

Appendix A: Community Consultations

1. Community Input Event

A Community Input Event for the Master Plan was held on October 2, 2014 at the St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre (S.K.A.C.). City Staff extended invitations to over 140 organizations and individuals via emails and phone calls, in addition to advertising the event through print and social media, resulting in attendance of 29 persons who represented the general public as well several local stakeholder groups.

Following a brief introduction to the Master Plan's objectives and planning process, discussions on wide variety of topics were held. While not a complete transcription of the dialogue, the following key themes (listed in no particular order) emerged from the Community Input Event with respect to parks and recreation facilities and services in St. Catharines.

- Those in attendance generally appreciated the overall distribution of parks, trails and recreation facilities throughout the City and also thought that these assets are fairly well maintained. Cited examples of highly valued facilities included the waterfront and Waterfront Trail, the S.K.A.C., the Port Weller Community Centre, Garden City Complex, and the Seymour Hannah Sports and Entertainment Centre.
- Another key value mentioned was the fact that recreational spaces in St. Catharines are fairly inclusive for

all residents regardless of ability, class, cultural background, or income and that there is a good range of program opportunities for a broad range of interests or backgrounds.

- Although programs were highly valued, a need for greater programming was identified specifically for teens and older adults, those oriented to healthy living, additional cultural programs, and more low-to-no cost outdoor programs.
- From an indoor facility perspective, a major stated need centred upon a new indoor recreation complex oriented to field sports and indoor tennis, possibly by converting an existing underutilized facility. Additional indoor facility needs included securing additional times at arenas, provision of a second indoor pool or rehabilitating/repurposing the former West Park Pool, and potentially constructing a new multi-use community centre and/or trade show centre that concentrates multiple activities at one site.
- Requests for outdoor recreation facilities generally focused upon more playgrounds (including those designed specifically for adults and older adults), ball diamonds suitable for adult play (i.e. larger fields), outdoor skating areas, tennis courts (including some oriented to a community tennis club), multi-use open spaces for day camps and to bring indoor activities to the outdoors, and more splash pads.



- Improvements to the aesthetics, comfort and functionality of the parks system was discussed. In particular, cleaning up the beach and waterfront areas was a major priority area for attendees as was enhancing waterfront facilities such as public boat launches. Other suggestions included updating washrooms, adding more seating, improving signage and wayfinding, more regular maintenance activities such as garbage pickup, etc. Another major point of emphasis was to improve trail connectivity, especially in between parks, with a stated desire for enhanced trail management practices year-round and better accessibility.
- Better communication and marketing was stated by attendees, particularly through digital media by way of using electronic media and QR codes (and supplemented by traditional advertising such as the Leisure Guide and brochures) to promote awareness of the parks and recreation system. Promoting parks and recreation facilities as destinations was believed to give people a reason to visit these assets.
- Partnerships with school boards and other service providers (identified as a broad range including the Y.M.C.A., curling club, golf courses, etc.) were seen as a way to expand community access to facilities that already exist in the community.

2. Household Survey

To assist with the Master Plan, a statistically significant random sample household telephone survey was initiated on September 15, 2014 over a two week period. The purpose of this survey was

to collect representative data from 388 households, yielding a confidence level of $\pm 5\%$ (19 times out of 20). The survey focused on participation, opinions and priorities of various recreation facilities and programs in St. Catharines. This section summarizes the principal findings of the household survey. A more detailed summary can be found in Appendix A.

Household Participation in Recreation Activities

Walking and hiking for leisure was identified as the most popular activity in St. Catharines over the past 12 months, with 82% of surveyed households participated in these activities. Other popular recreation activities included: swimming (53%); aerobics, fitness, and weight-training (42%); cycling or mountain biking (41%); and use of playground equipment (38%). The fact that these top five recreational pursuits are generally unstructured is indicative that many people in the City are looking for unstructured activities where they can flexibly schedule their participation or spontaneously drop-in.

Barriers to Participation in Recreation Activities

Nearly two-thirds of the survey sample (61%) stated that their household is able to participate in parks and recreation facilities as often as they would like. For the remaining 39% of households who were not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they desired, the most common barrier was the lack of personal time/too busy (56%) followed by health problems/disability/age (32%).

In most scientific polls conducted in Ontario, the lack of time is often cited as the primary barrier to participation. There are a number of strategies that municipalities can employ to address this common participation constraint by providing appropriate

opportunities for self-scheduled recreation pursuits, adjusting or extending hours of operation, or lighting sports fields. The fact that health or age was a barrier for one third of persons unable to participate is indicative that St. Catharines has an older age profile relative to other communities, something that correlates to the older than average age of this survey's respondents. It also suggests that the City may be pressed to explore service options including (but not limited to) to improving facility accessibility, integrating a greater complement of programs that are not physically intensive, or possibly investigating more therapeutic or rehabilitative activities within its facilities in order to respond to the needs of an aging population.

Location of Recreation Activities

60% of surveyed households indicate that all of their recreation needs are met within St. Catharines. The remaining 40% reported that they participate in a broad range of activities and programs outside of the City, primarily consisting of walking and hiking, followed by golf, cycling, hockey, skating, camping, and swimming. Of the households that participate in recreation activities outside of the City, the most popular reason is because the facility or program is not available in St. Catharines (30%) while other common responses were that they seek more variety outside of the City and change of scenery (25%), and that the quality of facility or program is superior compared to St. Catharines (14%).

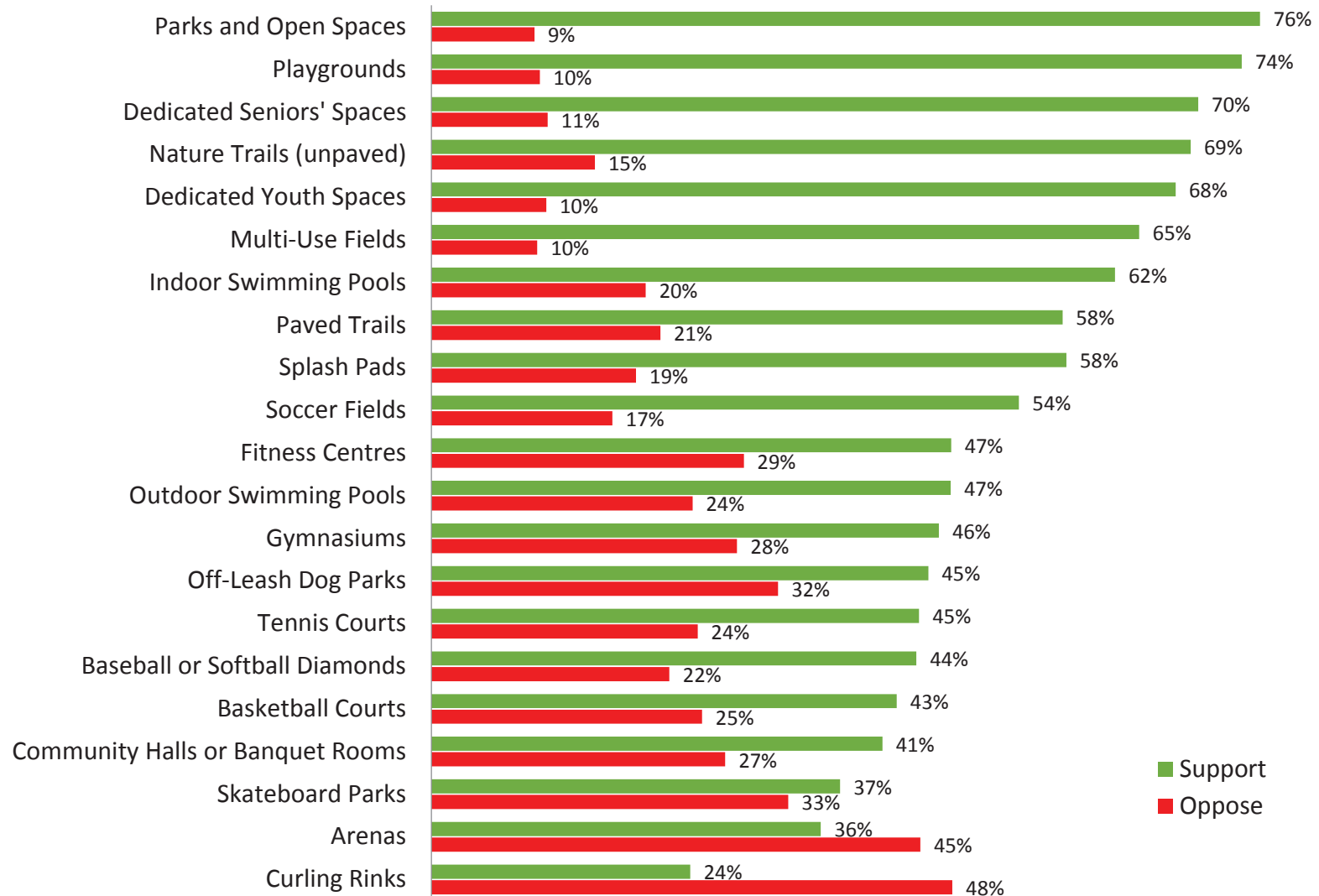
Provision of New Facilities and Programs

About one-fifth of the survey sample identified that there were new facilities and programs (22% and 19%, respectively) that they would like to see offered that did not already exist. It is important to note that each of the responses accounted for less than 3% of

the total sample and thus they are not considered to be significant gap areas.

It is also worth noting that four of the top five facilities were already provided by the City of St. Catharines. The exception was a multi-use community centre, which is an understandable sentiment given many of the City's facilities are focused on single activities though the S.K.A.C. could be considered multi-use due to the inclusion of the library branch. Additionally, the City also provides many of the stated programs through their fitness/wellness and aquatics portfolio. The fact that these facilities and programs were identified likely speaks to the fact that respondents either wanted more of these services or that they were unaware that the City provides them.

Support and Opposition for Additional Spending by Recreation Facility Type



Satisfaction with Recreation Opportunities by Age Group

Survey respondents identified that they are most satisfied with the recreation opportunities in St. Catharines for children between the ages of 0 and 12 (72%). This is followed by adults (age 19-54), older adults (age 55+), and teens (ages 13-18). Recreation opportunities for teens typically rank the lowest in this type of survey, which is often attributed to the respondent being unaware of what is available for this age group, which may be the case given the higher than average age of this survey. Research has also revealed that teens often do not participate, leading to community perceptions that there are not enough opportunities for youth. However, the results suggest a need to further investigate opportunities for this age group.

Importance and Satisfaction for Parks and Recreation Facilities

The survey sample rated their level of importance and their level of satisfaction with various facility types in St. Catharines. Parks for passive uses were the most important recreation facility type (91%), followed by trails and pathways (81%), outdoor recreation facilities (74%), and indoor recreation facilities (67%). Lower levels of satisfaction were reported for each recreation facility type which provides an indication that expectations are currently not being met. Although passive parks had the greatest satisfaction rating, they also had the largest deviation between its importance score (-21%) which suggests that the community sees this as an area for improvement (a similar situation exists for trails).

Priorities for Spending

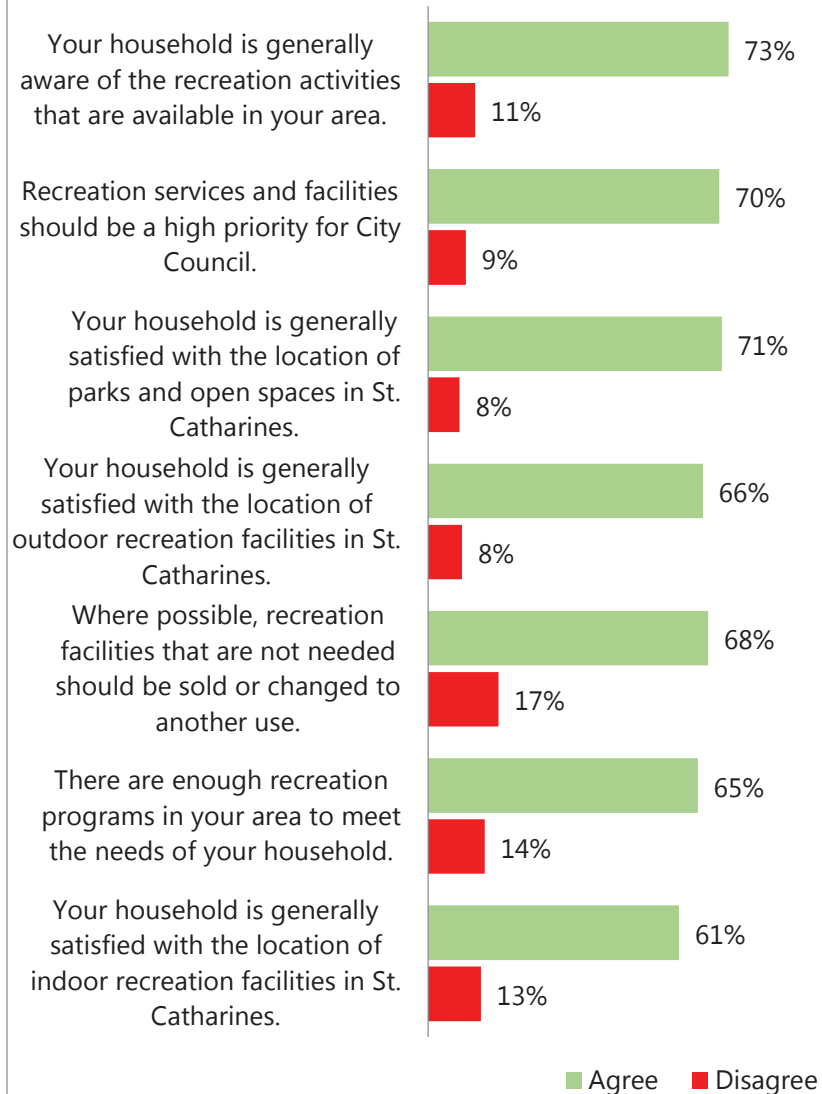
Respondents were asked to rate their level of support for additional spending on various municipal facilities based on whether they 'strongly support', 'support', 'indifferent', 'oppose' or 'strongly oppose' such spending. The strongest level of support were for parks and open space, playgrounds, and seniors' spaces that all received over 70% support. Opposition was greatest towards additional spending curling rinks and arenas at over 45% of the sample.

Another observation from this question was that the top five supported facilities are focused towards multi-use, unstructured, and self-scheduled activities. By contrast, organized sports and single-use facilities ranked lower in support.

Level of Agreement

Using a scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', households were asked to respond to a series of statements regarding the provision of recreation facilities and programs in St. Catharines.

Level of Agreement with Recreation Statements



Profile of Survey Respondents

The median age of respondent was 57 (the average age was 56), which is higher than the median age of 43.5 recorded in the 2011 Census, suggesting that the age of the responding sample was generally older than the representative population. That being said, a review of the age structure of responding households suggests closer representation to Census data particularly for the number of persons under 19 years of age, between the ages and 35 and 54, and over 70. The survey appears to over-represent those between the ages of 55 to 69 and under-represent persons between the ages of 20 and 34. Furthermore, the average size of surveyed households was 2.6 persons, slightly less than the average number of persons identified in the Census (2.8 persons). Nonetheless, survey responses are considered to be generally representative of the City's age and household structure within an acceptable threshold, and the higher median age may indicate that the person actually providing the responses was a head of the household.

Table 7: Household Age Structure of Survey Respondents

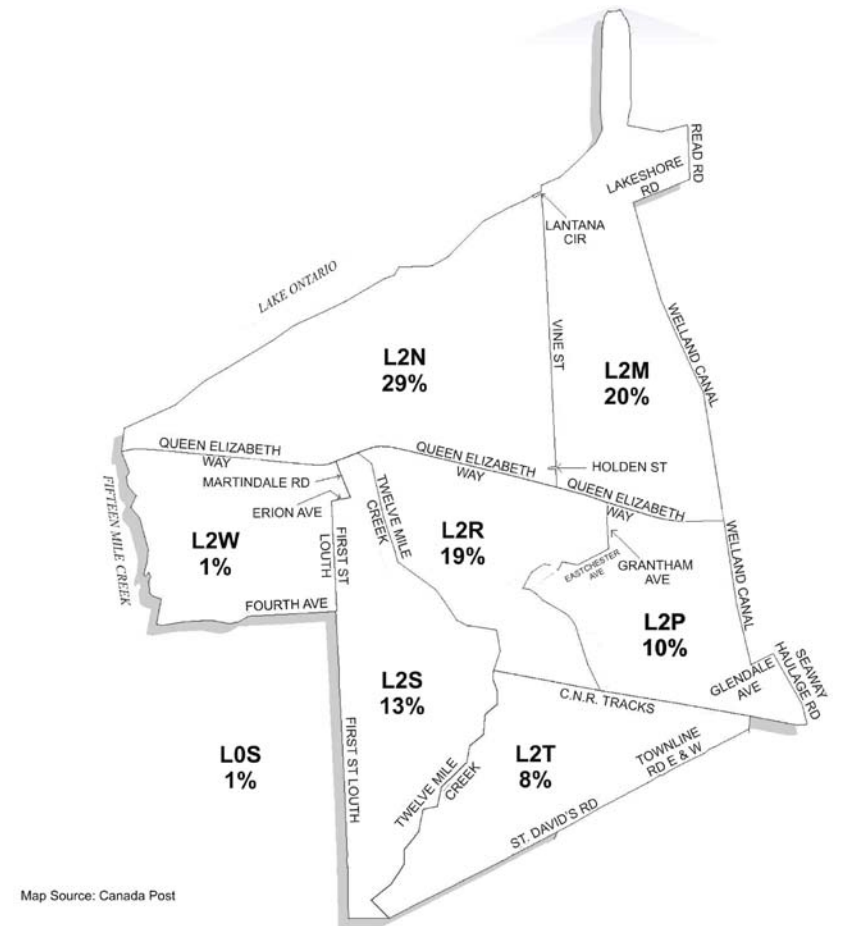
	Sample	2011 Census
Children (under 10 years)	10%	10%
Youth (10 to 19 years)	11%	12%
Young Adults (20 to 34 years)	11%	19%
Mature Adults (35 to 54 years)	29%	27%
Older Adults (55 to 69 years)	25%	19%
Seniors (70 years and over)	13%	14%
Total	100%	100%

As shown in Figure 5, 49% of the survey sample resided north of the Queen Elizabeth Way (L2M and L2N postal codes), 37% resided in the south-east (L2R, L2P and L2T postal codes), and the remaining 14% resided in the south-west (L2S and L2W postal codes). Distribution of responses is representative of household counts as recorded by Canada Post.

	#	%	Canada Post*
L2M	78	20%	24%
L2N	109	29%	23%
L2P	39	10%	11%
L2R	74	19%	20%
L2S	48	13%	12%
L2T	29	8%	9%
L2W	2	1%	1%
L0S	2	1%	Data not available
Total	381	100%	100%

* represents the percentage of households within each postal code area as recorded through Canada Post household counts

Figure 5: Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents





3. Online Survey

An online community survey was established as a vehicle for input from residents not randomly selected for the household telephone survey. The survey questions focused on a select number of topics while also providing one dedicated open-ended question for residents to provide any pertinent thought regarding recreation in St. Catharines. The online survey was active for a period of seven weeks commencing on August 27, 2014, which coincided with the launch of the City's Fall program registration so that the survey could be advertised during the registration process. The online survey was also promoted through the City's social media accounts and targeted advertising efforts including setting up a Kiosk at the S.K.A.C., press releases, and Department Staff directly asking people to complete the survey.

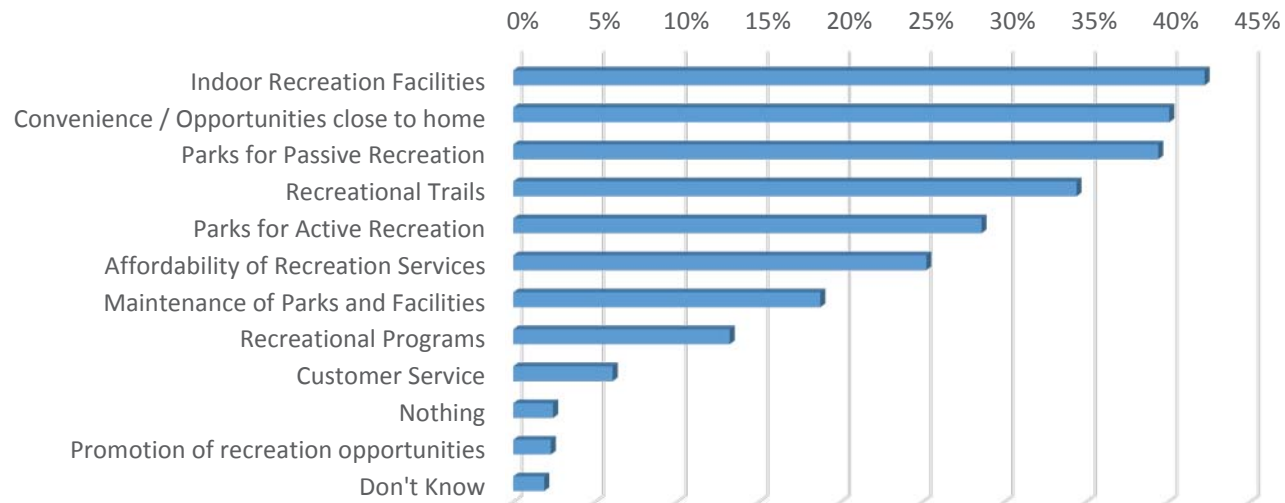
Hosted on the City of St. Catharines' website created for the Master Plan, a total of 741 online surveys were submitted, representing the views of over 2,000 residents living within responding households. The median and average age of survey respondents was 43 and 45 years, respectively with the average size of participating households recorded at 2.7 persons. Approximately 44% of responses were received from households living north of the Q.E.W., 52% resided south of the Q.E.W., and the remaining did not disclose their postal code or were from outside of the City.

Unlike the telephone survey undertaken for this Master Plan, the online survey results cannot be considered to be statistically representative of the City's population since the survey was self-administered and non-random. Survey results should be interpreted as generalized input based on the volume of surveys

received from interested residents, and will be considered with all other consultation activities from the master planning process.

In terms of survey findings, indoor recreation facilities were the most liked aspect of the City's parks and recreation system, followed by how convenient and close to home recreation services are. St. Catharines' passive park system was also highly valued by survey participants. Survey participants most frequently stated that the provision of new recreational trails were most likely to increase their own participation in parks and recreation activities. Other common suggestions were to provide more affordable recreation services, additional indoor recreation facilities, and new or improved parks for passive recreational activity.

Things People Like the Most About Parks and Recreation in St. Catharines



Ways the City Could Increase Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities





When asked their level of agreement towards four statements (using a scale of 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'), the following outcomes were observed:

- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that their household is generally aware of the recreation activities that are available in their area. Conversely, 13% disagreed in some form with this statement (the balance of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 73% agreed in some form that "where possible, surplus recreation facilities should be repurposed to other needed uses." Conversely, 12% disagreed in some form with this statement.
- 68% agreed in some form that recreation facilities and programs offered by the City are generally affordable to their household while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 38% suggested that they would be willing to pay more for new or improved parks and recreation facilities while 36% indicated they would not be willing to do so. 26% of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed with paying more.

4. Parks and Recreation User Focus Groups

Four focus groups were held in October 2014 at the Meridian Centre to discuss various topics pertaining to the Master Plan with organizations and user groups having an interest in the City's parks and recreation system. City Staff extended invitations to over 200 organizations and individuals via emails and phone

calls, in addition to advertising the event through print and social media, resulting in attendance of over 50 persons who represented the general public as well as the following 35 stakeholder groups:

- Adult Hockey League
- Ballhockey.com
- Brock Badgers Ringette Club
- Dirty Runner Productions
- Dunlop Drive Older Adult Centre
- Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park
- Friends of Walker's Creek
- Garden City Aquatic Club
- Garden City Kiwanis Hockey
- Greening Niagara
- Gymnastics Energy
- Henley Rowing Club
- Mayor's Advisory Committee on Accessibility
- Merritton Arena
- Niagara Roller Girls
- Niagara Sport Commission
- Niagara Tennis Academy
- Player's Hockey League
- Port Dalhousie Works Committee
- Ridley College
- Russell Avenue Community Centre
- Special Olympics - Sea Otters
- St. Catharines Athletics JR. A. Lacrosse
- St. Catharines Falcons Hockey
- St. Catharines Female Hockey
- St. Catharines Islamic Society
- St. Catharines Jets Girls Soccer

- St. Catharines Minor Baseball
- St. Catharines Recreational Skate
- St. Catharines Rowing Club
- St. Catharines MD Hurricanes & CYO
- Total Hockey Experience & Hockey School
- Turbo Turtle Running Club
- West Park Aquatics Club
- Y.M.C.A. of Niagara

The above noted organizations were segmented into four focus groups: Arena Partners Focus Group; Indoor Recreation Facility Users; Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facility Users; and General Community Interest Users. Groups were permitted to attend multiple focus groups where they had multiple interests, areas of focus, or types of facilities being used (e.g. those using both indoor and outdoor facilities).

Arena Partners Focus Group

A focus group was held on October 22nd with members of the Arena Partners Committee, a civic advisory committee formed in 2008 to bring the City and various local arena user groups together to discuss various topics pertaining to arena usage in St. Catharines. Arena users who do not have formal representation on the Committee were also invited to attend this session.

The general discussion centred upon the need for the City to be strategic and proactive in meeting arena needs rather than taking the historically reactive approach. Key themes emerging from the focus group included:

- supporting the need for arenas to be financially sustainable and for financial reporting of operating performance to be transparent;
- identifying that with only the Bill Burgoyne Arena available to serve the north end of the City, equitable distribution of arenas should be considered;
- considering how St. Catharines' arena service level compares to other communities;
- improving how ice time is scheduled between rentals and City programs;
- recognizing that while a new twin pad arena is preferred to potentially replace the Garden City Complex, the City as a whole has financial limitations due to its existing infrastructure commitments and thus the existing twin pad should not be discounted simply on the basis of its age; and
- a desire for dry floor arena users such as lacrosse, roller skaters, ball hockey, soccer, etc. to have representation on the Arena Partners Committee.

At the conclusion of the focus group, the Arena Partners Committee resolved that they would work with the City and the Consulting Team in providing financial and operating performance assessments that were previously prepared by the local arena users.

Indoor Recreation Facility Users

A focus group was held on October 22nd with twelve representatives of local organizations using the City's indoor



recreation facilities. Key themes emerging from this session included:

- extending operating hours of older adult centres into more evenings so that programs and services sought by those ages 50 to 65 who still may be working, and rebranding programs and facilities to serve a “55+” market rather than “older adults or seniors”;
- desire for a multi-use, multi-generational facility combining a number of facility components that offers a diverse range of programs and services while moving away from the traditional model of single-focused facilities such as arenas and community halls;
- support to revitalize underutilized recreation facilities for other needed uses, with the dedication of the Haig Bowl to dry floor uses (e.g. ball hockey) cited as an example;
- making sure recreation facilities are well served by transit and/or along trail routes to maximize inclusivity to those who do not have access to a private automobile (e.g. youth, older adults, persons with disabilities, low income users, etc.);
- request for a second municipal indoor pool as service level is presently one per 140,000 residents which is lower than many other municipalities, recognizing that residents and swim teams have some access to pool time at Ridley College, the Y.M.C.A. and Brock University (which is not perceived to be as convenient or affordable as a municipal pool would be) and thus partnerships could be explored with those providers;

- requests for another municipal gymnasium as Port Weller is the only true gym apart from Queen Elizabeth Community Centre (leased to the Boys and Girls Club) and Russell Avenue Community Centre that is simply a large room with limited ceiling height and structural limitations associated with the pillars in the programmable space;
- finding ways to make sure there are low to no cost opportunities available, and ensuring overall affordability through continuing to improve the City’s F.A.I.R. program, exploring ways to minimize the high cost of insurance, better transit, etc.
- exploring whether the City has a role in providing equipment-based fitness centres to provide a more affordable alternative to the private sector; and
- improving the way in which services are delivered and communicated to the public such as improvements to customer service, better marketing of facilities and services, training staff (accessibility training was noted in particular), better interdepartmental communication and reducing bureaucracy in processing permits and providing consistent advice, etc.

Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facility Users

A focus group was held on October 29th with seventeen representatives of local organizations using parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Key themes emerging from this session included:

- improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in parks through playground improvements, adding change

- rooms beside splash pads, accessible seating areas at sports fields and the beach;
- provide appropriate comforts within parks, trails and facilities such as seating areas, water stations, shade, etc. and providing amenities and facilities in parks that are oriented to the growing population of older adults;
 - making sure that parks in established areas, notably those that will densify over time, continue to address needs of the surrounding community;
 - ensure that passive recreational activities and facilities are emphasized, particularly within the trails system and natural areas such as the Eco-Park and Walker's Creek, and continuing to support the Urban Forestry Management Plan;
 - desire for more community allotment gardens within parks or creation of an urban farm, particularly in keeping with the "Garden City" brand and fostering social inclusion/equity;
 - requests for additional facilities such as hardball diamonds, off-leash areas, outdoor skating rinks and to facilitate the creation of a community tennis club to run programs and leagues;
 - greater Departmental focus on community development approaches, particularly to assist local stakeholders and community providers to become self-sustaining and successful, and more regular communication with stakeholders including a liaison to provide a single point of contact;

- less bureaucracy and red-tape when enabling volunteers to undertake works such as park clean-ups, and explore enabling more "Friends Of" models given the success of many such local organizations in taking an active role in stewardship; and
- general improvements requested to parks and sports fields, including more frequent garbage collection and cleaning municipal washrooms/change rooms, with a desire for better communication with groups in this respect.

General Community Interest Users

A focus group was held on October 29, 2014 with a broad cross-section of local recreation-oriented service providers using the City's recreation facilities. A total of nine people attended the focus group, highlighting the following key themes:

- there are a wealth of physical assets in St. Catharines consisting of active and natural parks, the pier and waterfront, quality trails and facilities, etc.;
- improve accessibility of parks for children and caregivers with disabilities, through visual markings, surface treatments, removal of steps and curbs – while new parks seem to be satisfactory in this respect, it is time to look at renewal of existing parks through the accessibility lens;
- a stated imbalance of recreation facilities from a geographic distribution perspective, with the west and north ends most frequently noted as gap areas for services in general;



- request for a second indoor pool, with a stated preference for an Olympic regulation pool, to improve the overall level of service relative to other communities;
- requests for additional facilities including a municipally-run fitness centre, indoor walking track, outdoor rinks, and gymnasium;
- desire for multi-use facilities rather than singular focused templates that have been historically provided;
- growing needs for older adult programs, along with requests for greater funding in order to make services viable and accessible to those on fixed incomes; and
- looking at how to keep volunteerism levels strong while the City still has a base of volunteers to draw from; and
- exploring partnerships with other parties to deliver facilities and services aimed at improving the overall physical activity levels in St. Catharines.

5. User Group Questionnaire

A self-administered online User Group Questionnaire was initiated in September 2014. The City sent out a web link to the questionnaire to over 800 local and regional stakeholders who utilize St. Catharines' parks and recreation facilities. The survey was open for a five week period during which City Staff followed up multiple times with major users of municipal facilities to encourage their participation.

A total of 46 questionnaires were received. By identifiable category, arena users accounted for the largest portion of the respondents (16 groups or 35%), followed by sports field users

(10 groups), arts and cultural groups (7 groups). Other groups spanned aquatics, parks and trail users, and other community providers and institutions. The following is a listing of all groups submitting a survey for the Master Plan, followed by a summary of key findings collected from the questionnaires.

- Ballhockey.com
- Brock Badgers Ringette Club
- Carousel Players
- Choralis Camerata
- Chorus Niagara
- Department of Dramatic Arts, Brock University
- Dirty Runner Productions
- Dunlop Drive Seniors Recreational Club
- Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park
- Friends of Walker's Creek
- Garden City Aquatic Club
- Garden City Minor Hockey Association
- GHL Niagara Beginners Coed Hockey
- Greater Niagara Baseball Association
- Greening Niagara
- International Silver Stick
- Islamic Society of St. Catharines
- Kiwanis Hockey League
- Kiwanis Select Hockey
- Niagara Bauer Hockey Challenge & Niagara Hockey Summer League
- Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre
- Niagara Grape and Wine Festival
- Niagara Metros "AAA" Major Baseball Club
- Niagara Regional Slo-Pitch League - Men's & Coed
- Niagara Sport & Social Club

- Niagara Sport Commission
- Niagara Varsity Football Club
- PALZ
- Players Hockey League
- Port Dalhousie Works Committee
- Rankin Cancer Run
- Ridley College
- Sara Bauer Academy
- St Catharines Jets Soccer
- St Catharines CYO Minor Hockey Association
- St. Catharines Athletics Jr A Lacrosse Club
- St. Catharines Club Roma Soccer
- St. Catharines Community Tennis Club
- St. Catharines Concord Soccer Club
- St. Catharines Female Hockey Association
- St. Catharines Junior B Falcons
- St. Catharines Minor Baseball Association
- St. Catharines Minor Hockey School
- St. Catharines Recreational Skate
- St. Catharines Senior Cobras Baseball
- Suitcase in Point Theatre Company

Expanding Programming and Services

A majority of responding user groups (72%) indicated that they expect to expand the scope of their programs and/or services over the next three to five years, and suggests that a number of groups envision growing demands for quality parks and recreation facilities in St. Catharines. While no groups expected to reduce their scope of services, 22% indicated that they expect no changes to their scope of services.

Of the groups that identified expanding the scope of their programs and/or services, 85% indicated that they have the capacity to accommodate additional community demand/interest for their services. 12% of groups identified that they were not and 3% of groups were unsure. Groups who identified that they are unable to accommodate additional interest indicated that they are unable to expand due to barriers including the lack of regular ice time, the need to provide lit beach volleyball courts, and limited support/resources required to operate.

Locations of Play

Over half (54%) of user groups reported regular use of facilities outside of St. Catharines, generally reflecting the regional focus of many organizations though a number of groups also stated that they ventured outside of the City to access additional or more convenient facility time slots, or to access services presently not available in St. Catharines. Communities most frequently mentioned included Niagara Falls, Thorold, and Welland largely for arenas and indoor sports fields (use of the Gale Centre and Youngs Sportsplex were commonly stated), while Ridley College's facilities also received use. On the other hand, 39% of user groups indicated that they only use recreation facilities located within the City of St. Catharines.

Facility Design & Distribution

The majority (59%) of user groups indicated that the design of St. Catharines' recreation facilities meets the needs of their organization. Conversely, facility design was not optimal for 17% of groups while 24% were indifferent or unsure about the design of facilities that they used. As an example, soccer groups articulated difficulties in delivering programs arising out of the Ontario Soccer Association's long-term player development



model which requires smaller fields, stating that the City's fields or field lining practices were not conducive to younger age groups (where five versus five or nine versus nine play is now mandated). Sports field users as a whole also mentioned the need for broad improvements related to turf maintenance, additional amenities (e.g. lighting), and more frequent garbage collection.

About half of responding user groups (52%) were also satisfied with the distribution of St. Catharines' recreation facilities. One-quarter of user groups were unsatisfied and 9% were neutral (13% were unsure).

Access to Facilities

Nearly half (46%) of user groups indicated that they were satisfied with their ability to access recreation facilities at desired times throughout the week. Conversely, just over one third of groups (35%) were dissatisfied with their ability to access facilities when they wanted, while 20% were either indifferent or unsure.

However, nearly half of user groups (48%) also requested additional access to existing recreation facilities in St. Catharines, largely to accommodate growing participation or to expand the scope of their programming. Arena users, in particular, noted that they require additional access to prime ice times especially with the removal of the Haig Bowl from the supply. On the other hand, 39% of responding groups indicated that they did not foresee the need to book additional time in municipal facilities (2% were unsure and 11% not applicable).

Providing New Recreation Facilities

Nearly two-thirds of user groups (61%) reported that they anticipate the need for new recreation facilities to support growth and to support new program opportunities, while 26% of groups said they did not (13% of groups were unsure). Examples of facilities mentioned as pressing needs by the groups included, in no particular order:

- Additional sports fields, particularly an indoor artificial turf venue;
- Ice pads, especially if the City eventually decides to decommission Garden City Complex and/or a single pad arena;
- An indoor pool, gymnasium, and multi-use community centre (which could presumably accommodate such indoor recreation facilities);
- Affordable and/or improved venues for arts and cultural programming; and
- More parks, trails and an off-leash dog park.

43% of groups stated that they were willing to contribute to the development or operation of new or expanded recreation facilities through partnerships with shared resources or responsibilities (42% of willing groups), followed closely by fundraising (39%). Other solutions included payment of higher rental fees (13%) or other options (5%) such as seeking funding or partnerships from senior level government or private organizations. 34% of groups indicated that they were unwilling or unable to contribute financially towards new facilities (23% of groups were unsure).

Volunteers and Additional Supports

Approximately 59% of user groups indicated that their organization is able to attract enough volunteers, while 13% of groups indicated that they were not. 20% of groups were neutral and 9% of groups indicated “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”. These results suggest that the ability for user groups to attract volunteers is not a pressing issue.

When user groups were asked if their organization could benefit from additional supports from the City, 39% of groups identified that they would benefit from additional supports. User groups indicated that they would benefit from a range of supporting opportunities such as additional funding, assistance with marketing programs, coordinating between groups to leverage resources, providing sports equipment, more affordable rental costs, enhanced front-line customer service, and improved facility maintenance. One third (33%) of groups indicated that they did not require any municipal support while 28% of groups were either unsure or the question was not applicable to them.

6. Interviews with Key Project Informants

Interviews were held in January 2015 with members of Council, City and Library Staff, and various agencies (e.g. educational institutions, arts and cultural sector representatives, regional sport and recreation providers, etc.) operating in St. Catharines. Due to the confidential nature of these interviews, statements attributable to specific individuals were not reproduced but were explored in the context of the master planning assessments, where appropriate.

7. City Staff Workshops

Two workshops were held with City Staff on November 19, 2014. The first workshop was held with front-line Staff who have the most frequent and direct contact with the community, while the second workshop was held with supervisory and management level staff. The workshops focused on: the Departmental vision and mandate; strengths, challenges and opportunities associated with support services, Department programs, and facilities and assets; key priorities for the future; and ways to measure success. In order to ensure maintain confidentiality of comments provided by Staff, the discussions were documented for internal use by the Consulting Team. Ideas and opinions will be considered, as appropriate, through the Master Plan’s facility and service delivery assessments.

8. Community Open Houses

Two community open houses were held during the afternoon and evening of February 18, 2015. A total of 30 people signed in though total attendance was slightly higher after accounting for persons not signing in, as well as attendance by a number of City Councillors and Staff. The open houses provided residents with the opportunity to engage members of the Consulting Team and Senior Steering Committee in discussing the Draft RFPMP prior to its finalization. In addition to verbal discussions, written feedback was provided through dozens of comment sheets provided at the Open Houses along with email submissions received after the Draft Master Plan was posted on the project’s website.



Generally speaking, those attending the Open Houses expressed their support for the Draft Master Plan and noted an appreciation for how many facilities and services were assessed. Broad themes arising through the afternoon and evening discussions included:

- One of the most prevalent and recurring themes of the sessions was a desire for the City to invest in a broader range of recreational facilities and programs oriented to a wider set of ages, interests, incomes and abilities.
- Often, the above noted theme was prefaced with a statement that the City provides arenas with far more resources relative to other recreational interests. Many people expressed a sentiment that investments in the parks and recreation system must be much more balanced, and reflect the priorities of a broader set of ages, interests, abilities and incomes. There were persons in attendance who supported further investments in the local arena system but comments provided verbally and through comment sheets were more heavily weighted to reducing investments in the City's arenas, questioning whether the City requires the number of ice pads that it currently provides, and making arena operations more cost-effective (e.g. reducing operating hours during low use times at most arenas and shift usage in those times to the quad pad arena instead).
- Often, the above noted theme was prefaced with a statement that the City provides arenas with far more resources relative to other interests and priorities reflective of the broader community, which has resulted in unbalanced provision. There were persons in attendance who supported further investments in the local arena

system but comments provided verbally and through comment sheets were more heavily weighted to reducing investments in the City's arenas (including closure of an ice pad) and being more cost-effective (e.g. reducing operating hours during low use times at most arenas and shift usage in those times to the quad pad arena instead).

- Requests for more programs and facilities for older adults and seniors residing in St. Catharines, usually stated on the basis that the population is aging and that there are gaps (real or perceived) in funding for the 55+ market relative to many organized sports.
- A need to augment the City's trails systems, particularly through wayfinding and provision of on and off-road bicycle routes. Regular formal updates of the Parks Policy Plan were also requested since a comprehensive assessment of the parks and trails system was not included as part of the RFPMP's terms of reference.
- Requests were received for higher quality outdoor facilities in terms of design, maintenance and renewal. Sports fields and multi-use courts were specifically referenced examples of which included a request for a ball diamond complex (i.e. at least two diamonds on one site) designed for younger age divisions while another comment was received regarding the antiquated state of many tennis and basketball courts.
- General agreement that splash pads would be a cost-effective and modern way to meet outdoor aquatic demands in each ward, referencing the high level of use at the City's existing splash pads. There was support to retain

some outdoor pools on the basis that these facilities provide a different experience than indoor pools.

- A need to explore ways to optimize meeting rooms in arenas, community centres and other facilities to accommodate a broader range of arts and cultural uses. A specific comment was to ensure proper acoustics through room designs and conversions (to stop sounds coming from outside the rooms as well as to make sure sound within the rooms is sufficiently audible).
- A desire for greater cooperation between the City and School Boards to gain affordable, convenient access to school gymnasiums. This could reduce the need for the

City to build a new gym (recognizing that this would not serve daytime demands during the school year). Similarly, some responses suggested making use of surplus/closed schools for parks and recreational use.

- Greater accessibility for persons with disabilities within parks and trails (e.g. stone pathways), which facilitates greater movement and usage in these areas for persons with restricted mobility.
- Involving residents more in planning and design processes when developing parks and recreation facilities and services at the neighbourhood/community level.