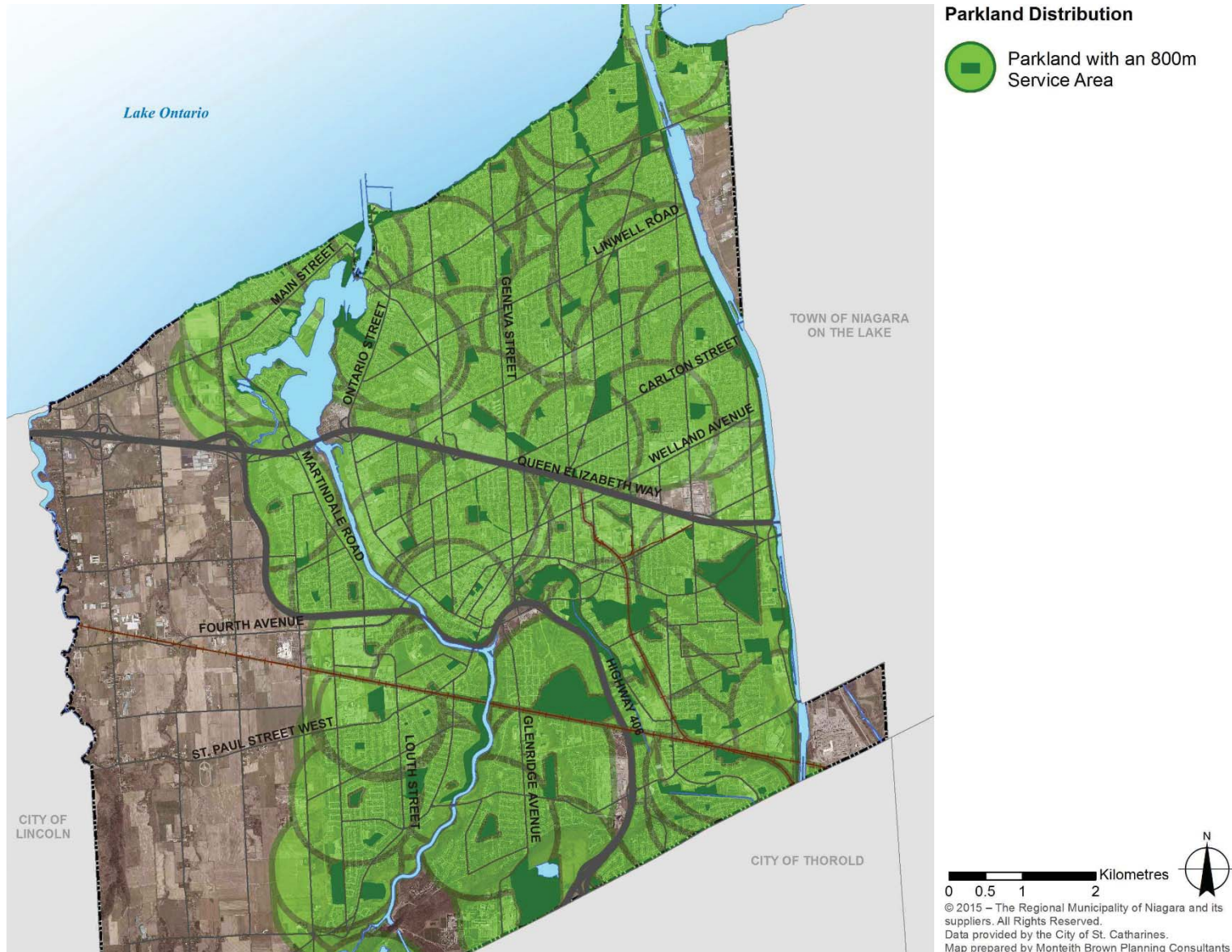
- iv) **Linear Parks** - walking and cycling trails to support a connected network of active transportation linkages within and between other parkland, open space, natural areas, downtown, residential, employment, commercial and mixed use neighbourhoods, community facilities and other activity use areas. The level of development of linear parks can range from minimal to extensive, and may include trailhead parking, restroom, pavilion, public art and other amenities;
- v) **Special Urban Parks** - smaller specialized parks, such as parkettes, urban squares or plazas suitable to fit within higher density urban areas such as the Downtown or other higher use activity centers and nodes, or to support the acquisition and development of smaller parks within underserved areas where the acquisition of larger parks is not possible. These park settings are intended to serve as interesting public spaces for passive social, cultural and leisure activities and should emphasize opportunities for the provision of public art and cultural expression.

This classification of parkland is consistent with best practices and definitions employed in other Ontario municipalities, and most importantly, are deemed to adequately reflect the structure and intended function in which the local parks system has been designed. A deeper review into the parkland classification structure reveals the following:

- The City's supply of 562 hectares represents a level of service in the range of 4.0 hectares per 1,000 population, which is a healthy supply particularly in the context of the Parks Policy Plan which targets parks at 3.0 hectares per 1,000 and thus indicates that St. Catharines has done well in providing a broad range of parkland to its community. It is recognized that this level of service includes Victoria Lawn Cemetery (48.5 hectares) and a number of parks that are operated by, but not owned by, the City, such as 63.5 hectares of land along the Welland Canal Trail, Grantham Lions Park, Lakeside Park, etc. that are publically accessible open spaces.
- Service radii recommended in the Parks Policy Plan for each park typology remain adequate for the current master planning period.
- Existing service levels for Special Urban Parks and Neighbourhood Parks (0.95 hectares per 1,000), District Parks (0.52 hectares per 1,000) and City-wide Parks (1.96 hectares per 1,000) align extremely well with those established in the Parks Policy Plan. As noted in that plan, however, there continues to be differences in the service level of each park typology in different areas of the City.

Forecasting the level of service to the year 2026 (assuming the parkland supply remains constant), parkland is anticipated to be provided at a rate of 3.9 hectares per 1,000 persons, remaining above the Parks Policy Plan target. Another indicator of strength of the parkland system is the excellent geographic coverage achieved in St. Catharines. An 800 metre service radius is applied to all municipal parks (recognizing that the Parks Policy Plan identifies larger radii for higher order parks) as the intent is to show general walkability within ten to fifteen minutes, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers (i.e. arterial roads, highways, railways and waterways). Doing so shows that most residential areas of the City are located within reasonable walking distance of a park, recognizing that the quality or function of each park will vary.

Map 11: Distribution of City Parks





From a fiscal and land availability perspective, there are few opportunities to add significant amounts of open space to the existing supply of parkland due to a shortage of available land and the high cost of land. In moving forward with the implementation of the Parks Policy Plan, the City should continue to emphasize the following:

- Providing parkland in new residential growth areas and any potential gap areas, using parkland dedication set forth in the Ontario Planning Act where permissible to do so. This may include identifying areas where there may be shortfalls in certain parkland typologies (e.g. District Parks, particularly since the noted deficit in rectangular sports fields may place a greater requirement for these types of parks).
- Striving to acquire 'lands to complete gaps in the trail system along the Lake Ontario waterfront, increasing public access to the waterfront, and improve waterfront parkland' as per Section 13.1.3 of the Garden City Plan.
- Designing parks and trailways in accordance with generally accepted standards for accessibility and safety.
- Integration of comfort elements (e.g. shade shelters, benches, washrooms, etc.) and wayfinding (e.g. signage) into parks and trails design, which would be particularly useful for aging populations but also be beneficial for residents and visitors of all ages.

As noted, it is a municipal objective to increase public access to waterfront areas recognizing that such space is highly valued by the entire community. In addition to the waterfront lands along the Welland Canal Trail and the Merritt Trail, the City of St. Catharines maintains three beach sites consisting of:

- Lakeside Park Beach that forms part of the larger park. Sand volleyball courts are also located within the beach. Of note, the City will be installing rubberized mats at the beach entry to facilitate access by persons with mobility-related disabilities.
- Municipal Beach which provides 365 metres (1,200 feet) of sandy beach along Lake Ontario, located along the Waterfront Trail and in close proximity to the Welland Canals Parkway Trail.
- Jones Beach which does not have any formal amenities beyond a parking lot.

The City should continue to enhance its waterfront by adding amenities (i.e. washrooms at key locations), ongoing beautification efforts (i.e. tree plantings, horticultural displays) and infrastructure development (i.e. paved pathways in strategic locations, lighting, etc.). The waterfront areas are also a space that can provide opportunities for a number of other marine uses such as angling, boating, canoeing/kayaking, kite flying, etc. and should continue to be supported with appropriate amenities (e.g. piers, boat launches, beach areas, etc.), where appropriate, as recently done with the addition of the kayak launch.

In addition and complementary to municipal parkland, there are many trail routes and pathways in the City of St. Catharines, some of which are described below:

- Welland Canals Parkway Trail – A multi-use trail spanning 9 km in length and offers a walking, biking and in-line skating path. Provides links to the Flight Locks, the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, Malcolmson Eco-Park and the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail.
- Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail – The St. Catharines section of this provincial multi-use trail is approximately 9 km, and is suitable for both cyclists and hikers.
- Port Dalhousie Harbourfront Walkway Waterfront Trail – Makes up a small but vital section of the larger provincial Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail, following the shoreline and winding past historical sites, connecting Lakeside Park and the East and West Piers.
- Merritt Trail – An 11 km long segmented trail that connects with the Green Ribbon Trail. The pathway consists of stone dust providing a surface for pedestrian and bicycle use.
- Green Ribbon Trail – A 0.5 km trail surrounded by a class one wetland. The trail is ideally suited for year round activities such as fishing, jogging and canoeing.
- Participark Trail – A 2 km trail with a link to the Merritt Trail.
- Burgoyne Woods - The pathway is conducive for walking, jogging or cycling, while there are also nature trails provided in the central portion of the park.
- Terry Fox Trail – A 1.5 km trail.
- Walker's Creek Trail – A 1.5 km multi-season trail with stone dust surface.
- Bruce Trail - St. Catharines contains a 20 km section and associated side trails of this provincial footpath, which follows the Niagara Escarpment, extending from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Tobermory. Of note, the Morningstar Mill is along the Bruce Trail.
- Short Hills Provincial Park – Hiking, cycling and horseback riding are uses for the trails provided in this provincially-owned natural open space, which also connects with the Bruce Trail.

The Parks Policy Plan recommended a number of trail acquisition and development priorities, a number of which have been pursued by the City. Categorized into three levels of priority, these actions from the Parks Policy Plan are summarized below. It is recommended that the City continue to strive to attain its trail related objectives as articulated through the Parks Policy Plan and other strategic documents, largely by rounding out any remaining Priority One Actions and placing a focus on Priority Two Actions.



Priority One

- Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail
- Extension of Welland Canal Parkway North to St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Piers
- Port Master Park to Dalemere Park
- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail extension to EPA lands along 406 east corridor
- Burgoyne Woods Trails
- Joe McCaffrey Sports Park hydro corridor
- Southerly extension of Participark Trail/Laura Secord Trail along Twelve Mile Creek, including discussions with Ontario Power Generation

Priority Two

- CNR spur line rail-to-trail conversion
- Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt Trail
- Yale Crescent rail conversion corridor
- Walker's Creek trail improvements

Priority Three

- Green Ribbon/Merritt Trail extension to EPA lands along Highway 406 east corridor crossing the Q.E.W.
- CNR south to hydro corridor, crossing Q.E.W. to Merritt and Bruce Trails
- Centennial Gardens connection to Merritt and Bruce Trails, crossing Highway 406

Recommendations

- #36. Continue to implement the Parks Policy Plan, along with its parkland classification system and service levels, as a guiding document that directs investment and management within the municipal parks system. Specific attention should be paid to pursuing parkland dedication and acquisition objectives of the Parks Policy Plan and the Garden City Plan, while outstanding Priority One and Priority Two trail-related actions should also be implemented where feasible, to continue to move towards an interconnected and comprehensive parks and active transportation system.
- #37. Continue to enhance the design and redesign of parks and trails through strategic improvements focused on accessibility for persons with disabilities and special needs, user comfort, safety, wayfinding and interpretative signage, at a minimum.
- #38. Continue to enhance public access, experience and connectivity within waterfront areas through strategic land acquisitions and park/trail improvements as per above.