Cobourg
Ontario • Canada

Parks and Recreation

Master Plan

Final Draft

June 19, 2026

thinc.

mehak, kelly & associates.

oracle poll RESEARCH

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that the Town of Cobourg is located in the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

We respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations have been stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters, and that today remain vigilant over their health and integrity for generations to come. In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we acknowledge that these treaties have not always been honoured, and often they've been broken. We also acknowledge that we are all a part of building good relations.

We are all Treaty People.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Anne McCaughey, Chair
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- Joey Hatem
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 BACKGROUND 11

1.1 Introduction And Purpose 11

Scope 11

What This Plan Is 11

What This Plan Is Not 11

Previous Work 12

1.2 Context 13

Geographic Context 13

Land Use Context 13

Development Context 15

Planning & Policy Context 16

Socio-Demographic Context 17

Overview 17

Current Characteristics 17

Future Characteristics 19

1.3 Comparator Communities 21

1.4 Process And Engagement 23

Workplan 23

Community Consultation 24

Initial Engagement 24

Subsequent Engagement 27

2.0 PARKS & OPEN SPACES 29

2.1 Existing Inventory 29

Current Parkland Provision 32

Parkland Classification System 33
Park Design Directions 38
Parkland Distribution 50
Gap #1: Central Cobourg 53
Gap #2: North-Western Cobourg 54
Gap #3: Northern Cobourg 55
Gap #4: North-Eastern Cobourg 55
Gap #5: Central-East Cobourg 56
2.2 Future Needs & Directions 57
Community Feedback 57
Acquiring New Parkland & Funding Park Improvements 58
Future Service Levels 58
Parkland Dedication & Cash-In-Lieu 58
Development Charges 62
Size Requirements for New Park Features 62
Comfort, Safety & Inclusivity 64
Accessibility 64
Public Health & Parks 64
Drinking Water 67
Shade & Shelter from Sun and Rain 67
Washroom Access 68
Maintenance 72
Ecology & Environment 74
Stormwater Management 74
Sustainable Environment Policy 75
Naturalization 76
Shoreline Protection 77
Park and Play Amenities 79

Trails 79
Playgrounds 87
Splash Pads & Water Play 92
Skate Parks 95
Basketball Courts 98
Beach Volleyball Courts 99
Disc Golf 100
Outdoor Fitness Equipment 101
Outdoor Rinks 102
Outdoor Gathering & Event Spaces 103
Gardens 104
Water Access Points 108
2.3 Sites For Special Consideration **111**
Cobourg Dog Park 111
Victoria Park Campground 113
Overview 113
Previous Recommendations 114
New Recommendations 114
117 Durham Street 118
3.0 RECREATION FACILITIES **120**
3.1 Introduction **120**
3.2 Indoor Facility Requirements **121**
Ice Pads 122
Ice Pad Use and Estimated Future Requirements 123
Community Interest and Proposed Directions 125
Gymnasiums 126
Gymnasium Use and Estimated Future Requirements 127

Community Interest and Proposed Directions *127*
Multi-Purpose Space 129
Multi-Purpose Space Use and Estimated Future Requirements *130*
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *132*
Curling Rink 133
Arts Spaces 134
Indoor Pool 134
Indoor Artificial Turf 135
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *135*
Other Indoor Recreation Facilities 136
3.3 Outdoor Facility Requirements 137
Ball Diamonds 138
Ball Diamond Use and Estimated Future Requirements *139*
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *140*
Rectangular Fields 141
Field Use and Estimated Future Requirements *142*
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *145*
Racquet Courts: Sinclair Park 147
Court Use and Estimated Future Requirements *147*
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *148*
Racquet Courts: Delanty Park 149
Court Use and Estimated Future Requirements *149*
Community Interest and Proposed Directions *150*
Lawn Bowling Green 151
Outdoor Pool 152
Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities 153
3.4 Improvements To Existing Facilities 154
Indoor Facilities 154

Outdoor Facilities 155
Assessment & Directions 156
3.5 CCC Campus Planning 157
4.0 PROGRAMS & EVENTS 160
4.1 Programs Context 160
Municipal Supply 160
YMCA Northumberland 161
Other Program Providers 161
Community Feedback 163
Youth Activities & Third Spaces 164
Analysis of Existing Provision 165
New & Emerging Program Trends 165
4.2 Community Events Context 168
Current Supply 168
Community Feedback 168
Analysis of Existing Provision 169
New & Emerging Event Trends 169
4.3 New Opportunities for Recreation Activities in Cobourg 171
Active Aging 171
Youth Spaces & Activities 171
Pop-Up Tournaments 171
Ccc Teen Takeover 172
Off-Site Excursions 172
"Missing Middle" Programming 173
Social Sports Leagues 173
Bite-Sized Workshops 173
Equipment Lending Library 174

Park Crawls & Scavenger Hunts 174
Paws In The Park *175*
Roll and Stroll Route *176*
Global Cobourg Cultural Crawl *176*
Geocache Tour *176*
Winter Programs & Events 177
Welcome to Winter *177*
Winter Wellness Weekends *177*
Newcomer Inclusion 179
"Taste Of Home" Community Kitchen Series *179*
Tape-Ball Cricket Game *179*
Northumberland Night Market *179*
Global Cinema Series *180*
5.0 SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM 182
5.1 Introduction 182
5.2 Municipal Organization 182
Role of the Municipality 182
Committees of Council 187
5.3 Volunteers 187
Parks and Recreation Volunteers in Cobourg 187
Enhanced Support to Volunteers 187
Volunteer Support Policies 189
Municipal Community Grants *189*
Community Group Affiliation *189*
5.4 Levels of Service 191
Ongoing Maintenance and Operations 191
Managing Demand for Access to Facilities 193

Capital Investment 193
Storage Policy 193
Food Services 194
5.5 Partnerships & Agreements 195
Existing Agreements 195
MOU Between the Town of Cobourg and the Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club 195
Commercial Lease Amendment Agreement Between the Town of Cobourg and the West Northumberland Curling Club 195
Lease Renewal Agreement Between the Town of Cobourg and the Cobourg Yacht Club 196
Lease Agreement Between the Town of Cobourg and theCobourg Farmers Market 196
Agreement Between the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority and the Town of Cobourg 196
Lease Agreement Between the Town of Cobourg and the Northumberland Soccer Club 196
Future Agreements 197
Agreement Between the Town of Cobourg and the Northumberland YMCA 197
Reciprocal Use Agreements with School Boards 197
Partnerships and Collaborations 197
Climate Action Partnerships 198
5.6 Financing Service Provision 199
User Fees And Contributions 199
Revenue Generation 201
Advertising 201
Naming Rights 201
Program/Event Sponsorship 201
Amenities 201
Donations 202
Facility Rentals 202
5.7 Accessibility & Inclusion 202
Inclusion Policy 203
Rzone Policy 204

Inclusive Multi-Sport Court 205
5.8 Service Planning & Evaluation 206
Engaging Other Service Providers 208
6.0 IMPLEMENTATION 209
6.1 Important Considerations 209
6.2 Implementation Schedule 209

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Purpose

Scope

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a high-level, strategic roadmap designed to guide the Town of Cobourg over the next decade. It provides a framework for future decision-making, ensuring that parks, facilities, programs, and service delivery evolve to meet the community's changing needs..

WHAT THIS PLAN IS

- A strategic vision outlining long-term goals, priorities, and direction
- A framework to guide future capital investments, grant applications, partnerships, and agreements
- A reflection of broad community needs and trends in parks and recreation

WHAT THIS PLAN IS NOT

- A detailed site design or architectural blueprint for specific parks, plantings, trails, or facilities
- An operational maintenance schedule
- A finalized, approved budget

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan operates at a 30,000-foot level. It establishes the "what" and the "why" for Cobourg's recreational future, but the "how" and the "when" are determined through subsequent, detailed planning phases.

When reading this document, it is important to understand the typical lifecycle of a municipal project:

1. **Strategic Identification:** A general need is identified based on community feedback, usage data, site observations, and trends (e.g., "Cobourg needs a new skate park").
2. **Feasibility & Siting:** Town staff investigate potential locations, partnerships, environmental impacts, and high-level costs.
3. **Detailed Design & Consultation:** Before any shovels hit the ground, specific designs are created, and the community is consulted on the specific locations, designs, and features of that park or facility.
4. **Budget Approval:** The project is brought to Town Council for funding approval during the annual capital budget cycle.

This Master Plan represents **Step 1**. It ensures that as Cobourg grows, individual decisions are aligned with a unified, comprehensive vision.

PREVIOUS WORK

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the importance of parks and recreational spaces in personal and community wellbeing, economic development, and public health. There emerged an increased value for time spent outdoors in the natural environment.[1] The need to make use of existing assets and resources – to encourage residents and visitors of all age groups and abilities to use parks and facilities – has also been apparent.

Cobourg is navigating population growth, pressures as a regional hub, and demographic transitions as diverse newcomers and their families arrive to fill gaps in the workforce. This Plan builds upon relevant work undertaken in previous studies for the Town, including:

- Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2000)
- Parks Master Plan (2013)
- Recreation Strategy and Implementation Plan (2016)
- Waterfront User Needs Assessment (2018)

These documents were thoroughly reviewed to identify elements to be updated as well as new areas of focus to meet community needs. Any recreation spaces absent from this Parks and Recreation Master Plan were out of the project's scope and/or addressed in studies that remain valid.

[1] A cross-country survey by Park People showed that appreciation for parks and green spaces increased over the pandemic, and Canadians want to see expansion of parks-based community programming and events: https://ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2021/

1.2 Context

Geographic Context

Cobourg is located approximately 100 km east of Toronto in Northumberland County (Figure 1.1). It is a growing regional hub of the County, serving a catchment area of 50,000 people including residents of Hamilton Township and Port Hope.

Land Use Context

Figure 1.2 on the following page shows Cobourg's land uses according to the Official Plan (2018 Consolidation).[2] These include residential areas, employment lands, institutional lands, shopping nodes, mixed-use corridors, parks, and environmentally constrained areas. During the 10-year term of this Master Plan, the majority of growth is anticipated within the Secondary Plan areas designated in Figure 1.2.

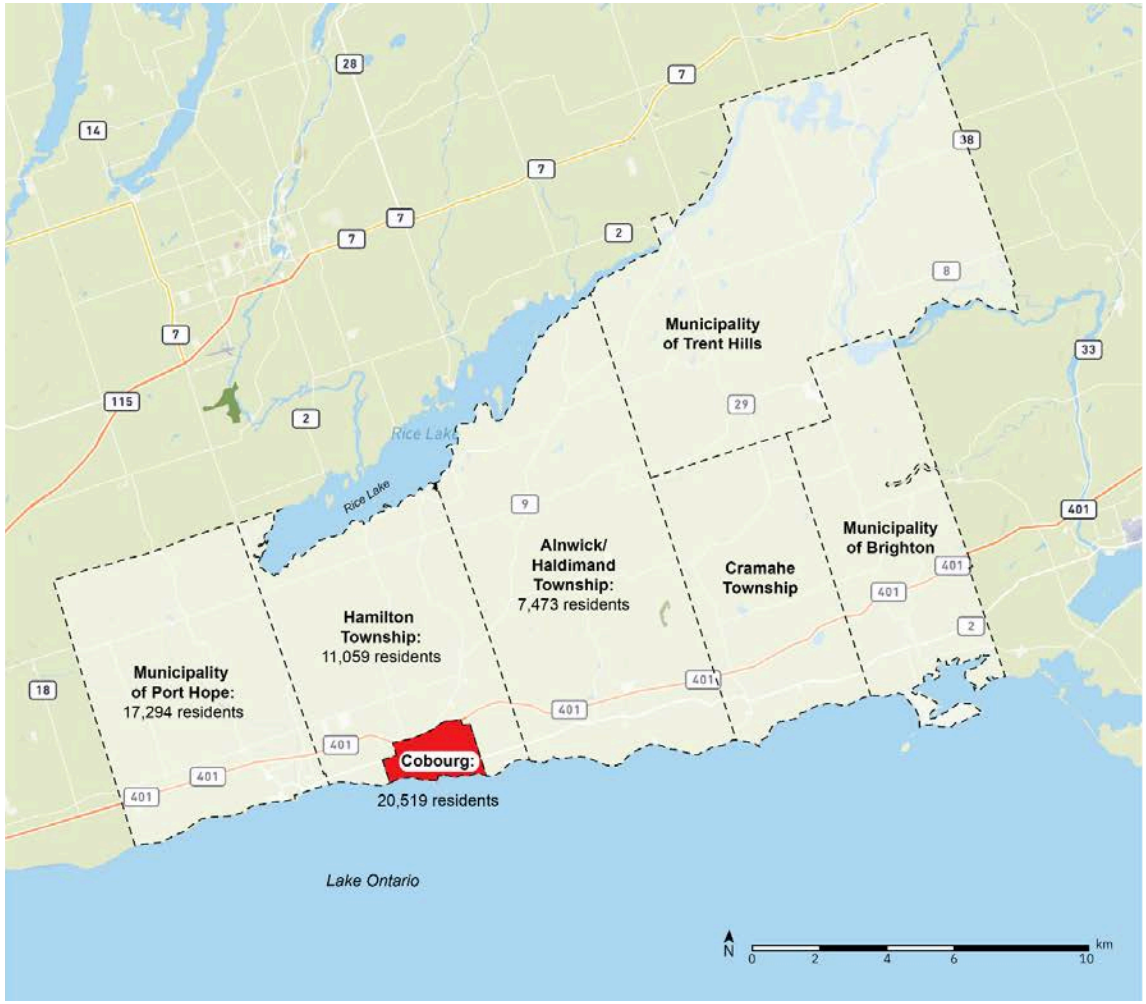

Figure 1.1: Cobourg and Surrounding Area

[2] At the time of writing, the Town is undertaking an update to the Official Plan.

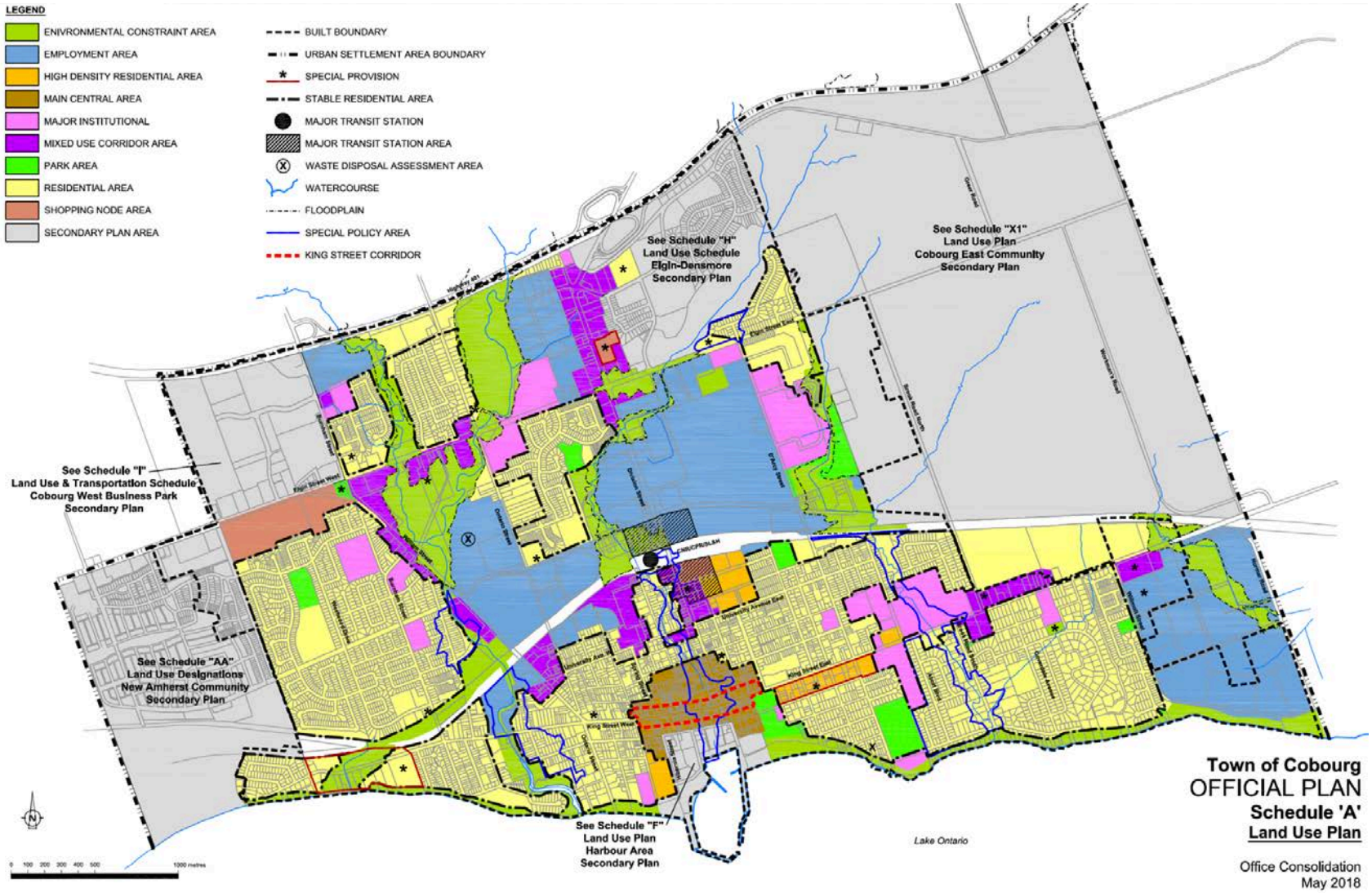

Figure 1.2: Land Uses in Cobourg (Official Plan Schedule 'A')

Development Context

As a compact municipality of 22.41 km^2, the vast majority of Cobourg's land area is already fully developed. Smaller, undeveloped tracts in Cobourg's western and northern corridors are transitioning into active residential subdivisions, visible in Figure 1.2 on the previous page. The Town's remaining undeveloped footprint is heavily concentrated in the eastern edge known as Cobourg East, which contains several hundred acres of greenfield land.[3]

Cobourg East is guided by the Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan, established in 2005 and updated in 2018. The Secondary Plan is being updated again to prepare for growth expected by 2051, ensuring that it is managed in a way that protects the natural environment, provides the necessary infrastructure and community services, and builds complete communities with appropriate densities, a range of housing types, and commercial and employment areas (Figure 1.3).

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been prepared in tandem with the Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan Update to align growth, connectivity, and recreation and leisure. **It is an ideal time to plan for parks and recreation as the Town approaches full build-out of its developable land.**

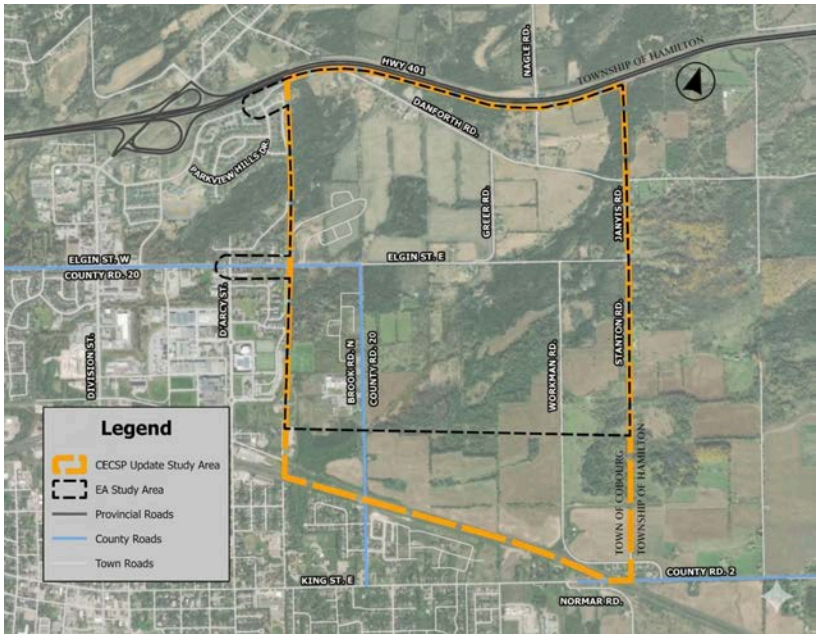

Figure 1.3: Cobourg East Area

[3] Greenfield land refers to previously undeveloped areas, such as agricultural fields or natural landscapes, that have never been built upon and are now slated for new construction or urban development.

Planning & Policy Context

The following plans, policies, studies, data, and reports were compiled to provide supportive contextual information for this Plan and its assessments:

- Official Plan (2018 Consolidation) & Secondary Plans
- Strategic Plan (2023-2027)
- Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan (2018 Update)
- Transportation Master Plan (2021)
- Development Charges Background Study (2021)
- Development Charges By-Law (2022) and Fee Schedule (2025)
- Cultural Master Plan (2019)
- Economic Development Annual Report (2022)
- Operational Plan (2025)
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2023)
- Asset Management Policy (2024)
- Asset Management Plan (2025)
- Downtown Vitalization Action Plan (2013)
- Economic Development and Venture13 Strategy & Action Plan (2023)
- Downtown Cobourg Master Plan (2016)
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Heritage Master Plan (2016)
- Climate Action Plan (2020)
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2020-2024)
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy
- Urban Forest Management Plan (2018-2037)
- Parks Master Plan (2013)
- Recreation Strategy and Implementation Plan (2018)
- Waterfront User Needs Assessment and Detailed Design (2018)
- GIS mapping and shapefiles
- 2026 capital and operating budgets
- Organizational chart and staffing structure
- User fees
- Building conditions assessments
- Agreements (leases, non-municipal providers, etc.)
- Municipal program registration and participation data
- Facilities schedules, rentals, usage

Socio-demographic Context

OVERVIEW

This section highlights current and projected populations, socio-demographic details, and population age distributions for the Town of Cobourg. The data was compiled from the following sources:

- Statistics Canada: 2021 Canadian Census
- Town of Cobourg: 2021 Development Charges Background Study (Watson & Associates) - Jan. 24, 2025 Update
- Ministry of Finance: Ontario Populations Projections 2021-2046

CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS

Snapshot

Table 1.1 shows a snapshot of Cobourg based on 2021 Census data. This includes a permanent population of 20,519 residents, which has increased by 5.6% since 2016 when there were 19,440 residents. Approximately 510 (2.4%) current residents identify as Indigenous.

Table 1.1: Cobourg Snapshot

	Town of Cobourg
Permanent Population (2021)	20,519
Land Area	22.41 km^2
Population Density	916/km^2
Average After-Tax Household Income (2020)	$44,040
Indigenous Identity[4]	525
Language Spoken Most Often at Home	English
Median Age	54.8 years

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

[4] Includes persons who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who report having membership in a First Nation or Indian band.

Household Distribution

Table 1.2 shows the distribution of households in the Town of Cobourg, where 32.4% are one-person households, 32.3% comprise couples without children, and 18.2% are couples with children.

Table 1.2: Household Composition in Cobourg

Household Type	#	% of Total
Couple Family[5] Households with Children	1,660	18.2%
Couple Family Households without Children	2,945	32.3%
One Parent Family Households	860	9.4%
Multigenerational Households	185	2.0%
One-Person Households	2,955	32.4%
Other[6]	520	5.7%
TOTAL	9,125	100%

Source: 2021 Canadian Census

Age Distribution

Table 1.3 shows the distribution of age groups in the Town of Cobourg compared to Northumberland County and the Province of Ontario. Approximately 28.2% of Cobourg residents are adults aged 20 to 49 years, while 17.1% (3,505 people) are youth aged 19 and under. Cobourg has large portions (32.8% or 10,035 people) of older adults aged 50 to 74 years and seniors greater than 75 years (16.8%). The median age is 54.8 years. In general, the Town's age distribution mirrors that of the County, although Cobourg has slightly smaller proportions of age groups younger than 64 years, and a larger proportion of seniors over the age of 75 than the County. Both Cobourg and Northumberland County have a greater proportion of older adults (65+) than the province.

Table 1.3: Distribution of Age Groups Compared to District and Province

Age Group	Town of Cobourg 2021 Population (#)	% of Total		
		Cobourg	Northumberland County	Ontario
0-4 years	765	3.7%	3.8%	4.8%
5-14 years	1,775	8.7%	8.9%	11.1%
15-19 years	965	4.7%	4.8%	5.7%
20-49 years	5,790	28.2%	29.5%	39.5%
50-64 years	3,190	15.5%	23.9%	20.9%
65-74 years	3,545	17.3%	17.0%	9.9%
75+ years	3,445	16.8%	12.1%	8.0%

Sources: 2021 Canadian Census

[5] Includes both married couples and common law couples

[6] Includes other household structures such as: multiple-census-family households, one-census-family households with additional persons, two-or-more person non-census-family households.

Language, Religion, Citizenship & Immigration

According to 2021 Census data, most Cobourg residents (91.2%) are native English speakers, with an additional 1.5% speaking French. Approximately 6.2% of residents (1,245 people) reported non-official languages as their mother tongue, with the largest proportions being German, Dutch, Arabic, Italian, Polish, Tagalog (Filipino), Spanish, and Portuguese. English is the language spoken most often at home by 97% of residents.

Just over half (55%) of Cobourg residents are Christian, while 43% have no religion and secular perspectives. Smaller proportions of religious groups also exist (approximately 75 Muslims, 60 Hindus, and 20 Jews).

As of the 2021 Census, Cobourg has 2,550 immigrants, with a majority (88%) arriving before 2010. Historically, immigrants came predominantly from the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands. Today, immigrants are increasingly arriving from non-European countries, with India among the top birthplaces. Approximately 5% of current residents are a visible minority such as Black, South Asian, and Filipino.

Younger, Diverse Newcomers

While Cobourg's overall median age is a very high 54.8 years, the median age of its visible minority population is significantly lower, hovering around the mid-30s. For example, the median age of the South Asian demographic in Cobourg is 31.4 years. These statistics indicate that the diverse newcomers arriving in Cobourg are primarily working-age professionals and young families, helping to fill labour gaps in healthcare, retail, and services while also driving the slight rebound in the Town's younger population.

FUTURE CHARACTERISTICS

Cobourg is at a transition point, balancing a predominantly older, established population with an urgent need to welcome new families and immigrants to sustain the local workforce.

Future Population

Table 1.4 shows the residential development forecast for the Town of Cobourg over a 20-year period to 2041. This includes an increase of approximately 393 new people each year.[7]

Table 1.4: Cobourg's Residential Growth Forecast

Year	Population
Mid 2026	21,856
Mid 2031	23,936
Mid 2041	28,135

Source: 2021 Development Change Background Study (Watson & Associates) Table 3-1

Figures Used For Assessments:

Based on these forecasts, it is calculated that the Town's population will be 25,901 at the 10-year term of the Master Plan in 2036.

[7] Industrial growth such as the new nuclear generating station confirmed in Port Hope will also likely add to Cobourg's population growth as workers and their families look for homes in Northumberland County.

Future Households

Table 1.5 shows the forecast of household growth by unit type over a 10-year period to 2031, based on the 2024 Development Charges Background Study. Almost half of the 1,870 new dwellings (48.9%) will be medium-density multiple units such as townhouses and duplexes. Most new development (71%) will be in the Cobourg East Serviced Area.

Table 1.5: Forecast of Household Growth by Housing Unit Type (2021-2031)

Dwelling	# of New Housing Types (2021-2031)	Proportion of Total
Singles & Semi-detached	507	25.7%
Multiples (e.g., townhouses, duplexes)	964	48.9%
Apartments	499	25.3%
TOTAL	**1,970**	**100%**

Source: 2024 Development Charges Background Study (Hemson Consulting Ltd.) - Appendix A

Future Age Distribution

Table 1.6 repeats the 2021 age distribution in Northumberland County and shows the County's projected age distribution in 2031, at the halfway point of the Plan's term, and in 2036 at the end of the Plan's term. It is anticipated that the Town of Cobourg will continue to mirror that of the County. Over the term of this Plan, it is expected that the proportion of adults aged 20 to 49 years will increase, along with decreases in older adults aged 50-74 years and an increase in seniors aged 75 years and older.

The proportion of children and youth aged 19 years and younger will roughly remain the same over time. Seniors over 65 years will comprise one third (34%) of the County.

Table 1.6: Projected Age Distribution in Northumberland County

Age Group	2021 Population		Projected 2031 Population		Projected 2036 Population	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
0-4 years	3,405	3.8%	3,466	3.3%	3,575	3.3%
5-14 years	7,980	8.9%	8,415	8.1%	8,246	7.6%
15-19 years	4,275	4.8%	4,680	4.5%	4,725	4.4%
20-49 years	26,345	29.5%	32,460	31.2%	33,760	31.1%
50-64 years	21,345	23.9%	17,598	18.9%	16,373	19.1%
65-74 years	15,155	17.0%	16,630	16.9%	18,041	15.1%
75-84 years	7,810	8.7%	13,089	12.6%	14,543	13.4%
85+ years	3,045	3.4%	4,642	4.5%	6,6464	6.1%
TOTAL	**89,360**	**100%**	**104,001**	**100%**	**108,342**	**100%**

Sources: 2021 Canadian Census, Ontario Populations Projections 2021-2046

1.3 Comparator Communities

In this Plan, seven Ontario municipalities serve as comparators for the Town of Cobourg:

- City of Brockville
- Town of Collingwood
- City of Owen Sound
- Town of Wasaga Beach
- Municipality of Port Hope
- Town of Midland
- Town of Amherstburg

Table 1.7 on the following page outlines each community's population, population density, median age, geography and attractions, and parks and recreation and compares them to Cobourg. As outlined in section 1.2, Cobourg's current population is 20,519 with a density of 916 residents/km^2 and an estimated population of 25,901 in 2036.

These seven communities were selected as benchmarks because they balance a similar population size with comparable challenges.[8] Like Cobourg, they must build and maintain parks, beaches, and washroom facilities that exceed the needs of their permanent tax base due to the influx of seasonal visitors to their waterfront geography. They have older demographic profiles, with median ages that hover above the provincial average (41.6 years) close to Cobourg's (54.8 years).

Three of these communities are particularly comparable to Cobourg as they navigate growth, regional hub pressures, and demographic transition:

The **Town of Collingwood** (population: 24,811) serves as the primary regional and commercial hub for a larger catchment area (The Town of The Blue Mountains, Clearview, Wasaga). Its growth has accelerated from a retirement and vacation community to an influx of young families from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The **Town of Wasaga Beach** (population: 24,862) has traditionally been known as a retirement and summer tourist destination, but is now rapidly urbanizing with a demographic shift toward families who commute or work remotely.

The **Town of Midland** (population: 17,817) serves as the economic and service hub for a catchment including Penetanguishene, Tay, and Tiny. It is currently facing development pressures pushing up from Barrie and the GTA, transitioning from an older demographic to a mixed community. The Town has had to navigate regional cost-sharing agreements for its recreation facilities.

[8] The 2013 Parks Master Plan included five comparators: Collingwood, Owen Sound, Midland, Amherstburg, and Orillia. In this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the City of Orillia was not included as a comparator given its larger current population of 33,411.

Table 1.7: Municipal Comparator Analysis

Municipality	Population & Density (2021)	Median Age	Geography & Attractions	Comparability to Cobourg (Parks and Recreation Context)
City of Brockville	Population: 22,116 Density: 1,057/km^2	51.6 years	St. Lawrence River waterfront, Thousand Islands tourism, historic downtown, municipal marina, riverfront parks	Similar population size and density. Manages high-profile heritage waterfront, municipal marina, and waterfront parks catering heavily to the older demographic and seasonal boaters.
Town of Collingwood	Population: 24,811 Density: 748/km^2	50.8 years	Georgian Bay waterfront, ski resorts, extensive multi-use trail network, boating, and historic downtown	Permanent population swells during tourist seasons. Shares the challenge of providing local recreation facilities while managing heavy tourist traffic on the trail and waterfront assets.
City of Owen Sound	Population: 21,612 Density: 893/km^2	48.0 years	Georgian Bay waterfront, river valleys, waterfalls, extensive parkland, and regional hub status	Close match in both population and density. Serves as a regional recreational hub for smaller surrounding townships.
Town of Wasaga Beach	Population: 24,862 Density: 433/km^2	56.4 years	Georgian Bay waterfront, world's longest freshwater beach, provincial park integration	Manages massive summer beach tourism, requires scaling parks maintenance, waste management, and washroom facility supply.
Municipality of Port Hope	Pop: 17,294 Density: 62/km^{2*}	50.8 years	Lake Ontario waterfront, Ganaraska River, heritage downtown, beaches	Direct local benchmark, sharing regional context, climate, and Northumberland County demographic trends.
Town of Midland	Pop: 17,817 Density: 504/km^2	50.0 years	Georgian Bay waterfront, Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, boating/marinas, strong heritage tourism	Historic waterfront town with a significantly older population alongside a high-maintenance harbour and tourist waterfront.
Town of Amherstburg	Pop: 23,524 Density: 128/km^2	45.6 years	Detroit River waterfront, historic Fort Malden, Navy Yard Park, wine region	Significant heritage/waterfront tourism with high-profile, heavily manicured waterfront spaces (e.g., Navy Yard Park).

***** includes large rural ward

1.4 Process and Engagement

Workplan

The Town engaged the multidisciplinary consulting team of thinc design and Mehak, Kelly & Associates to develop the Plan. The project process spanned three phases from July 2025 to July 2026 and included the following tasks:

Phase 1: Current Context & Background Work

- Project Kick-off Meeting
- Data & Document Assembly
- Review of Previous Plan & Strategy
- Socio-demographic Profile
- Mapping & Inventories
- Project Team Meeting

Phase 2: Community & Stakeholder Engagement

- Representative Telephone Survey
- Council & Staff Interviews
- User Group Survey
- Project Team Meeting
- Site Tour & In-Person Community Workshop
- Seniors Focus Group
- Youth Focus Group
- Public Survey & Engage Cobourg Page
- Stakeholder Focus Groups/Interviews
- Parks & Recreation Task Force Meeting
- Engagement Summary: Presentation to Council

Phase 3: Assessments & Plan Development

- Project Team meeting
- Programs Assessment
- Parks & Open Spaces Assessment
- Recreation Facilities Assessment
- Service Delivery Assessment
- Preliminary Master Plan
- Project Team Meeting
- Draft Master Plan & Implementation Strategy
- Project Team Meeting
- Revised Master Plan & Implementation Strategy
- Parks & Recreation Task Force Meeting
- In-Person Community Workshop
- Engage Cobourg Online Feedback Period
- Project Team Meeting
- Final Master Plan & Executive Summary
- Parks & Recreation Task Force Meeting
- Presentation to Council

Community Consultation

The consulting team conducted a series of engagement activities to consult Council members, municipal staff, parks and recreation user groups, stakeholders, and residents/the general public.

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Preliminary engagement took place in Fall 2025 to understand the community's interests and priorities. An overview of the activities and demographics is presented below. Appendix A contains a detailed Consultation Summary Report.

Municipal Council & Staff

Between September 4 and October 9, 2025, the consulting team led virtual interviews with six members of Council and 15 Town staff:

- Mayor Lucas Cleveland
- Deputy Mayor Nicole Beatty
- Councillor Miriam Mutton
- Councillor Randy Barber
- Councillor Aaron Burchat
- Councillor Brian Darling
- Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer
- Brian Geerts, former Director of Community Services
- Jason Johns, Interim Director of Community Services
- Anthony Caruso, Manager of Long-Range Planning
- Joe Chartrand, Manager of Development & Engineering Services
- Jackie Chapman-Davis, Manager of Culture, Events & Tourism
- Lyndsay Aitken, Manager of Recreation
- Lyndsey Prevost, Recreation Coordinator
- Allison Greer, Recreation Coordinator
- Stu Dafoe, Manager of Parks
- Rick Cromlish, Horticulturalist
- Eddie Cork, Arborist
- Tyler Parker, Working Foreperson
- Jodi Ware Simpson, Administrative Assistant, Community Services

Municipal representatives shared their thoughts on parks and recreation services in Cobourg, including strengths and successes, challenges and barriers, long-term aspirations, and emerging trends and opportunities.

Parks & Recreation User Groups

Invitational Online Survey

An online survey was developed specifically for organized groups that use Cobourg's parks and recreation facilities. The link to participate was sent by invitation in October 2025 from municipal staff to 61 groups including sports leagues, clubs, and other associations. Follow-up emails and phone calls were made in January and March 2026. Surveys were completed by 39 representatives from 33 groups between October 24, 2025 and March 12, 2026. For the full list of participants in the user group survey and a summary of responses, see Appendix B.

Focus Groups

To better understand current recreation facility use and future needs, the consulting team conducted five virtual focus groups with ball field users, arena ice users, and outdoor courts users.

RESIDENTS

Online Survey & Engagement Tools

A dedicated page for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was created on the Engage Cobourg website in Fall 2025 with an overview of the project background, contact information for the team, and opportunities to share input. The online engagement tools included a quick poll, mapping exercise, and visioning wall of virtual sticky notes; in total, 241 contributions were received.

From October 2 to November 18, 2025, an online survey was available on the Engage Cobourg webpage for completion by any member of the public. A total of 471 fully completed surveys were received. As shown in Figure 1.4, online participants' household composition included couples with children (40.3% of respondents), couples without children (26.4%), multi-generational households (10.2%), and single adults (9.6%). Figure 1.5 shows survey respondents lived in the West End (28.5%), East End (26.4%), Central Cobourg (14.6%), and Downtown Area (14.3%), as well as in other municipalities in Northumberland County (16.2%). As seen in Figure 1.6 on the following page, participants' ages ranged, with the greatest representation from those aged 35-44 years (25.9% or 127 participants) and 65-74 years (22.6% or 111 participants).

It is important to note that the survey did not require every question to be answered. Thus, not all participants chose or were directed to answer all of the questions, and the total number of respondents per question varied from 63 to 492 respondents. The full online survey results are in Appendix C.

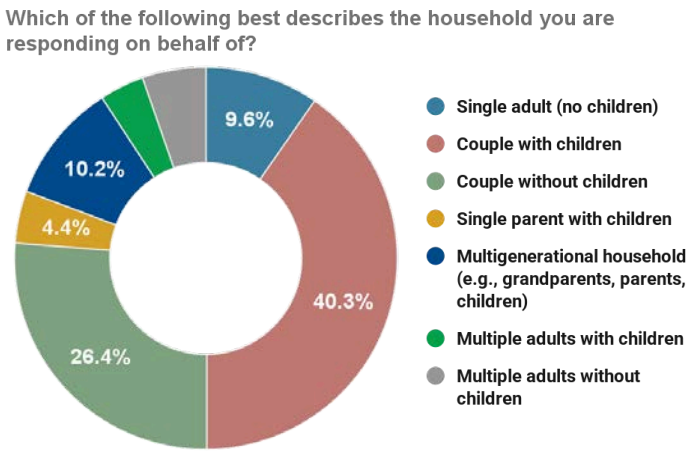

Figure 1.4: Online Survey Household Composition

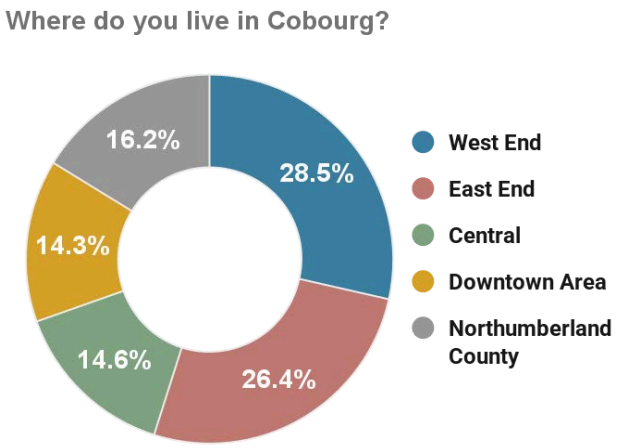

Figure 1.5: Online Survey Geographic Composition

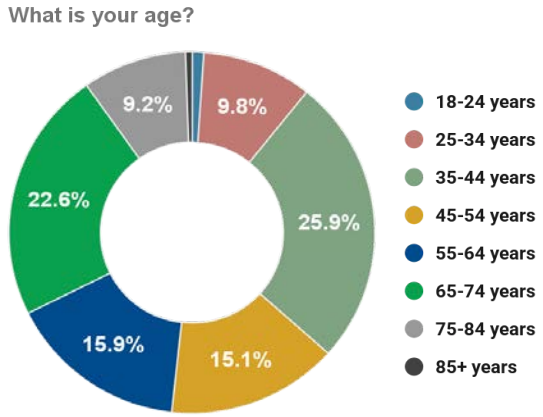

Figure 1.6: Online Survey Age Distribution

Household Telephone Survey

Between October 24 and November 5, 2025, a telephone survey was administered to 300 randomly selected households in Cobourg to capture a statistically representative sample of needs and interests in the community, including users and non-users of parks, facilities, and programs. The sample frame included landlines as well as cell phone-only households. Respondents were aged 18 years and older and asked to respond on behalf of themselves and members of their household. The telephone survey asked the same questions as the online survey.

The composition of telephone survey participants was somewhat different from the online survey. The telephone survey included slightly more couples without children (27.0%), slightly fewer couples with children (37.7%), and more single adults without children (17.7%) and with children (9.7%), as shown in Figure 1.7. Telephone survey participants were almost evenly split between Central Cobourg, East End, and West End, with the remaining 8.3% living Downtown (Figure 1.8), and a fairly well distributed age range between 25- to 74-year-olds (Figure 1.9 on the following page). The full results are in Appendix D.

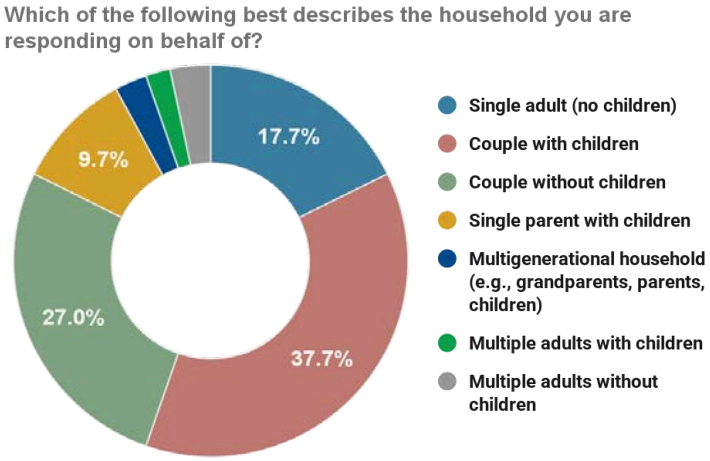

Figure 1.7: Telephone Survey Household Composition

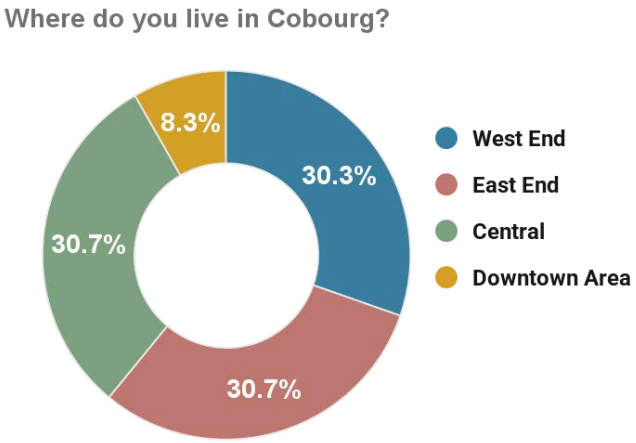

Figure 1.8: Telephone Survey Geographic Composition

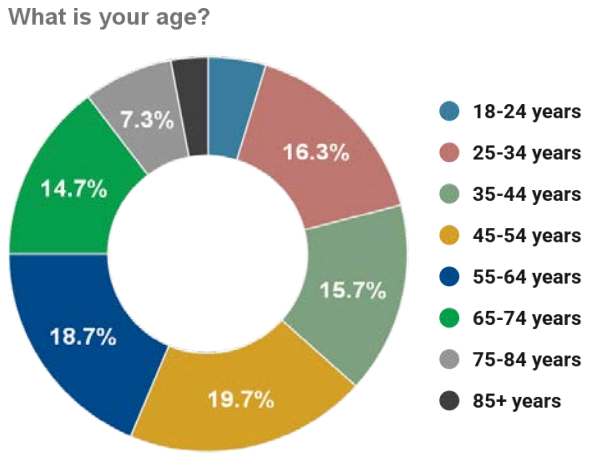

Figure 1.9: Telephone Survey Age Distribution

Figure 1.10: In-Person Community Workshop

Community Workshop

An in-person workshop was held on the evening of Thursday, October 30, 2025 at the Cobourg Community Centre and attended by 29 community members (Figure 1.10). Interactive panels invited conversation about the current context of parks and recreation services in Cobourg. Members of the consulting team answered questions and documented feedback.

Focus Groups

The project team held dedicated focus groups with youth and seniors on Thursday, November 13, 2025. At Cobourg Collegiate Institute, the team introduced the Master Plan project to 19 students in the Grade 12 Recreation and Healthy Active Living Leadership class. The youth completed a handout and shared their ideas for the future of parks and recreation in Cobourg, with a special focus on teen-friendly spaces and programs.

The seniors' focus group was promoted through posters and via the Seniors Activity Centre's e-newsletter, and held at the Cobourg Community Centre. There were two attendees. To capture additional feedback, staff posted questions inside the Seniors Activity Centre and provided a drop-box. One completed response was received in the two-week period.

SUBSEQUENT ENGAGEMENT

After draft recommendations were prepared in Phase 3 of the Master Plan, they were shared with the community for comments. An overview of activities during this engagement period is presented below.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Task Force

The project team presented the draft Master Plan and its recommendations to the Task Force at its May 19, 2026 meeting.

Engage Cobourg

The draft Master Plan, Executive Summary, and Appendices were posted on Engage Cobourg. From May 20-June 8, 2026, 348 pieces of feedback were received from 265 unique community members.

Youth Engagement

A class of grade 4/5 students at Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School reviewed the draft Plan as part of their Structures unit, wrote letters to Council sharing their ideas for creative playgrounds, and made models out of plasticine structures. Across the letters, the students placed a strong emphasis on inclusivity, frequently requesting wheelchair-accessible equipment, swings, and features specifically designed for children with disabilities. Ziplines were a particularly popular request (Figure 1.11) with students proposing multiple lanes to accommodate different needs, such as seated belts and wheelchair-accessible cars.

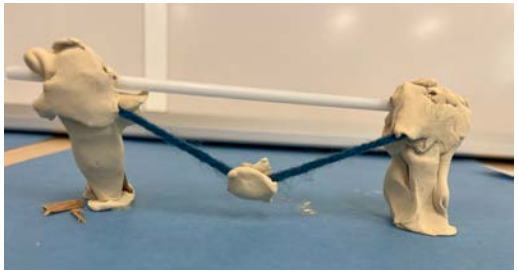

Figure 1.11: Zipline Playground Model

Emails

The project team received 18 emails from community members and user groups with their comments on the draft Plan.

Public Open House

On Monday, May 25, 2026 from 5:00-7:00 PM, a Public Open House was held at the CCC to share the draft Master Plan and its recommendations. Over 100 community members attended and a total of 117 comments were shared on the seven poster panels (Figure 1.12).

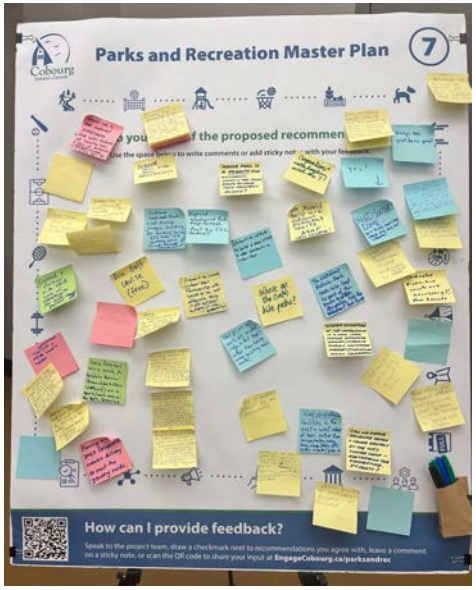

Figure 1.12: Public Open House Panel

After the consultation period concluded, the project team reviewed feedback with staff to confirm revisions to be made to the final version of the Plan.

2.0 PARKS & OPEN SPACES

2.1 Existing Inventory

The Town of Cobourg has 153.25 hectares of municipally managed parkland spread between 70 parks, along with 41.9 km of trails, 10.56 km of waterfront, and significant woodlands, cemeteries, and school board lands.

While this assessment focuses on the provision and distribution of municipally managed parkland and park amenities, it is important to recognize that Cobourg's broader parks and open space system extends beyond Town-owned lands. Contributing open spaces such as school board lands, cemeteries, environmental constraint areas, and non-municipal conservation areas complement the municipal park system and improve community access to open space and recreational opportunities. This broader system is summarized in Table 2.1 and illustrated in Figure 2.1 on the following page.

Table 2.1: Parkland and Open Space within the Town of Cobourg

Parkland and Open Space	Hectares
Municipal Managed Parkland (incl. GRCA[9]-owned conservation area and leased dog park)	153.25
Total Municipal Managed Parkland	**153.25**
Environmental Constraint Areas	176.43
Cemeteries	17.08
Total Other Municipal Open Space	**193.51**
School Board Lands (incl. parking lots and building footprints)	32.77
Total Non-Municipal Open Space	**32.77**
Grand Total	**379.53**

[9] Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority

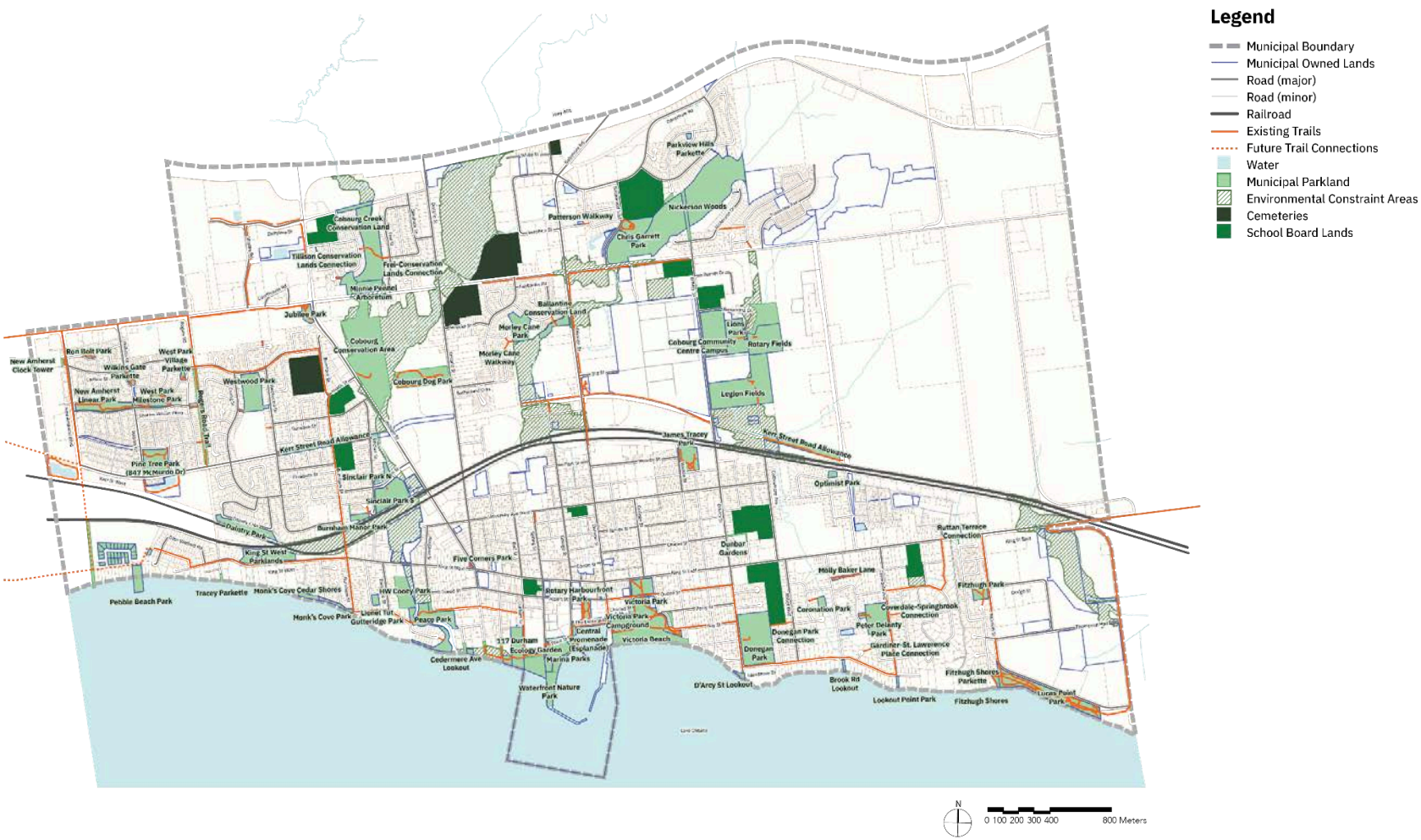

Figure 2.1: Cobourg's Total Parkland and Open Space Network[10]

[10] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg per GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002).

Across Cobourg's 70 municipal parks and open spaces, the following amenities are available for unscheduled, self-directed use:

- 50 passive green spaces
- 14 playgrounds
- 11 water access points
- 6 seasonal washrooms
- 3 gazebos
- 3 portable toilets
- 2 pavilions
- 2 ecology gardens
- 2 designated picnic areas
- 2 cenotaphs/memorials
- 2 drinking water fountains & water bottle fillers
- 1 community garden
- 1 outdoor rink
- 1 set of outdoor fitness equipment
- 1 accessible beach mat
- 1 boat launch ramp
- 1 small craft launch
- 1 dock
- 1 basketball court
- 1 skate park
- 1 splash pad
- 1 dog off-leash area

For a complete inventory of the Town's municipal parkland and open spaces, including their size and location, as well as large-scale copies of the mapping in this Plan, refer to Appendix E.

Figure 2.2: Cobourg Park Examples

Current Parkland Provision

Given its population of 20,519 residents and parkland total of 153.25 ha (incl. the GRCA-owned conservation area and leased dog park lands), Cobourg's current parkland provision rate is 7.5 ha per 1,000 residents. This is higher than guidelines once set by the former Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, which suggested a general standard of 4.0 ha of open space per 1,000 residents.

To further evaluate Cobourg's level of service for parkland provision, a comparative analysis was completed using the seven comparator municipalities introduced in Section 1.3.

As Table 2.2 shows, Cobourg holds a strong position in terms of parkland provision when compared to its benchmarking municipalities. With 7.5 ha per 1,000 residents, Cobourg significantly exceeds the group average of 5.6 ha. Its service level aligns with those of municipal peers, including Port Hope and Midland, which surpass Cobourg by just 0.1-0.3 hectares. Municipalities with historic waterfronts tend to carry higher municipal parkland ratios (7.0+ ha/1,000), as waterfront areas often require continuous public access along shorelines. This results in larger overall parkland acreages when compared to landlocked communities.

The 2013 Parks Master Plan originally identified a parkland level of service of 4.8 ha per 1,000 residents (including the Cobourg Creek Conservation Area). This jump in parkland provision indicates significant parkland acquisition since 2013 and highly effective planning as the Town has grown.

Table 2.2: Parkland Provision Analysis with Benchmark Municipalities

Municipality	Total Parkland (hectares)	Hectares per 1,000 residents
Municipality of Port Hope	134.1[11]	7.8
Town of Midland	136.2	7.6
Town of Cobourg	153.25	7.5
City of Owen Sound	156.5	7.2
Town of Collingwood	123.5	5.1
Town of Amherstburg	85.0	3.6
City of Brockville	69.0	3.1
Town of Wasaga Beach	79.5[12]	3.2

[11] Includes 78 hectares of naturalized open spaces such as conservation lands. Port Hope's total "active parkland" is approximately 56 hectares.
[12] Excludes Wasaga Beach Provincial Park (1,844.3 hectares)

Parkland Classification System

Cobourg's Parks Master Plan (2013) introduced an updated parkland classification system (p. 17), shifting from a traditional parks classification model based on park size, service area, and facilities to a more comprehensive, system-based approach. This framework established seven park types defined by character, function, primary and secondary facilities, and suitable locations.

The updated parks classification system proposed in this Plan builds on this original framework, refining it through four key lenses: coverage and service gaps, clarity and redundancy, metrics and standards, and missing information and dimensions.

This system is organized using three overarching levels of service (Regional, Town, and Neighbourhood), which establish standard service radii and minimum park sizes. Within these service levels, the six park types are defined by their service roles, character, core (mandatory) facilities, secondary (optional) facilities, and suitable locations. This Plan redacts Connector Parks[13] from the parkland classification system and dedication inventory (previously included as parkland in Cobourg's 2013 Parks Master Plan) and reclassifies them within the trail classification system (see Table 2.15), where they are more appropriately defined by their role as linear connections.

This updated framework closely aligns with the one introduced in 2013, while providing greater clarity and applicability. Cobourg's proposed new parks classification is outlined in Table 2.3, supported by a map in Figure 2.3.

[13] Connector parks outlined in the 2013 Cobourg Parks Master Plan include Patterson Walkway, Rogers Road Trail, Kerr Street Road Allowance, Ruttan Terrace Connection, Gardiner-St. Lawrence Place Connection, and Dunbar Gardens.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO1. Adopt the revised parkland classification system outlined in this Plan as the framework for future parks planning and design.

PO2. Merge the following Connector Parks into their adjacent park systems to improve clarity:
- Morley Cane Walkway to merge with Morley Cane Park
- Tillson-Conservation Lands Connection and Frei-Conservation Lands Connection to merge with Cobourg Creek Conservation Area
- Donegan Park Connection to merge with Donegan Park

PO3. Reclassify the following parks to better reflect their existing conditions and use:
- Cobourg Creek Conservation Land from Connector to Nature
- King St W Parklands from Connector to Nature

PO4. Remove Connector Parks as a park type and incorporate them into the Active Transportation and Trails classification.

Table 2.3: New Proposed Parks Classification System

Park Type	Service Role	Character	Core Facilities (Mandatory)	Secondary Facilities Examples (Optional)	Suitable Location	Parks Classified
Regional Destination parks serving the Town and beyond, with a high level of amenities and programming Service Radius - 4 km Minimum Size - 5 ha						
Athletic	Organized sport	- Open and level - Programmed for organized sport - Structured with defined activity areas - Designed for high use - Maintained - Clear sightlines	- Regulation sports fields - Spectator areas - Player amenities - Accessible pathways connecting all facilities - Washrooms/ changerooms - Parking and/or drop off area - Field lighting (where required) - Wayfinding/signage	- Concession/food services - Shade structure/pavilion - Playgrounds - Splash pad/water play - Skatepark or pump track - Multi-use courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball) - Fitness equipment - Walking/jogging loop - Picnic areas	- Large, unconstrained sites - Near arterial/ collector roads - Accessible to multiple neighbourhoods - Industrial or commercial areas - Buffered from residential	- Cobourg Community Centre Campus - Donegan Park - Legion Fields - Lions Park - Rotary Fields - Sinclair Park S - Westwood Park
Landmark/ Waterfront	Tourism and identity	- Lakefront, urban, and prominent - Active, social, and scenic - Highly accessible and connected - Strong views	- Promenade/ multi-use trail - Accessible pathways - Gathering/festival spaces (plazas, open lawn) - Seating and lookouts - Water access points - Commercial/retail - Water-based activity - Washrooms - Wayfinding/signage	- Concession/food services - Splash pad/water play - Marina/ boating facilities - Public art/landmarks - Playground - Fitness equipment - Seasonal features (skating) - Picnic areas - Lighting - Shade structure/pavilion	- Adjacent to the waterfront - Highly visible, central location - Connected to trail network	- Central Promenade (Esplanade) - Marina Parks - Victoria Beach - Victoria Park Campground

Park Type	Service Role	Character	Core Facilities (Mandatory)	Secondary Facilities Examples (Optional)	Suitable Location	Parks Classified
Town Parks serving multiple neighbourhoods, supporting daily recreation with a moderate level of amenities Service Radius - 2 km Minimum Size - 1 ha						
Nature	Natural	- Wooded, valley or stream corridor - Passive, habitat-focused - Low maintenance - Naturalized	- Gravel or wood fibre surface trails/boardwalks - Trailhead/access points - Seating/rest areas - Interpretive/ wayfinding signage - Environmental protection features - Naturalization	- Lookouts/viewing platforms - Boardwalk extensions or bridges - Outdoor classroom/ gathering node - Picnic areas (small scale) - Natural play area (logs, boulders) - Community gardens - Wildlife observation areas - Enviro-washroom - Public art/sculpture	- Within woodlands, valleys, or stream corridors - Areas with ecological value or constraints - Part of the natural heritage system - Buffered from urban development - Accessed via trails	- Cobourg Conservation Area[14] - Cobourg Creek Conservation Land - Five Corners Park - King St W Parklands - Lucas Point Park - Minnie Pennel Arboretum - Molly Baker Lane - Nickerson Woods - Peace Park - Pebble Beach Park - Pine Tree Park (847 McMurdo Dr) - Waterfront Nature Park
Civic/ Cultural	Social and cultural gathering	- Identity defining - Unique, inspirational, reflective of Cobourg - Social, organized, informative	- Plaza/gathering space - Seating - Accessible pathways - Public art/sculpture - Memorials - Interpretive signage	- Performance space/ stage - Themed play area - Horticultural display - Feature lighting - Seasonal features (markets, skating) - Shade structure/pavilion	- Central location within Town - Highly visible and prominent within the urban context - Integrated with civic, cultural, or commercial uses - Easily accessible	- Chris Garrett Park - Cobourg Dog Park - Jubilee Park - New Amherst Clock Tower - Rotary Harbourfront Park - Victoria Park

[14] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg; it is not a Town-owned asset. Management is guided by the GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002).

Park Type	Service Role	Character	Core Facilities (Mandatory)	Secondary Facilities Examples (Optional)	Suitable Location	Parks Classified
Neighbourhood Local parks within walking distance, providing basic amenities for everyday use Service Radius - 400 m Minimum Size - 0.25 ha						
Leisure	Daily use	- Open, green, and informal - Mix of lawn, trees, and amenities - Flexible, social, and family oriented - Unique to its area	- Accessible pathways - Playground - Open lawn/ flexible green space - Seating - Shade (trees/structures)	- Splash pad/water play - Multi-use courts (basketball, pickleball) - Small sport features (half-court, open play field) - Picnic areas - Shade structure/pavilion - Outdoor fitness equipment - Information kiosk - Public art/sculpture - Community gardens	- Located within residential neighbourhoods - Centrally positioned - Within walking distance of residents - Integrated with local streets/ pedestrian routes	- Brooke Meadows Parkette - Burnham Manor Park - Coronation Park - Daintry Park - Delanty Park - Fitzhugh Park - HW Cooey Park - James J. Tracey Park - Lionel Tut Gutteridge Park - Monk's Cove Park - Monk's Cove Cedar Shores (not assumed as of time of Plan) - Morley Cane - New Amherst Linear Park - Optimist Park - Parkview Hills Parkette - Ron Bolt Park - Sinclair Park N - West Park Milestone Park - West Park Village Parkette - Wilkins Gate Parkette
Lookout	Water front access	- Waterfront access - Clear entry/ transition - Movement - Strong views	- Connection to waterfront trail - Pathway to shoreline - Seating - Overlook, lookout	- Shade structure/pavilion - Bicycle parking - Public art/entry feature - Interpretive panels - Planting	- Located where streets or public routes meet the waterfront	- Brook Rd Lookout - Cedermere Ave Lookout - D'Arcy St Lookout - Fitzhugh Shores - Lookout Point Park - Tracey Parkette

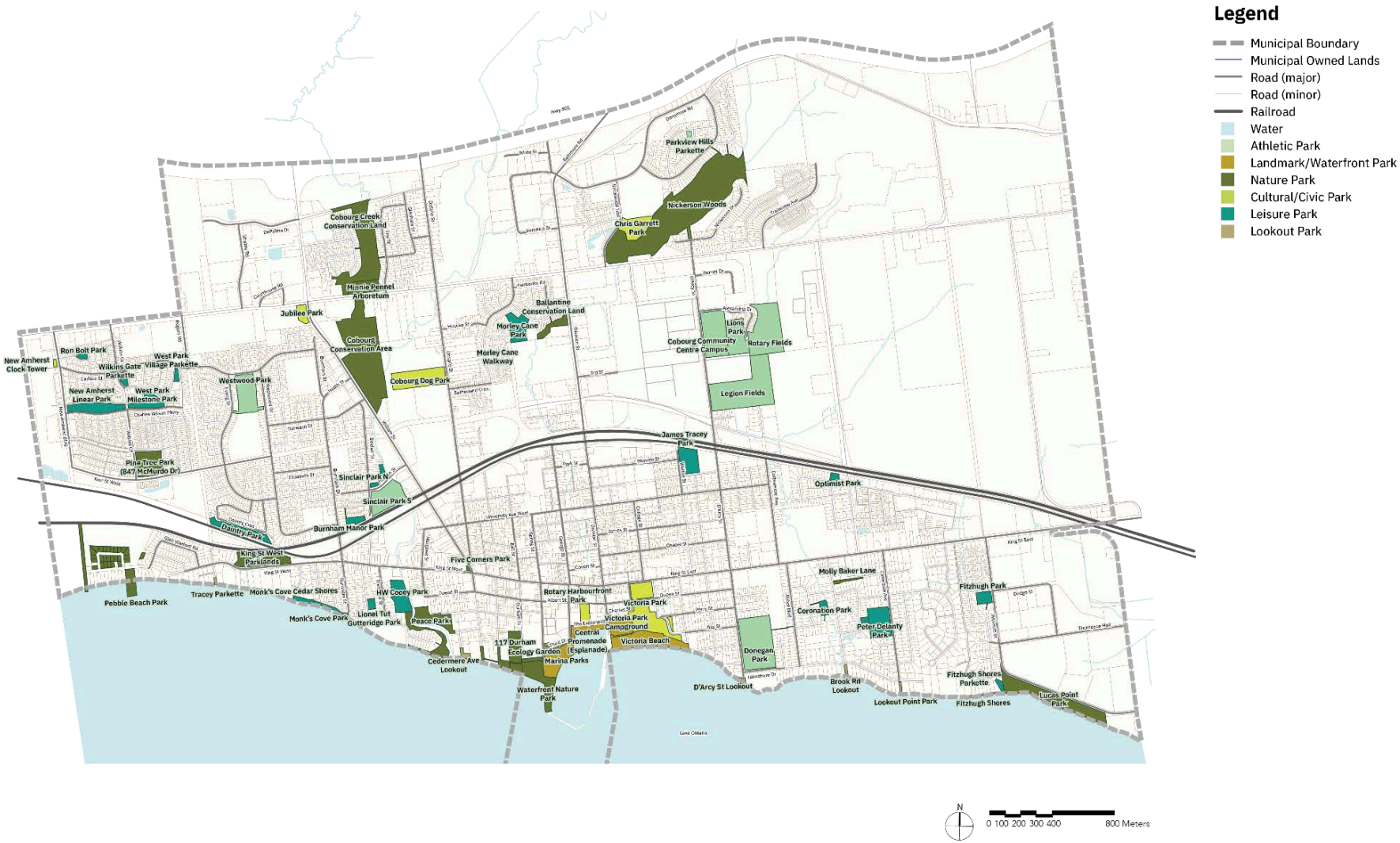

Figure 2.3: Cobourg's Parkland Re-classified[15]

[15] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg per GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002).

Figure 2.4: Park Types in Cobourg's Updated Parkland Classification System

PARK DESIGN DIRECTIONS

Design guidelines for each park type were originally established in Cobourg's 2013 Parks Master Plan. This section updates and expands upon those guidelines to support the future design, redevelopment, and ongoing improvement of parks across Town.

Each municipal park and open green space should have consistent signage identifying the name of the park using a clear, AODA compliant sign design that reflects the Town's brand and matches the name of the park on the Town's website. As a general rule, signage should be provided at all municipal park entrances, trail access points, throughout the sites as needed (e.g., directional signage, trail rule and regulations, no-dumping signage, no-parking signage), and along major routes. Municipal signage should be strategically placed so there is a clear hierarchy and graphic style/design for all types of signage including safety, wayfinding, and interpretive signage.

Design guidelines for each park type are described in further detail on the following pages. They build on existing standards while remaining flexible to allow for creative and contextual design, establishing a consistent baseline for quality and user experience. They are organized under the following categories: Location, Access, Pedestrian Circulation, Vehicular Circulation, Core Facilities, Secondary Facilities, Landscaping, and Signage.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO5. Use these design directions to guide the planning and redevelopment of Cobourg's parks.

Athletic Parks

These are large-scale green spaces whose primary function is active recreation. They serve both the Town and the surrounding region and are designed to accommodate multiple sports and activities. Programmed for leagues, tournaments, and community events, Athletic Parks support high levels of use and contribute to the Town's recreational opportunities.

Table 2.4: Athletic Park Design Directions

Direction	Guideline
Location	Located on large, flat, accessible sites with strong connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and arterial/collector roads, and buffered from residential uses (minimum 15 m setback, planting, or fencing).
Access	Should have a minimum 50 m street frontage, with frontage on two streets where possible. Provide multiple access points (2 minimum) for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles, with direct connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, trails, and transit.
Pedestrian Circulation	3.0 m primary routes and 2.0 m secondary routes connecting all facilities and to the active transportation network. Durable, accessible, well-drained surfaces (concrete, asphalt). Provide bike parking along accessible routes.
Vehicular Circulation	On-site parking to be located to minimize impacts and should be designed to accommodate peak demand, be well-lit, and located near primary activity areas. Include "green" overflow parking areas to accommodate demand when necessary.
Core Facilities	• **Regulation Sports Fields** ○ Meet regulation standards and support multi-sport use ○ Organized for efficient scheduling and tournament play ○ Include appropriate safety buffers ○ Durable, well-drained surfaces • **Spectator Areas** ○ Clear sightlines to play ○ Accessible, integrated seating ○ Provide shade and comfort • **Accessible Pathways** ○ Connect all facilities through clear, continuous pathways ○ Direct, legible routes ○ Universally accessible surfaces (asphalt or concrete) • **Washrooms / Changerooms** ○ Centrally located ○ Considers anticipated demand ○ Accessible and inclusive • **Field Lighting** ○ Meet sport lighting requirements ○ Minimize spillover to adjacent uses

Direction	Guideline

	• **Player Amenities**
	  ○ May include benches, dugouts, shelters, storage, and water access
	  ○ Located adjacent to fields

Secondary Facilities	• Support Amenities *(Concession, Shade Structures, Picnic Areas)*
	  ○ Centrally located and near high-use areas
	  ○ Support gathering, events, and day-to-day use
	  ○ Provide comfort (shade, weather protection)
	• Play Amenities *(Playgrounds, Splash Pad)*
	  ○ Located near gathering and spectator areas
	  ○ Includes seating and shade
	  ○ Separated from active sports areas
	• Sport Amenities *(Skatepark, Pump Track, Multi-Use Courts)*
	  ○ Located to minimize conflicts with other uses
	  ○ Visible and accessible
	  ○ Designed for high-use
	• Fitness Amenities *(Fitness Equipment, Walking Loop)*
	  ○ Integrated with pathways and circulation
	  ○ Supports informal, drop-in use

Landscaping	Maintain clear sightlines and open views, provide shade in high-use areas, buffer edges with planting; use hardy, low maintenance, native or non-invasive plant species. Consider integrating stormwater management practices and landscaping parking with durable plantings (e.g., native grasses and trees, where possible.
Signage	Provide clear park identification signage, appropriate rules and regulatory signage, and wayfinding to key amenities and fields at entrances. Consider field/facility identification signage for scheduling and events. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.

Landmark/Waterfront Parks

These prominent, destination parks have the primary function of celebrating Cobourg's waterfront and identity. They serve both residents and visitors and are designed to accommodate a range of social, cultural, and recreational activities. Featuring strong visual connections and gathering spaces, Landmark/Waterfront Parks contribute to tourism and the Town's image.

Table 2.5 Landmark/Waterfront Park Design Directions

Direction	Guidelines
Location	Prominent, highly visible waterfront sites connected to downtown and key destinations, in or adjacent to commercial areas.
Access	Maximize street frontage and visibility, with strong public access and connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, downtown, trails, and transit. Entrances should be clearly defined, easy to locate, and connect directly to the waterfront trail and other primary routes.
Pedestrian Circulation	Prioritize pedestrian movement with a continuous waterfront promenade (min. 4.0 m) connecting key destinations, viewpoints, and gathering spaces, and linked to the Town's active transportation network. Provide durable, accessible surfaces (asphalt, concrete) and bike parking along primary routes.
Vehicular Circulation	Locate parking at the periphery to minimize impacts on the waterfront and pedestrian experience, and should be designed to accommodate peak demand.
Core Facilities	• **Promenade/Multi-Use Trail** ○ Continuous, accessible waterfront route ○ Connects key destinations and parks ○ Designed for high pedestrian and cycling use ○ Min. 4.0 m width (boardwalk or paved surface) • **Accessible Pathways** ○ Connect all facilities through clear, continuous pathways ○ Direct, legible routes ○ Universally accessible surfaces (asphalt or concrete) • **Water Access Points** ○ Safe, defined access to water ○ Located to manage user movement ○ Designed for durability • **Commercial/Retail** ○ Located at key nodes ○ Integrated with public spaces and circulation • **Washrooms** ○ Located near high-activity areas ○ Designed for peak demand ○ Accessible and inclusive

Direction	Guidelines	
	• **Gathering/Festival Spaces (Plazas, Open Lawn)** ○ Located at key nodes ○ Sized for large gatherings and events ○ Integrated with circulation and access • **Seating and Lookouts** ○ Oriented to waterfront and key views ○ Located along pathways and nodes ○ Integrated with gathering areas ○ Inclusive and accessible	• **Water-Based Activity** ○ May include swimming, paddling (kayak/canoe/SUP), small craft launching, boat rentals, marina use, and seasonal activities. ○ Located to minimize conflicts with other uses ○ Designed for safe access and operation
Secondary Facilities	• Support Amenities *(Concession, Lighting, Picnic Areas, Shade Structures)* ○ Located at high-activity areas ○ Integrated with gathering spaces and circulation ○ Lighting focused on key routes and activity areas • Play Amenities *(Playground, Splash Pad)* ○ Located near gathering areas ○ Includes adjacent seating and shade ○ Separated from high-traffic areas • Cultural Amenities *(Public Art/Landmarks)* ○ Located at key nodes and gateways	• Waterfront Amenities *(Marina/Boating)* ○ Provides safe, defined water access ○ Integrated with waterfront circulation ○ Designed to minimize conflicts with other uses • Recreation Amenities *(Fitness Equipment, Seasonal Features)* ○ Located along pathways or flexible open spaces ○ Designed to accommodate seasonal use
Landscaping	Frame views to the water and key landmarks, provide shade and comfort in high-activity areas, and use high-quality, hardy planting that reflects the waterfront character and withstands exposure. Consider integrating stormwater management practices and landscaping parking with durable plantings (e.g., native grasses and trees, where possible.	
Signage	Provide clear park identification and wayfinding to key destinations and amenities at entrances and key nodes. Signage design should reflect the Town's identity and support tourism. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.	

Nature Parks

Nature Parks have the primary function of protecting and enjoying natural features and ecological systems. These parks serve the Town and are designed to support passive recreation and environmental education. With minimal intervention, they provide immersive natural experiences while preserving sensitive landscapes.

Table 2.6: Nature Park Design Directions

Direction	Guidelines
Location	Located within woodlands, valleys, and stream corridors, forming part of the Greenlands System, with ecological value or constraints, and buffered from surrounding development.
Access	Limited, well-defined pedestrian access points connected to surrounding neighbourhoods and to the active transportation and trail network, designed to minimize impacts on natural areas.
Pedestrian Circulation	Natural trails and boardwalks with 2.5 m primary paths and 1.2 m secondary paths connecting key features, with clear, legible routes to manage movement and protect sensitive areas.
Vehicular Circulation	Parking is not required; if demand warrants, provide limited on-site parking at park edges or trailheads, designed to minimize impacts on natural features and accommodate low to moderate use, or provide on-street parking.
Core Facilities	• **Natural Surface Trails/Boardwalks** ○ Elevate routes when protecting sensitive areas ○ Defined alignment to manage movement ○ Designed for durability and drainage • **Trailheads/Access Points** ○ Located at key entry points ○ Clearly defined and visible (e.g., signage) ○ Provide transition from urban to natural areas • **Seating/Rest Areas** ○ Located at intervals, key nodes, and atop steep slopes ○ Integrated with natural setting (e.g., boulders, wood) ○ Oriented to views or points of interest • **Environmental Protection and Naturalization** ○ Protect sensitive areas through barriers, setbacks, and defined routes ○ Restore and enhance native vegetation ○ Minimize erosion, disturbance, and ornamental planting

Direction	Guidelines

Secondary Facilities	• Support Amenities *(Enviro-Washroom, Picnic Areas, Art/Sculpture)*
	  ○ Located at trailheads or key nodes
	  ○ Minimal footprint and impact
	  ○ Integrated with natural character
	• Viewing & Lookout Amenities *(Lookouts, Viewing Platforms, Wildlife Observation)*
	  ○ Located at key viewpoints or habitat features
	  ○ Designed to protect sensitive areas
	  ○ Integrated with trail network
	• Learning & Gathering Nodes *(Outdoor Classroom, Community Garden)*
	  ○ Located at accessible nodes
	  ○ Small-scale and minimally intrusive
	  ○ Integrated with educational opportunities
	• Play Amenities *(Natural Play)*
	  ○ Use natural materials
	  ○ Integrated with natural landscape
	  ○ Located away from sensitive areas

Landscaping	Preserve existing vegetation and natural features, use native, site appropriate planting to enhance habitat, restore disturbed areas, and minimize formal landscaping and ornamental planting. Employ invasive species management strategies.
Signage	Located at key features and nodes, integrated with trails and gathering areas, and designed to support environmental education. Provide clear park identification and wayfinding signage at entrances and key nodes. Include interpretive signage, where appropriate. Ensure durable sign design and context-sensitive placement. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.

Civic/Cultural Parks

These possess historic and cultural qualities distinct to Cobourg. They serve as key destinations within the Town and are designed to support community gatherings, celebrations, and special events. In conjunction with Landmark/Waterfront Parks, Civic/Cultural Parks provide significant opportunities to enhance tourism and contribute to Cobourg's identity and history.

Table 2.7: Civic/Cultural Park Design Directions

Direction	Guidelines
Location	Located in central, prominent areas within the Town, highly visible, integrated with civic, cultural, and commercial uses, and easily accessible to residents and visitors. Located on sites with historical, memorial, or cultural importance.
Access	Highly visible and publicly accessible, with strong connections to surrounding streets, downtown, and destinations. Entrances should be clearly defined and integrated with adjacent uses. Should have street frontage on a primary street, aiming for a 30 m street frontage. Should have a defined pedestrian entrance with unique features, such as landscaping, art, signage, or sculpture.
Pedestrian Circulation	Prioritize pedestrian movement with direct, legible pathways connecting key features, gathering spaces, and surrounding streets. Primary internal pathways to be 3.0m wide to link facilities, and secondary paths of 2.0 m wide to connect the active transportation network. Surface treatments should be accessible (asphalt, concrete).
Vehicular Circulation	On-site parking is not required; limit vehicular access and prioritize pedestrian movement, with parking located on-street or in nearby municipal lots. Where required, integrate short term drop-off access, designed to support events.

Core Facilities	• **Plaza/Gathering Spaces**
	  ○ Located at prominent nodes
	  ○ Designed for events and daily use
	  ○ Integrated with circulation
	• **Seating**
	  ○ Located at key nodes and along primary pathways
	  ○ Integrated with gathering spaces and plazas
	  ○ Inclusive and accessible
	• **Accessible Pathways**
	  ○ Connect all facilities through clear, continuous pathways
	  ○ Direct, legible routes
	  ○ Universally accessible surfaces (asphalt or concrete)
	• **Public Art/Sculpture/Memorials**
	  ○ Located at nodes, focal points, and entrances
	  ○ Integrated with plazas and circulation

Direction	Guidelines

Secondary Facilities	• Event & Performance Amenities *(Stage, Seasonal Use)*
	  ○ Located at central or flexible gathering spaces
	  ○ Integrated with circulation and access
	  ○ Sized and oriented to accommodate events
	• Play Amenities *(Themed Play)*
	  ○ Located near gathering areas
	  ○ Set to minimize conflicts with event spaces
	  ○ Integrated with park layout and context
	• Horticultural & Garden Features *(Gardens, Displays)*
	  ○ Located at key nodes and edges
	  ○ Integrated with pathways and spaces
	  ○ Designed for seasonal interest
	• Support Amenities *(Lighting, Shade Structures)*
	  ○ Located along key routes and gathering areas
	  ○ Integrated with high-activity areas
	  ○ Lighting focused on primary paths and features

Landscaping	Frame views and define spaces through high-quality, hardy planting, incorporating seasonal interest and displays. Consider the site history and context when selecting plant species. Integrate planting with plazas and circulation, providing shade in gathering and high-activity areas, and screening adjacent land uses.
Signage	Provide clear park identification and wayfinding for large parks at entrances. Include interpretive signage that reflects the cultural and historic context of the site, located at key features and nodes and integrated with pathways and gathering areas. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.

Leisure Parks

These are neighbourhood-oriented parks whose primary function is informal recreation and everyday use. They serve surrounding neighbourhoods and are designed to support unstructured play, relaxation, and social interaction. Leisure Parks provide accessible, comfortable spaces for a range of ages and abilities.

Table 2.8: Leisure Park Design Directions

Direction	Guidelines
Location	Located within residential neighbourhoods, centrally positioned and within walking distance, and integrated with local streets and pedestrian routes.
Access	Easily accessible from surrounding streets, with multiple entry points and direct connections to neighbourhood sidewalks and the active transportation and trail network.
Pedestrian Circulation	Direct, legible pathways connecting key features and entrances, with a 2.1 m primary path linking facilities and 1.8 m secondary paths connecting to the active transportation network. Provide accessible, hard, stable surfaces (concrete or asphalt).
Vehicular Circulation	Not required; limited on-street or small on-site parking if demand warrants, located to minimize conflicts with pedestrian areas.
Core Facilities	• **Accessible Pathways** ○ Connect all facilities through clear, continuous pathways ○ Direct, legible routes ○ Universally accessible surfaces (asphalt or concrete) • **Playground** ○ Located near central areas ○ Set away from streets and water ○ Integrated with seating and pathways • **Open Lawn/Flexible Green Space** ○ Centrally located and visible ○ Sized for informal play and gathering ○ Free of fixed obstructions • **Seating** ○ Located along pathways and near play areas ○ Integrated with gathering spaces ○ Inclusive and accessible

Direction	Guidelines

Secondary Facilities	• Water Amenities *(Splash Pad)*
	  ○ Located near gathering areas
	  ○ Integrated with seating and shade
	  ○ Set to minimize conflicts
	• Sport Amenities *(Courts, Small Features)*
	  ○ Located at park edges or defined zones
	  ○ Separated from passive areas
	  ○ Integrated with circulation
	• Community Amenities *(Fitness, Gardens)*
	  ○ Located along pathways or park edges
	  ○ Integrated with circulation
	  ○ Set to minimize conflicts
	• Support Amenities *(Kiosk, Pavilion, Picnic Areas, Art)*
	  ○ Located at entrances or key nodes
	  ○ Integrated with pathways and gathering spaces

Landscaping	Provide shade and comfort in high-use areas through shade tree planting. Use hardy, low-maintenance species, and maintain clear sightlines, screening adjacent land uses.
Signage	Provide clear park identification with signage located at entrances and key nodes. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.

Lookout Parks

These are access points whose primary function is to connect people to the waterfront. Lookout Parks serve both residents and visitors and are designed to support orientation, movement, and arrival. They contribute to wayfinding and the overall connectivity of the park system.

Table 2.9: Lookout Park Design Directions

Direction	Guidelines
Location	Located where streets or public routes meet the waterfront, forming key access points and connections within the park network.
Access	Highly visible and easily accessible from surrounding streets and routes, with clear, direct entry points aligned with key connections.
Pedestrian Circulation	Provide a 2.1 m primary path and 1.8 m secondary pathways on hard, durable surface (concrete, asphalt), prioritizing direct, legible connections to the waterfront, trails, and key destinations, with clear alignment from entrances.
Vehicular Circulation	No on-site parking; limited short-term parking where required, with priority given to pedestrian movement and clear access points.
Core Facilities	• **Connection to Waterfront Trail** ○ Direct, visible connection from street to trail ○ Aligned with primary movement routes ○ Integrated with surrounding circulation • **Pathway to Shoreline** ○ Clear, direct route to water ○ Designed to manage movement and access ○ Integrated with waterfront trail or shoreline • **Seating** ○ Located at entry points and along key routes ○ Oriented to views and arrival spaces • **Overlook/Lookout** ○ Located at key viewpoints ○ Oriented to water and landmarks ○ Integrated with pathways
Secondary Facilities	• Identity & Wayfinding Features *(Art, Entry Feature, Interpretive Panels)* ○ Located at entrances and key nodes • Support Amenities *(Shade, Bicycle Parking)* ○ Located at entrances and along primary routes ○ Integrated with circulation and arrival spaces
Landscaping	Provide shade and comfort in high-use areas through shade tree planting. Frame views, highlight connections, and define entry and movement through planting. Use durable, low-maintenance species, and maintain clear sightlines.

Direction	Guidelines
Signage	Provide clear entry signage and wayfinding to waterfront and trails, located at entrances and key nodes. Utilize consistent, legible, and accessible sign design with symbols and text.

Parkland Distribution

Assessing parkland distribution is important as it ensures that green space remains a functional, shared community resource and identifies areas where gaps in parkland access may exist. For this assessment of Cobourg's municipal parkland system (excluding Connector Parks), parkland distribution was evaluated in relation to service area coverage and population density dissemination areas .

Traditional planning best practices recommend a 10-minute walk (800m) to the nearest park for all residents. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 on the following pages illustrate the distribution of parkland (excluding Connector Parks) across Cobourg using a 400m catchment area radius (or 5-minute walk). Figure 2.5 displays this catchment area radius in relation to population density in dissemination areas according to the 2021 Canadian Census.

Overall, parkland is well-distributed throughout the western and waterfront areas, where overlapping service areas provide continuous access to parks. The waterfront, New Amherst neighbourhood, and the Downtown, in particular, demonstrate a high level of coverage.

In contrast, gaps in park service are apparent where urban development and population density is less concentrated, including areas in north, north-east, north-west, and central Cobourg (Division St and University Ave West). Parkland coverage here becomes more fragmented and less consistent. Gaps are assessed in more detail in the preceding sections.

Areas with the highest population densities appear near Daintry Park and the Downtown. While these areas generally have good parkland coverage, they should be considered priority areas when evaluating opportunities for additional municipal parkland or parkland improvements.

As shown in Figure 2.6, the trail network (identified in yellow) plays an important role in connecting parks and extending access beyond the 400m catchment areas. Trails provide alternative routes linking neighbourhoods to nearby parks and open spaces, helping mitigate gaps in proximity-based access. This highlights the importance of considering both park distribution and active transportation connections when evaluating overall accessibility.

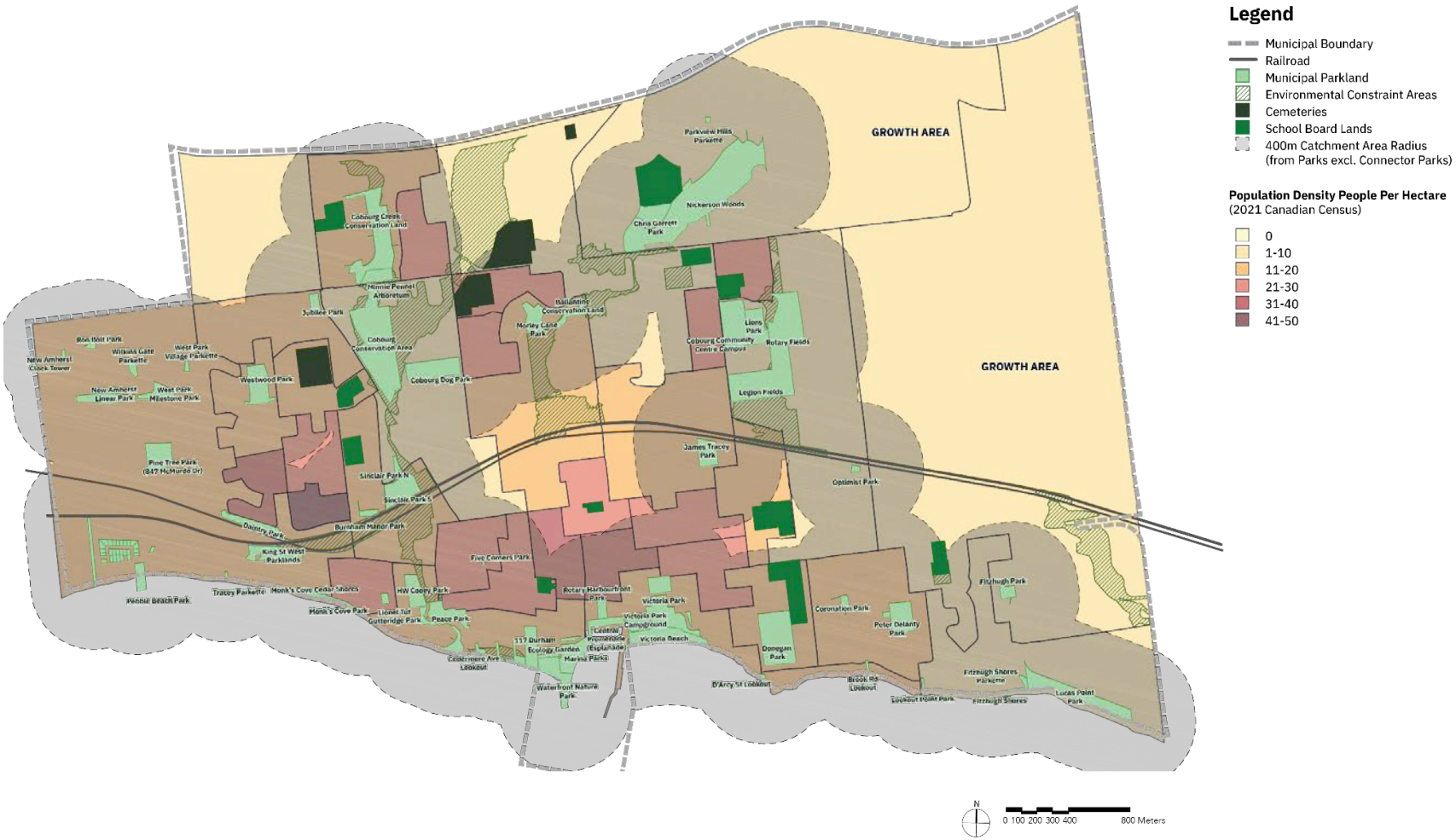

Figure 2.5: Cobourg's Parkland Distribution and Population Density[16]

[16] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg per GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002).

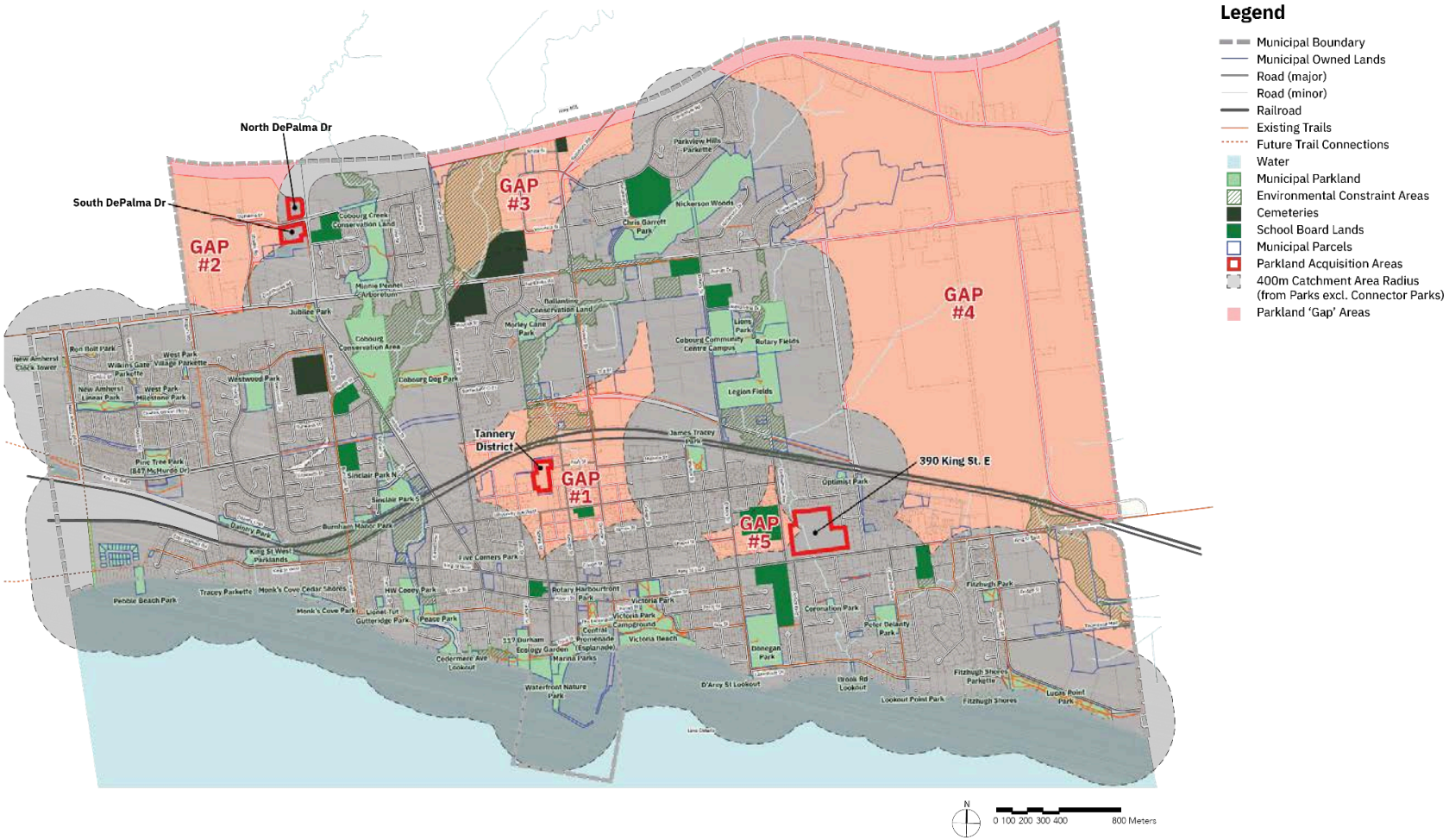

Figure 2.6: Cobourg's Parkland Distribution and Gap Areas[17]

[17] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg per GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002).

GAP #1: CENTRAL COBOURG

Gaps in park service within central Cobourg occur in an area south of the railway corridor, characterized by residential neighbourhoods, commercial land uses, and community infrastructure. Notable features within this gap include St. Michael Catholic Elementary School, the Cobourg Train Station and railway corridor, and municipal recreational facilities such as the Jack Heenan Arena/Cobourg Curling Club. This gap area also contains Census dissemination areas with higher population densities when compared to the other gap areas.

The railway corridor presents a constraint to connectivity within Central Cobourg, limiting north-south movement and reducing direct access to parks and open spaces on either side.

North of the rail corridor within the service gap, land uses are primarily industrial, where the provision of traditional parkland may not be needed. While some municipal parcels exist (e.g., north of Kerr St), surrounding uses may constrain park development. Alternative approaches, such as improved connections to existing parks or integrating green infrastructure, may be more suitable in this area.

There is an existing municipally owned, undeveloped 6-acre parcel at 96 Alice St known as the former Tannery Lands. In 2023, Council approved a Secondary Plan and Sustainable Neighbourhood Master Plan for the Tannery District, a larger area that includes the Alice St property and surrounding lands.[18] The Plan concluded there is a lack of open space in the surrounding neighbourhood and proposed a 0.8 ha central park[19] and a public linear park along the south of the rail corridor as part of the district's development plan.[20] The central park was envisioned as part of the first phase of the Tannery District's development.[21] The proposed size is similar to the existing Fitzhugh Park (0.75 ha).

To realize plans for the District, the Town has been investigating opportunities to activate development and revitalization of the brownfield lands at 96 Alice St. in partnership with a developer. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan reaffirms the need for public open space in this area and recommends that the Town secure at least 0.8 ha of municipal parkland as part of the Tannery District's development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO6. As the Tannery District is developed, secure at least 0.8 ha of municipal parkland to address the neighbourhood's park service gap.

PO7. Explore opportunities to enhance connections in Central Cobourg, including improved pedestrian and cycling routes that support access between surrounding parks, the downtown, and the waterfront.

PO8. Integrate green infrastructure and low-impact development within industrial or transitional areas where parkland may not be needed.

[18] https://www.cobourg.ca/media/p1lclc24/tannery-district-master-plan-final-june-2021-compressed.pdf

[19] p. 109
[20] p. 119
[21] p. 127

GAP #2: NORTH-WESTERN COBOURG

Gaps in park service within north-western Cobourg are largely influenced by existing institutional and commercial land uses, including the Northumberland Hills Hospital, Highland Shores Children's Aid Society, and surrounding commercial parcels. Planned development in the area, including a proposed nursing home/long-term care facility, will further contribute to increased activity and demand for nearby open space.

Despite these gaps there is a potential opportunity to enhance park provision within this area. An undeveloped green space located east of the hospital parking lot, and another located north of the Children's Aid facility, adjacent to an existing stormwater management pond, may be suitable locations for parkland. These sites are also directly across from Terry Fox Public School, offering an opportunity to support both school and community use.

As the area evolves, including through planning initiatives such as the Cobourg West Business Park Secondary Plan, there is an opportunity to integrate parkland and open space into the development framework. Providing accessible green space in proximity to institutional uses and future residential/care facilities would improve parkland service levels and support a more complete parkland network and community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO9. Explore opportunities to acquire underutilized green space north (adjacent to the hospital parking lot) and south (adjacent to the SWM pond and Children's Aid) of DePalma Drive for future parkland. Where acquisition is not feasible, coordinate with Northumberland Hills Hospital and other landowners to explore shared-use agreements to support public access to parkland and open space.

PO10. Explore opportunities to integrate parkland within or nearby the proposed nursing home/long-term care development in northwest Cobourg.

PO11. Integrate parkland provision and open space into future planning initiatives, including the Cobourg West Business Park Secondary Plan, using this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide distribution and design.

GAP #3: NORTHERN COBOURG

Gaps in park service within north Cobourg are largely influenced by existing land uses. A significant portion of the identified gap is occupied by the Mill Golf Course, which comprises over half of the gap area and is represented on the map as an Environmental Constraint Area. While this land contributes to the overall open space network, it does not function as publicly accessible parkland.

To the east of the golf course, land uses are predominantly industrial and commercial, as well as transportation corridors, where the provision of parkland is not typically required. As a result, gaps in the 400m catchment in these areas are not indicative of a deficiency in park planning.

While additional parkland may not be an appropriate use of the area, there is an opportunity to promote low-impact development within existing and future developments of this area. This may include incorporating green infrastructure, enhancing naturalized areas, and supporting ecological functions to contribute to the broader open space network.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO12. Prioritize low-impact development (LID) strategies within industrial and commercial lands to support environmental performance.

GAP #4: NORTH-EASTERN COBOURG

North-eastern Cobourg represents the largest concentration of parkland service gaps within the Town. These gaps reflect the current lack of park provision in an area that is largely due to being undeveloped and planned for future growth.

The Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan is currently in progress and is anticipated to guide future land use in this area, including the introduction of residential neighbourhoods, parks, and institutional uses. As planning for this area is ongoing, detailed conclusions regarding park distribution and accessibility are limited at this time.

However, the scale of the existing service gaps highlights the importance of ensuring that future parkland provision is strategically planned and aligned with growth. This includes establishing an appropriate distribution of parks, integrating trails and connections, and ensuring equitable access to parkland as development occurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO13. Use this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to inform parkland provision within the Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan.

PO14. Integrate a connected trail and open space network through Cobourg East to support accessibility and connectivity.

PO15. Coordinate park planning with future institutional uses (e.g., schools, community facilities).

GAP #5: CENTRAL-EAST COBOURG

Gaps in park service within central-east Cobourg are located within a low-density residential neighbourhood, with C.R. Gummow Public School centrally positioned within the gap area. While the school provides open space that contributes to the broader parkland and open space network (Table 2.1), it is not municipally owned or publicly accessible parkland; use is limited to outside of school hours.

The area is otherwise largely built out with residential and institutional uses. A 12.25 ha vacant parcel at 390 King St. E (formerly the Brookside Detention Centre) was purchased in 2025[22] The land owner is proposing mixed-use and mixed-density development with approximately 0.26 ha of public parkland and 2.71 ha of private parkland that will be accessible to the public. Section 2.2 below outlines considerations for ensuring privately-owned public spaces function as high-quality community assets.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO16. Ensure perpetual public access to parkland provided at 390 King St. E.

PO17. Consider working with the school board to formalize shared use of C.R. Gummow Public School lands to expand reliable public access outside school hours.

[22] https://cobourgblog.com/assets/2025/Brookside-Presentation-TPP.pdf

2.2 Future Needs & Directions

Community Feedback

Residents should have access to a balance and variety of park types, sizes, and amenities to support health, play, and belonging. The telephone and online surveys asked Cobourg households if their needs were met in relation to various aspects of municipally owned parks and open spaces. Table 2.10 summarizes the feedback. Both survey results indicate that residents are satisfied with the location of existing parks in Cobourg, which supports the parkland distribution analysis in section 2.1. Telephone respondents' needs are generally met, with 60% or greater for each aspect, while 60% of online respondents highlighted washrooms as an area of unmet need. Over the term of this Plan, there are opportunities to improve the park experience in Cobourg including amenities, AODA accessibility, shade/tree canopy, and the number of open spaces.

Table 2.10: Residents' Views on Existing Parks & Open Space Aspects

Park/Open Space Attributes	469 online respondents			300 telephone respondents		
	needs are met	needs are not met	not sure	needs are met	needs are not met	not sure
Amenities (e.g., drinking water fountains, seating, waste receptacles)	41.9%	48.5%	9.7%	67.7%	16.7%	15.7%
AODA accessibility	34.8%	7.9%	57.3%	59.7%	12.7%	27.7%
Cleanliness/maintenance	48.4%	42.9%	8.8%	72.7%	9.3%	18.0%
Location of parks/outdoor spaces	74.1%	17.6%	8.4%	88.3%	2.7%	9.0%
Number of parks/outdoor spaces	50.4%	38.9%	10.7%	69.7%	19.7%	10.7%
Parking	46.7%	42.9%	11.5%	63.7%	18.3%	18.0%
Shade/tree canopy in parks	56.0%	33.9%	10.1%	64.7%	18.3%	17.0%
Up to date	41.0%	39.2%	19.9%	87.3%	3.7%	9.0%
Variety of parks/outdoor spaces	45.9%	41.1%	13.0%	70.3%	21.3%	21.3%
Washrooms	26.4%	60.4%	13.1%	64.7%	13.7%	21.7%

Acquiring New Parkland & Funding Park Improvements

FUTURE SERVICE LEVELS[23]

To the term of this Plan, the Town is projected to increase to 25,901 residents. If no additional parks are developed, the parkland provision rate in 2036 will drop to 5.59 ha per 1,000 residents. This figure remains greater than previous provincial guidelines (see section 2.1) and Cobourg will remain among its peer municipalities.

If the Town wishes to maintain the current parkland service level of 7.5 ha/1,000 residents, approximately 49.5 ha of new parkland will need to be acquired, resulting in a total municipal parkland of at least 194.25 ha.[24] To meet this goal, the Town can utilize tools including a parkland dedication by-law and cash-in-lieu of parkland policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO18. To maintain current service levels, secure approximately 49.5 ha of new parkland over the next 10 years.

[23] Excludes the 5.48 ha classified as Connector Parks in the 2013 Parks Master Plan. Per the updated Park Classification System (see section 2.1), these trails and road allowances are removed from the parks inventory.

[24] Municipal staff anticipate approximately 4 hectares of parkland will be dedicated over the next 10 years as part of new development, which leaves a minimum of 45.5 hectares of additional parkland left to be secured to maintain service levels. Given its servicing capacity, Cobourg could also absorb lands from surrounding municipalities (e.g., Hamilton Township, Port Hope) in the future. The potential for additional development also requires more parkland to meet community needs and maintain a balanced distribution of open space for residents' access.

PARKLAND DEDICATION & CASH-IN-LIEU

The Planning Act (1990) governs land use planning and control in Ontario. Section 42 of the Planning Act allows municipalities to secure land or funds for parks and recreational areas through a parkland dedication by-law. A parkland dedication by-law is the legal tool that makes parkland or "cash-in-lieu" of parkland a condition of development approval (e.g., plan of subdivision), and allows the municipality to enforce its established requirements.

Historically, the provision in Section 42 required up to 2% of the land for commercial or industrial projects to be parkland, and up to 5% of the land for other development (e.g., residential), or cash equivalent. In certain circumstances, municipalities could also apply alternative rates based on dwelling units; cash funds would be placed into a reserve to acquire or upgrade parks in the community. Cobourg's existing Parkland Dedication By-law 074-2019 reflects these requirements, specifying that parkland dedication shall not exceed 5% for any purpose other than commercial or industrial either as land or cash-in-lieu.

Bill 23 Implications

In 2022, Bill 23, the "More Homes Built Faster Act," amended the Planning Act to restrict both the amount of land and the financial contributions municipalities can extract from developers. The alternative calculation rates were halved: the cash-in-lieu rate dropped to 1 ha per 600 residential units, or 1 ha per 1,000 high-density units. Parkland dedication was capped at 10% of the value of the land for sites that are 5 hectares or smaller, and 15% for sites that are larger. Affordable housing, non-profit housing,

and "as-of-right" additional residential units (up to three units on a standard residential lot) also became exempt from parkland dedication. Municipalities are now required to spend or officially allocate at least 60% of parkland reserve funds at the start of each year, hindering the ability to save cash-in-lieu funds for larger purchases.

In addition, Bill 23 permits landowners to formally propose to satisfy their parkland dedication using Privately Owned Public Spaces and "encumbered lands" (e.g., parks built over utilities or underground parking). Municipalities still have the full authority to refuse to accept this land conveyance. However, developers now have the right to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal, which makes the final binding decision based on whether the proposed land meets provincial criteria for parkland.

Provincial criteria dictate that parkland must actually be capable of supporting park use (e.g., accommodating structural footings, public accessibility, and tree planting). In section 4.7.2 of its Official Plan, Cobourg does not accept environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands), hazard lands, drainage channels, and stormwater management facilities as part of parkland dedication. Developers can still include these lands as part of park designs: after primary active parkland requirements have already been met, the Town can choose to accept these constrained/sensitive lands as “bonus” functional open spaces for passive recreation (e.g., multi-use trail systems, nature viewing) or in conjunction with adjacent active parkland.

Under Bill 23, a parks plan is now required before passing a parkland dedication by-law. This Master Plan examines Cobourg’s needs for parks and recreation; for all intents and purposes it is considered a municipal parks plan under section 42 of the Planning Act. This Plan also provides direction and priorities for park development and spending, which can guide annual cash-in-lieu allocation.

Direction on Parkland Dedication vs. CIL

For large-scale greenfields (e.g., 5-10 ha developments), the Town should prioritize conveyance of physical parkland to establish functional, programmable parks and continuous active transportation corridors. Fragmented, undevelopable “leftover” parcels or those of unsuitable shape (e.g., strips smaller than 15m wide) should not be accepted as part of the statutory dedication. Conveyed parkland should be developable tableland, free of contamination, and feature adequate public street frontage (e.g., a minimum of 50% of the perimeter) to ensure high visibility, safety, and operational access. Lands used for stormwater management facilities, natural heritage buffers, or hazard lands should not be accepted as part of the statutory parkland dedication, though they may be conveyed to the Town independently for conservation and trail connectivity. Where feasible, the Town should prioritize land dedications that are adjacent to schools or existing municipal facilities to create larger, co-located community hubs.

For smaller residential infill, lot severances, or commercial developments within the established urban core, the Town should prioritize the collection of cash-in-lieu of parkland. Where appropriate, cash-in-lieu may be suitable in neighbourhoods that are already well-served by parkland.[25] By directing cash-in-lieu funds into a dedicated municipal reserve, the Town can strategically finance capital upgrades to new and existing spaces.

[25] see Figure 2.4, which shows current parkland distribution within 400m catchment areas

Table 2.11 summarizes this Plan's suggested direction on strategically applying the parkland dedication by-law to maximize community benefit.

Table 2.11: Guidance for Parkland Conveyance versus Cash-in-Lieu

Direction	Characteristics
Parkland conveyance	• Part of a large-scale plan of subdivision (e.g., 5-10 ha development) • Developable tableland (i.e., relatively flat, free of significant drainage issues, free of contaminated soils) • Functional shape (e.g., min. 15m width) • Unfragmented • If appropriate, promotes continuous, unbroken public access to the waterfront or trail system • Includes basic site servicing such as water/hydro connections to the lot line, rough grading, and hydro-seeding
Cash-in-lieu of parkland	• Development site is 1 hectare or less (e.g., small condominium, consent/severance); and/or • Neighbourhood is already well-served by parkland[26]

[26] see Figure 2.4, which shows current parkland distribution within 400m catchment areas

Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

As mid- and high-rise intensification is pursued in Cobourg's downtown core and waterfront, the Town may encounter applications proposing Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS). Developers may integrate POPS (e.g., public courtyards, widened landscaped walkways, public viewing terraces) into site plans to satisfy parkland dedication requirements while maintaining land ownership. The following considerations are focused on protecting the public interest and ensuring privately-owned public spaces continually function as high-quality community assets.

Guaranteed Public Access and Maintenance: The Town should require a Statutory Right-of-Way (SRW) or an equivalent registered easement on title prior to site plan approval. This legal agreement must guarantee perpetual public access, strictly prohibit condominium corporations from enacting by-laws that restrict standard public use, and ensure the property owner assumes all liability and costs for perpetual maintenance.

Mandatory Branding and Wayfinding: To ensure the public knows they are welcome, the Town should implement a standardized, trademarked "Public Space" signage program. Developers will be legally required to install and perpetually maintain this Town-approved signage at all primary entry points of the POPS, clearly stating access hours and public rights.

Seamless Physical Integration: POPS must act as a natural, universally accessible extension of the municipal streetscape. Design guidelines should strictly prohibit sunken plazas, gated enclosures, and elevated terraces accessed by stairs. All spaces must be flush and seamlessly graded with the adjacent public sidewalks to maximize visibility and remove physical barriers.

Environmental Comfort and Active Edges: A successful public space must be comfortable and secure. Development applications proposing POPS should require comprehensive wind and shadow studies to guarantee the space receives adequate sunlight during peak usage hours. Furthermore, POPS should be bordered by active ground-floor uses (e.g., retail entrances, cafes, community facilities) to foster vibrancy and passive surveillance, strictly avoiding adjacencies to blank walls, utility corridors, or exhaust vents.

In anticipation of future POPS in future development proposals, the Town's Official Plan should be updated to include language establishing that:

- The Town may consider POPS or encumbered lands to satisfy a portion of parkland dedication, but strictly at the Town's discretion and only if the space meets municipal criteria.
- POPS are secondary supplements and do not replace the primary need for unencumbered, Town-owned parks.
- Any accepted POPS must be permanently secured through binding legal agreements (such as a Statutory Right-of-Way) and registered on title as a condition of Site Plan Approval.
- The design, execution, and maintenance of the POPS must strictly adhere to the Town's Urban Design Guidelines.

Subsequently, the Town's Urban and Landscape Design Guidelines (2010) should be updated with considerations relating to POPS. These might include:

- **Accessibility and Grading:** Prohibitions on sunken or raised plazas, mandating that the POPS must be perfectly flush with the municipal sidewalk.
- **Microclimate Rules:** The requirement for developers to submit wind and shadow studies proving the space is physically comfortable for public use.
- **Branding:** The exact dimensions, wording, and placement of mandatory Town-approved "Public Space" signage.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO19. Prioritize conveyance of physical, developable parkland for large-scale greenfields.

PO20. Accept cash-in-lieu of parkland for smaller infill projects and/or sites located in neighbourhoods already well-served by parkland.

PO21. Update the Official Plan to reflect policies for privately-owned public spaces.

PO22. Update the Urban and Landscape Design Guidelines to reflect considerations relating to privately-owned public spaces.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

In addition to lowering parkland dedication rates, Bill 23 also reduced the amount of development charges permitted under municipalities' existing and future development charges by-laws. Specifically, development charges for rental housing units have been further reduced, and municipalities can no longer use development charges to purchase land for parks and growth-related infrastructure. A variety of new housing units – affordable, attainable, nonprofit, and inclusionary zoning housing units, as well as gentle density (up to three units per lot) and rental buildings with four or more units – are exempt from development charges and parkland dedication fees. Revised definitions of these housing typologies may result in larger proportions of housing supply considered eligible for these exemptions.

A Development Charge Background Study was prepared for the Town of Cobourg by Watson & Associates in Dec. 2021 and updated in Jan. 2025, resulting in the approval of Development Charges By-Law 058-2025. Cobourg's current schedule of development charges per housing unit within the parks and recreation services category is as follows:

- **Single & Semi-Detached Dwellings:** $9,163
- **Bachelor & 1-Bedroom Apartments:** $4,686
- **2+ Bedroom Apartments:** $6,379
- **Other Multiples:** $7,315

Non-residential units are charged $1.27 per square foot of Gross Floor Area according to the current schedule.

The collection of these fees supports necessary additions and improvements to Cobourg's parks, amenities, facilities, recreation vehicles, and equipment as a result of (re)development. Future development charges that are collected and reserved for parks and recreation services should continue to be used to their full capacity to support Cobourg's' parks and recreation system.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO23. Continue using development charges to their full capacity to support parks and recreation services.

SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW PARK FEATURES

Table 2.12 on the following page shows typical land area requirements for facilities and amenities commonly found in public parks. The Town can refer to these estimates when discussing parkland parcels as part of new development. Actual sizes may vary depending on design standard, layout, and site conditions.

Table 2.12: Size Requirements and Considerations for New/Improved Park Amenities and Facilities

Park Facility/ Amenity	**Size** (approx.)[27]	**Key Considerations**
Fitness Equipment	80-300 m^2	depends on the number of stations, equipment types[28]
Splash Pad	150-600 m^2	depends on the number of water features
Pickleball Court	175-250 m^2	13.4 m × 6.1 m court, allow extra for circulation and fencing
Playground	300-1,200 m^2	depends on age range, number of structures, surfacing, etc.
Skate Park	400-2,000 m^2	depends on use (local vs. community-wide)
Basketball Court	400-600 m^2	full court
Tennis Court	650-700 m^2	recommended area 36.6 m × 18.3 m with run-off
Ice Rink	800 m^2	40 m x 20 m for neighbourhood parks, large enough for recreational skating and casual hockey
Pump Track	1,000-3,000 m^2	compact asphalt designs at lower end; full circuit with multiple lines at upper end
Off-Leash Dog Park	2,000-10,000+ m^2	highly variable
Softball Field	8,000-15,000 m^2	includes outfield and player areas; fast pitch (76 m) at lower end, slow pitch (100 m) at upper end; youth diamonds may be smaller (~4,000 m^2)
Soccer Field	9,000-10,000 m^2	standard full-size field; rugby field about the same size; youth fields are smaller (~ 500 m^2)
Football Field	10,000 m^2	Canadian football
Cricket Field	15,000-25,000 m^2	typically oval, 130-150 m diameter depending on level of play
Baseball Diamond	16,000 m^2	122 m in centre field

[27] Estimates do not include parking and buffers to residential zones.
[28] General allocation of 20-30 m^2 per equipment station, including the use zone (clearance area), circulation paths, and space for accessible maneuvering. A fitness trail should allocate 15–30 m^2 per station pad, spread along a walkway.

Comfort, Safety & Inclusivity

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility in parks and open spaces is fundamentally about ensuring that everyone, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities, has the equal opportunity to experience the benefits of these spaces and to navigate them independently and safely.

As shown in Table 2.4 earlier in this section, residents reported their accessibility needs are met within parks and open spaces in Cobourg. Only 7.9% of online respondents and 12.7% of telephone respondents indicated their needs are not met, though many online respondents (57.3% of 469 residents) were not sure.

All new parks and open spaces should be designed and constructed to meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards. A major component of AODA standards is providing everyone with access to outdoor spaces. This Plan recommends adopting universal design whenever possible for all new open space developments, and improving existing open spaces through a phased approach.

Universally designed spaces are for everyone. The concept recognizes that almost all people at some point in their lives will benefit from accessible features such as a washroom, seating, low-grade changes, clear signage, etc. To achieve universal design, the Town should aim to:

- connect open space amenities together with paths;
- install accessible surfacing and play equipment;
- provide accessible parking stalls near amenities and paths; and
- provide washrooms and water fountains at major parks, trailheads, and water access points, where possible.

Cobourg's 2026-2030 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines further guidelines for removing barriers for people with disabilities and improving accessibility in outdoor public spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO24. Strive for universal design by integrating accessibility upgrades within existing open spaces.

PO25. Ensure all new parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and comply with affiliated AODA regulations.

PUBLIC HEALTH & PARKS

Caretakers of Cobourg's Ecology Garden noted in their user group survey that the space is "popular with the homeless community. As a result, numerous visitors, particularly those with children and seniors, have told us that they are leery about visiting the garden."

The Town of Cobourg, as a lower-tier municipality, does not receive direct funding for social services. The County of Northumberland is the designated service manager responsible for homelessness supports and social services within the Town. While the Town plays an important role in maintaining safe and accessible parks and public spaces, it operates within this broader service delivery framework and remains in line with the Town's responsibility as a lower-tier municipality.

Council has adopted regulatory by-laws intended to ensure that parks and open spaces continue to serve their intended purpose, supporting community well-being by providing accessible, inclusive, and cost-effective opportunities for recreation. These spaces are essential for promoting physical health, social connection, and overall quality of life for residents.

With the intersection of the substance use crisis and housing insecurity, public parks have increasingly become locations where individuals convene, and visible drug use occurs. During consultation for this Plan, many residents cited the presence of drug use and related litter in public washrooms and at Westwood Park and Victoria Park, particularly on the beach and at the children's playground. In discussions with local students, youth also noted that limited lighting at Victoria Park contributes to feelings of unease and reduced perceptions of safety.

The Town of Cobourg has implemented regulatory by-laws that align with current Provincial legislation, including Bill 6, *Safer Municipalities Act, 2025* to address nuisance behaviour on public lands, restrict the public consumption of illegal substances, and maintain safe, accessible public spaces for residents and families.

By-law provisions, provincial statutes, and initiatives relating to encampments and public drug use include:

- **Trespass to Property Act (TPA):** Trespassing remains an offence, with recent amendments under Bill 6 strengthening enforcement. New provisions introduce aggravating factors for courts to consider at sentencing, particularly in cases of repeat or ongoing trespass.
- **Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025:** Prohibits the consumption of illegal substances in public places and provides enforcement authority to address non-compliance.
- **Nuisance By-law #048-2016 (as amended, By-law 017-2024):** Prohibits causing, creating, or permitting a nuisance in a public place; expands the definition of nuisance to include illegal drug and alcohol-related activities; and introduces the term "Nuisance Gathering," meaning a gathering that results in disruptive or unlawful behaviour.
- **Parks By-law #022-2016 (as amended, By-law 070-2023):** Prohibits camping or dwelling in parks, while incorporating ways in which the Town can remain consistent with the Town's legislative authority as a lower-tier and upholding our responsibilities to our residents regarding their public lands.
- **Proactive Enforcement and Partnerships:** Includes increased patrols in parks and downtown areas by Municipal Law Enforcement Officers, along with coordinated efforts with police services and homelessness support providers to balance enforcement with social support, but remaining consistent that parks and open paces which are for promoting physical health, social connection, and overall quality of life for residents, and for the enjoyment of all residents.

Together, these Provincial laws, municipal by-laws, and proactive enforcement measures equip the Town of Cobourg with stronger tools to address nuisance behaviour, manage unauthorized encampments responsibly, and protect the safety and usability of public spaces for the community.

Practical measures to support public health and safety remain important. Cobourg currently maintains a sharps disposal container at Rotary Harbourfront Park and the marina, along with clear signage at the Albert Street washroom and lobby directing residents to the appropriate contacts for various concerns and to report any illegal activity, including Municipal Law Enforcement, police, the Parks Department, and emergency services.

Figure 2.7 shows examples of what improved signage, lighting and sharps disposal bins could look like in Victoria Park. These visualizations were generated by artificial intelligence for conceptual inspiration only and may not be technically feasible as shown.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO26. Enhance lighting in Victoria Park to improve visibility.

PO27. Provide additional clear signage guiding residents on how to report community health hazards.

PO28. Continue to prioritize safe, inclusive public parks through core operations, service delivery, and lower-tier jurisdictional responsibilities.

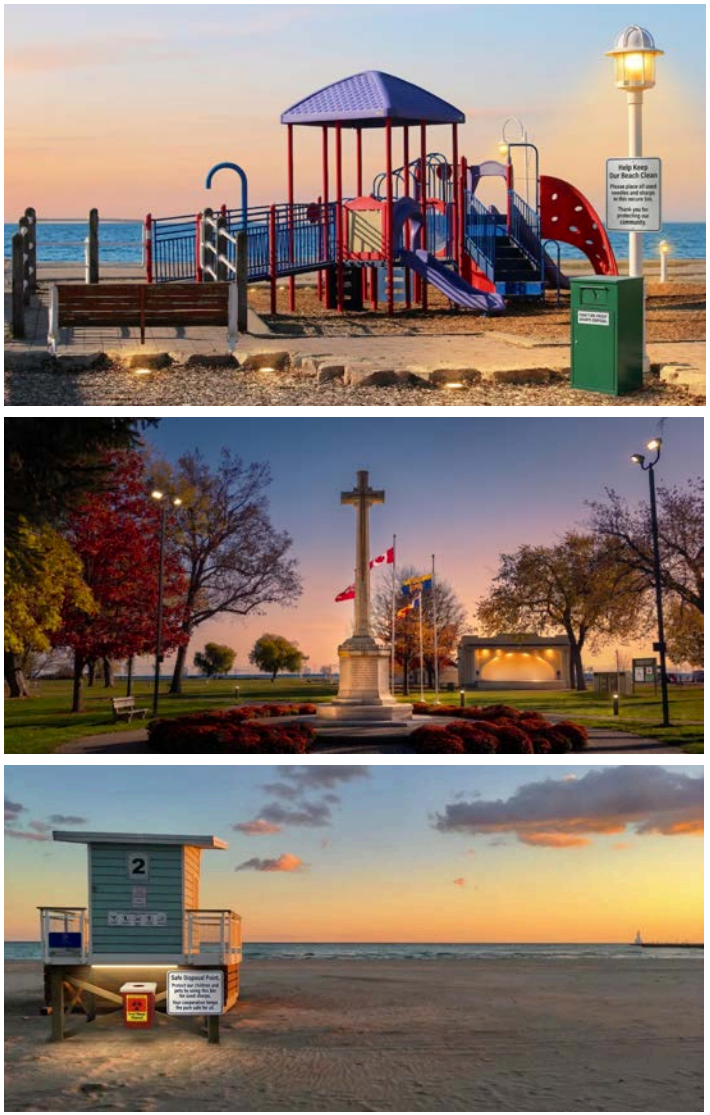

Figure 2.7: Potential Public Safety Improvements to Victoria Park (Images Generated by AI)

DRINKING WATER

Providing a source of drinking water at parks and trailheads allows people to increase the length of time they stay and can help prevent heat-related illnesses in hot weather. Drinking water is especially important in parks with sports and active facilities that people use for more than an hour or two at a time (e.g., fields, courts, picnic areas). A drinking fountain and bottle filler station is available at Cobourg Marina, Victoria Park, and Legion Fields. Three are also inside the Cobourg Community Centre. In the surveys conducted for this Plan, 67.7% of 300 telephone respondents and 41.9% of 469 online respondents indicated their needs are met for park amenities such as drinking water fountains, seating, and waste receptacles. A number of online participants requested access to drinking water in parks as part of open-form comments.

Over the term of this Plan, the Town should add drinking water fountains and/or bottle fillers to remaining parks classified as Regional Parks in the updated Classification System (see Table 2.3), where possible. These include Athletic Parks and Landmark Parks such as Donegan Park, Sinclair Park, Rotary Fields, and Westwood Park. Future parks provided as part of new subdivisions should include a drinking water amenity/connection, where possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO29. Add drinking water fountains and/or bottle fillers to remaining Regional Parks, where possible.

PO30. Work with developers to include a drinking water amenity/connection in future parks, where possible.

SHADE & SHELTER FROM SUN AND RAIN

Parks need to have adequate shelter to support community health and safety in all weather conditions. Shelter can be achieved through tree canopy or built structures and is particularly crucial at playgrounds, picnic areas, and sports fields. When surveyed about shade and tree canopy in parks, 56.0% of 469 online respondents and 54.7% of 300 telephone survey respondents indicated their needs are met.

Given the time required for trees to mature and provide adequate shade, immediate and short-term solutions such as shade structures and pavilions are essential. All new parks built over the term of this Plan should include a shade structure (e.g., bench covering, gazebo, shade sail). Larger pavilions, designed for group rentals and special events, can not only encourage park usage but also help offset the costs of providing shade structures (see “Outdoor Gathering and Event Spaces” below).

The Canadian Dermatological Association provides a shade structure grant program to support the purchase or construction of permanent shade structures at schools, daycares, municipal parks, and not-for-profit organizations. The goal is to create a safe outdoor environment that protects people from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet radiation.

Strategic tree planting should be prioritized due to its numerous benefits, including shade, carbon sequestration, and stormwater management. A valuable resource for sun protection is the comprehensive guide “Under Cover: Guidelines for Shade Planning and Design”[29] developed by the New South Wales Health Department (Australia) and the Cancer Society of New Zealand

[29] https://www.sunsmart.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Guidelines_Under_Cover.pdf

Inc. This technical guide explains various shade-providing structures, including built structures and different tree types. It also covers how to conduct a shade audit of a park and addresses site-specific considerations for sports fields and other park areas.

Cobourg has a dedicated arborist who is responsible for supporting the Town's tree canopy and engaging the community in tree planting projects. Over the term of this Plan, the Town should start the next generation of trees in parks that have few to no young trees, ensuring that new trees are able to replace aging trees over time. The Town should also direct developers to provide sufficient tree planting in all new park and open space parcels, as well as sufficient protection for new trees planted such as watering aids (i.e., tree diapers) to support tree health and establishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO31. Include shade structures in new park designs to support community health and safety in all weather conditions.

PO32. Maintain an ongoing tree planting program to replace aging trees in existing parks, where possible.

PO33. Ensure developers include sufficient tree planting and protection in all new park and open space parcels.

WASHROOM ACCESS

Existing Supply

In addition to year-round accessible washrooms indoors at the Cobourg Community Centre, Cobourg Public Library, and Victoria Hall, public washrooms are located at 11 parks and open spaces in Cobourg (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14: Public Washroom Access in Cobourg

Location	Seasonal Washrooms	Portable Toilets
Cobourg Conservation Area		✔
Cobourg Marina	✔*	
Donegan Park	^	✔
Legion Fields	✔*	
Lion's Park		✔
Morley Cane Park		✔
Peter J. Delanty Park	✔	
Rotary Harbourfront Park	✔	
Rotary Fields		✔
Sinclair Park	✔	
Westwood Park		✔
Victoria Park (Beach Canteen)	✔*	✔

* = accessible

^ = The permanent service building at Donegan Park, which formerly housed washrooms, changerooms, and a canteen, has been out of commission for approximately ten years. Due to chronic plumbing damage and prohibitive ongoing maintenance costs, the facility was decommissioned.

From the May to October long weekends, seasonal washrooms are available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM at the Cobourg Marina/Yacht Club/Boat Launch, Legion Fields, Delanty Park, Sinclair Park, and Victoria Park. A washroom at Rotary Harbourfront Park is open from December to April to support the figure skaters at the outdoor rink. Portable toilets are stationed at Cobourg Conservation Area, Donegan Park, Lion's Park, Rotary Fields, Westwood Park, and Victoria Park.

Planned Improvements

The Town is investing in improvements to the seasonal washrooms at Victoria Park's beach canteen, with construction to be completed by July 2026. The washrooms will be upgraded to meet AODA standards, supporting older adults and individuals with mobility devices through features such as wider turning radii, grab bars, lowered fixtures, automatic door openers, etc. Furthermore, a transition to "family-style"/universal washrooms will replace the traditional gender-segregated, multi-stall facilities with individual, fully enclosed rooms designed for all users. This inclusive model will provide essential privacy and space for parents navigating washrooms with children of a different gender or strollers, allow mixed-gender caregivers to assist older adults, and create a safe, stress-free environment for transgender and non-binary residents.

Beyond improving accessibility, this modern design will also resolve significant safety and operational challenges. Because the individual doors typically open directly to the public exterior, natural surveillance is increased, which deters loitering and illicit activity. Operationally, the layout is more efficient, allowing municipal staff to maintain, clean, or temporarily close a single unit without shutting down the entire facility.

Demand

Public washrooms in municipal parks are among the most requested amenities by the public, yet they remain one of the most difficult and expensive facilities for a municipality to provide and maintain. When surveyed about washrooms in parks and open spaces in Cobourg, 26.4% of 469 online respondents and 64.7% of 300 telephone survey respondents indicated their needs are met. In the online surveys of residents and user groups, there were several requests for permanent washroom facilities, particularly at Donegan Park.

Challenges

Cobourg and other communities with waterfronts and high tourism (e.g., Midland, Orillia, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach) all face the same operational challenges and tension with respect to public washroom access. Tourists and residents demand clean, accessible, year-round facilities, while municipal budgets struggle with the high costs of maintenance, vandalism, and winterization.

Costs

The most immediate barrier to public washroom provision is the high cost. A single, winterized, accessible washroom building can cost a municipality $500,000-$1,000,000+ to construct due to the requirement for commercial-grade durability, utility trenching in green spaces, and adherence to strict building codes. Beyond construction, operational costs include cleaning crews, restocking supplies, and rapid-response plumbing repairs.

Vandalism

During interviews, members of Council and municipal staff noted that Cobourg's washrooms are often misused and/or vandalized.

Vandalism of public washrooms is typically the single most cited reason for washroom closures. Vandalism occurs for a variety of reasons including "to convey a message, to express frustration, to stake revenge, to make money, or as part of a game."[30] The nature of public-facing facilities makes them more susceptible to frequent interaction with the public, and therefore increases the opportunity for defacement. Thus, to a certain degree, the vandalism or damage of public amenities such as equipment found in public parks or recreation facilities is widely acknowledged to be unavoidable.

However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, media outlets have reported a spike in vandalism (e.g., graffiti), damage (e.g., light smashing, removing/bending signage), or theft in municipal, provincial, and national parks across Canada and the rest of North America.[31] Frequent targets include public restrooms, vacant buildings, signage, play equipment, sports field equipment (e.g., soccer, cricket, baseball), street furniture (e.g., benches, picnic tables), and even significant ecological and natural features.[32] The illegal dumping of garbage and litter has also increasingly become a concern.[33] Municipalities fight a constant battle against graffiti, destruction of fixtures, and arson. Electronic locking systems on timers are increasingly common to ensure facilities are only accessible during park hours, reducing nighttime illicit activity.

Winterization

In colder climates, winterizing washroom facilities can be a logistical hurdle. Older park washrooms were typically built with uninsulated pipes that burst in freezing temperatures; subsequently retrofitting these buildings for year-round use requires expensive insulation, heating systems, and deep-trench plumbing. In many cases, a municipality's only financially viable option is to provide portable toilets.

Analysis of Comparators

Cobourg's comparator municipalities (see section 1.3) employ similar strategies with respect to washroom access in public spaces. Permanent, multi-stall washroom facilities are installed at waterfronts, with Collingwood and Wasaga Beach also moving toward self-contained, gender-neutral, accessible "family" style washrooms. Parks with major sports fields or splash pads typically have secondary washroom facilities, often built directly into a pavilion or concession stand to save costs, while local neighbourhood parks occasionally provide seasonal porta-potties. General public access to washrooms at marinas and harbours is restricted to operational daytime hours to prevent overnight vandalism. Winter washroom availability is consolidated to specific indoor facilities.

Opportunities

As Cobourg's population ages and the Town strives to attract new families, the availability of clean, accessible washrooms should be

[30] Scott, Michelle L., Nancy G. La Vigne, and Tobi Palmer. 2007. "Preventing Vandalism." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Justice Policy Center. Retrieved from https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/31256/1001192-Preventing-Vandalism.PDF

[31] e.g., https://www.muskokaregion.com/news/crime/bathrooms-vandalized-signs-spray-painted-at-huntsville-park-july-11/article_c8b0e9b2-cdff-581d-a7af-ac48db6d08a3.html; https://www.lakeshore.ca/en/news/vandalism-and-damage-prompts-closureof-park-washrooms-in-lakeshore.aspx

[32] Scott, La Vigne, and Palmer (2007)

[33] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-parks-clean-campaign-1.6105439

considered critical public health infrastructure that dictates how long these demographics can comfortably remain in a park. This Plan recommends piloting two programs over the next 10 years.

Seasonal Adjustments

Milder winters and warmer autumns are extending the active parks season. The traditional "May to October" operating window is increasingly leaving park users without washroom facilities during busy, mild weeks in April and November. The Town should pilot extending the operational season of washrooms in 1-2 parks (e.g., Sinclair Park, Delanty Park). This will align municipal service levels with shifting climate realities and extended sports seasons, which was mentioned by multiple responses to the user group and resident online surveys. The extension should be monitored for usage and utility costs and evaluated after the first extended season to determine long-term viability.

Emerging Technologies

Self-cleaning toilets feature automated systems that wash the bowl and floor, dispense paper, and lock/unlock on a timer. Research and municipal pilot projects indicate that while these units drastically reduce the need for daily manual janitorial work, they trade plumbing problems for mechanical and electrical problems. The complex internal machinery (sensors, automated arms, water jets) is vulnerable to intentional sabotage. If a user stuffs the mechanical components with debris or damages the sensors, the entire automated cycle fails, requiring highly specialized technicians (rather than standard municipal plumbers) to repair. While the exteriors are durable, the internal mechanics have proven finicky in harsh Canadian winters unless heavily insulated and continuously heated, which raises utility costs.

As such, current municipal best practices heavily favour washrooms based in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). These units are constructed almost entirely from heavy-gauge stainless steel with anti-graffiti powder coating, shatterproof mirrors, and concealed plumbing (Figure 2.8). Rather than relying on automated machinery, the units are designed so a municipal worker can open the door, spray the entire interior with a high-pressure hose, and complete the job in minutes. Victoria, British Columbia was one of the first Canadian cities to adopt this type of accessible washroom to combat severe downtown vandalism and illicit drug use in public facilities.

Figure 2.8: Portland Loo (Victoria, B.C.)

Vandal-proof design can be costly and create a tension between aesthetics and durability. CPTED facilities have clear sightlines (i.e., no hidden corners), high-intensity lighting, and durable materials like stainless steel mirrors and toilets that cannot be easily smashed. Handwashing is moved to a station on the exterior, preventing users from breaking porcelain sinks, deliberately flooding the interior, or loitering inside to wash

clothes. The heavy steel louvers at the top and bottom of the unit maintain primary privacy but expose a user's feet and allow sound to carry. Victoria's police and municipal by-law officers noted that this design made it challenging for users to discreetly use the washroom as a safe injection site or for illegal activities, leading to a drastic reduction in police calls compared to traditional enclosed park washrooms.

Cobourg should procure a winterized, high-durability, CPTED-designed pre-fabricated washroom unit. Designed for high vandalism, significantly cheaper to install than traditional buildings, and requiring minimal winterization, it is an ideal solution to replace the long-decommissioned facility at Donegan Park. The Town should evaluate it after 1-2 years of use and consider procuring a similar facility (perhaps at 117 Durham, see section 2.3) to support winterized use of the waterfront.

Improved signage and wayfinding

Many public parks and open spaces are in close proximity to existing indoor public washroom facilities. The Town should develop a standardized, highly visible wayfinding system (both physical signage in parks and a digital map on the municipal website) that clearly identifies the locations, accessibility status, and operating hours of all public washrooms. Directional signage at high-traffic areas (e.g., playground, picnic bench, sports facility entrance) can indicate the nearest washroom's location (e.g., "Public Washroom: 3-minute walk (Library)" with an arrow).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO34. Pilot extending the seasonal washroom availability in Sinclair Park and/or Delanty Park.

PO35. Procure and install a winterized, high-durability, pre-fabricated washroom unit at Donegan Park.

PO36. Evaluate the new washroom at Donegan Park and consider installing a similar facility along the waterfront to support year-round users.

PO37. Develop a digital map of public toilets for the municipal website.

PO38. Where applicable, add signage in municipal parks and open spaces indicating the location and walking distance to nearby public washrooms.

MAINTENANCE

This Plan encourages responsible financial stewardship through preventative maintenance. Properly resourcing parks operations ensures that routine maintenance is performed on schedule, thereby maximizing the lifecycle of capital investments and preventing costly emergency repairs or premature replacements. When operational budgets fail to keep pace with capital expansion, the Town incurs an "infrastructure deficit," effectively borrowing from the future to pay for the present. For highly used, climate-exposed assets like the waterfront walkway, routine preventative care is the primary defense against accelerated structural deterioration.

When surveyed about the cleanliness and maintenance of existing parks and open spaces in Cobourg, 48.4% of 469 online

respondents and 72.7% of 300 telephone survey respondents indicated their needs are currently met. As Cobourg grows in population over the next decade (and continues to be a regional hub in Northumberland County), improvements and upgrades to existing spaces will be required. New parks will also join the municipal complement. While casual observers may feel needs are met, daily users are experiencing the early signs of capacity strains and infrastructure aging. As density increases, the physical toll on high-traffic parks will accelerate, shifting the operational demand from cosmetic upkeep to intensive structural asset management.

To ensure sustainable growth, maintain current service levels, and manage higher daily usage, capital investments in parkland and associated amenities must be paired with proportional increases in operational budgets, specifically regarding parks maintenance staffing and resources. As the Town actively works to attract and retain newcomers and young families to sustain the local workforce, the physical condition of parks sends a clear message. Well-maintained, safe, and beautiful public spaces foster a sense of belonging and pride, which are critical components of successful integration and retention of community members.

Any future capital approval for park development, expansion, or new amenity installation over the lifespan of this Plan should include a mandatory, corresponding assessment of the operational impacts. Budget planning must reflect the integrated cost of both building and sustaining the Town's recreation infrastructure.

Stewardship

During community consultations, residents expressed a desire to protect local green spaces from the impacts of climate change. In addition to municipal operations, there was interest in actively participating in localized environmental care such as managing urban heat impacts, protecting mature tree canopies, and monitoring local biodiversity.

Case Study: Adopt A Park

Adopt a Park programs encourage community-minded residents to volunteer their time to care for public spaces. Typically a group of at least five volunteers pledge to maintain, improve, and preserve their local park through reporting hazards, cleaning up litter, watering and caring for new trees, etc. The group may comprise families, a school, a business, a church or faith institution, residents of the neighbourhood, or members of a specific service group or user group. In Markham, Ontario, volunteers sign a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the program. Many communities, such as the Township of Scugog, acknowledge a community group's commitment to cleaning up their park through an official Adopt-a-Park sign.

Stewardship programs can foster increased community responsibility for maintaining "ideal" conditions in public parks. To channel community passion effectively without creating restrictive administrative frameworks, the Town should support any growth of grassroots, neighbourhood-led "Friends Of" park groups. Unlike formal advisory or standing committees, these groups would operate outside of standard municipal governance. There would be no application process, no Council-led selection, and no fixed terms. Any member of the public could participate and groups would be entirely community-led, forming dynamically based on neighbourhood interest (e.g., Friends of

Victoria Park, Friends of Pine Tree/McMurdo Park, Friends of Waterfront Nature Park).

The core mandate of these groups would focus on hands-on stewardship. Activities might include volunteer trash cleanups, invasive species monitoring, and acting as local "eyes on the park" to report hazards directly to Town staff. While independent, the Town would support these groups by providing a single point of contact within the parks department. This liaison would coordinate permissions for work parties, offer guidance on native plant selection, and ensure volunteer activities align safely with municipal park maintenance guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO39. Ensure all new park developments, expansions, or amenities undergo an operational impact assessment to budget for ongoing staffing, equipment, and lifecycle replacement costs before capital approval..

PO40. Provide a dedicated municipal liaison to support and safely coordinate volunteer-led 'Friends Of' groups in local park upkeep and ecological care.

Ecology & Environment

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management is a critical component of park planning and design, particularly as urban development increases impervious surfaces and alters the natural hydrologic cycle[34]. Without appropriate management, this can result in increased runoff, reduced infiltration, degraded water quality, and increased risks of flooding and erosion.

Parks play an important role in mitigating these impacts by managing stormwater at both the site and system level. In alignment with the Ontario *Stormwater Management Planning and Design Manual*, stormwater management should aim to maintain natural water balance, protect water quality, and reduce risks of flooding and erosion.

A “treatment train” approach[35] should be considered, prioritizing runoff management as close to the source as possible through a combination of:

- **Source controls:** reducing runoff generation at the source (e.g., permeable surfaces, naturalized zones)
- **Conveyance controls:** slowing and filtering runoff (e.g., bioswales, vegetated channels)
- **End-of-pipe controls:** managing remaining runoff (e.g., stormwater ponds)

[34] The continuous circulation of water between the ocean, atmosphere, and land.
[35] Ontario Ministry of the Environment. (2003). *Stormwater Management Planning and Design Manual*. Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

Within Cobourg, parks should incorporate green infrastructure and low-impact development (LID) where appropriate. LID must respond to evolving regulatory considerations[36], including potential risks related to infiltrating contaminated runoff in areas with poor soil quality, historical fill, or adjacent, potentially contaminated, industrial and commercial land uses.

Where site or budget constraints limit large scale LID implementation, LID-lite approaches provide stormwater management benefits in parks through less intensive interventions. Examples include permeable surfaces, depressed lawn areas, rain gardens, bioswales, increased tree planting and soil volumes, curb cuts, planting beds, and naturalized areas (e.g., meadows).

Where feasible, large scale LID approaches such as bioretention systems, constructed wetlands, infiltration trenches or galleries, subsurface storage systems, and stormwater management ponds may also be considered.

Technical guidance is provided in the "Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Planning and Design Guide" (TRCA, CVC, LSRCA).[37]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO41. Seek opportunities to integrate LID practices in park planning and design, where appropriate.

PO42. Utilize LID-lite strategies in parks where site or budget constraints limit large scale LID implementation.

PO43. Utilize provincial guidelines and manuals including, *Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Planning* and *Design Guide* and *Stormwater Management Planning and Design Manual*, to inform implementation of LID and stormwater management strategies.

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Cobourg is a unique destination that attracts visitors from across Ontario, largely due to its rich natural assets. Situated between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Town features over 10 km of continuous waterfront along its southern boundary, more than 170 ha of environmental constraint areas (e.g., Waterfront Nature Park), and a GRCA-owned conservation area. Key features such as Cobourg Creek, the waterfront, Lucas Point Park, and provincially significant wetlands are natural heritage features identified in Cobourg's Official Plan (2018) as part of the Town's Greenlands System and are protected under provincial and local policy.

Community consultation emphasizes the importance of these natural systems. Residents indicated that there are many mental, physical, and social health advantages associated with having access to natural environments, with overwhelming support for conservation of these green spaces and expanded nature-based activities. The outcome of the online survey shows a preference for environmental conservation over urban or economic development and interest in preservation of biodiversity, less greenfield development, and increased environmental standards within growth areas. Trails were the top priority for expansion,

[36] Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)

[37] TRCA and CVA. Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Planning and Design Guide. (2010). https://trcaca.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/app/uploads/2021/10/20091521/LID-SWM-Guide-v1.0_2010_1_no-appendices.pdf

emerging from both phone and online surveys, emphasizing the value residents place on environmental access and ecological integrity.

A sustainable environment policy would build on this by aligning with Cobourg's Official Plan (2018) and the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2023), which puts "sustainability at the heart of all that [Cobourg does]". This policy would focus on supporting ecology and the environment as a requirement for sustainable growth. This means that all development and economic activities will be guided in the context of environmental sustainability. The policy may establish priorities regarding protection of sensitive environments, context sensitive management of access in ecologically sensitive areas, promotion of nature-based activities, and guiding park management practices. The policy would help to protect Cobourg's natural assets for future generations and protect its role in the Town's identity.

Relevant resources the Town can consult in developing this policy, may include:

- A Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing (2015)
- EcoHealth Ontario
- The District Municipality of Muskoka's A New Leaf: Climate Change Strategy

RECOMMENDATION:

PO44. Develop a policy to support environmentally focused park and waterfront development and management.

NATURALIZATION

Lack of staff is becoming an increasing challenge for the Town when it comes to the maintenance of its parks and open spaces. In order to move to more proactive and sustainable practices, Cobourg should explore strategies that reduce maintenance demands and costs. One of the most effective methods is to reduce the amount of regularly mown turf. Open fields generally require weekly or bi-weekly mowing during peak growth seasons, which entails considerable expenditures of labour, fuel, and time. Naturalization offers an alternative approach that involves transforming unused turf areas into low-maintenance natural landscaping. Suitable locations include steep slopes, park edges, riparian corridors, and other areas currently not used for sport or leisure.

In addition to maintenance associated efficiencies, naturalization provides other environmental and climate advantages. These include supporting pollinators and wildlife, increasing biodiversity, improving stormwater management, preventing erosion (particularly along waterfront areas), and reducing urban heat island effects.[38] While naturalized areas may require higher levels of care during their establishment period (e.g., watering, invasive species management), they become self-sustaining over time, requiring only periodic maintenance.

Naturalization is already a key directive in Cobourg's planning framework, including the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2023), Official Plan (2018), and the Urban Forest Management Plan (2018). Across these documents, this practice is identified as a critical strategy for transitioning from traditional,

[38] Ecological Design Lab. (2024). *Yard naturalization: A "how-to" guide*. Toronto Metropolitan University.

high maintenance landscapes to climate adaptive, sustainable, ecologically conscious spaces. In particular, the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan designates naturalization as a key action in achieving its goal of long term sustainability in Cobourg and provides an accompanying implementation strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO45. Continue to pursue naturalization in parks and open spaces as per Action 11 in Cobourg's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

PO46. Develop naturalization guidelines for public lands as per Action 11 in Cobourg's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

PO47. Consider pursuing partnerships with the GRCA, Trent University Environmental and Life Sciences, Indigenous communities, and local volunteers for expertise and engagement.

SHORELINE PROTECTION

Cobourg's Lake Ontario shoreline is a defining feature of the Town, having transitioned from an industrial port to a destination for recreation, culture, and the natural environment. However, it remains highly vulnerable to erosion, flooding, and extreme weather. Steep slopes, sandy beaches, and exposure to strong winds and storm events contribute to ongoing shoreline instability, while climate change and the loss of riparian areas increase the risk of coastal flooding. As a result, proactive management is required to protect this asset while maintaining public access and ecological integrity.

Multiple Town plans, including the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2023), Official Plan (2018), Urban Forest Management Plan (2018), and Waterfront User Needs Assessment (2018), provide direction for shoreline management in Cobourg. The Official Plan designates the shoreline as an Environmental Constraint Area, limiting and regulating development by requiring approval from both the Town and the GRCA. This policy framework is supported by hazard mapping, detailed shoreline erosion studies, and strict zoning to protect vulnerable areas.

In natural areas, the Town has prioritized proactive tree maintenance and naturalization, using strategic planting to stabilize eroding banks and reduce impacts from coastal winds and storms. Additionally, public land acquisition remains a key priority, supported by policies aimed to gradually bring vulnerable and ecologically sensitive shoreline lands into public ownership to support conservation, mitigate erosion risks, and ensure safe, managed public access.

Following significant Lake Ontario flood events in 2017 and 2019, the Town declared a climate emergency in December 2019 to advance climate resilience planning. Ongoing efforts include maintenance and upgrades to coastal infrastructure, such as structural repairs to the East Pier to address degradation and to withstand high waves and ice buildup, as well as access restrictions along the east breakwater to protect sensitive wildlife habitat and provide safe roosting areas for migratory birds.

Cobourg's approach to shoreline protection should continue to recognize the Lake Ontario shoreline as a valued natural asset and important municipal infrastructure. Management should balance natural and engineered solutions and prioritize long-term resilience and ecological health.

Figure 2.9: Cobourg's Shoreline

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO48. Prioritize proactive shoreline stabilization through naturalization strategies, implementing hard armouring (e.g., rip rap, breakwaters) in high risk erosion and flood areas.

PO49. Protect shoreline ecology by expanding vegetated buffers, restoring degraded areas with native plant species, limiting disturbance (e.g., public access), and developing strategies to ensure no net loss of habitat.

PO50. Plan for climate and shoreline change by integrating hazard mapping into shoreline development and planning decisions and establishing appropriate setback standards.

PO51. Continue coordination with experienced regulatory agencies, including the GRCA and MNRF.

Park and Play Amenities

TRAILS

Trails are a foundational component of the park and open space system, as they improve access, connect communities, support health, and enhance ecological and recreational experiences.

Community engagement shows that Cobourg residents value trails and seek a more connected and nature-based network. Among the 487 online survey respondents, 61.4% reported their household currently uses trails. Waterfront trails were identified as the top priority for future expansion over the 10 year term of this Plan, ranked as the #1 request in both the telephone survey (45.5% of 300 respondents) and the online survey (39.1% of 358 respondents). General trails ranked as the #2 request in both surveys (36.0% telephone survey, 36.03% online survey).

Key gaps and opportunities identified through feedback include:

- Limited access to dedicated, off-road trails
- Strong demand for nature-based trail experiences
- Need for improved connectivity, including links to Port Hope and connections through valleys and parklands
- Ongoing maintenance issues (e.g., surface conditions, cycling infrastructure, litter)
- Lack of clear signage and wayfinding, particularly along the waterfront trail and Cobourg Creek

Overview of Existing Trails

Cobourg's trail network currently includes five trail typologies, including footpaths, waterfront trails, grass boulevards, asphalt boulevards, and asphalt multi-use pathways (see Figure 2.10 on the following page), excluding standard concrete and brick sidewalks. Together, these routes comprise a total of 41.9 km of trails across Cobourg.

Footpaths account for roughly 13.8 km of the network and are typically located within parks and open spaces, including former Connector Park classifications. These trails vary in surfacing, ranging from granular and wood fibre to asphalt, brick, and concrete. Grass boulevards, asphalt boulevards, and asphalt multi-use pathways account for approximately 13.3 km and are generally located along arterial and collector roads, serving as linear, roadside connections.

The waterfront trail is the most significant component of the system, comprising approximately 14.8 km and functioning as the Town's primary east–west active transportation corridor. Extending along the Lake Ontario shoreline, it connects Cobourg to Hamilton Township and continues through key areas including the Downtown and the New Amherst neighbourhood. As both a destination and an active transportation spine, the trail links major waterfront assets such as Victoria Park, the beach, the marina, and the harbour, while supporting tourism and daily use.

The waterfront trail is predominantly asphalt, offering an accessible multi-use route. In high activity areas, concrete surface treatments are used, while more naturalized segments may include granular treatments or boardwalks. The route itself is composed of a mix of signed on-road cycling routes, paved shoulders, and off-road pathways (both paved and unpaved).

The broader trail system lacks a unified classification framework, consistent naming convention, and cohesive design standards. Outside of the waterfront trail, connections between trails, parks, and neighbourhoods are limited, with many routes relying on sidewalks or roadside facilities. This results in gaps in the network, particularly in inland areas, and a limited supply of nature-based, off-road trail experiences.

The most recent review of the trail system was undertaken through the Cobourg Transportation Master Plan (2011), which identified several challenges that remain relevant today, including:

- A fragmented network, with many off-road trails not connected to sidewalks or dedicated cycling infrastructure
- Limited availability of off-road, multi-use pathways beyond the waterfront, particularly in inland areas such as central, north, north-west, and east Cobourg
- A lack of continuous trail connections through Cobourg's Greenlands System

These challenges are explained further in the Transportation Master Plan.

Figure 2.10: Cobourg's Existing Trail Network

Trail Directions

Building on the existing trail network and identified gaps, the following directions establish a framework to guide the future planning, design, and implementation of trails in Cobourg. These directions respond to current challenges, such as limited connectivity, accessibility gaps, and inconsistent design, while supporting a more cohesive Town-wide trail system.

Establish a Connected, Town-Wide Trail Network

A continuous trail network improves connectivity between neighbourhoods, parks, and key destinations, while minimizing vehicle dependence by encouraging walking and cycling. It also provides an improved user experience by providing intuitive, pedestrian-focused, uninterrupted routes that support a healthier, more sustainable community.

Prioritize closing gaps in the existing trail system in order to develop a cohesive, integrated, Town-wide trail network that extends beyond the waterfront. A connected system links neighbourhoods, parks, and key destinations, as well as enhances the trail itself as an important recreational amenity. Efforts should be made to improve central and north, east-west and north-south corridors, connect communities and key amenities, and integrate trails within the Greenlands System. Where off-road routes are not feasible, efforts should be made to provide on-road active transportation along lower traffic local and rural roads, where possible.

Integrate Trails into Growth and Development Areas

Integrating trails into growth areas from the outset makes establishing a connected and accessible network easier. Early integration is more cost effective than retrofitting, ensures continuous linkages between neighbourhoods and key destinations, and supports use of active transportation.

Plan trails as core infrastructure within new and emerging communities by integrating them into parks, open spaces, and residential areas from the outset. Plan to have the new routes connect to surrounding neighbourhoods and the broader active transportation network, prioritizing off-road connections where feasible. Require trail linkages through development approvals, secure corridors early (e.g., easements and parkland dedication), and align new routes with overall active transportation network to prevent future gaps.

Waterfront Trails

In Cobourg, the waterfront trail functions as a key component of the trail network and a primary driver of recreational use, as identified through community engagement surveys. Continue to enhance and expand these routes to function as both destination experiences and critical connectors within the broader trail system. Increase connections between the waterfront and inland neighbourhoods and parks to improve connectivity among the broader trail network and access to the waterfront.

Off-Road and Greenland Trails

Expand opportunities for off-road trail experiences by developing routes through the Greenlands System. Balance recreation with environmental protection by using context sensitive alignments, appropriate materials, and environmental stewardship practices. Integrate educational interpretive signage and programming to promote responsible trail use, such as staying on designated paths and picking up litter to protect natural features. Where trails come into contact with sensitive areas (e.g., ESA, ANSI, wetlands, endangered species, nesting zones, and significant habitats), incorporate appropriate setbacks and buffers to minimize impact. The Town should work with regulatory agencies with conservation expertise, such as the GRCA, to assist with off-road trail development.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Enhance trail design to support users of all ages and abilities by prioritizing accessible surfacing and widths, manageable slopes, interval rest areas, and clearly defined, hierarchical access points. Accessible trails should be designed to accommodate users with mobility challenges, including those using mobility devices, through the provision of wide, firm, and stable surfaces. The goal should be creating a system that is not only technically compliant, but functionally usable and intuitive. Where full accessibility cannot be achieved, provide clear signage indicating trail conditions, the level of accessibility and difficulty, and the extent to which accessible travel is possible along the route.

Wayfinding and Education

Improving signage and communication across the trail system raises public awareness of the trail network and encourages responsible use of outdoor recreational spaces. Communication can highlight the value of preserving natural habitat, respecting wildlife, and create a sense of ownership among users. Provide clear wayfinding, distance markers, and interpretive signage that promotes responsible trail use, including etiquette in both nature and multi-use trails. Additionally, consider complementing signage with outreach efforts such as educational campaigns, community events, and digital platforms to promote the new and improved trail network.

Maintenance and Safety

Developing maintenance standards across trail types can enhance the safety and usability of trail amenities, including routine inspections, repair timelines based on trail hierarchy, regular vegetation management to maintain clear sightlines, and prioritized snow clearing on primary routes. Incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in trail design acts as natural surveillance enhancing user safety by ensuring clear sightlines, minimizing concealed or enclosed areas, and introducing lighting in high-use or high risk locations, where appropriate. For new trail development, consult with emergency response personnel to identify potential risks, constraints, and required access points for emergency vehicles. Where feasible, incorporate emergency contact information into trail signage to support timely response and enhance user safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO52. Develop an Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan.

PO53. Develop a coordinated Wayfinding and Signage Strategy for trails that integrates with parks and POPS signage, where possible.

PO54. Integrate trail planning into growth and development areas by requiring trail connections through approvals, securing corridors early (e.g., easements and parkland dedication), and aligning with Secondary Plans such as the Cobourg East Secondary Plan.

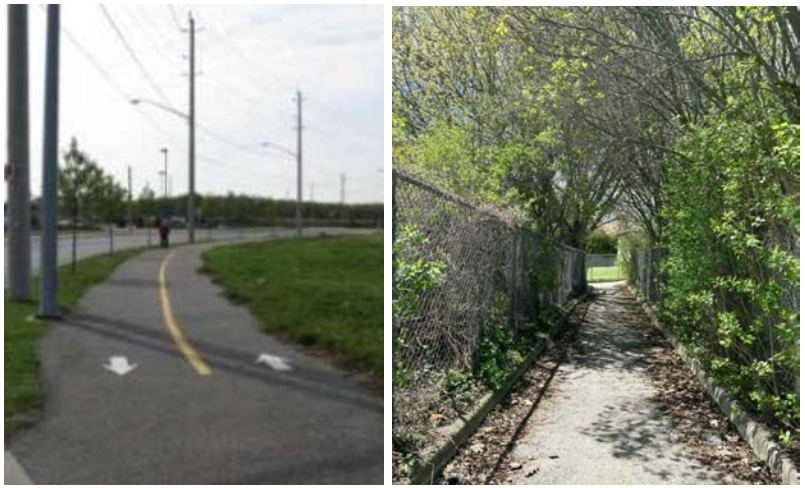

Figure 2.11: Typical Primary Multi-Use Trail (Left - DePalma Dr. Source: Cobourg's Transportation Master Plan) and Secondary Multi-Use Trail (Right - Morley Cane Park)

Trail Classification Hierarchy

This plan identifies seven types of trail infrastructure as defined in Table 2.15. The table indicates recommended surfacing, width, and location. This classification system is intended to serve as a short term guide (0-5 years) to define trails and their design until a dedicated Active Transportation Master Plan is completed.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO55. Implement the recommended Trail Classification Hierarchy when developing new trails and updating existing trails until the Active Transportation Master Plan is complete.

Figure 2.12: Typical Waterfront Trail (Victoria Park and Central Promenade/Esplanade)

Table 2.15: Recommended Trail Classification Hierarchy

Type	Description/Location	Permitted Uses	Minimum Width (m)	Surface Type	Maintenance
Primary Trails (Major Corridors) High priority, routes forming the backbone of the Town-wide trail network					
Waterfront Trail	The Town's primary east-west active transportation corridor, extending along the Lake Ontario shoreline, comprised of a combination of facility types	Walking, hiking, cycling, and other non-motorized uses	3.0-4.0	Primarily asphalt, brick, or concrete; may include boardwalks and granular in natural areas	Highest priority; regular inspections, surface maintenance, vegetation management, and winter maintenance
Primary Multi-Use Trails	Continuous, off-road, multi-use routes located within parks, open spaces, linear corridors, and along arterial and collector roads, connecting major destinations across Town			Primarily asphalt; may include concrete in urban areas	
Secondary Trails (Connectors) Routes providing local connections between neighbourhoods, parks, and primary trails					
Secondary Multi-Use Trails	Off-road, multi-use routes located within neighbourhoods providing connections between parks, neighbourhoods, and primary trails	Walking, hiking, cycling, and other non-motorized uses	2.0-3.0	Asphalt or compacted granular	Moderate priority; routine inspections, surface upkeep, and seasonal maintenance
Recreational Trails Off-road routes designed for leisure, nature-based experiences, and local park use rather than direct transportation					
Park Trails	Informal or semi-formal routes located within formal parks, connecting park amenities	Walking, hiking, mobility devices	1.8-3.0	Asphalt, concrete	Low to moderate priority; routine upkeep and repairs as needed
Nature Trails	Off-road trails located within Nature Parks and the Greenlands System	Walking, hiking	1.2-2.5	Amended trail surface, engineered wood fibre, granular, asphalt	Low priority; periodic inspections, minimal intervention

Type	Description/Location	Permitted Uses	Minimum Width (m)	Surface Type	Maintenance
Boardwalks	Specialized trail segments located in shoreline, wetland, or flood prone areas	Walking, hiking, mobility devices	2.0-3.0	Wood, composite decking, metal	Moderate priority; regular inspections and structural maintenance
Supporting Active Transportation Network On road infrastructure that supports walking and cycling connections					
Sidewalks	Formal pedestrian infrastructure located within road ROW	Walking, hiking, mobility devices	1.2-1.5m	Concrete	High priority; regular inspections, repairs, and winter maintenance

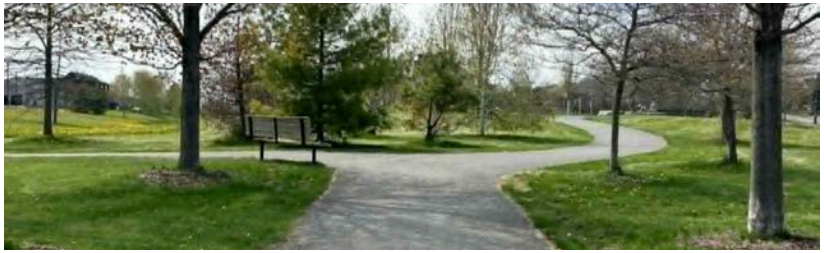

Figure 2.13: Typical Park Trail (New Amherst Linear Park)

Figure 2.15: Typical Nature Trail (Lucas Point Park)

Figure 2.14: Typical Boardwalk (Pebble Beach Park)

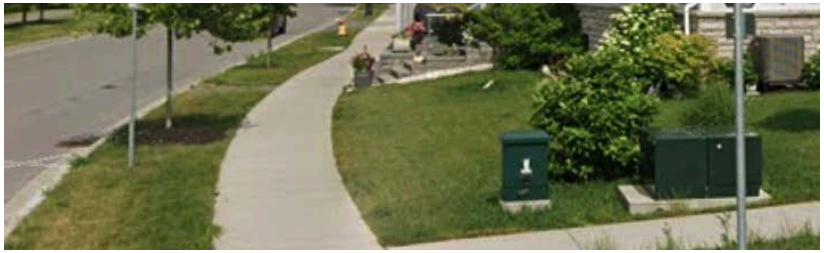

Figure 2.16: Typical Sidewalk (Wilkins Gt. Source: Google Maps)

PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are important spaces for children to play, exercise, use their imagination, and enhance their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. They are also an important gathering place and social space for families.

As of the 2021 Census, the Town has 2,540 children aged 14 years and younger. Figure 2.16 on the following page shows the distribution of children in Cobourg by Dissemination Area[39] and maps the Town's existing 14 municipal playgrounds and 800-metre radius (10-minute walk).

The data indicates the greatest concentrations of children were in north, west, southwest, and central Cobourg. Increased development will increase the number of youth in Cobourg East during the term of this Plan.

In the telephone survey of 300 households, 17.3% indicated they use playgrounds and 27.7% think more playgrounds are needed over the term of this Plan. In the online survey of 487 households, 46.4% indicated they use playgrounds and 22.9% think more are needed. In open form comments, there were multiple requests for playgrounds in the Pebble Beach and New Amherst neighbourhoods (e.g., 847 McMurdo Dr, as well as at the Cobourg Community Centre. One respondent requested a playground on Daintry Crescent. Several residents requested improvements to the play equipment at Victoria Park and Donegan Park.

Table 2.16 indicates that Cobourg falls within the mid-range of playground provision compared to peer municipalities. The Municipality of Port Hope provides the highest number of municipal playgrounds (20), while the Town of Midland provides the fewest (10). Cobourg currently provides 14.

Table 2.16: Playgrounds Provision Comparisons

Municipality	# of municipal playgrounds
Town of Midland	10
Town of Amherstburg	13
Town of Collingwood	14
Town of Cobourg	14
Town of Wasaga Beach	15
City of Owen Sound	18
Municipality of Port Hope	20
City of Brockville	20

Figure 2.17 on the following page identifies priority areas for additional playground provision in west and southwest Cobourg, where the highest concentrations of children are currently located. It also highlights the need to plan for future provision in northwest, central, as well as eastern Cobourg in response to anticipated growth within the Cobourg East Secondary Plan area.

As Cobourg continues to expand and the family population increases, it is recommended that the Town aim to provide one playground within 800 m of all residents, with a more refined target of 500 m in areas with higher concentrations of children.

[39] Dissemination Areas (DAs) are the smallest standard geographic areas for which 2021 Census data is produced. Each DA typically contains several residential blocks and a minimum population of 400 people.

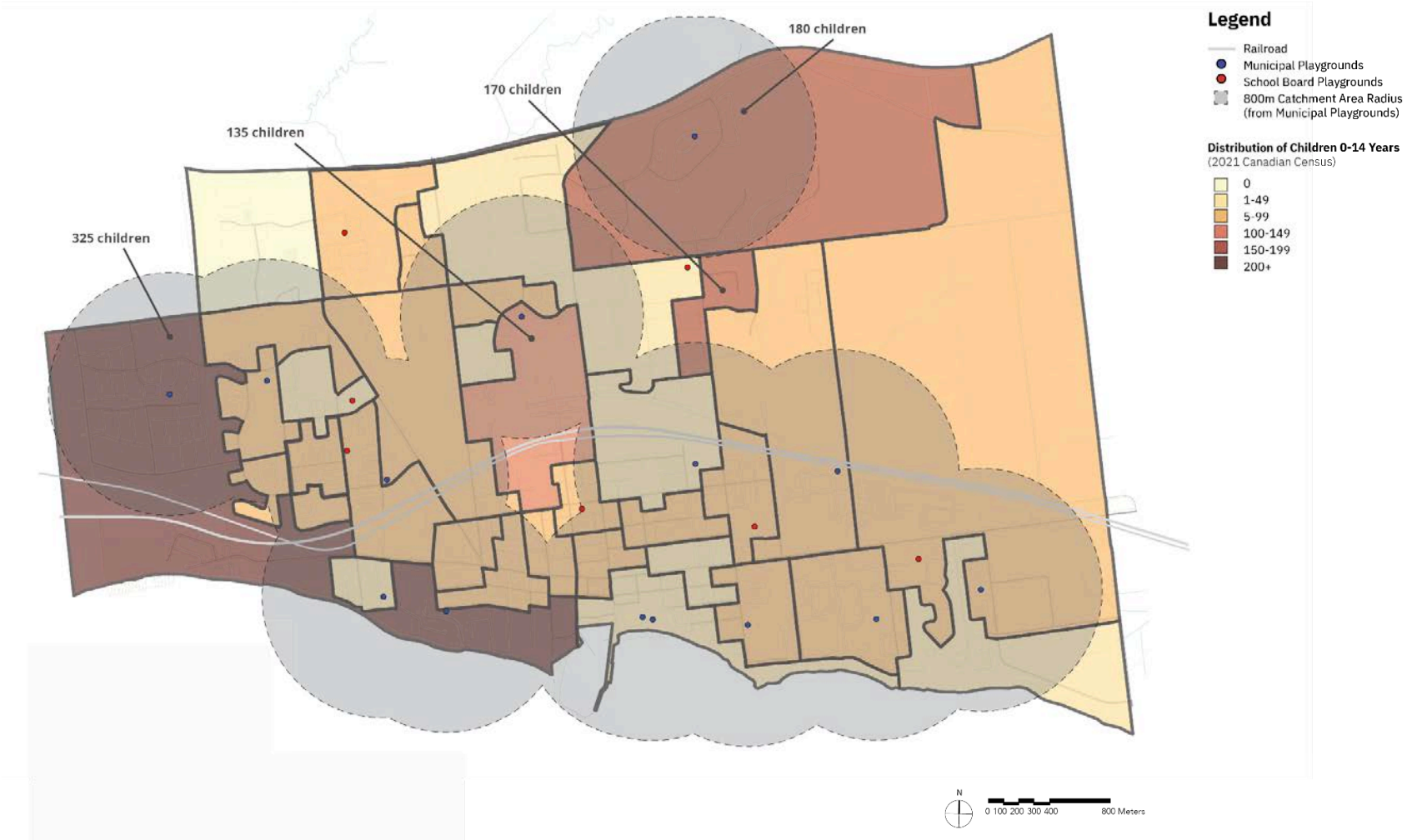

Figure 2.17: Municipal Playground Distribution and Census Population of Children

Accessible Playgrounds

Playgrounds should be renewed as needed, especially in relation to accessibility. As a playground approaches the end of its lifecycle, the Town should update its equipment and surfacing. Examples of upgrades to playground accessibility include, but are not limited to:

- surfacing updates such as poured in place rubber or rubber tile safety/fall surface or engineered wood fibre;
- cast in place flush concrete curb around perimeter of playground to retain safety surface and allow for barrier-free access; and
- playground design that meets minimum accessibility requirements in accordance with applicable mandatory standards, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and CAN/CSA Z614-20 Children's Playground Equipment and Surfacing, and are further informed by non-mandatory standard Annex H: Children's Playspaces.

In the online survey on Engage Cobourg, it was noted that, "There are no enclosed playgrounds for children who elope." Perimeter containment/fenced playgrounds are ideal for physical safety (e.g., slow down anyone trying to flee) as well as emotional safety (e.g., users have the autonomy to play while visually understanding where they are allowed to be). Often families with young children or those with autism use playgrounds at elementary schools since schoolyards are typically fenced through a double-gate system.

Play Equipment for Older Youth/Adults

Playgrounds designed for older youth and adults focus on providing challenge, social connection, and active recreation opportunities that especially appeal to teens and pre-teens. These spaces often include parkour or ninja/obstacle-style equipment, outdoor fitness stations (see Figure 2.18 below, and discussion later in this section of the Plan), and areas for informal sports or creative expression, such as basketball hoops, multi-sport court, skate features, or performance spaces. Unlike traditional playgrounds, they emphasize independence and exploration, encouraging older youth to test their strength, coordination, and problem-solving skills. Well-designed youth play areas also include social zones with seating and shade, creating a welcoming environment where young people can gather, be active, and feel a sense of belonging in their community. In the online survey on Engage Cobourg, a respondent wrote, "I wish there [were] more options for older youth, all the indoor playgrounds and facilities are geared towards young children."

Figure 2.18: Outdoor Fitness Equipment (Source: Kompan)

Diverse Playground Experiences and Play Types

Alongside accessibility improvements, new and retrofitted playgrounds should incorporate a range of play experiences and play types to support diverse users and maximize play value. Play experiences can be shaped by the types of playgrounds provided. While traditional playgrounds[40] have dominated over the past two decades, alternative playground types are being adopted for the greater diversity and richness of play value. Types of playgrounds include:

- **Natural Playgrounds:** Nature-based environments using rocks, planting, topography, and loose materials (e.g., sand, water) to support imaginative and inclusive play (Figure 2.19).
- **Destination Playgrounds:** Large, feature-rich spaces that attract regional users, offering varied challenge levels, inclusive equipment, and amenities (e.g., seating, shade, washrooms).
- **Adventure Playgrounds:** Spaces that encourage risk-taking and unstructured play, supporting physical, cognitive, and social development (Figure 2.20).
- **Themed/Sculptural Playgrounds:** Visually distinctive play environments integrating play into art or sculptural forms to create identity and maximize appeal of a playspace (Figure 2.21).

Figure 2.19: Natural Playground (Kiwanis Park, London, ON)

Figure 2.20: Jamie Bell Adventure Playground (High Park, Toronto, ON)

Figure 2.21: Themed Playground (Fairwinds Park, Mississauga, ON)

[40] A playground designed primarily for physical activity, focused on developing strength, coordination, and gross motor skills typically featuring modular equipment, swings, slides, etc.

While playgrounds often emphasize physical play, providing diverse play opportunities helps create inclusive environments where all users can engage meaningfully. Types of play include:

- **Physical Play:** Movement-based activities that build strength, coordination, and motor skills (e.g., climbing, running, swinging).
- **Sensory Play:** Engagement of the senses through texture, sound, movement, and materials (e.g., water, sand, tactile elements, refuge spaces) (Figure 2.22).
- **Cognitive Play:** Activities that support problem-solving, learning, and exploration (e.g., puzzles, building, cause-and-effect) (Figure 2.23).
- **Social Play:** Interaction-based play that builds communication and cooperation (e.g., group play, pretend play, collaboration).

Figure 2.22: Sensory Play (Source: Inter Play)

Figure 2.23: Cognitive Play (Source: Proludic)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO56. Consider a phasing plan to update all playgrounds to meet current Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and CSA Z614-20 requirements for play equipment and surfacing.

PO57. Introduce a new playground at Pine Tree Park (847 McMurdo Drive) to serve the New Amherst area's high concentration of children.

PO58. Continue to explore options to provide a playground for the Pebble Beach-Cedar Shores-Monk's Cove neighbourhood to address the 800 m service gap and support the high concentration of children in this area.

PO59. Explore retrofitting the large existing playground at Victoria Park into a fully inclusive, destination playground, incorporating features such as rubber surfacing, a range of play types, perimeter containment, and increased ground-level play elements.

PO60. Include a new playground as part of the Tannery District development.

PO61. Plan for a minimum of three evenly distributed playgrounds within the Cobourg East Secondary Plan area to support future population growth.

SPLASH PADS & WATER PLAY

Splash pads are a common request in communities with many families, as they provide opportunities for heat relief and water play without lifeguard supervision. Cobourg currently has one splash pad located at Victoria Beach (Figure 2.24), with use reported by 35% of 487 online survey respondents and 18% of 300 telephone survey respondents. As it was installed in 2003 and is due for replacement during the term of this Plan.

Figure 2.24: Splash Pad at Victoria Beach

Table 2.17 shows the number of splash pads in the seven comparator municipalities from section 1.3. All of these communities have one splash pad to service a population between 17,294 and 24,862 residents. Based on this benchmarking, Cobourg does not need an additional splash pad during the term of this Plan.

While splash pads are highly desirable amenities, their installation represents significant capital and long-term operational commitment. A contemporary splash pad requires complex, high-capacity underground infrastructure.

Table 2.17: Splash Pad Provision Comparisons

Municipality	# of splash pads
Town of Cobourg	1
Municipality of Port Hope	1
City of Brockville	1
Town of Midland	1[41]
City of Owen Sound	1
Town of Collingwood	1
Town of Amherstburg	1
Town of Wasaga Beach	1

Municipalities generally must choose between a "flow-through" (drain-to-waste) system or a "recirculating" system (see Figures 2.25-2.26 on the following page), each carrying distinct financial burdens. Flow-through systems are less expensive to build but have immense, recurring seasonal utility costs; in contrast, recirculating systems drastically reduce water consumption but require a massive initial capital investment to construct the necessary underground concrete holding tanks, UV filtration systems, and chemical treatment rooms. Furthermore, under Ontario public health guidelines, recirculating systems demand rigorous daily staff maintenance, water chemistry testing by certified operators, and higher long-term equipment replacement costs.

[41] Under construction, with estimated completion August 2026

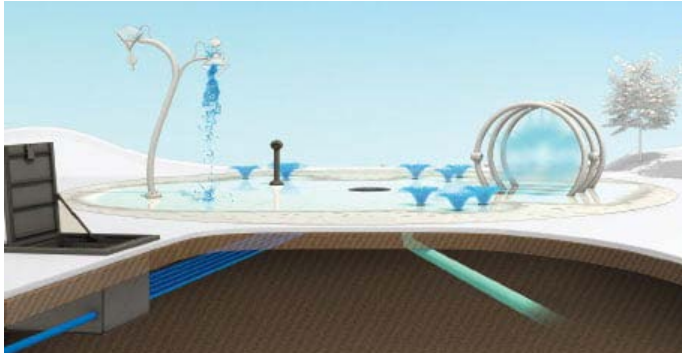

Figure 2.25: Flow-Through Splash Pad (Source: PlayQuest)

Figure 2.26: Recirculating Splash Pad (Source: PlayQuest)

Given the high costs associated with traditional splash pads, municipalities are increasingly deploying low-impact, scalable cooling elements in smaller parks at the neighbourhood level. These alternatives provide critical heat relief and interactive play without the burden of massive underground filtration vaults or exorbitant water bills.

Other Water Features

Misting stations involve standalone architectural features (e.g., arches, poles, stylized shade structures) with specialized nozzles to emit a very fine, cooling mist rather than a heavy stream of water (Figures 2.27-2.31). Because the water is aerosolized into a fine mist, the water consumption is less than that of a traditional flow-through splash pad. These amenities require minimal underground infrastructure, do not pool water (i.e., no complex drainage or slip hazards), and can be easily retrofitted onto existing park pavilions or alongside playgrounds.

Figure 2.27-2.29: Misting Station - Hamilton ON (Source: Joey Coleman); CoolToppers Post with Cool Mister (Source: Landscape Structures); Glomist Outdoor Misting Station (Source: ABC Recreation)

Figure 2.30: AquaHedra Cooling Water Mist Feature (Source: Landscape Structures)

Figure 2.31: Awen' Waterplay - Collingwood, ON (Source: Envision-Tatham)

Interactive, hand-pump water tables are increasingly being added to playgrounds to support both water play and cooling off. As a multi-level feature, it is fully wheelchair accessible and invites users to physically crank a wheel or push a hand pump to release a small amount of water (Figures 2.32-2.34). The water then flows down a series of small, interactive sluices, dams, and channels. It shifts the focus from "getting soaked" to tactile, sensory-based play. Because the water only flows when physically activated by the user and is contained to a small table area, it uses a small amount of municipal water.

Figure 2.32-2.33: Water Pump Products (Source: Cadron Creek Play)

Figure 2.34: Water Pump - Exhibition Park, Guelph (Source: Amber Rohal)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO62. Replace the existing splash pad in Victoria Park.

PO63. Add water features to at least three parks distributed across Cobourg (i.e., west, central, east).

SKATE PARKS

Skate parks are lower cost, self-guided recreation amenities that support healthy and physical activity. They are also informal social spaces that promote independence among youth and younger adults. Cobourg has one skate park, built in 2003 at Donegan Park (Figure 2.35) and refurbished in 2016. Use of the skate park was reported by 11% of 487 online survey respondents and 1% of 300 telephone survey respondents.

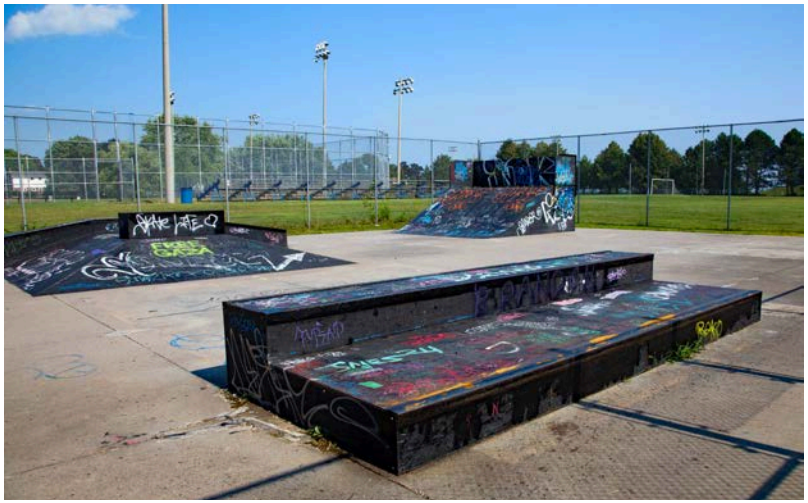

Figure 2.35: Skate Park at Donegan Park

Small numbers of telephone (23% of 100) and online (9.2% of 358) survey respondents think additional skate parks are needed in Cobourg. Table 2.18 shows the number of skate parks in the seven comparator municipalities from section 1.3. All of these communities have one skate park to service a population between 17,294 and 24,862 residents. Based on this benchmarking, Cobourg does not need an additional skate park during the term of this Plan. However, Town staff and many online respondents noted that the existing skate park is out of date and suggested upgrades such as expanding its size, adding lights, improving washroom facilities, repairing holes in the fence and cracks in the concrete surfacing. There were also several suggestions to relocate the skate park to Cobourg Community Centre and away from residential neighbourhoods.

Table 2.18: Skate Park Provision Comparisons

Municipality	# of skate parks
Town of Cobourg	1
Municipality of Port Hope	1
City of Brockville	1
Town of Midland	1
City of Owen Sound	1
Town of Collingwood	1
Town of Amherstburg	1
Town of Wasaga Beach	1

In summer 2022, the Town held a dedicated public consultation on the Engage Cobourg website to hear from residents on the future of Cobourg's skate park. An online survey was completed by 223 respondents:

- 86.7% were Cobourg residents
- 39.9% were under aged 30
- 35.2% use Cobourg's skate park daily or weekly; 29.3% use it monthly
- 58.0% travel to other places to use their skate parks (58.4% mentioned Port Hope)

When asked if improvements would make them spend more time at the skate park, 78.4% agreed and offered suggestions including a small half pipe and low hills for beginners, a concrete bowl, stairs, various grind rails, seating for spectators, shade, lighting, and an area designated as a blank canvas for local artists. A majority (72.5%) indicated their ideal skate park would include features for BMX bikes, scooters, and skateboards. Many respondents noted the need to provide amenities for younger/less experienced skaters.

There were mixed views with respect to locating Cobourg's skate park: 50.9% preferred to remain at Donegan Park, 35.8% preferred to relocate to Cobourg Community Centre, and 13.3% suggested other parks. A large majority (93.4%) of survey respondents indicated their preference for a new skate park made of concrete; several reported that the existing prefabricated metal ramps in Donegan Park get extremely hot, contribute to noise, and require frequent maintenance and replacement.

The current skate park (approximately 60 m^2 in size) is aging and should be replaced during the 10-year term of this Plan. A new, larger concrete skate park should be built with features for various users and ability levels. The existing site has space to the south and east without encroaching on the adjacent ball diamond. Section 3.3 on ball diamonds includes a recommendation to prepare a detailed revitalization strategy and master plan for Donegan Park.

Poured-in-place concrete is the gold standard for modern, permanent outdoor skate parks; it can endure decades of heavy use and harsh weather and requires very low maintenance (e.g., crack sealing, surface patching). Figures 2.36-2.39 show examples of concrete skate park layouts in Campbellford, Picton, Milverton, and Leamington.

Figure 2.36: Kennedy Park (Campbellford, ON)

Figure 2.38: All-Wheels Park (Milverton, ON)

Figure 2.37: County Youth Park (Picton, ON)

Figure 2.39 Kinsmen Baseball Diamonds and Skate Park (Leamington, ON)

During interviews conducted for this Plan, Council members suggested special interest groups bring forth a minimum funding commitment (e.g., 50%) for new capital projects. To secure these funds, the skater community can leverage in-kind donations for materials (e.g., concrete supplier, local construction company) and labour (e.g., local landscaping or excavation company), sponsorships (e.g., tiered, naming rights, service clubs), grants (e.g., Ontario Trillium Foundation, Hydro One Energizing Life Community Fund), and grassroots community fundraisers (e.g., skate jams, art auctions, buy-a-brick). Staff should support the skater community in promoting these initiatives via municipal communications tools.

The Public Skate Park Guide, developed by the Tony Hawk Foundation, includes helpful resources for skate park fundraising, design, construction, maintenance, and operations.[42]

RECOMMENDATION:

PO64. Engage the skater community in fundraising and design development to replace the existing skate park with a larger concrete amenity that includes features for multiple ability levels and uses.

BASKETBALL COURTS

Basketball was in the top five sports played by Canadians overall in 2023. Considering youth, basketball was the third most played sport (after soccer and swimming) at 43%.[43] Trends indicate interest in basketball will remain strong, and likely grow in the coming years:

> Basketball's simplicity is one of its greatest strengths. Minimal equipment required, and the proliferation of basketball courts globally means there should be minimal expenses to play. It's a sport, when delivered through a positive youth development lens, that can be used as a vehicle for developing and delivering life-long outcomes related to health, education and employment.
>
> The global popularity of basketball is another factor. It is the most popular North American sport worldwide and second most popular globally after soccer. The stars of the game are some of the most recognizable figures, representing a diverse spectrum of identities. The culture of basketball, which connects the sport to music, fashion, art, design, film and tech, offers many in-roads to a deeper relationship with the game.
>
> And the growth of basketball is also significant: WNBA viewership has increased 300% in the 2024 season, 3×3 was introduced as an Olympic sport in 2020, and wheelchair basketball continues to lead in sports for different abilities (Sport Information Resource Centre, 2024).[44]
>
> The growth of basketball in Canada has also benefitted girls and women. Plans for a WNBA team in Toronto by 2026 are underway, promising to boost the sport's profile and encouraging more girls and women to play. Canada's national teams have also seen success, performing well in

[42] https://publicskateparkguide.org/

[43] https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/4863-diving-data-sports-participation-canada

[44] https://sirc.ca/articles/leveling-the-playing-field-accessibility-in-youth-basketball/

international competitions like the FIBA World Championship and the Olympics (Sport Information Resource Centre, 2024).[45]

Although several public schools in Cobourg (e.g., Terry Fox, C. R. Gummow, Burnham) have basketball hoops on their grounds, these spaces are typically gated with use only permitted outside of regular school hours.

There is only one municipal outdoor basketball court in the town, located at Fitzhugh Park in southeast Cobourg. Use of the basketball court was reported by 6% of 487 online survey respondents and 5% of 300 telephone survey respondents. Among a list of possible new amenities, basketball courts were not highly requested during consultation activities for this Plan (16% of 100 telephone survey respondents and 16% of 354 online survey respondents). However, the online survey had a number of open-form comments requesting basketball facilities, particularly in Donegan Park. There is also an active community group (the Greg Jillings Memorial Basketball Tournament) fundraising for a new outdoor basketball court in the area of the Cobourg Community Centre. Together this indicates community interest in expanded options for playing basketball in Cobourg.

Guidelines by the former Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation suggest a general standard of 1 basketball court per 5,000 population.[46] With this service target, and the current population of 20,519 with increasing numbers of families and young adults, Cobourg should have five outdoor basketball courts available to residents (including the existing court at Fitzhugh Park in the Town's southeast end). As the population reaches 25,901 residents in 2036, an additional court will be needed to meet growing community needs. As such, five new courts should be built during the term of this Plan; they should be located across the Town (i.e., west, east, downtown, central, and northeast) to meet service gaps in these areas.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO65. Install five additional basketball courts across town over the 10-year term of this Plan.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL COURTS

Beach volleyball is popular in Cobourg, with at least four groups providing programs including recreational leagues and competitive tournaments throughout the summer:

- Cobourg Alliance Church
- Invado Volleyball
- Soul Beach Volleyball
- Viva Volleyball

There are four courts within each section (West, Central, East) of Victoria Beach, totalling 12 municipal beach volleyball courts. The Ontario Volleyball Association occasionally hosts events at this location during the summer months for various age groups, from 13U to Adult.

In the surveys conducted for this Plan, 22.1% of 300 telephone households and 20.0% of 479 online households reported they use the beach volleyball courts. When asked about additional

[45] https://sirc.ca/news/the-rise-of-basketball-in-canada-2016-2024-lessor-du-basketball-au-canada-2016-2024/

[46] Guidelines for Developing Public Recreation Facility Standards, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation (2004)

beach/sand volleyball courts, 26.7% of 60 telephone respondents and 6.8% of 354 online respondents think more are needed. The 2025 beach volleyball season included 180 bookings from May to September, totalling 1,057 reserved hours. More than half of all bookings (55%) were during weekday evening prime time (5:00 PM to 9:00 PM). July was the busiest month with the most bookings, highest hours, and greatest revenue.

The Centre courts are the most popular and profitable at Victoria Beach; from June-August they operated at maximum capacity with 95-100% of prime time booked. The East and West courts are underutilized, with prime time bookings in July and August ranging from 27-60%. Across the whole year and all courts, 56.4% of total hours were zero dollar hours, meaning use was provided at no charge. More than 70% of the reserved hours for the East courts and West courts were complementary.

As the combined summer prime time utilization across all courts is 64.7%, additional beach volleyball courts are not needed during the term of this Plan. The Town should incentivize and promote paid rentals of the East and West courts to meet the hours going unused during prime time.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO66. Explore the feasibility of promoting paid use of the underutilized East and West beach volleyball courts given the available prime time.

DISC GOLF

Disc golf is a hybrid of disc throwing and ball golfing: players throw a disc/flying Frisbee® from a tee-off area to a target, typically an upright metal basket mounted in the ground. The aim is to complete each hole in the fewest number of throws for a stronger score. Disc golf is easy to learn and can be played by school-aged children, families, and adults of all ages. It is an inexpensive, year-round sport, growing in popularity among younger generations.

A course may have a combination of open and wooded holes with rolling terrain. Beginner courses typically have nine holes, while advanced levels/tournaments may play at 18-hole courses. Ideally, a course will be built at large, naturalized sites (such as conservation areas) with trees, shrubs, and other obstacles.

Cobourg has an 11-hole disc golf course adjacent to the ball diamonds at Legion Fields. It was developed in 2024. Use of the municipal disc golf course at Legion Fields was reported by 4.0% of 300 telephone respondents and 1.9% of 487 online respondents. When asked about additional disc golf courses, 3.3% of 60 telephone respondents and 3.6% of 358 online respondents think more are needed.

There is also a 6-hole disc golf course spread across the schoolyard at C.R. Gummow Public School, available to the public on weekends and after 6:00 PM on weekdays.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO67. Continue to monitor usage of the disc golf course during the term of this Plan.

OUTDOOR FITNESS EQUIPMENT

Outdoor fitness equipment provides individuals of all ages and fitness abilities the opportunity to enjoy free workouts at their own pace while gaining health benefits such as increased muscle strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility. These amenities can provide a social outlet for exercise and promote a sense of pride within neighbourhoods. When positioned in close proximity to/within sight lines of a playground, both parents and children (or children and older siblings) can engage in physical activity simultaneously, making parks appealing to diverse age groups.

Fitness parks/stations vary in their space requirements depending on the type and amount of equipment installed, which may include push-up bars, parallel bars, rope climbing, monkey bars, dip stations, balance beams, vault bars, hurdles, slacklines, step benches, and climbing boulders. These can be stand-alone or multi-use pieces, or designed as an entire circuit/obstacle course within a larger geographic area. Equipment can also be designed for children through use of lower heights, brighter colours, and design elements (e.g., netting). Generally, the parts are durable and require minimal maintenance. The best fitness equipment is immovable and safe (e.g., no pinch parts).

An outdoor fitness piece is provided next to the Cobourg Community Centre near the Seniors Activity Centre (Figure 2.41). One contributor to the Engage Cobourg page noted that younger children often play on it. Although there was limited interest in additional pieces being provided in the future (2% of 100 telephone survey respondents and 12.6% of 354 online survey respondents), fitness equipment could offer exciting outdoor play and exercise opportunities in new developments. Boulders and slack lines (Figure 2.41 on the following page) are increasingly popular with pre-teens, teens, and adults looking for adventure and challenge equipment that is recognizable and intuitive. Where possible, the Town should consider including these kinds of creative outdoor fitness equipment as existing playgrounds and parks are upgraded, and work with developers to include them in new park parcels.

Figure 2.40: Existing Outdoor Fitness Equipment in Cobourg

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO68. Work with developers to include creative outdoor fitness equipment in new park parcels.

PO69. Consider including creative outdoor fitness equipment in playground upgrades.

Figure 2.41: Teen-Oriented Fitness Equipment (Source: Trekfit)

OUTDOOR RINKS

Outdoor ice rinks are a beloved part of winter in Ontario, acting as community hubs that bring together residents of all ages and income brackets. During months when sedentary behaviour typically increases, ice skating provides free or low-cost outdoor physical activity including cardiovascular/muscular fitness, flexibility, balance, and coordination.[47] Many municipalities install ice skating rinks, loops, and trails to celebrate winter and support self-led recreation.

In Cobourg, a refrigerated outdoor rink is developed each year from December through March on the pond at Rotary Harbourfront Park (Figure 2.42). It is a popular space, used by 41.9% of 487 online survey respondents and 15% of 300 telephone respondents. There is interest in additional ice rinks from 22% of 100 telephone respondents and 10% of 354 online respondents .

Keeping outdoor rinks running is becoming difficult due to warmer, unpredictable weather and rising costs. While natural ice is cheaper, it melts easily in "freeze-thaw" cycles and has high labour costs. Relying on local champions or volunteer neighbourhood groups to maintain community rink operations often leads to burnout and fatigue among these volunteers. Conversely, refrigerated systems guarantee a skating season but often cost over $1 million to install. Planning a designated outdoor rink includes balancing the high cost of cooling technology against the reliability of the ice, while also prioritizing energy efficiency, ensuring the space is accessible to people of all

[47] https://sportsmedicineweekly.com/blog/how-ice-skating-can-enhance-health-and-wellness/

abilities, and designing the surface to be used for summer sports like basketball.

Figure 2.42: Outdoor Ice Rink at Rotary Harbourfront Park

RECOMMENDATION:

PO70. Continue to monitor usage of the outdoor rink during the term of this Plan.

OUTDOOR GATHERING & EVENT SPACES

Parks need to support the delivery of outdoor events and activities, which foster social cohesion and a shared sense of community among residents, local organizations, government, businesses, and visitors. In Cobourg, these needs are met through gazebos at Jubilee Park and West Park Village Parkette, and a pavilion at Fitzhugh Park. The most famous and well known event space is Victoria Park, which serves as the hub for major annual festivals including the Waterfront Festival and Sandcastle Festival. It has both a gazebo and pavilion as well as a bandshell, open green space, and beach access to Lake Ontario.

As additional parkland is acquired in Cobourg over the term of this Plan, Regional and Town parks (including Athletic Parks and Landmark/Waterfront Parks identified in Table 2.3 in section 2.1) should include amenities to accommodate events, placemaking, celebration, and unstructured play, where possible. Event spaces include public squares, parkettes, pavilions, gazebos, or picnic shelters with protection from sun/rain. There should be sufficient seating (including accessible furnishings), shade, and waste receptacles; if possible, these spaces should have paved space for parking, electric site servicing (to provide pedestrian-scale evening lighting), access to a washroom, outdoor water fountains/bottle fillers, power/sound system hook up, etc. Outdoor event spaces may be supported by other amenities such as kitchenettes, water hook-ups, and amphitheatres/stages.

RECOMMENDATION:

PO71. Design future Regional and Town parks with amenities to accommodate events and activities such as parking, water and electric site servicing, where possible.

GARDENS

Ecology Gardens

The Cobourg Ecology Garden (Figure 2.43) was founded in 1996 by Cobourg local resident Minnie Pennel.[48] While it is a Town-owned park, it has been maintained by volunteers since its opening. The Garden demonstrates chemical-free, organic methods for growing a variety of plants, including vegetables, herbs, Prairie grasses, and native perennials. Organized as a series of islands, the space is designed to inspire visitors, with each portion of the garden having its own theme, and individual plots maintained by different volunteers.[49] The objectives of the Cobourg Ecology Garden are rooted in community building through educating the public about sustainable gardening practices, increasing awareness of the value of public green space, inspiring individual action, and beautifying Cobourg for the enjoyment of all.

In addition to the Cobourg Ecology Garden, there is a second ecology garden, 5 Corners Millennium Garden (Figure 2.44), at Five Corners Park. The landscape was designed by Miriam Mutton and an arbor was built by Keith Discipline. The garden is sponsored, funded, and maintained by the Cobourg Garden Club.[50]

Figure 2.43: Cobourg Ecology Garden

Figure 2.44: Five Corners Millennium Garden

[48] Cobourg Ecology Garden. (n.d.). *Cobourg Ecology Garden*. https://www.cobourgecologygarden.ca/

[49] McClinton, L. (2022). *Ecological gardens: Mimicking nature to create a space of beauty*. The Furrow. https://www.deere.com/en/publications/the-furrow/2022/spring-2022/ecological-gardens/

[50] Cobourg Garden Club. (n.d.). *5 Corners Public Garden*. https://cobourggardenclub.ca/5-corners-public-garden/

Public engagement highlights strong use of the Cobourg Ecology Garden, with 16% of 300 telephone survey respondents and 39% of 487 online survey respondents indicating frequent visitation. Despite its popularity, residents have identified challenges including maintenance concerns (some perceive the space as being 'unkempt') and instances of vandalism, including an incident where individuals attempted to cut down trees they believed to be invasive. Additionally, safety concerns linked to social issues have emerged, with some residents reporting they avoid the garden during the summer months (see Public Health and Parks discussion above).

Cobourg's Ecology Garden serves as both a community amenity and an educational demonstration. Unlike conventional parks, the garden prioritizes ecological function and sustainability over formal, manicured aesthetics. Ecological gardening is a sustainable approach to landscaping that encourages users to lean into nature, to work with and not against it, and to achieve a self-sustaining, biodiverse habitat that supports local wildlife.[51] The concept prioritizes native species that provide food and habitat for local fauna, often supporting soil health and biodiversity through composting initiatives, avoids chemical inputs and synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and implements sustainable irrigation practices. While this can result in a less formal appearance, it reflects an intentional design approach that supports biodiversity and environmental stewardship, while providing opportunities for the public to learn about native species, food production, and low impact gardening practices.

Community Gardens

A community garden is a collaboratively managed piece of land where people come together to grow food and plants, serving as a vibrant neighborhood hub that promotes health, food security, and social connection. There has been an increase in community gardens in Ontario with the rising costs of food and interest in community building following the COVID-19 pandemic. In most cases, community gardens are provided through a partnership with the municipality and community organizations, whereby the municipality provides the land (free of charge), planter frames, soil, fencing around the site, and a shed with basic supplies. In turn, the community group takes on the administration and operation of the site. Maintenance can be shared between the two partners, typically with the municipality providing grass cutting and taking care of larger repairs.

Because growing food is deeply tied to well-being and food security, public health units and food banks make ideal partners for garden development. These spaces can also serve as meaningful avenues for placekeeping and reconciliation by incorporating Indigenous artwork alongside native trees, shrubs, grasses, and perennial plants. Furthermore, when gardens are located near schools or community kitchens, they become dynamic outdoor classrooms where participants can learn summer gardening skills and later use the harvested produce for cooking and food-preservation classes. Ultimately, these shared spaces naturally bridge age gaps, strengthening community ties by connecting children, teens, adults, and seniors through engaging, intergenerational programming.

[51] Native Plant Trust. (n.d.). *Ecological gardening*. https://www.nativeplanttrust.org/for-your-garden/ecological-gardening/

Cobourg has one community garden located on the west side of James J. Tracey Park (Figure 2.45). Spearheaded by a grassroots group in 2016, it contains 25 in-ground beds and three wheelchair-accessible beds.[52] The beds are leased to local residents for $10-$20 each year, with priority given to returning gardeners and beds reserved for donation to the Northumberland Fare Share Food Bank. Interest in additional community gardens was identified by 11% of 100 telephone survey respondents and 9.5% of 354 online survey respondents.

Figure 2.45: Cobourg Community Garden
Photo: Dominik Wisniewski)

Sensory Gardens

Sensory gardens include a collection of plants, pathways, seating, and other structures intended to heighten one or more of the five senses (Figure 2.46). These therapeutic green spaces can support mental wellness, helping residents connect with nature and tune into surroundings in a way that is grounding and restorative. Sensory gardens also support those who have disabilities by engaging multiple senses.

Figure 2.46: Base31 Sensory Garden - Picton, ON

52 https://www.communitypowernorthumberland.ca/a-new-community-garden-for-cobourgs-east-end/

Professional landscaper Bonnie L. Grant shares the following guidelines for creating sensory gardens:[53]

- **Touch:** Integrate textures such as soft, fuzzy, spiky, and rough through leaves, petals, hardy plants, railings, seating, etc.
- **Sound:** Select plants that rustle or clatter when the wind blows (e.g., bamboo) or whose seed pods will crackle (e.g., rattlesnake master). Consider installing water features or chimes to add supporting sounds.
- **Smell:** Consider the spicy, floral, and herbal scents of flowers and herbs such as thyme or eucalyptus leaves. Avoid clustering heavily scented plants in one area.
- **Taste:** Encourage interaction through edible plants such as lamb's ear, butterfly weed, paperbark maple, witch hazel, swiss chard, false indigo, and peony, as well as herbs (e.g., wooly thyme, rosemary), fruit trees, and native berry bushes.
- **Sight:** Incorporate diverse plant colours and heights and use light, shadow, and movement to create many places for the eye to rest (e.g., stones, pathways, bird feeders or baths).

For individuals with disabilities, particularly autism spectrum disorder, sensory gardens can offer inclusive, multi-sensory environments that support exploration, curiosity, regulation, and engagement tailored to a wide range of abilities and interests.[54] These amenities can be complementary to inclusive playgrounds, offering a quieter and sensory-diverse experience to support user needs. The Town should consider integrating a sensory garden alongside the recommended inclusive playground identified earlier in this Plan, whether at Victoria Park or another location selected for this amenity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO72. Add interpretive signage to locations with ecology gardens to communicate the purpose and benefits of ecological gardening practices.

PO73. Work with Cobourg Ecology Garden volunteers to improve its safety and comfort by activating the space through increased programming and events, monitoring use, and incorporating CPTED strategies (e.g., lighting) where appropriate.

PO74. Monitor interest in establishing new community gardens and support residents in their development.

PO75. Consider developing a sensory garden alongside the recommended inclusive playground.

[53] https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/accessible/sensory-garden-ideas.htm

[54] Children & Nature Network. (n.d.). *Sensory gardens can be therapeutic environments for children with autism as well as welcoming spaces for all ages and abilities*. https://research.childrenandnature.org/research/sensory-gardens-can-be-therapeutic-environments-for-children-with-autism-as-well-as-welcoming-spaces-for-all-ages-and-abilities/

WATER ACCESS POINTS

Water access is arguably the Town's most significant and heavily utilized asset. Because Cobourg sits directly on Lake Ontario, its water access points are a mix of highly programmed tourist hubs, naturalized passive spaces, and functional marine infrastructure. During consultation activities, many residents provided feedback regarding Cobourg's waterfront. This Plan provides a brief strategic overview of some of these spaces, with the understanding that detailed plans and recommendations are found in the Waterfront User Needs Assessment and Detailed Design Plan. The revitalization of the East Pier is outside of the scope of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan; work is ongoing and the Town's Engage Cobourg page shares updates as that project progresses.

Victoria Beach

Victoria Park has over one kilometre of beautiful white sand known as Victoria Beach (Figure 2.47). There is direct entry into Lake Ontario for swimming, wading, and paddleboarding. When given a list of parks and open space amenities in Cobourg, survey respondents reported their households' use of beaches the most: it was selected by 80.7% of 487 online and 32.0% of 300 telephone respondents. Several shared in online comments their desire for lifeguards to be employed at the beach again.

A mobility mat is installed in the summer to provide balance and stability for people with wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, canes, and scooters on the beach. The mat's surface also serves as a tactile marker for people with visual impairments looking to access the water. In Cobourg, the mat extends south from the boardwalk, close to the water's edge. Due to changing currents and water levels, the mat's current application cannot extend directly into the water. Past attempts to safely anchor it were unsuccessful.

Lakelands Public Health monitors the recreational water quality each year from the beginning of June until the end of August to ensure the water is safe to swim in. While there are no lifeguards on duty at the beach, the four existing lifeguard towers have public safety signage with emergency numbers if support is required. Each of the towers are registered with an exact geographic location so that emergency response teams can locate an individual calling from the tower.

Figure 2.47: Victoria Beach in Summer

Many residents raised issues with parking availability and cost as Cobourg continues to manage high tourism at Victoria Beach. During major summer events, the Town has offered a complimentary shuttle service between Northumberland Mall, Cobourg Community Centre, and the waterfront. As revenue

strategies for non-resident beach use, other waterfront communities have employed tiered parking models (e.g., Innisfil Beach Park), digital license plate registration (e.g., City of Barrie), and direct gate admission (e.g., Wellington Beach). Ontario Provincial Parks implemented a daily vehicle permit system where visitors must pre-purchase their day-use pass online up to 5 days in advance to monitor capacity.

Marina and Harbour

Located immediately adjacent to Victoria Beach, Cobourg Marina and Harbour is the operational and motorized hub of Cobourg's waterfront. Deep water access is via a multi-lane public boat launch, transient and seasonal boat slips, and a fuel dock. There is also a fully accessible pedestrian walkway along the historic East and West Piers.

Among 487 online respondents, 10.1% use the boat launch and 14.2% use the dock; similar low use was reported by 300 telephone survey respondents (9.7% use the boat launch and 4.7% use the dock). A combined 17 households in the telephone and online surveys think additional boat launches and docks are needed. While reported use and need was low, the Dragonboat and Canoe Club provided qualitative feedback regarding peak-time congestion and suggested a public boat launch and dock be added to East Cobourg. This suggests a need for objective usage data. In the short term (i.e., over 1-2 seasons), the Town should deploy automated usage sensors to determine peak use of the existing boat launch and dock. This data should then be evaluated against the qualitative concerns of user groups to explore the feasibility of installing an additional public boat launch, potentially at Lookout Point Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO76. Install automated usage sensors at the public boat launch and dock to determine peak use over the next 1-2 seasons.

PO77. Evaluate usage data to explore the feasibility of installing an additional public boat launch in Cobourg.

Waterfront Nature Park

Formerly known as the West Beach Headlands and Boardwalk, the area was consolidated and renamed Waterfront Nature Park in 2022. Located west of the harbour, Waterfront Nature Park serves as a quieter, naturalized counterpart to Victoria Beach (see Figure 2.48 on the following page).

The conservation of Waterfront Nature Park is important due to its ecological significance. The area supports local and migratory wildlife, serving as an important stopover and roosting site for migratory birds. Over 250 species of birds have been recorded in and around Cobourg's harbour since 1948.[55] Waterfront Nature Park is also home to more than 200 plant species, characterized by its combination of a rare dune ecosystem and naturalized coastal wetland, including species such as *Salix cordata*, *Euphorbia polygonifolia*, and a variety of native dune grasses.

The ecological value of the area has been recognized through numerous municipal studies, including the Parks Master Plan (2013) and Waterfront User Needs Assessment (2018), among others. This Plan builds upon the recommendations of these previous studies while recognizing the Marina's continued role as a working harbour that must be maintained to support its

[55] https://www.cobourgharbour.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BIRDS.pdf

operational function.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO78. Update all Town data, mapping, GIS files, signage, and communications materials to reflect the park's new name as Waterfront Nature Park.

PO79. Establish clearly defined boundaries for Waterfront Nature Park through further engagement with Town staff, Council, advocacy groups, and the public.

Figure 2.48: Waterfront Nature Park in Summer and Winter

Visual Water Access Points

Cobourg has a number of open spaces that serve as passive, naturalized waterfront parks with open green spaces, trail connectivity, rest areas, and views of Lake Ontario. These shoreline spaces and street-end lookouts include:

- Cedermere Avenue Lookout
- Fitzhugh Shores Parkette
- Lucas Point Park
- Lookout Point Park
- Monk's Cove Park
- Peace Park
- Tracey Parkette

These visual corridors are used for passive recreation such as scenic/sunset viewing, bird watching, reading, and dog walking. They provide psychological value to the community by maintaining unbroken sightlines to Lake Ontario. Appropriate amenities in these locations include accessible seating, shoreline erosion management, and interpretive signage (e.g., local history or ecology).

Cobourg Creek

Water access in Cobourg is not limited just to the lake. Cobourg Creek runs directly through the municipality down to the harbour. Parks along the creek, such as Peace Park, offer trails, forested canopies, and direct access to the creek banks, which is particularly popular during seasonal fish runs

2.3 Sites for Special Consideration

Cobourg Dog Park

Cobourg has one leash-free dog park located at 770 Ontario Street and open to the public from sunrise to sunset (Figure 2.49). Operated in partnership with the Cobourg and District Dog Owners Group (CADDOG) and open since 2013, the space is a free, safe area for dogs to run without conflict with other park uses. Features include a parking lot, open field, wooded trail, water station, covered shed with shade, memorial rock garden, and seating. There is also a separate enclosed space for shy, young, and elderly dogs. CADDOG uses membership dues and donations to pay for dog waste bags, signs, shed repairs, and group insurance.

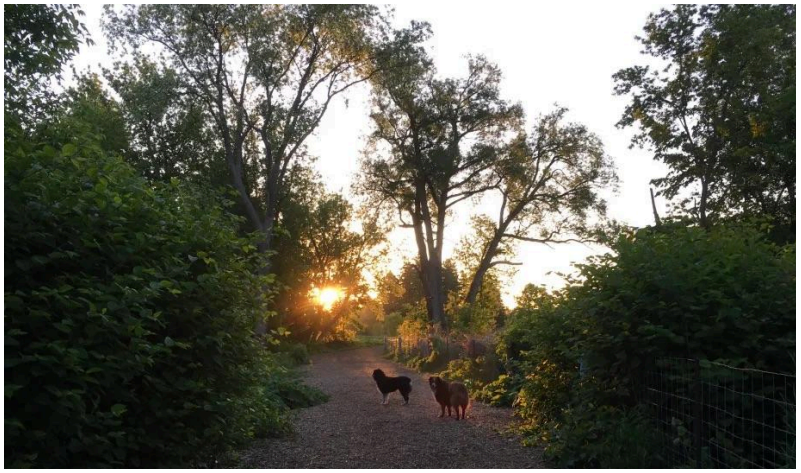

Figure 2.49: Cobourg Dog Park

The Town does not own the 9-acre plot of land on which the dog park sits (Figure 2.50). It is leased from the owners of the adjacent industrial property, formerly used as a plastics manufacturing plant.[56] According to the terms of the 2-year municipal lease agreement, total rent for the 2025-2026 year was $29,289.60.[57] Existing budget documents indicate the Town's intention to continue funding the lease with the property owner through a 2026–2028 extension period.

Figure 2.50: Leased Lands at 770 Ontario Street

Use of the Cobourg Dog Park was reported by 23.7% of 300 telephone respondents and 18.7% of 487 online respondents. Additional dog parks were requested by 8.9% of 100 telephone survey respondents and 8.4% of 358 online survey respondents, with three mentions in additional comment sections. Interviews

[56] https://pub-cobourg.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=39198
[57] https://pub-cobourg.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=39199

with Council indicated residents have requested dog parks in both the east and west ends of Cobourg.

Table 2.19 below compares provision of off-leash dog parks in seven comparator municipalities. The average rate is 1.5 dog parks. All communities have at least one public dog park, with the exception of Owen Sound's privately-owned space.

Table 2.19: Dog Park Provision Comparisons

Municipality	# of dog parks
Town of Cobourg	1
Municipality of Port Hope	1
City of Brockville	1
Town of Midland	2
City of Owen Sound	1 (privately owned)
Town of Collingwood	3
Town of Amherstburg	1
Town of Wasaga Beach	2

Cobourg's dog park is a core community amenity, and its existing location near industrial land is a good choice to mitigate any noise and smell complaints from residential neighbourhoods. However, given the high value of industrial and commercial real estate, the Town faces the continuous risk of abruptly losing this park should the property owner choose to develop the land, divest the parcel, or significantly increase lease rates. For long-term security, a permanent off-leash park on municipally-owned land should be a capital priority during the term of this Plan.

One option is to negotiate a land swap or severance to purchase the existing 9-acre parcel from the numbered corporation. This would maintain the ideal industrial-buffer location while removing the lease vulnerability. The Town should initiate a conversation with the property owner to explore the likelihood of this outcome.

If the existing location is unattainable, the Town should transition from a single, centralized dog park to a distributed model of smaller dog parks in 2+ locations. This will distribute the wear-and-tear of traffic while ensuring more residents have walkable access to off-leash spaces. The greenspaces at 847 McMurdo Drive and 117 Durham (see discussion below), both located in west Cobourg, should be considered for possible off-leash spaces.

The 2013 Parks Master Plan identified a 1.78-acre property at 640 Cottesmore Avenue (one parcel south to the Kerr Street Allowance) for potential acquisition and use as a municipal dog park. This site is south of Legion Fields and close to the Kerr Street Trail. Its location makes it a suitable space for dog owners in both central Cobourg and east Cobourg.

Given anticipated growth over the next decade, the Town can engage with developers to discuss the potential for a municipal dog park in Cobourg East, as part of a newly dedicated park parcel and/or integrated within natural heritage features as an off-leash trail. The Town could also explore public-private partnerships such as POPS and co-location within plazas or courtyards to integrate small-scale off-leash areas in higher-density residential areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO80. Initiate a conversation with the dog park's property owner to determine the likelihood of severing the land for municipal ownership or engaging in a land swap.

PO81. Establish at least one permanent off-leash park on municipal parkland.

PO82. Engage developers in discussions for a potential new off-leash park/trail in Cobourg East.

Figure 2.51: Victoria Park Campground in Summer

Victoria Park Campground

OVERVIEW

The Town operates a 3.8 acre, urban-style campground at 138 Division Street from mid-May through early October (Figure 2.51). The 70 trailer sites and 5 tent-only sites sell out each season (Figure 2.52). With views of Lake Ontario, the campground also has a comfort station with washrooms and showers, coin laundry, a sanitary dump station, and ice and firewood for sale.

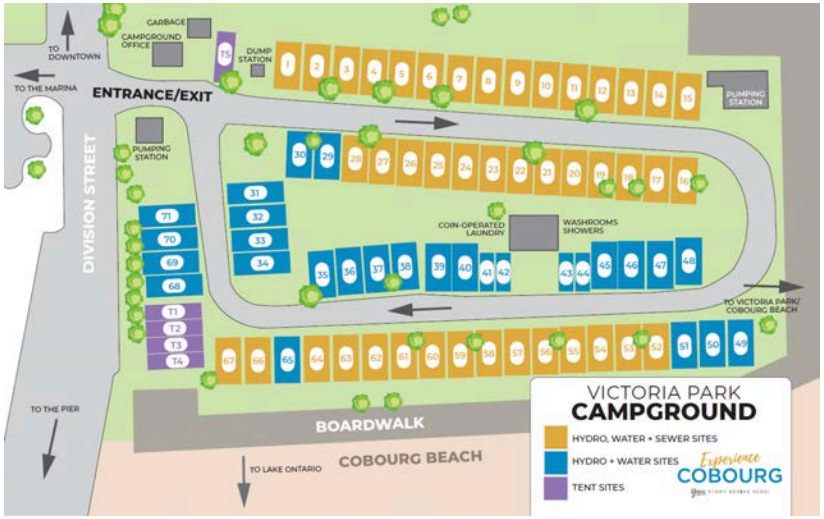

Figure 2.52: Map of Victoria Park Campground

PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

Past studies and reports have provided mixed recommendations pertaining to the Victoria Park Campground.

Parks Master Plan (2013)

This Plan built on the 2000 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to focus on a comprehensive park system that meets the needs of the community.

Recommendations included enhancing the path through the campground as an improved pedestrian-cyclist connection between Victoria Park and urban waterfront/marina basin. The area north of the pathway would remain green space to accommodate tenting, while the area south of the pathway would be transformed to a more multi-functional waterfront park space.

Downtown Cobourg Master Plan (2016)

This document set out a long-term vision for Downtown Cobourg with guidelines for both private development and public investment and strategic directions to be pursued over the next 20 years.

Regarding the Victoria Park Campground, the Plan recommended redeveloping the site as a regional destination draw such as a hotel, restaurant, or spa focused on health and recreation in a landscaped park. The Plan emphasized that any future redevelopment should include public pedestrian access through the site for public access and connectivity to the waterfront via pathways, street furniture, and pedestrian-scale lighting and landscaping.

Waterfront User Needs Assessment & Detailed Design (2018)

This 15-month project expanded on work completed as part of the 2013 Master Plan and looked specifically at the community's priorities for a beautiful, accessible, and sustainable waterfront. An extensive engagement process involving a project steering committee, stakeholder consultation, public meetings/workshops, surveys, and a design charrette to understand the community's interests and to solicit input on proposed improvements.

The study recommended leaving the campground in its current location and making a number of improvements to help reduce its visual and operational impact on the waterfront:

- water, sanitary and electrical services upgrades
- public boardwalk/walkway realignment
- extended/expanded use (e.g., seasonal yurts, single-room winter cottages, skating loop/winter uses)
- washroom/laundry facility upgrades
- registration system upgrades
- rate increases and policy revisions
- tree planting, grading improvements, and reconfigured layout
- multi-use trail connection around campground perimeter

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of consultation activities for this Parks and Recreation Master Plan (see section 1.4.2), community members were asked their opinion on the future of the campground site in both the online and telephone surveys (Figures 2.53-2.54 on the following page), which yielded conflicting results.

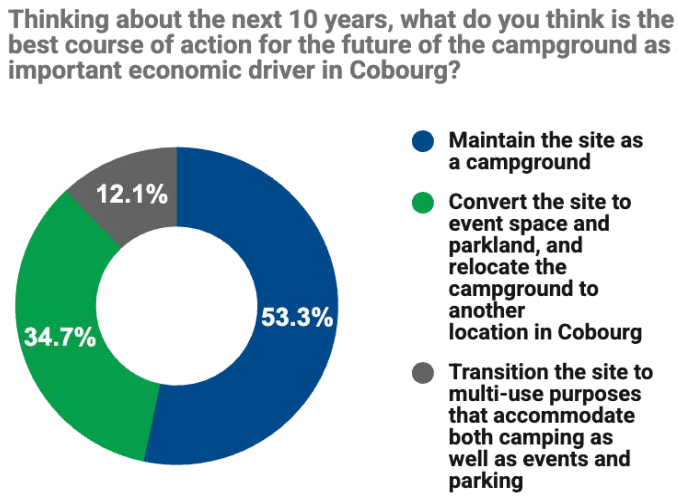

Figure 2.53: Online Survey Views on Victoria Park Campground

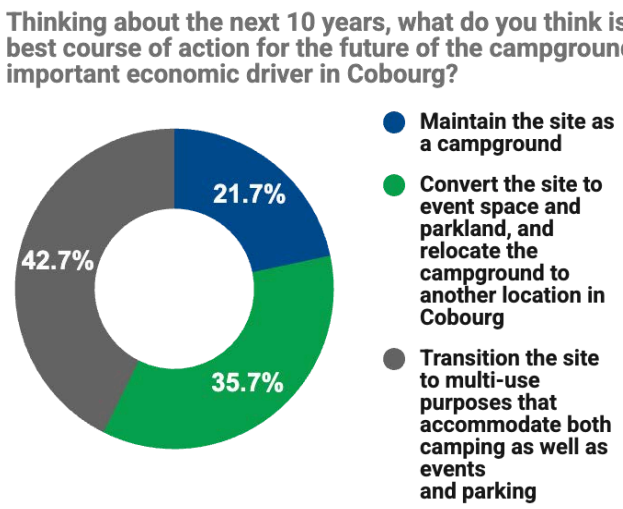

Figure 2.54: Telephone Survey Views on Victoria Park Campground

The online survey, composed of self-selected respondents, showed a strong preference (53.3% of 473) to maintain the campground. In contrast, the telephone survey showed a preference (43% of 300) to transition the site to multi-use purposes that accommodate both camping as well as events and parking. In both surveys, approximately 35% of respondents supported converting the site to event space and parkland while relocating the campground to another location in Cobourg.

Although the sample size is smaller, the 300 households in the telephone survey were randomly selected from a cross-section of the entire Cobourg community. As a result, this data is a statistically accurate representation of the broader public, capturing both those who do and do not use the campground. While the online survey reflects a highly engaged group with a vested interest in the status quo, the telephone survey provides more reliable data for understanding the average community member's wishes.

This Plan recommends a phased, compromise-driven approach focused on shared access to maximize the use of prime parkland for the entire community. Multi-use concepts should be tested and evaluated in the short term to inform permanent decision-making in the medium term.

As a spatial compromise, the Town should first consider reducing the total number of RV/trailer sites along the most premium waterfront edge of the property. This reclaimed land would be converted into day-use picnic areas, food services, or public walkways.

Tourism Strategy

The Town should develop a standalone Tourism Strategy that builds on the 2023–2028 Economic Development and Venture13 Strategy and Action Plan. While the Action Plan addresses the business side of the waterfront and downtown Cobourg, a dedicated Tourism Strategy would manage the logistical, environmental, and experiential side of tourism. It should focus on year-round, sustainable tourism while respecting the local community.

Shoulder Seasons

To modernize the campground site and appeal to a broader demographic, the Town should explore integrating creative, alternative overnight accommodations, as suggested in the 2018 Waterfront User Needs Assessment. This would create a new municipal revenue stream during the off-season while successfully transitioning the space into a more inclusive, multi-use community asset.

Town staff have rightly noted the environmental challenges of the site, observing that "nobody wants to be on Lake Ontario in the winter." The harsh winds and freezing temperatures present a barrier to traditional winter camping. The immediate focus for yurts and cabins should be extending the operating window into April, May, October, and November. Heated structures such as seasonal yurts, single-room winter cottages/eco-cabins, and glamping pods offer comfortable, weather-proof accommodations for fall foliage tourists, early-season cyclists, and weekend visitors when traditional tent or trailer camping is less appealing (Figure 2.55).

The Town should trial these structures during the extended shoulder seasons. If occupancy rates remain high through late November, the Town can evaluate the financial feasibility of keeping select cabins open through the winter.

Figure 2.55: Campground Site Used for Shoulder Season Accommodations (Image Generated by AI)[58]

Nordic Wellness Trends

In recent years, Nordic wellness practices – specifically the pairing of icy cold plunges with mobile, wood-fired saunas – have surged in popularity across communities situated along Lake Ontario including Toronto, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Prince Edward County. Emulating traditional Finnish "hot, cold, rest" circuits, growing numbers of wellness enthusiasts are actively seeking out these lakeside experiences for their mental health benefits,

[58] The visualization was generated by artificial intelligence for conceptual inspiration only and may not be technically feasible as shown.

nervous system regulation, and communal connection during the colder months. By partnering with mobile sauna operators to offer curated cold-plunge and warm-up sessions at the Victoria Park waterfront, Cobourg could effectively transform the site's challenging winter climate from an operational barrier into a highly marketable, off-season destination (Figure 2.56). This is discussed in further detail in section 4.3.

Figure 2.56: Campground Site Used for Winter Wellness (Image Generated by AI)

Figure 2.57: Campground Site Used for Community Events (Image Generated by AI)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO83. Consider reducing the number of RV/trailer sites along the most premium waterfront edge and explore integrating alternative overnight uses during the off-season as an additional municipal revenue stream (e.g., yurts, glamping pods).

PO84. Develop a dedicated, year-round Tourism Strategy.

PO85. Consider partnering with mobile sauna operators to offer hot-cold experiences in the winter.

117 Durham Street

This 5-acre vacant property (Figure 2.58) was formerly used as a sports field for the now-closed Cobourg District Collegiate Institute (CDCI) West. The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board declared the land surplus, while a lakeside boardwalk on the lower half of the property continued to be maintained by the Town. The southernmost portion is subject to flooding and water hazard; it is designated an Environmental Constraint Area and undevelopable.

The 2013 Parks Master Plan recommended the Town formally acquire the 117 Durham property as a link to West Beach and a means of supporting an integrated, connected municipal open space system with active recreation opportunities for Cobourg's intensifying community. The 2016 Downtown Master Plan recommended the 117 Durham site be redeveloped for townhouse and condominium typologies.

In September 2022, the Town purchased the parcel from the school board. In April 2023, Council directed the property to be used for a balanced mix of parkland, market, and affordable residential units. The northern portion of the lands (1.29 hectares/3.18 acres) have significant development potential, while the southern boardwalk and waterfront lands could be severed for preservation as parkland. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in February 2024 for ownership and development of a housing project. No proposals were accepted. Northumberland County did not pursue the lands for affordable housing.

Figure 2.58: Vacant Land at 117 Durham Street

In early 2025, a zoning by-law amendment application was proposed to introduce medium- and high-density residential uses for the site and provide guidance for future development proposals. Following significant opposition from community members, Council deferred its decision for the rezoning.

This Plan recommends formally severing the southern 1.36-acre portion from the developable lands immediately. This will ensure the identified environmentally sensitive area remains a permanent municipal asset, preserving the waterfront boardwalk and supporting a connected, accessible parks and open space system. The remaining developable land is not being considered as part of this Plan.

In 2023, Council passed a resolution regarding the future use of the property, directing that the lands be a balanced mix of parkland, market and affordable residential units. Engagement for this Plan suggests the community views this site primarily as open space. However, if the entire 5.15-acre site is reverted to parkland, the Town must absorb the financial burden of the 2022 purchase from the school board.

For the remaining developable 2.8 acres, this Plan recommends dedicating at least 1 acre to active recreation and rezoning it to a Park Area.

For example, depending on the updated campus plan for the Cobourg Community Centre (see section 3.5), a formal new rectangular sports field could be accommodated at 117 Durham. Section 3.3 notes that the property is occasionally booked by user groups because there is no time available on other facilities.

The Town will conduct additional public consultation with the community to engage constructively on the future use of these lands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PO86. Sever the southern 1.36-acre portion of the lands to ensure the identified environmentally sensitive area remains preserved as municipally-owned open space, and reclassify this severed portion as a Nature Park under this Plan's parks classification system.

PO87. Rezone at least 1 acre of the remaining 2.8 acres as a Park Area and appropriately classify the space in accordance with the parkland classification system.

PO88. Conduct additional public consultation with the community to engage constructively on the future use of these lands.

3.0 RECREATION FACILITIES

3.1 Introduction

This section addresses needs in Cobourg that are likely to emerge during the term of the Plan for indoor and outdoor facilities that are (or could be) scheduled for community use. The assessments are based on current facility supply and use, consultation with the public and organized users on anticipated needs, population growth and local trends in participation. They are based on several underlying premises:

- The Town of Cobourg is generally well supplied with indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at the Cobourg Community Centre (CCC) campus and elsewhere in the community. This is likely the reason that, for the most part, stronger interest among community residents and organized groups emerged for facilities that are currently not part of supply.
- A distinction is made between the role of the municipality in meeting regional facility needs and/or those of small or specialized/niche markets versus providing general, introductory community recreation.
- Prime time on scheduled facilities comprises total time available for booking on weeknights and weekends, whether or not it is currently used. This will likely call for a major change in facility scheduling and use patterns that historically do not incorporate weekends, which increase available hours substantially, as regularly used prime time. Instead, heaviest facility use is limited to weeknights. On unlit facilities, therefore, prime time may represent as few as ten (10) hours per week while weekend hours sit idle.
- The primary indicator of need to expand the supply of scheduled facilities is the extent to which current use approaches available prime time capacity, and if there are opportunities and methods to optimize use to 'expand' supply before building new, recognizing the need for the municipality to control costs. As with other municipal services, recreation facilities are subsidized through the tax base and operate at a deficit. To the extent possible, facility supply should meet verified demand to limit unnecessary expenditures.
- Data on the most recent full year/season (i.e., 2025) from Town schedules was used to provide the above-noted indicators of facility use in relation to capacity. It is understood, however, that additional work is required to improve information collection processes to establish a comprehensive and consistent data base for decision-making on future facility supply. Part of this work will include reconciling different perspectives on facility use/capacity across various sectors of the community.

The discussion is presented under the major headings of Indoor Facility Requirements, Outdoor Facility Requirements, Improvements to Existing Facilities, and CCC Campus Planning.

3.2 Indoor Facility Requirements

Responses to the question, "Do you think additional or expanded indoor recreation facilities are needed in Cobourg?" are illustrated for each resident survey in Figure 3.1.

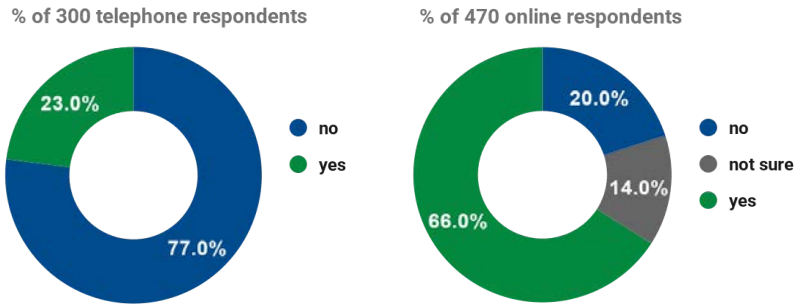

Figure 3.1: Need for More/Expanded Indoor Facilities

As the graphs show, the majority of respondents indicated that more/expanded indoor facilities either 'are' or 'are not' needed: 77% of telephone survey respondents reported they **are not needed**, and 66% of online survey participants noted additional/expanded facilities **are needed**. The proportions of total telephone respondents (300) that are interested in more facilities, therefore, are based on few respondents - ranging from 5 to 22. The top four most frequently requested indoor facilities by both survey groups are in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Top Indoor Facility Interests Among Residents

Random Telephone Survey (N=300)	Online Survey (N=470)
Swimming pool: 7%	Swimming pool: 46%
Walking/Running track: 6%	Fitness facilities (e.g., weights rooms, cardio rooms, etc.): 25%
Fitness facilities (e.g., weights rooms, cardio rooms, etc.): 5%	Artificial turf field: 24%
Arena: 5%	Multi-purpose space: 15%

Indoor facilities are discussed below as follows:

- ice pads
- gymnasiums
- multi-purpose space
- curling rink
- arts spaces
- indoor artificial turf
- other indoor recreation facilities

It is noted that an indoor pool was the most frequently requested facility among both telephone and online survey respondents. The need for an indoor pool is discussed in section 3.5 on the future of the CCC and its surrounding campus.

Ice Pads

Table 3.2 describes features and amenities of the CCC arenas.

Table 3.2: CCC Ice Pad Supply and Features

Name	Key Features	Amenities/ Comments
the Bowl Arena	• 2,000-seat feature arena with "bowl" seating • box office reception desk • 4 large dressing rooms • Cobourg Cougars Jr. A team dressing & coaches' rooms	• elevated walking track • professional score board and time clock • score clock advertising • also accommodates concerts, special events
Grace Bowen Arena	• 400-seat recreation and practice arena • 6 large dressing rooms • warm viewing available from the Grand Hall	
Tournament Room	• on second floor between, and overlooking the two ice pads	• no cost use during tournaments for event administration

The Bowl Arena (Figure 3.2) primary users include minor hockey, which rents the arena for five hours or more nightly from Monday to Friday over seven months of the year with extended hours on weekends. The arena hosts events like the Cobourg Cougars home and playoff games, Cobourg Kodiaks Lacrosse, Northumberland Home and Garden Show and a variety of live entertainments.

Figure 3.2: The Bowl Arena

The Grace Bowen Arena (Figure 3.3) is provided year-round ice for diverse hockey activities including daily hockey for local leagues and minor hockey practices, Adult Shinny, Drop-In Adult Skating and Over-35 League sessions. It is the home of the CCC's 'Learn to Skate' and 'Learn to Play Hockey' programs. Extensive use for minor hockey is supplemented by private hockey development camps throughout the summer.

Figure 3.3: Grace Bowen Arena

ICE PAD USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Within total operating hours, prime time comprises:

- **Weekdays:** 4:00 pm to 11:15 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 7:00 am to 11:15 pm Saturday, Sunday

Calculations on current use of the ice pads is based on the above noted definitions of prime time. Estimates of future need for additional ice pads are based on two calculations:

- total use on both pads by month for 2025, using an average of prime time hours per month
- actual use of each pad during the peak month of January 2025

Average Total Use on Both Pads

weekday total	7.25 hours x 5 days	=	36.25
weekend total	16.25 hours x 2 days	=	32.5
weekly total	36.25 + 32.5	=	68.75
average per month	weekly total x 4 weeks	=	275
total average per month	monthly total x 2 ice pads	=	550

As shown above, prime time hours produce an average of 550 hours per month on the two pads For May, June and July; however, the Bowl Arena does not provide ice and is used for floor activities (Kodiaks Lacrosse; annual events such as Home & Garden Show, high school grad ceremonies). This generates a total of 5,775 hours per year [(550 x 9) + (275 x 3)]. IIn Table 3.3, these results are used to determine the proportion of used, and unused, prime time hours based on the Town's booking records for 2025.[59] The calculations show that in 2025, a total of 80.5% of prime time was used on the two ice pads. Levels of use by month when both pads had ice (i.e., peak use periods) ranged from 67.7% to 92%, with between 81% and 89% use occurring most frequently.

Table 3.3: 2025 Average Prime Time Use on Both Ice Pads

2025 Month	# Prime Time Hours Used	% Prime Time Hours Used*	Total Unused Prime Time Hours*
January	480.0	87.3%	70.0
February	465.5	84.6%	84.50
March	491.25	89.3%	58.75
April	385.0	70.0%	165.00
May	330.75	80.2%	81.75
June	221.75	80.6%	53.25
July	166.75	60.5%	108.25
August	367.0	66.7%	183.00
September	454.75	82.7%	95.25
October	446.0	81.1%	104.00
November	505.75	92.0%	44.25
December	463.75	84.3%	86.25
TOTAL #	**4,679.25**		**1,134.25**
TOTAL %	**80.5%**		**19.5%**

* based on monthly average of 550 hours of prime time both pads, except for June and July when the Bowl arena has no ice, and monthly prime time averages 275 hours during this period. In May, Bowl ice was extended for two weeks to accommodate playoffs, for a total of 412.5 hours of prime time.

[59] Reserved time is assumed to equal used time.

Annual prime time supply now, therefore, is per 0.228 hours per capita (4,679.25 hours/20,519 population). Assuming a consistent average rate of 85% peak use of prime time produces the following additional average requirements to 2036:

- **Total annual prime time needed** = 0.228 per capita x 25,901 population **= 5,905 hours**
- **Additional annual prime time needed = 1,225.75 hours** (5,905 total - 4,679.25 existing use)
- **Additional monthly prime time needed = 102 hours** (1,225.75 hours/12 months)

Each ice pad provides an average of 275 hours of monthly prime time. At the average peak use level of 85%, 234 hours of this time will be used. The need for 102 hours of additional time, therefore, is the equivalent of 0.44 ice pads (102 hours/234 hours).

Peak Total Use Month on Each Pad

Table 3.3 above shows that November was the busiest month for prime time use on both pads at 505.75 hours. The following calculations estimate future need for additional ice pads assuming November is the peak month that will require accommodation, with other months requiring fewer prime time hours:

weekday total per pad	7.25 x 5	=	36.25
weekend total per pad	16.25 x 2	=	32.5
monthly weekday total per pad	36.25 x 4 weeks	=	145.0
monthly weekend total per pad	32.5 x 5	=	162.5
total prime time hours per month 2025	145.0 + 162.5	=	307.5
% prime time use Nov. Bowl Arena	268 / 307.5	=	87.2%
% prime time use Nov. Grace Bowen Arena	237.75 / 305.5	=	77.3%

Using the same approach as above for each arena produces the following estimates of additional prime time requirements to 2036 (Table 3.4). Estimating requirements for each pad separately recognizes that their respective uses are not directly comparable or interchangeable.

Table 3.4: Estimated Future Prime Time Requirements for Peak Month

	Bowl Arena	Grace Bowen Area
Current per capita supply	268 / 20,519 = 0.013	237.75 / 20,519 = 0.011
Total prime time needed to 2036	0.013 x 25,901 = 337 hours	0.011 x 25,901 = 285 hours
Additional prime time needed	337 - 268 = 69 hours	285 – 237.75 = 47.25 hours

At current levels of peak prime time use - Bowl Arena 87% and Grace Bowen 77% - an additional 69 and 47.25 hours per month will be needed to accommodate increases in use to 2036 on each pad, respectively. These findings are used to estimate the hourly equivalent of ice pads:

- **Bowl Arena:** 87.2% of prime time is used = 268 hours. The need for 69 hours of additional time, therefore, is the equivalent of 0.26 ice pads (69/268).

- **Grace Bowen Arena:** 77.3% of prime time is used = 237.75 hours. The need for 47.25 hours of additional time, therefore, is the equivalent of 0.20 ice pads (47/238).

This result compares to that using annual averages and totals 0.44 additional ice pads in terms of hours needed. One additional pad, therefore, could accommodate more than prime time needs to 2036 based on current facility use and Cobourg's population growth alone.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The resident surveys revealed relatively limited interest in another municipal gymnasium. An arena was requested by 5% (15) and 11% (50) of telephone and online survey respondents, respectively. Conversely, among the eight (8) groups using the CCC ice that responded to the survey, seven (7) think that more ice is needed. Of these regular seven (7) groups use the CCC for their regular season and four (4) host events at the arenas. Comments on need included:

- at least one (1), likely two (2) more pads are required
- there is a lack of time from 5 to 9pm to accommodate younger players, and lack of continuous weekend time blocks
- a smaller development rink or shooting pads with a warmup/work out area would help add capacity and provide cross-training facilities

These reports on a shortage of facilities are supported by the foregoing assessment on use and estimated future requirements and indicate that another ice pad is needed to meet additional prime time needs and to provide some flexibility in scheduling to: better serve age-related needs for earlier times, provide more continuous time blocks, and allocate more time for development activities.

At the same time, it appears that the deficiency relates to regional use of arenas, as opposed to Cobourg specific needs alone. Collectively, the groups reported using arenas in five (5) other area communities, with a total of eight (8) ice pads at the facilities used: Port Hope, Alnwick/Haldimand, Cavan-Monaghan, Cramahe, and Hamilton Township. The NMHA, which is a major user of both ice pads at the CCC, uses the other arenas noted above more frequently than the remaining groups.

Among six groups responding to this question, four (4) reported that over half (between 60% and 100%) of their regular season participants live in Cobourg, and the balance live in other communities. The NMHA, which comprises 41% (665) of the total 1,623 participants represented by the six groups that provided figures on Cobourg-based players, did not include this proportion.

As the largest community in Northumberland County and its relative centrality within Northumberland County, the Town of Cobourg would likely be an appropriate location for additional indoor ice, with the understanding that it will continue to largely serve regional needs. Cobourg-based use alone could likely be comfortably met with facilities available at the CCC.

These findings reflect the increasingly regional nature of community sport and the shift in need for facilities to serve a larger geographic area than has historically been the role of municipal arenas to serve the immediate community. Ideally, a regional serving facility should be delivered through a regional

partnership among communities that will be the primary users. This type of initiative would require a joint investigation to determine the market for additional year-round ice, the extent of the requirement, estimated capital and operating costs, and an appropriate joint development/use agreement for the parties to its provision based on proportionate shares of use. This work would incorporate any plans that the individual municipalities may have to expand the supply of indoor ice in their own communities, which will influence the need for more facilities in the larger market.

If the Town intends to continue meeting regional needs for indoor ice, it should plan to add one pad within the next ten years, based on a detailed study of the market demand for a facility, the capital and operating costs to provide it, and the potential to partner with other area municipalities for its construction and/or ongoing operation. Section 3.4 considers future facility locations in Cobourg. It is noted that limited resident interest for a walking/running track emerged in the telephone survey (6% or 18 respondents) and the online survey (15% or 68 respondents). Should an additional arena be considered in the future, the planning for this facility can determine the need for a second indoor track as part of its provision.

In the interim, there is unused prime time (and non-prime time) capacity on both pads, which varies between the two and throughout the year, that can be reviewed for improved allocations to all users in terms of needed increases, scheduled times, and seasonal distribution. The Town should also increase marketing directed to private sector business and organizations to build non-prime time ice use for tournaments, team building events, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF1. Based on confirming the intention to continue meeting regional needs for indoor ice, plan to add one pad within the next ten years.

RF2. Prepare a detailed study of the market demand for a regional-serving facility, the capital and operating costs to provide it, and the potential to partner with other area municipalities for its construction and/or ongoing operation.

RF3. Review existing ice allocations to improve distribution to all users in terms of needed increases, scheduled times, and seasonally.

RF4. Increase promotion directed to the private/commercial sector to build non-prime time ice use.

Gymnasiums

The gymnasium at the CCC, which is formally named the Rotary Sports and Performance Hall, is a double gym that can be divided into two single spaces (Gym A and Gym B), via a retractable dividing wall. At full capacity for performances and large events, it can accommodate 700 people.

The gyms are used for sports/activities such as volleyball, basketball, pickleball, carpet bowling, birthday parties, etc. Gym A is connected to one of the multi-purpose rooms and Gym B has a door to an outside area that is used for camp programs.

GYMNASIUM USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Within total operating hours, prime time comprises:

- **Weekdays:** 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 10:00 am to 8:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total	5 hours x 5 days	=	25
weekend total	10 hours x 2 days	=	20
weekly total	25 +20	=	45
average per month	weekly total x 4 weeks	=	180
total average per month	monthly total x 2 gyms	=	360

As shown above, prime time hours produce an average of 360 hours per month on the two pads, which generates a total of 4,320 hours per year (360 x 12). In Table 3.4 below, these results are used to determine the proportion of used, and unused, prime time hours based on the Town's booking records[60] for 2025.

These calculations show that in 2025, a total of 68% of prime time was used at the two gyms. Levels of use by month ranged from 41% to 93%, with most falling below 70%. March, at 93%, is the only month of the year that shows close to capacity use of prime time.

Table 3.4: 2025 Average Prime Time Use for Both Gyms

2025 Month	# Prime Time Hours Used	% Prime Time Hours Used	Total Unused Prime Time Hours
January	277.0	76.9	83.0
February	215.0	59.7	145.0
March	334.75	93.0	25.25
April	251.50	69.9	108.5
May	177.0	49.2	183.0
June	147.0	40.8	213.0
July	226.5	62.9	133.5
August	257.5	71.5	102.5
September	232.0	64.4	128.0
October	218.0	60.6	142.0
November	300.0	83.3	60.0
December	245.5	68.2	114.5
TOTAL #	**2,881.75**		**1,438.25**
TOTAL %	**66.7%**		**33.3%**

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The resident surveys did not reveal strong interest in another gym, which was requested by 4% (12) and 9% (40) of telephone and online survey respondents, respectively.

The three (3) primary gym user groups that responded to the survey use the CCC gyms – two (2) for regular season programs and all three (3) for events. Comments on need included:

[60] Reserved time is assumed to equal used time.

- Short mat bowling regularly uses Gym A for three (3) hours twice a week and available Saturdays, as well as 3 to 4 full Saturdays during the season. Interest in additional use includes renting two (2) of the adjoining multipurpose rooms with up to 72 tables for a tournament lunch, and possibly three (3) more hours of gym use on Sunday afternoon.
- Greg Jillings Memorial Basketball hosts an annual event to raise funds to construct an outdoor basketball court in Cobourg, ideally on the CCC campus, to move the tournament outdoors. They are interested in municipal support to locate and help fund this project.
- In addition to the CCC, the Northumberland Breakers Volleyball Club uses six (6) gyms across Northumberland County for practices. It is interested in a single facility that is sufficiently large with OVA standards in net systems and flooring to: address school deficiencies in availability and suitability; to centralize, share and store proper equipment among teams; and to accommodate growth in participation; to provide the time to operate seasonal programs and regular tournaments. They are interested in support in the form of grants and funding for such a project.
- Other groups that are primarily outdoor facility users but also use the gym (or other spaces in the CCC) for winter cross-training include three baseball/softball organizations, rugby, and pickleball.

The CCC gyms are intended for general recreation programming and community use. Adding to the supply of municipal gyms would only be indicated if there was enough unmet demand for expanded use of this type. While at the time, including OVA standard facilities could be considered as an 'upgrade' with fundraised contributions from potential user groups, providing new municipal space specifically for volleyball is cost prohibitive. Moreover, despite the Breakers' growth in the past three years (from 60 to 110 participants), it is a small group relative to the costs of providing and maintaining a separate facility. While it was suggested that it could be shared with pickleball, this aligns with the concept of a multi-use gym that is the preferred model, and which is the case now with existing facilities. Again, this could be considered at the point a third gym is required, once the use of existing facilities is optimized and growth in demand due to population increases or participation in recreational gym-based sports is confirmed.

The Northumberland Breakers Volleyball Club indicates it is open to County-wide participation (and possibly from communities beyond). The group currently draws 70% of its regular season membership from Cobourg and the remainder from other communities. As noted above, there is unused non-prime time that could be considered in a review of allocations to improve distribution of time for all users. As a regional serving group, however, it is assumed that the Club will continue to use facilities in other communities.

Current prime time use of 2,881.75 hours equates to 0.140 hours per capita (2881.75/20,519). Applying this figure to the projected 2036 population suggests that a total of 3,626 (25,901 x 0.140) of gym prime time will be required to meet demand during the term of the Master Plan or an additional 744 hours (3,626 - 2,882). This estimate is based on current use levels, which are less than optimal.

If 90% use of total prime time over the course of the year is used as a target for optimal use of the gyms, a total of 3,888 hours would be used (of the annual total of 4,320). This leaves 1,006 hours of gym time available for use, which exceeds the 744 hour

estimate associated with population growth alone. Tracking the growth of participation in all existing and new gym uses will inform planning for additions to Cobourg's supply beyond the term of the Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF5. Optimize the use levels of the CCC gymnasiums to accommodate demand generated by population growth during the term of the Master Plan for gym-based sports and recreation programs/activities.

RF6. Review existing gym allocations to improve distribution to all users in terms of needed increases and scheduled times.

RF7. Track participation in various gym activities to inform plans for an additional multi-use gymnasium to be provided after 2036.

RF8. In designing future gymnasium space, consider specialty, user-specific requirements as upgrades or additions with fundraised contributions from potential user groups.

Multi-purpose Space

Table 3.5 describes the various multi-purpose spaces at the CCC.

Table 3.5: Multi-purpose and Dedicated Rooms in Cobourg

Room Name	Type	Notes
Cameco A	multi-purpose	one large room divisible into three separate, smaller spaces; semi-sprung floor; mirrors; each has door to the gymnasium
Cameco B	multi-purpose	
Cameco C	multi-purpose	
HTM Insurance	multi-purpose	small room; wireless internet; fridge and sink; door to gymnasium
Seniors	dedicated	used primarily by seniors for a variety of programs/ activities; kitchenette; direct entry from parking lot
Spoolon	multi-purpose	designated but not used as a youth room; wireless internet; door to gymnasium
Bea's Place	childcare room	designed for use by children; also used for other programs
Whitelaw Boardroom	meeting	wireless internet; ceiling-mounted projector; wall-mounted screen; whiteboard; sink, bar fridge; teleconference equipment
Grand Hall	building lobby	large, open space with fireplace/seating; used informally and for hosting events with temporary stage and bar

These nine (9) facilities of various sizes and features (Figure 3.4) can collectively be labeled multi-purpose or spaces or rooms. Some of these spaces are designed and/or designated for certain users/uses, such as the Seniors' Room, Bea's Place for childcare, and the Whitelaw Boardroom. At the same time, uses in these rooms may include those for which they were not specifically intended. For example, Bea's Place, which was designed/equipped for small children, is used for both children's and seniors' arts programs, and as a base for summer camps. Five of these spaces (3 in Cameco Hall, the Spoolon Youth and the HTM Insurance Rooms) are the core 'multi-purpose' rooms with respect to design flexibly for a variety of uses. The three (3) spaces that comprise the Cameco Hall can be used separately or in partial/full combinations with retractable internal walls. When combined, the Hall comprises the largest, multi-purpose room available in the CCC. It is the most heavily used space for rentals. The Grand Hall is also a large open space that comprises the CCC's entrance lobby and an arena viewing area. It is available for large, social events that do not require a self-contained space.

The Town owns a number of other facilities that are dedicated multi-purpose spaces, can be used as such at certain times or are rooms within buildings that can be used for various purposes including: Victoria Hall, Cobourg Public Library, and Venture 13. There is a room in the back of Victoria Hall on the 3rd floor, which is used occasionally for warm ups but is predominantly storage. It does not have elevator access or washrooms. Not-for-profit facilities include the Lion's Community Centre, (Knights of) Columbus Community Centre, Orange Hall, Cobourg Memorial Temple and Cobourg Legion.

Figure 3.4: Multi-purpose Rooms at the CCC

MULTI-PURPOSE SPACE USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Within total operating hours, prime time comprises:

- **Prime time multi-purpose space on weekdays:** 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Prime time multi-purpose space on weekends:** 10:00 am to 8:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total	4 hours x 5 days	=	20
weekend total	10 hours x 2 days	=	20
weekly total	20 +20	=	45
average per month	weekly total x 4 weeks	=	160
total average per month	monthly total x 9 rooms	=	1440

Total average per month prime time available for nine multi-purpose spaces = 1,440 hours or 17,280 per year. As shown above, prime time hours produce an average of 1,440 hours per month for all nine rooms, which produces a total of 17,280 hours per year (1,440 x 12). In Table 3.6 on the following page, these results are used to determine the proportion of used, and unused, prime time hours based on the Town's booking records for 2025.[61]

Table 3.6: Multi-purpose Room Use 2025

2025 Month	# Prime Time Hours Used	% Prime Time Hours Used	Total Unused Prime Time Hours
January	458.0	31.8%	982.0
February	270.75	18.8%	1,169.25
March	517.5	35.9%	922.5
April	447.5	31.1%	992.5
May	408.75	28.4%	1,031.25
June	238.0	16.5%	1202.0
July	791.75	55.0%	648.25
August	938.75	65.2%	501.25
September	285.0	19.8%	1,155.0
October	335.5	23.3%	1,104.5
November	458.0	31.8%	982.0
December	391.5	27.2%	1,048.5
TOTAL #	**5,541**		**11,739.0**
TOTAL %	**32.1%**		**67.9%**

The calculations show that in 2025, approximately one-third (32%) of total available prime time hours in these spaces was used. Levels of use by month ranged from 17% to 65%, with all months except July and August falling below 40%. Over the course of the year, considering all spaces collectively, the majority (70%) of prime time is available for use.

Prime time use during the peak month of August was reviewed by grouping eight of the rooms (not including the Grand Hall) into similar spaces to improve comparability within these three groups and variable levels of use during the year:

- **Large multi-purpose:** Cameco A, B & C
- **Small multi-purpose:** HTM, Seniors and Spoolon
- **Designated:** Whitelaw

Table 3.7 on the following page shows that peak use by type of space comprises noticeably larger proportions of available prime time than annual activity collectively.

[61] Reserved time is assumed to equal used time.

Table 3.7: Prime Time Peak Month Use August 2025*

Space/ Room	# Hours Used	# Prime Time Hours Used
Cameco A	242.25	117
Cameco B	180	110.5
Cameco C	201	114.75
Sub-total	**623.25**	**342.25**
HTM Room	250.75	105.5
Seniors	183.25	102
Spoolon	434	207.5
Sub-total	**230.75**	**100**
Whitelaw	184.25	105
TOTALS	**1,758.25**	**938.76**

* excludes Grand Hall

These findings were used to estimate additional hours of prime time use that will be needed to meet demand generated by population growth over the term of the Plan in relation to unused prime time from Table 3.7. It was found that additional demand for these spaces to 2036 based on population growth alone can be accommodated with available prime time hours. While this represents 100% capacity use, which is not always achievable, it does not consider the extent of available non-prime time. Unlike facilities such as arenas, ball diamonds and rectangular playing fields for which prime time is more strictly defined and limited, multi-purpose space tends to be generally better used at times other than peak periods since it meets a range of needs. The Cameco rooms, for example, were used for a total of 623.25 hours in August or an additional 281 hours outside of prime time. Moreover, as August comprises the peak month of the year, all other months have more time available.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The resident surveys revealed the following interest in multi-purpose and similar spaces:

- 3% (10) and 15% (71) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in multi-purpose space, respectively.
- 2% (5) and 2% (7) of telephone and online survey respondents requested a banquet hall, respectively.
- 3% (9) and 3% (13) of telephone and online survey respondents noted a need for meeting space, respectively.
- 4% (12) and 6% (29) of telephone and online survey respondents requested a dance/aerobics studio, respectively.

A dance company that uses the CCC and responded to the group survey indicated the need for more spaces to provide additional time for scheduling, more multi-purpose rooms with mirrors and expanded storage.

The foregoing assessment indicates that the existing supply of multi-purpose space can accommodate increased use during the term of the Master Plan and that community demand for access to more of these types of spaces is likely related more to preferred times of use than lack of available time. Changes to existing interior spaces could be considered as ways to increase usability by, for example, adding mirrors and more secure storage. Although interest in space to accommodate banquets was minimal, adding a community kitchen to the large multi-purpose space could introduce a new facility for programming and to provide food service to social functions held

in the space. This would most likely mean interior renovations to an existing space, while (in the case of Cameco A or Spoolon) including removable partitions to retain the option of enlarging the space when needed. An alternative would be to consider replacing the space occupied by the café/concession with a kitchen if a reconfiguration of this area is to occur to relieve the congestion in the vicinity of the reception desk.

The Grand Hall offers a considerable amount of unused time - both prime and non-prime - which could be used for additional programming that is suitable to the space. Although its primary function is events, showcases, receptions, etc. it comprises almost 4,000 sq. ft. of space. Increasing its use will contribute to the objective of optimizing use of all facilities/spaces in meeting future demand/interest in recreation services.

Although the current use levels of other available multi-purpose spaces in Cobourg is not available, the use of municipally owned facilities should also be monitored for opportunities to optimize the use of these. As required, the Town can continue to direct requests for use that cannot be met at its facilities to those owned by not-for-profit organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF9. No additional multi-purpose space will be needed during the term of the Master Plan due to population growth.

RF10. Investigate cost-benefit opportunities for renovations/reconfigurations that add functions and features to improve the use of existing spaces.

RF11. Increase use of the Grand Hall, as required, for suitable programs/activities.

RF12. Continue to direct requests that cannot be accommodated at the CCC or other Town owned multi-purpose spaces to community-based facilities belonging to not-for-profits.

RF13. Monitor the use of all municipally owned multi-purpose spaces to identify opportunities to optimize the use of those located elsewhere in the community.

Curling Rink

The West Northumberland Curling Club assumed operation of the former Jack Heenan Arena from the Town in 2011 (Figure 3.5). The municipality owns the facility and is responsible for capital improvements /maintenance to the building envelope. The Club leases it from the Town and is responsible for internal maintenance. A 2,000 sq. ft. lounge/rink viewing area is accessible by elevator.

Figure 3.5: West Northumberland Curling Club at Jack Heenan Arena

At 440 members, participation has increased by 17% in the last two years through advertising efforts. The League is active every day and provides programs for all age groups and hosts provincial and international tournaments. In the ice out season, the floor is used for cornhole.

The Club is thriving and appears to be satisfied with the facility and its relationship with the Town. The Town should continue to support and work with the Club to grow its recreation services to the community. Support for volunteers is discussed in section 5.3 of the Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF14. Continue to support the Curling Club in maintaining its facility for programs and social activities..

Arts Spaces

Resident interest in arts facilities was relatively limited, which may be due to the existence of a comprehensive Cultural Master Plan (MDB Insight Inc.) that was adopted by Council in 2019.

- 3% (10) and 9% (42) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in an arts/artisan studio, respectively.
- 3% (10) and 9% (41) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in a performing arts centre, respectively.

The Town owns two performing arts venues: Victoria Hall and the Fire Hall Theatre. Spaces within the CCC are also used to deliver arts related programming.

The Art Gallery of Northumberland was the only arts-related group that responded to the survey. The Gallery is located in Victoria Hall and uses facilities at the CCC for programs and activities. It is most interested in service delivery support from the Town (discussed in section 5.0).

While deferring to the Cultural Master Plan, the current study's findings do not indicate that the potential to expand services in the arts as the community grows will be constrained by lack of facilities/spaces to deliver programs in various disciplines (e.g. visual, artisanal, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION:

RF15. Continue to support community-based arts in Cobourg by implementing the recommendations of the 2019 Cultural Master Plan.

Indoor Pool

Consultation revealed that 7% (22) and 46% (214) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in an indoor pool, respectively. This was the most frequently requested indoor facility. Responses included opinions that the need is for a pool other than that at the YMCA, which is assumed to mean a municipally owned facility.

The YMCA is proposing to build a new facility on the CCC campus to replace its current building on Elgin Street in Cobourg. As such, it will include a new pool to continue providing its aquatic services to the community allowing the Town to focus on other recreation services. The extent to which these programs will be expanded to accommodate additional participants is not known.

Moreover, the proposal to relocate to the CCC campus has not been finalized.

A general guideline for municipal pool provision is a population base of 30,000+, which is a large enough market to generate sufficient use to justify committing to a large, annual operating deficit. In Cobourg, part of this market is already served by the YMCA and will continue to do so at the CCC location if it proceeds.

Should the YMCA proposal not proceed, the Town can investigate the feasibility of adding a municipal aquatic facility to the CCC. The 2009 feasibility study for the CCC recommended designing the building to include a pool at the time of construction or beyond.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF16. Consider preparing a detailed feasibility study for a municipal indoor pool at the CCC if the YMCA proposal does not proceed.

Indoor Artificial Turf

Municipal provision of an indoor turf facility is currently the subject of a detailed feasibility study, in response to previously expressed demand. Continuing interest in a facility emerged in the Master Plan surveys.

A number of the groups that responded to the survey currently use indoor turf in Hamilton Township and in the Municipality of Trent Hills. The installation of artificial turf at the Baltimore Arena was financed by the local soccer group in exchange for priority access. The Hastings Fieldhouse in Trent Hills was a purpose-built inflatable dome that functions as a multi-purpose facility for various field and courts sports, and includes fitness facilities and a walking track.

An indoor turf facility could - depending on what is provided - include fitness facilities (which are of interest to the community and not provided at the CCC) and a second walking/running track as a complementary component. User groups expressed a need for cross-training facilities, which typically includes fitness equipment. At the same time, there are existing commercially operated gyms in Cobourg that teams currently use for cross-training purposes. Facilities of this nature that the Town may add in future, therefore, should consider the impact it may have on local businesses and focus on minimizing negative outcomes for the commercial sector (e.g., do not duplicate services, contract commercial operators to provide services, etc.).

The existing track at the Bowl Arena is heavily used for self-directed activity. A second track as part of an indoor turf facility could expand opportunities for participation in a popular activity among a wide range of age groups and for cross-training among sport organizations in the community.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The surveys revealed the following:

- 5% (16) and 25% (116) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in fitness facilities (e.g., weights rooms, cardio rooms, etc.), respectively.
- 6% (18) and 15% (68) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in a walking/running track

- Four percent (13) and 24% (111) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in an indoor artificial turf field, respectively. Ball diamond and field user groups expressed strong interest in a facility to be able to provide year-round programs and training sessions.

Should the feasibility study indicate the need to provide an indoor artificial turf field, options to provide one should include the potential to repurpose existing assets for this purpose. The Memorial Arena building, which was decommissioned as an arena in 2019 and currently houses the Firefighters Museum, may present an opportunity to develop a facility to accommodate the various user groups requesting it. A decision to pursue this direction would need to include a comparison of the cost-benefit to repurposing versus building new, and consider the need to relocate current uses of the arena building.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF17. As part of a decision to provide an indoor artificial turf facility, consider the option to repurpose the Memorial Arena building.

Other Indoor Recreation Facilities

Three percent (9) and 13% (59) of telephone and online survey respondents expressed interest in courts for sports such squash and racquetball.

Racquetball and squash courts can be viewed as serving niche markets that do not align with a mandate to provide facilities for general, introductory community recreation. They accommodate a single activity comprising up to four people in a game of considerable skill in single purpose facilities. In the past, racquetball and squash courts were included in municipal complexes in some communities and appear to be making somewhat of a comeback in facility interest surveys.

Anecdotally, during the period in which racquetball (and squash) declined in participation, these complex-based courts became unused rooms or may have been converted to other uses (often storage, which is typically in short supply). The existing courts at the YMCA in Cobourg are no longer used, which provides some evidence of lack of demand for these activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF18. Limited demand for squash and racquetball facilities, along with the niche nature of these sports, does not support municipal provision of courts in Cobourg.

3.3 Outdoor Facility Requirements

Responses to the question, "Do you think additional or expanded outdoor recreation facilities are needed in Cobourg?" are illustrated for each resident survey in Figure 3.6.

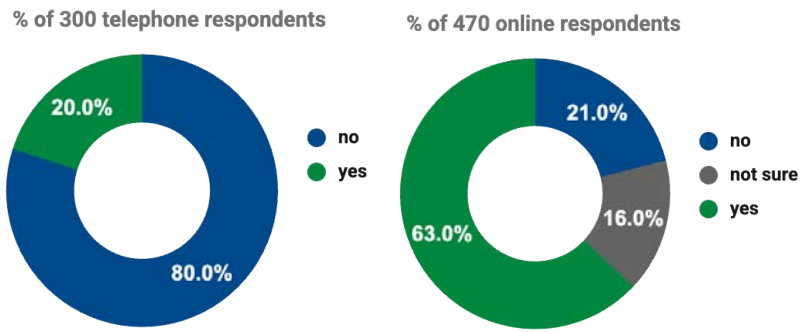

Figure 3.6: Need for More/Expanded Outdoor Facilities

Although less differentiated than for indoor facilities, the proportion of online survey respondents interested in more/expanded outdoor facilities in the next ten years was approximately triple that for telephone respondents - 63% and 20% for the former and latter, respectively. The top four most frequently requested outdoor facilities by both survey groups are in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8: Top Outdoor Facility Interests Among Residents

Random Telephone Survey (N=300)	Online Survey (N=470)
Swimming pool: 6%	Swimming pool: 32%
Ball diamonds: 6%	Artificial turf field: 17%
Pickleball courts: 5%	Pickleball courts: 16%
Tennis courts: 4%	Multi-purpose fields: 15%

Outdoor facilities are discussed below as follows:

- Ball Diamonds
- Rectangular Fields
- Racquet Courts: Delanty Park
- Racquet Courts: Sinclair Park
- Lawn Bowling Green
- Outdoor Pool
- Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Ball Diamonds

Table 3.9 describes the supply of municipal ball diamonds in the Town of Cobourg.

Table 3.9: Municipal Ball Diamonds

Diamond Name	Location	Notes
Layton Dodge	Legion Fields, CCC campus	lit; clay field with removable safety bases for older players; batting cage; washrooms
Jack Bevan	Legion Fields, CCC campus	lit; clay surface; large stands for seating
Donegan - C	Donegan Park	lit; clay surface; batting cage; washrooms
Clarke Sommerville	Legion Fields, CCC campus	unlit; clay surface
Delanty	Delanty Park	unlit; chip and dust surface
Donegan A - SW	Donegan Park	unlit; chip and dust surface; batting cage; washrooms
Donegan D - NW	Donegan Park	unlit; clay surface; batting cage; washrooms
Donegan E - NE	Donegan Park	unlit; chip and dust surface; batting cage; washrooms
Tracey	James. J. Tracey Park	unlit; chip and dust surface; fenced outfield
Sinclair North	Sinclair Park	unlit; chip and dust surface; washrooms
Sinclair South	Sinclair Park	unlit; chip and dust surface; washrooms

Figure 3.7: Legion Fields Ball Diamonds

Legion Fields (Figure 3.7), on the CCC campus, is a premiere softball facility built in1994, with three clay surface diamonds, two of which are lit. The diamonds are clover leaf configured and the facility includes a full-service canteen, accessible washrooms, meeting space, two score/press boxes, picnic areas, and batting cages. A third premier lit field is Donegan C diamond in Donegan Park.

There are eight (8) unlit diamonds, of which two (2) are clay surfaces and the remainder are chip and dust. Most of these park locations have seasonal washrooms, and several have batting cages. All diamonds are multi-use except for Donegan C, which is a full size hardball field.

BALL DIAMOND USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

July 2025 was the peak use month for diamonds and so used for estimates of future need. Prime time for lit and unlit diamonds combined the total number of weekday and weekend hours for the month:

PRIME TIME FOR LIT DIAMONDS

- **Weekdays:** 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 8:00 am to 11:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total/diamond	5 hours x 23 days	=	115
weekend total/diamond	15 hours x 8 days	=	120
monthly total/diamond	115 + 120	=	235
total available time all diamonds	235 x 3	=	705

PRIME TIME FOR UNLIT DIAMONDS

- **Weekdays:** 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total/diamond	2 hours x 23 days	=	46
weekend total/diamond	12 hours x 8 days	=	96
monthly total/diamond	46 + 96	=	142
total available time all diamonds	142 x 8	=	1,136

Table 3.10 shows the peak number of hours of prime time use on each diamond, the percentage of capacity it represents and the number of hours that are not used. These calculations show that in July 2025, approximately one-third (30%) of total available prime time hours on lit diamonds was used, and about one quarter (25%) was used on unlit facilities.

Table 3.10: Prime Time Peak Month Use July 2025

Diamond	# Prime Time Hours Used	% Prime Time Hours Available	Total Unused Prime Time Hours
Dodge	70.75	30.1%	164.25
Bevan	77.75	33.1%	157.25
Donegan	55.25	23.5%	179.75
Total Lit	**203.75**	**28.9%**	**501.25**
Sommerville	51.75	36.4%	90.25
Delanty	40.0	28.2%	102.0
Donegan A - SW	28.5	20.1%	113.5
Donegan D - NW	67.25	47.4%	74.75
Donegan E - NE	21.25	15.0%	210.75
Tracey	30.0	21.1%	112.0
Sinclair North	24.25	17.1%	117.75
Sinclair South	23.25	16.4%	118.75
Total Unlit	**286.25**	**25.2%**	**849.75**

These calculations show that in July 2025, approximately one-third (30%) of total available prime time hours on lit diamonds was used, and about one quarter (25%) was used on unlit facilities.

Levels of use by month ranged from 17% to 65%, with all months except July and August falling below 40%. Over the course of the year, considering all spaces collectively, the majority (70%) of prime time is available for use. This approach, however, does not recognize variables that result in total time used being distributed across more than one or two diamonds (e.g., concurrent use of the same blocks of time, variable quality across facilities, etc.). Tracking use over the long term on all facilities will verify specific needs (see section 5.8 on service planning and evaluation) and may reveal that fewer diamonds are required. Until these data are in place, the Town should focus on the following:

- maintaining the three lit diamonds as a high quality hub for seasonal use and tournament activity
- investing in unlit diamonds in locations where there are two or more facilities to better develop hubs for concurrent use and operational efficiencies in maintenance
- working to extend regular season use into weekend prime time to make better use of all facilities

Community and Town interest in upgrading facilities at Sinclair Park supports the second point above and will also benefit from the availability of washrooms on site. As these and other diamonds are improved, more use can be scheduled and the effect on use at other locations monitored.

In practice, the third point noted above typically means moving away from scheduling patterns that have led to use being largely limited to weeknights, while facilities may sit idle on weekends. As shifts are made over time, requirements to align facility supply with demand will become apparent.

Ongoing use monitoring and evaluation of changes will be important to ensuring desired outcomes and to identify areas where improvements to diamonds may be needed to optimize use.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The resident surveys did not reveal strong interest in more ball diamonds, which were requested by 6% of both telephone (17) and online (28) survey respondents, respectively.

Five (5) ball diamond user groups responded to the survey. All are regular season users and three also host events. The facilities used by the following numbers of groups are: Legion Fields (4); J. Tracey (4); Sinclair (4); Coverdale (3); Donegan (2).

Two groups reported growing participation among youth and the need for more diamonds to accommodate both practices and games. It was noted that time on diamonds is currently limited with three (3) Town-based organizations using the same facilities.

Although four groups indicated need for additional facilities over the next ten years, three of these also noted that, “If improvements are made to existing facilities/spaces to increase suitability their needs will likely be met.”

Interviews with ball diamonds users provided more detail on their interests, which are summarized here:

- “A site assessment and revitalization plan is needed for Donegan Park is needed to be able to maintain Diamond ‘C’ as one of the ‘crown jewels’ of baseball facilities for U13 in Cobourg and include potentially replacing old

washroom with a new facility, adding higher fencing along backstop, and providing shade for players and spectators."

- "Tracey diamond is adequate for young players but should be upgraded to a clay surface, and both Tracey and Coverdale diamonds do not have enough (or no) bleachers."
- "Lights are critical to providing two diamonds that can accommodate fastball and softball. Only two of the three Legion diamonds are lit, and one of these cannot be used for fastball or softball. "

The Town noted a resurgence in baseball and fastball participation, reversing previous downward participation trends. Peaks in community sport participation often reflect the performance of professional home-based leagues in a given year or season, which emphasizes the need to monitor annual trends in local activity to gauge facility requirements that represent long-term investment. For example, following the Toronto Blue Jays' appearance in the 2025 World Series, staff noticed an increase in baseball use and participation.

Use information suggests that future needs could be met with fewer diamonds by optimizing prime time use on both weeknights and weekends. User groups are interested in both retaining and improving existing diamonds and adding to supply. Working with user groups, therefore, the Town should prepare a plan to identify and assign priority to upgrading and optimizing the use of existing diamonds, supported by the Turf Care Management Plan. The outcomes of this work should contribute to aligning facility supply with demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF19. Formally define prime time on lit and unlit ball diamonds to include and specify both weeknight and weekend hours, and schedule accordingly.

RF20. Prepare a detailed revitalization strategy and master plan for Donegan Park.

RF21. Work with ball diamond user groups to prioritize investment and optimize use of facilities.

RF22. Monitor and evaluate use on an ongoing basis to work towards aligning ball diamond supply with demand.

Rectangular Fields

Municipalities are experiencing growing demand for access to facilities for community sports other than soccer (e.g., rugby, football, lacrosse, etc.). The trend to provide multi-purpose versus single purpose fields also improves municipal financial capacity to meet a wider range in community demand simultaneously. Fields can be configured and equipped to be shared by various user groups. For these reasons, there is a move to renaming previously identified sport-specific fields to 'rectangular fields' and reframing the concept of use for all fields collectively. This discussion uses the term 'rectangular fields' throughout. The Town should consider formally adopting the concept and practice of playing fields to be shared by a range of compatible activities.

Table 3.11 on the following page describes the supply of rectangular fields in the Town of Cobourg. There are 18, one of

which is a lit premier field at Donegan Park. Of the 17 remaining fields, ten (10) are located on the CCC Campus. Four (4) youth fields that are scheduled by the Town are in the Cobourg Conservation Area, which is owned by the GRCA. One field at Westwood Park is used by the Cobourg Saxons Rugby Football Club. The two (2) remaining fields are at the closed Cobourg District Collegiate Institute West, and in Morley Cane Park. The former is a ball diamond that is minimally used for micro soccer.

Table 3.11: Rectangular Fields in Cobourg

Field Name	Location	Notes
Donegan	Donegan Park	lit; premier field; players benches; washrooms
CCA Field 1 NW	Cobourg Conservation Area	unlit; small youth field (Cobourg Conservation Area, GRCA-owned)
CCA Field 2 NE	Cobourg Conservation Area	unlit; small youth field (Cobourg Conservation Area, GRCA-owned)
CCA Field 3 SW	Cobourg Conservation Area	unlit; small youth field (Cobourg Conservation Area, GRCA-owned)
CCA Field 4 SE	Cobourg Conservation Area	unlit; small youth field (Cobourg Conservation Area, GRCA-owned)
117 Durham St. Field	117 Durham	closed high school
Westwood Field	Westwood Park	unlit; rugby
CCC1	CCC campus	unlit; U12
CCC2	CCC campus	unlit; U12
Legion Field	CCC campus	unlit; U14/U18/Adult
Lions 1	CCC campus	unlit; U14/U18/Adult
Lions 2	CCC campus	unlit; U14/U18/Adult
Rotary 1	CCC campus	unlit; U12
Rotary 2	CCC campus	unlit; U12
Rotary 3	CCC campus	unlit; U7/8
Rotary 4	CCC campus	unlit; U7/8
Rotary 5	CCC campus	unlit; U7/8
Morley Cane Diamond	Morley Cane Park	unlit; used for micro soccer

FIELD USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

August 2025 was the peak use month for fields and so used for estimates of future need. Prime time for lit and unlit fields combined the total number of weekday and weekend hours for the month, as shown below:

PRIME TIME FOR LIT FIELDS

- **Weekdays:** 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 8:00 am to 11:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total/field	5 hours x 21 days	=	105
weekend total/field	15 hours x 10 days	=	150
monthly total/field	105 + 1505	=	255
total fields	255 x 41	=	255

PRIME TIME FOR UNLIT FIELDS

- **Weekdays:** 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total monthly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday total/field	2 hours x 21 days	=	42
weekend total/field	12 hours x 10 days	=	120
monthly total/field	42 + 120	=	162
total fields	15 x 162	=	2,430*

* does not include Morley Cane and CDIC

Table 3.12 shows the peak number of hours of prime time use on each field, the percentage of capacity it represents and the number of hours that are not used. These calculations show that in August 2025, 40% of total available prime time hours on unlit fields was used, and just over one quarter (28%) was used on Donegan field. It is noted, however, that fields at the CCC campus are leased to the Northumberland Soccer Club. These facilities are scheduled by the organization rather than the Town. Whether all the hours shown are used is not confirmed. The assessment presumes this is the case, and that the Town will work with the Northumberland Soccer Club to verify actual use, participation trends, etc. to inform facility requirements.

Table 3.12: Prime Time Peak Month Use August 2025

Field	# Prime Time Hours Used	% Prime Time Hours Available	Total Unused Prime Time Hours
Donegan	70.0	27.5%	185.0
Total Lit	**70.0**	**27.5%**	**185.0**
CCA Field 1 NW - Youth	65.0	40.1%	97.0
CCA Field 2 NE - Youth	65.0	40.1%	97.0
CCA Field 3 SW - Youth	65.0	40.1%	97.0
CCA Field 4 SE - Youth	65.0	40.1%	97.0
117 Durham St. Field	12.0*	-	-
Westwood Field	55.0	40.0%	107.0
CCC1	65.0	40.1%	97.0
CCC2	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Legion Field	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Lions 1	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Lions 2	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Rotary 1	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Rotary 2	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Rotary 3	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Rotary 4	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Rotary 5	65.0	40.1%	97.0
Morley Cane	3.75*	-	-
Total Unlit	**965**	**39.7%**	**1,465**

* Not included in total

As shown in Table 3.13 below, except for the 117 Durham St.field and Morley Cane, 40% of prime time was used on all unlit fields. 117 Durham and Morley Cane were not included in calculations to avoid overrepresenting unused prime time since they are minimally scheduled, which does not make them comparable to other facilities. Groups indicated they use these fields because there is no time available on other facilities. Use data on the CCA fields suggests that these hours, which total 15.75, could be accommodated here.

3.13: Peak Month Estimates of Future Rectangular Field Needs

Type	Current Prime Time Use	2036 Needs	Additional Hours Required	Available Hours	Balance Remaining
Lit field (1)	70/20,519 = 0.003 hours/ capita	0.003 x 25,901= 77.75 hours	7.75 (77.75 - 70.0)	185.0	107.25
Unlit fields (15)	965/20,519 = 0.047 hours/ capita	0.047 x 25,901 = 1,217.25 hours	252.25 (1,217.25 - 965)	1,465	247.5

These findings suggest that by increasing overall prime time use levels on unlit fields to 50% (1,217.25/2,430), additional demand due to population growth for current activities (soccer and rugby) can be accommodated on existing fields with a buffer for rotational resting to maintain field quality and integrity. While this might be viewed as a conservative approach to anticipating future need for fields, it is far from capacity use of prime time with the inclusion of both weeknights and weekends, which is an objective of the Master Plan for all outdoor scheduled facilities.

Ontario Soccer's Technical Development Plan 2025-2036[62] supports a careful approach to investing in additional fields for soccer, which is currently the dominant use of facilities in Cobourg. The Plan was prepared within the framework of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Sport Ministers accepted "Long-Term Athlete Development" policy. In anticipating trends in participation, the report considers the pool of potential participants and notes that, "In looking at available children and youth, we see a clear decline" and, therefore, "we must be aware that the available registrant pool does not support continuous growth which means soccer must invest more in retention versus recruitment" (p. 28).

The Technical Development Plan also notes that, "players, regardless of streaming from recreation through to development, need to have a solid grounding and developmental base to play and enjoy soccer for life..."(p.8). This supports the role of municipal recreation in delivering facilities consistent with Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards aimed at "fostering an inclusive, fun, and developmentally appropriate environment for young players" that focuses on age groups from U4 to U13, which align with Sport for Life's first three levels of participation: Active Start, Fundamentals and Learn to Train (pp. 9-11). Most of Cobourg's field supply already serves these age groups and can continue to do so with available facilities.

62

https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/a48d-3401018/Ontario_Soccer_Technical_Development_Plan.pdf?_gl=1*dcdhw8*_ga*NjQ1NzE2OTQ4LjE3Nzc5MTExNTA.*_ga_PQ25JN9PJ8*czE3Nzc5MTExNjAkbzEkZzAkdDE3Nzc5MTExNzMkajQ3JGwwJGgw#_ga=2.162209977.440167590.1777911150-645716948.1777911150

While the existing number and type of fields is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate increased need by 2036, there is an overarching consideration about the future of the CCC campus with respect to the future balance of indoor and outdoor facilities to be located on the property. Section 3.4 discusses this topic and potential implications for on-site outdoor infrastructure that will continue to be required.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

The resident surveys displayed different levels of interest in adding to the supply of fields in Cobourg:

- Online survey respondents were noticeably more interested in more multi-purpose fields 15% (72), soccer fields 12% (55), and/or artificial turf fields 17% (81).
- Comparable responses from the telephone survey were 2% (5), 2% (6) and 2.3% (7), respectively.

Three (3) field user groups responded to the survey, including minor and adult soccer and rugby/football. All three are regular season users and two also host events. The facilities used by the following numbers of groups are: Legion Field (2); Lions Park (2); Rotary Fields (1) Donegan (1); Westwood Park (1); 117 Durham St. Field (1) Morley Cane Park (1).

Collectively, participation has fluctuated over the last several years but has increased slightly from 1,745 to 1,780, and in 2025 comprised approximately 73% minor soccer, 25% rugby and 2% men's soccer.

The groups indicated need for additional facilities over the next ten years of the type they use now, although two were unsure if improvements might preclude this need for more. Two groups indicated they require new or different types of facilities than those that are currently available. This included lit facilities as well as indoor turf, which is discussed in the previous section.

Rugby is interested in two (2) to three (3) co-located, dedicated lit fields with a clubhouse or facility containing washrooms, change rooms, first aid, and vendor space. Other than indicating need for another lit field, soccer groups indicated generally that more/better fields and amenities are required. There is no verified demand to indicate up to three dedicated fields are needed (lit or unlit), and use of Westwood Field was 55.0 hours for the month of August 2025 which, as with fields used for soccer, could accommodate more activity by extending use into weekend prime time. Moreover, the multi-use concept underlying 'rectangular' fields does not align with facilities being dedicated to one sport.

At the same time, use of 10 (67%) of the 15 fields being assessed are not controlled by the Town as they are leased to the Northumberland Soccer Club All ten fields are also on the CCC Campus, which creates a hub for concurrent use that is not available to other groups. Ideally, the Town should resume full control of these fields to serve as multi-purpose facilities for a range of community-based field sports, and to be able to monitor use of all municipal fields collectively to determine when (or if) new ones should be added to supply. This would also facilitate providing shared clubhouse-type facilities on the Town's main recreation campus - some of which are already provided by the CCC when it is open during outdoor programs/events on ball diamonds or fields.

Like the groups, several Town representatives indicated that there is growth in soccer participation and that, although there

are many fields, more are needed now and/or will be in the future. As noted above, the Ontario Soccer's Technical Development Plan suggests that growth at introductory levels is likely to slow down across the province as the pool of potential participants shrinks. How this trend materializes in Cobourg will need to be tracked on an annual basis and used to confirm facility requirements.

Reports from user groups on future field needs are supported by the Town's perspective but do not align with data on use of the Town's fields. Use information suggests that both current and future needs could be comfortably met with available fields by optimizing prime time use on both weeknights and weekends. There are indications that teams are, in fact, being encouraged to use fields more regularly on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Furthering weekend use of existing fields is strongly supported by the Plan.

At the same time, it was indicated by Town representatives that some of the struggles to meet demand are matching needs (e.g., lit, unlit, irrigated, not irrigated, parking capacity, etc.) with available inventory. Other commentary noted that fields are generally low quality and there are no facilities to host tournaments. Typically, facilities that are designed primarily to serve community-based users for regular programming can also host local/regional tournaments with appropriate design/amenity additions. Providing such a facility, however, is not mandatory and is up to the municipality in view of anticipated benefits. Incorporating upgrades to host tournaments at existing or future fields, therefore, will depend on a decision to pursue this level of service. Donegan Park is an immediate candidate for consideration in this regard, as the field here is the Town's best facility.

Collectively, these findings suggest the need for the Town and field users working together to identify the needed 'menu' of upgrades/improvements to existing fields (see section 3.3) to meet the requirements of community-based activity for the sports and age levels being accommodated. Ongoing maintenance of all fields should be supported by the Turf Care Management Plan.

The Town can develop an approach to future rectangular field provision, comprising the following general steps - some of which will be ongoing and/or concurrent:

- Incorporate prime time weeknight and weekend hours into regular season programming.
- Consolidate ongoing scheduling, monitoring/tracking of use on all fields into a Town run program.
- Upon determining a development plan for future changes to indoor facilities at the CCC campus (see section 3.4 below), confirm the need to relocate displaced fields - ideally as part of two or more co-located facilities.
- Determine the cost-benefit of upgrading a limited number of fields to host local/regional tournaments while continuing to serve community-based users for regular programming.
- Focus on upgrades/improvements to existing fields that will remain at the CCC campus and others throughout the Town for regular seasonal use and specific upgrades at one or two designated locations to host local/regional tournaments, if this is the Town's objective.

This approach will require the Town and the Northumberland Soccer Club to review and update the lease for partial municipal access to the CCC campus fields to schedule additional use for field sports that emerge during the term of the Master Plan (see

section 5.5 on agreements). Section 3.3 reports on facility improvements that may increase the overall performance of rectangular fields in meeting community needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF23. Formally designate all outdoor facilities intended for field sports as rectangular fields to facilitate multi-sport use of all fields through both definition and scheduling.

RF24. Formally define prime time on lit and unlit rectangular fields to include and specify both weeknight and weekend hours, and schedule accordingly.

RF25. Integrate all field scheduling and monitoring of prime time/non-prime time use into a Town operated tracking program.

RF26. Determine plans for future indoor facility development and its implications for maintaining an appropriate supply of rectangular fields.

RF27. Based on a Town decision to host local/regional tournaments, determine required design features and amenity requirements to include in capital improvement or field replacement plans.

Racquet Courts: Sinclair Park

The three municipal courts at Sinclair Park are lit and provide benches for players, windscreens on fences and washrooms. Sinclair Park is the home of the Cobourg Pickleball Club and Sinclair Tennis. The Pickleball Club is the primary user of courts at this location. In addition to these facilities, the commercially operated Dink Den provides eight (8) indoor courts and a variety of membership options.

COURT USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Determining future tennis and pickleball court requirements was based on weekly use in July 2025, since scheduling for the months of June through August is consistent by week. The assessment considers overall court use and prime time use within total available hours.

The Sinclair courts operate Sunday through Saturday from 9am to 11pm, based on typical start times in the morning and the availability of lights to 11pm. Total weekly hours available, therefore, are:

- hours per court per day = 14 (9am to 11pm)
- hours per court per week = 14 per day x 7 days = 98
- hours per 3 courts per week = 98 per week x 3 courts = 294

Table 3.14 on the following page summarizes the use of the courts for a typical week in July and shows the proportions of use that are scheduled for pickleball and tennis, hours that are unscheduled (open). General use of the courts by residents occurs during these open hours.

Table 3.14: Sinclair Courts Weekly Scheduled and Open Hours

Type	Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Available Time	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%
Tennis Hours	0	-	4	1.4%	0	-	4	1.4%	0	-	4	1.4%	0	-
Pickleball Hours	6	2%	6	2%	12	4%	12	4.1%	12	4%	6	2%	6	2%
Open Hours	288	98%	284	96.6%	282	96%	278	94.5%	282	96%	284	96.6%	288	98%

As the table shows, the three courts are scheduled between six (6) and 12 hours per day for organized pickleball, and for four (4) hours of tennis on three days. The majority of time, therefore, is open to other users.

PRIME TIME FOR LIT COURTS

- **Weekdays:** 9:00 am to 11:00 am and 5:00 pm 11:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 9:00 am to 11:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Total weekly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday mornings	2 hours x 5 days	=	10
weekday evenings	6 hours x 5 days	=	30
weekends	14 hours x 2 days0	=	28
total per court per week	10 + 30 + 28	=	68
total all courts per week	68 x 3	=	204

Appendix F illustrates the schedule for the Sinclair courts and shows that, within prime time, organized and public use of the courts is relatively balanced. It also shows that there is a considerable amount of weeknight and weekend prime time, as well as during non-prime hours.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

Interest in pickleball courts was reported by 5% (16) of telephone survey respondents and 16% (77) of the online survey participants.

As noted above, the Cobourg Pickleball Club is the primary user of the Sinclair courts with a current membership of 200 comprising all ages. Membership has increased from 125 members two years ago but decreased from 240 last year. In addition to regular season programs, the Club hosts a tournament in July that attracts close to 300 participants.

The Club is interested in dedicated courts for pickleball and Sinclair Park courts would be the obvious choice based on use. Sinclair Tennis also uses the courts. Participation currently totals 12 members, which has declined from 16 over three years and comprises adults aged 40+ years. This group of users can

continue using the courts during public time and play could be formally accommodated at Delanty Park.

Levels of use during public time at Sinclair are not known. If, over time, organized pickleball use grows, there may be need to allocate more time to this use, and there is room to do so. The Town can monitor and document the use of the courts during both organized and public use times to gather the information to determine needed changes in allocations and scheduling. Depending on the pace of growth, demand may emerge for additional courts for which ongoing monitoring of facility use will verify. Improvements to amenities are discussed in 3.3.2.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF28. Designate Sinclair courts as pickleball courts for organized use and invest in required facility upgrades/improvements to this end.

Racquet Courts: Delanty Park

The three municipal tennis courts at Delanty Park (referred to here as the Coverdale courts) are lit and provide benches for players, windscreens on fences and washrooms. The Coverdale Tennis Club is based here.

COURT USE AND ESTIMATED FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Determining future tennis court requirements was based on weekly use in July 2025, since scheduling for the months of June through August is consistent by week. The assessment considers overall court use and prime time use within total available hours.

The Coverdale courts operate Sunday through Saturday from 9am to 11pm, based on typical start times in the morning and the availability of lights to 11pm. Total weekly hours available, therefore, are:

- hours per court per day = 14 (9am to 11pm)
- hours per court per week = 14 per day x 7 days = 98
- hours per 3 courts per week = 98 per week x 3 courts = 294

Table 3.15 on the following page summarizes the use of the courts for a typical week in July and shows the proportions of use that are scheduled for tennis and unscheduled (open). General use of the courts by residents occurs during these open hours. As the table shows, the three courts are scheduled between six (6) and 15 hours per day for organized tennis, which leaves the majority of time open to other users.

PRIME TIME FOR LIT COURTS

- **Prime time on weekdays:** 9:00 am to 11:00 am and 5:00 pm 11:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- **Weekends:** 9:00 am to 11:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

Table 3.15: Coverdale (Delanty) Courts Weekly Scheduled and Open Hours

Type	Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Available Time	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%
Tennis Hours	6	2%	15	5%	9	3%	15	5%	9	3%	15	5%	0	0%
Pickleball Hours	288	98%	279	95%	285	97%	279	95%	285	97%	279	95%	294	100%
Open Hours	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%	294	100%

Total weekly prime time hours, therefore, are:

weekday mornings	2 hours x 5 days	=	10
weekday evenings	6 hours x 5 days	=	30
weekends	14 hours x 2 days0	=	28
total per court per week	10 + 30 + 28	=	68
total all courts per week	68 x 3	=	204

Appendix F illustrates the schedule for the Sinclair courts and shows that, within prime time, organized and public use of the courts is relatively balanced. It also shows that there is a considerable amount of weeknight and weekend prime time, as well as during non-prime hours.

COMMUNITY INTEREST AND PROPOSED DIRECTIONS

Interest in adding to the supply of tennis courts was reported by 4% (11) of telephone survey respondents and 8% (39) of the online survey participants.

The Coverdale Tennis Club indicated its programs serve ages 13+ years, and membership has increased from 57 to 109 over the past two years. The club is interested in a fourth (and possibly fifth) court being added to accommodate tennis activity moving from Sinclair to Coverdale if the former is designated for pickleball. Unless public time on the courts is used to capacity, there is considerable potential to increase allocations for organized activity. As noted above, designating the Sinclair courts as pickleball will require 12 hours per week of use for tennis to be transferred to the Coverdale courts.

Levels of use during public time at Coverdale are not known. The Town can monitor and document the use of the courts during both organized and public use times to gather the information to determine the need for a different distribution of time between the two types of use and where additional time can be allocated to organized activity. Monitoring use in July should provide a solid basis to inform an assessment and should be conducted on both Delanty and Sinclair courts simultaneously to facilitate scheduling tennis use from the latter location to Delanty. Once this work is completed, and warranted changes are made, the need for another tennis court during the term of the Master Plan can be verified.

It was noted that the court surface is damaged by its use for skateboarding, biking, roller blading, etc. and that a hard surface should be provided at the park specifically for this purpose and that will alleviate wear and tear on the courts. Basketball courts and a skate park are discussed in section 2.2. An alternative to providing a second hard surface (or until it can be provided) is to lock the courts when they are not in use. It was noted, however, that people cut locks off to gain access to the courts. A method to secure the courts will need to be implemented, therefore, that will allow the courts to be repaired, resurfaced and protected from further damage. Improvements to amenities are discussed in section 3.3.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF29. Conduct a comprehensive monitoring program to verify use levels of the Coverdale courts during both organized and public use times and use the results to assess the potential to reallocate the distribution of hours between the two types of use.

RF30. Eliminate damaging uses of tennis court surfaces by providing a second hard surface for use by wheeled equipment or finding a secure locking method for the courts when not being used for tennis.

RF31. Resurface courts once separation of uses is achieved.

RF32. After implementing warranted changes to allocations and scheduling, determine the need for an additional court at Coverdale.

Lawn Bowling Green

The Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club, located in Victoria Park, celebrated its centenary in 2007. Its club house was built in 1925.

In the 2022 season a major publicity drive took place, which resulted in the highest membership for many years of 143. Its membership now stands at 150. The Club notes that “outside of the metropolitan areas Cobourg is one of the most successful clubs in Ontario and regularly hosts Ontario Championships.” The season runs from May through September, with programs occurring on most days of the week. The Summer Youth program, which was discontinued during the pandemic, has been restarted this year. Other than interest in using more time at the CCC gym for winter short mat bowling, the Club is not looking to expand access to facilities.

Resident surveys indicate limited interest in lawn bowling, among 2% (6) of telephone survey respondents, and 2% (7) online survey participants, which could be accommodated now.

As one of many community-based volunteer groups in Cobourg that provide recreation programs and activities, municipal support in areas discussed in section 5.0 will help the Club continue to thrive.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF33. Provide appropriate municipal support to the Lawn Bowling Club as an established volunteer community group that delivers recreation services to the community.

Outdoor Pool

Centennial Pool is 59 years old. It is at the end of its lifecycle and will not be viable for much longer without substantial capital investment. It has major operational and design challenges including lack of AODA accessibility and operations interruptions due to mechanical failures. In 2024, for example, there were 15 closures due to system malfunctions.[63]

Information in a 2024 staff report indicates that needed renovations to the pool tank and building would total about $3.6 million.[64] After revenues are considered, it costs about $15,500 per week to operate over a 9-week summer season, which generates an annual deficit of approximately $140,000 (covers heat, utilities, property investments, material repairs, lifeguards, supplies). The Town is in the process of deciding the future of Centennial Pool, given both its operating deficit and needed capital improvements to renew the facility.

The Town contracts YMCA Northumberland to manage the pool and deliver summer aquatic programming. All programs offered at the outdoor pool are open to non-members and include registered and non-registered programs. The following are current day pass rates for the latter group:
[65]

- Family/Group $15.50
- Adult (15 yrs+) $7.25
- Youth (under 15yrs) $5.25
- AquaFit Drop-in $10.50

[63] Staff report COMM-2024-023: Centennial Pool Update.

[64] in 2024 Canadian dollars

[65] Drop-in rate is for the full day and includes use of the indoor and indoor play structure.

Information provided by the YMCA indicates increasing use in recent years, as shown in Table 3.16.

Table 3.16: Numbers of Users at Centennial Pool 2021-2025

Program	2021	2022	2023	2024*	2025
Lane Swim	348	352	465	435	680
Aquafit	1,444	1,457	1,759	1,425	2,320
Lessons	747	754	900	641	910
Open Swim	2,439	2,461	2,765	2,027	2,933
Water Baby Boot Camp			100	32	58
Total	**4,978**	**5,024**	**5,989**	**4,560**	**6,901**

* Heater broke mid-late July, which led to lower attendance due to cold water temperature for the remainder of the summer.

The pool, therefore, is well used in the summer and patronage has increased in recent years. The proposed new indoor YMCA pool would replace the current six-lane, 25m facility and include a leisure component. As such, it would not add enough capacity to accommodate all of the summer programs that are held at Centennial Pool. Moreover, there is strong community interest in retaining the outdoor pool.

Given these considerations, the continued viability of the Centennial Pool will require commitment to funding its capital renewal. The Town should consider preparing a design and cost estimate for a comprehensive pool revitalization, given its age and that the likelihood of optimizing long-term use and revenue generation will depend on developing a state-of-the-art facility. Strategies to increase revenue generation and/or reduce

expenses to offset more of its operating deficit will also be needed. The Town should consult with the YMCA on latter initiatives to be implemented in the short term.

As discussed in section 5.8 on service planning and evaluation, tracking and documenting facility use is necessary to determine demand. While program registration is typically well tracked, documenting the numbers of users at open recreation swims/drop-in activities can be facilitated by issuing wrist bands to patrons upon payment and entry to the pool to confirm attendance figures, and rotating the colour of the bands by day to monitor trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF34. Consider preparing a design and cost estimate for a comprehensive revitalization of Centennial Pool.

RF35. Consult with the YMCA to identify strategies to increase revenue generation at the pool and/or reduce expenses to offset more of the operating deficit.

RF36. Introduce wristbands for drop-in pool users upon payment/entry to the pool to confirm attendance figures and monitor trends.

Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Other facility interests that emerged in the resident surveys, although minimally, were bocce courts, noted by 2% (5) and 3% (14) of telephone and online survey respondents, respectively, and a cricket pitch, reported by 2% (5) and 1% (3) of telephone and online survey respondents, respectively.

Cricket is a rapidly growing sport in some communities, especially in the GTA. Bocce is popular in some communities but is not considered a growth sport. Municipal provision of courts is typically community-specific and often involves collaboration with user groups in building and operating courts.

In monitoring trends in local recreation participation, evidence of growth in these activities and others will emerge. Whether facility responses are warranted and how the Town will be involved in these initiatives will be determined at the time. As discussed with respect to indoor facilities (i.e., artificial turf), in cases where new facilities are required, opportunities to repurpose existing assets should be explored before building new.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF37. Monitor trends in emerging recreational sports and, as demand warrants, respond to the need for facilities in consultation with user groups.

RF38. In instances where new facilities are required, investigate the feasibility of repurposing existing facilities before building new.

3.4 Improvements to Existing Facilities

Facility improvements relate to infrastructure additions to existing 'core' facilities (e.g., adding lights, covered dugouts, etc.) or ancillary facilities to support/enhance their use (e.g., parking, washrooms, storage, etc.). Operations improvements focus on day-to-day work in managing and maintaining facilities. Indoor and outdoor facilities are discussed below and summarize both collective and activity/facility specific results from community consultation.

Indoor Facilities

In the user group survey, 24 groups indicated they use municipally owned indoor recreation facilities in Cobourg to deliver their programs and activities. These groups were asked whether their needs are met in relation to various aspects of these facilities. Appendix B includes a summary of the user group survey results.

The facility aspects that were most reported as not meeting user groups' needs were storage space, parking, audience/spectator viewing and availability for booking at convenient hours. Resident surveys included a similar question, with several of the same aspects identified. The responses were as follows:

- Among the 300 telephone survey respondents, the following indicated that these aspects of municipally owned indoor facilities do not meet their needs: 29% (87) parking; 22% (67) spectator/audience seating; 20% (61) washrooms; 19% (57) facility locations; 17% food options and up-to-date (53 and 52, respectively).
- Among the 476 online survey respondents, the following indicated that these aspects of municipally owned indoor facilities do not meet their needs: 42% (187) variety of facilities; 37% (171) number of facilities; 33% (152) food options; 24% (110) parking; and 23% (103) up-to-date.

Comparing the user group and resident survey responses to common aspects, several items emerged as most frequently mentioned across two or three of the groups: food services/options, audience/spectator seating, parking, and up-to-date facilities.

While AODA accessibility was not identified as a frequent concern, it is important to remember that the people who rely on these features comprise a smaller 'sample' in surveys than total respondents. The proportions of those in the total sample who are satisfied with these features include a majority who do not need facilities that incorporate AODA designed public spaces. The Town will continue to incorporate AODA standards in future renovations and new builds, as required, and can also include enhanced accessibility features as part of facility plans in consultation with the community.

The following summarizes comments on requested indoor facility improvements by types from various consultation activities.

- **arenas:** change room amenities need repair (water filling stations, showers, doors, etc.); designated separate entrance to the arena side of the building; cleaner dressing rooms; more parking

- **gymnasiums:** increase spectator/viewing capacity; keep gym floors cleaner; replace pickleball nets
- **multi-purpose spaces:** more regular cleaning of seniors' kitchen; replace furniture; increase storage capacity; sand parking lot to prevent slipping falls

Outdoor Facilities

Twelve (12) user groups indicated they use municipally-owned outdoor sport/recreation facilities in Cobourg. The facility aspects that were most reported as not meeting user groups' needs were amenities, food services, storage space, washrooms, parking and spectator capacity. Resident surveys included a similar question, with a few of the same aspects identified. The most frequent responses were as follows:

- Among the 300 telephone survey respondents, the following indicated that these aspects of municipally owned outdoor facilities do not meet their needs: 28% (83) variety of facilities; 24% (71) up-to-date; 21% (64) change rooms; 19% (58) food options; 18% (53) location of facilities.
- Among 462 online survey respondents, the following indicated that these aspects do not meet their needs: 47% (209) washrooms; 46% (203) up-to-date; 41% (180) number of facilities; 41% (178) variety of facilities; 39% (173) food options; 35% (158) parking

Comparing the user group and resident survey responses to common aspects, several items emerged as most frequently mentioned across two or three of the groups: food services/options, washrooms, parking, and up-to-date facilities. Again, despite the findings on AODA accessibility, it will continue to be implemented in future renovations and new builds, and in considering opportunities to enhance accessibility beyond legislated requirements.

The following summarizes comments on requested outdoor facility improvements by type from various consultation activities.

- **ball diamonds:** significant need to improve the quality of diamonds (e.g., clay or turf surfaces, fencing, etc.) and add or update amenities (more water fountains or filling stations, food/snack canteens; new/larger bleachers for spectators; batting cages/tunnels, bullpens; washrooms; accessible parking)
    - Donegan Park was specified as needing revitalization including a clay surface, fencing, permanent washroom facility, and diamonds to be brought up to current health and safety standards; work needed on culvert and drainage; improved maintenance levels.
    - Legion Fields were also identified as requiring capital improvements, although not specified.
- **rectangular fields:** improved quality; better matching to needs (lit, unlit, irrigated, not irrigated, parking capacity); 2 to 3 lit fields in one location dedicated to rugby with clubhouse or washroom/changeroom/first aid room, and vendor space
- **tennis and pickleball courts:** court repairs, resurfacing; improved court and equipment maintenance; Delanty Park requires upgraded tennis practice "cage"; hours for drinking water and washroom facilities to cover entire tennis season; additional storage and seating; new fencing and windscreens; more parking

Assessment & Directions

In addition to continuing work on any improvements already in progress, the Town should consult with indoor and outdoor facility user groups separately to detail specifics regarding capital and operations improvements and prepare a program and budgets to address those that are needed and feasible to implement during the term of the Plan.

The Town's determination on required capital improvements should be considered in conjunction with plans to develop the CCC Campus and the facility relocations it might involve. Some improvements might be better met when replacement facilities are being built rather than through retrofits to existing facilities for a limited time before removal. With respect to outdoor facilities, findings can be used to determine the extent to which improvements will contribute to optimizing use of existing to ball diamonds, rectangular fields, tennis, and pickleball courts.

Potential improvements to operations and capital planning are discussed further in the section on Service Delivery, since they are related to policy and procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RF39. Consult with indoor and outdoor facility user groups to clarify specifics on requested capital improvements to existing facilities.

RF40. Use consultation findings to inform the feasibility of needed/preferred improvements that emerge from consultations.

RF41. Consider deferring required capital improvements to existing outdoor facilities at the CCC campus to align with Campus Plan decisions, including the need to relocate facilities if warranted.

RF42. Using consultation findings, identify capital improvements that can help optimize the use of existing outdoor facilities.

3.5 CCC Campus Planning

The following discussion considers the potential implications of adding facilities and associated amenities to the CCC Campus.

The Cobourg Community Centre (142,000 sq.ft.) and three (3) ball diamonds and ten (10) rectangular fields (see Figure 3.8 on the following page) on the surrounding land occupy a site comprising 22 hectares. The CCC opened in 2011, and the outdoor facilities that were lost to the siting of the Community Centre were redeveloped several years later on the surrounding property. With the indoor and outdoor facilities and parking for patrons, it is now essentially fully built out.

YMCA Northumberland is interested in developing a 62,000 sq. ft. facility to replace the existing building on Elgin Street in Cobourg and is proposing to locate it immediately north of the CCC on the campus property with a land grant from the Town (see Figure 3.9 on the following page). In this new facility, the YMCA will continue to provide aquatics, fitness, recreation and camps to child, youth and adult members and licensed childcare to the community. Locating the YMCA on the CCC campus will contribute further to the creation of a recreation hub with the Y and the Town delivering complementary services to the community. As Cobourg builds out in upcoming years, the CCC campus will be central to surrounding residential areas and will provide families with a wide variety of recreation services in one location. The campus is also well served by public transit and linked to other points in the Town via trails.

Facilities that emerged in the foregoing assessments to consider for location on the site include a third ice pad and associated amenities, and an event-oriented basketball court.

The Plan anticipates the need for a third ice pad within the next ten years should the Town continue to serve both local and regional ice demand. A third pad would most reasonably be added to the existing twin pad arena at the CCC.

As well, Greg Jillings Memorial Basketball is fundraising to build an outdoor basketball court capable of hosting tournaments and envisions it being located on the CCC campus.

Parking is a current, ongoing concern. When events attracting large numbers of participants and spectators occur concurrently, there is insufficient parking to accommodate need. Adding the YMCA and the basketball venue may increase parking needs, even though some demand will be removed with field relocations. Actual need and site capacity should be investigated in a parking study for the site once a draft site plan (or optional site plans) with all future facilities is (are) prepared. This can be combined with a traffic study for the roads affected by use of the CCC.

RECOMMENDATION:

RF43. Update the CCC Campus Plan to reflect facility decisions for the site as they are confirmed for implementation.

RF44. Prepare a traffic and parking study for the CCC.

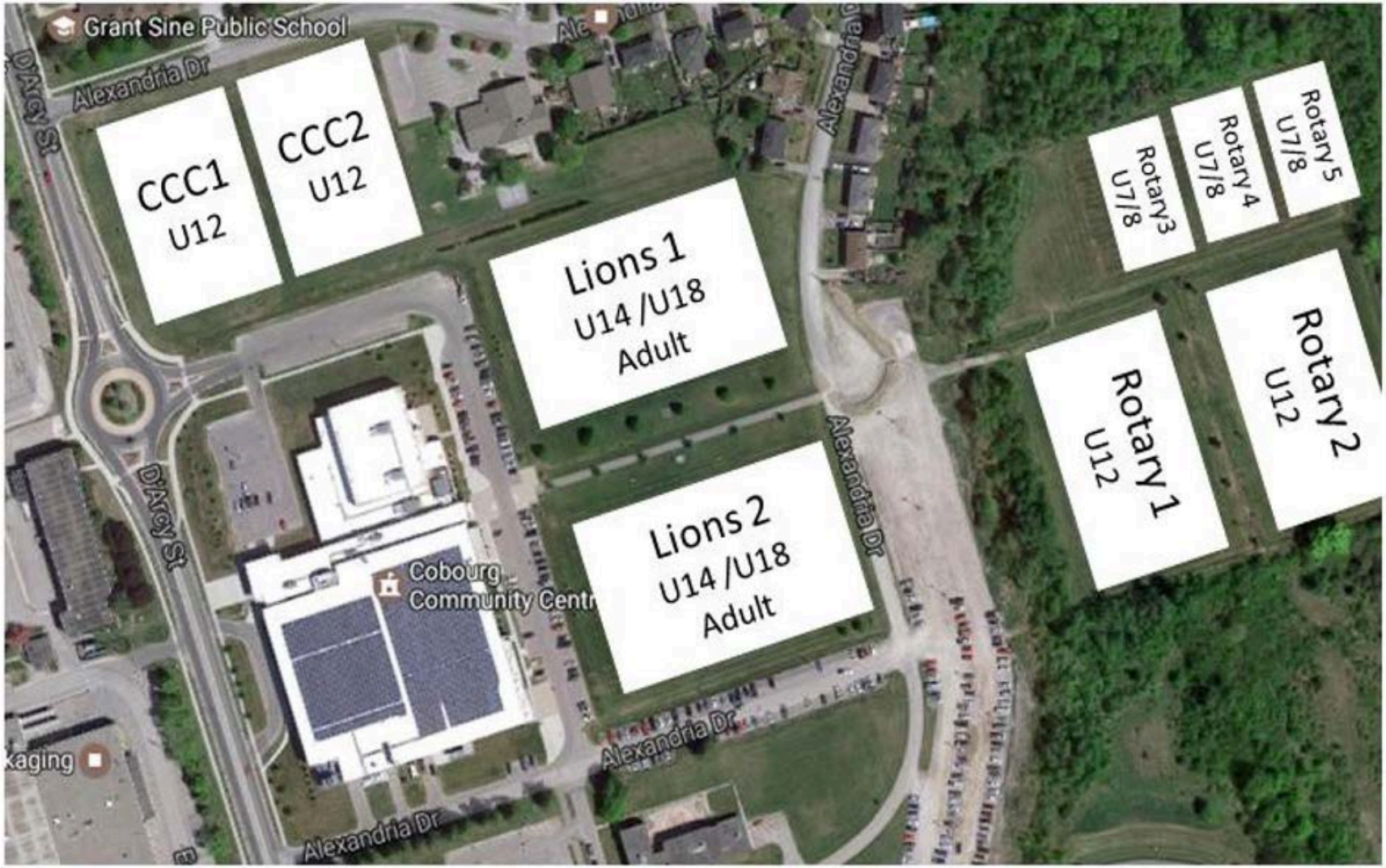

Figure 3.8: Rectangular Field Locations on the CCC Campus

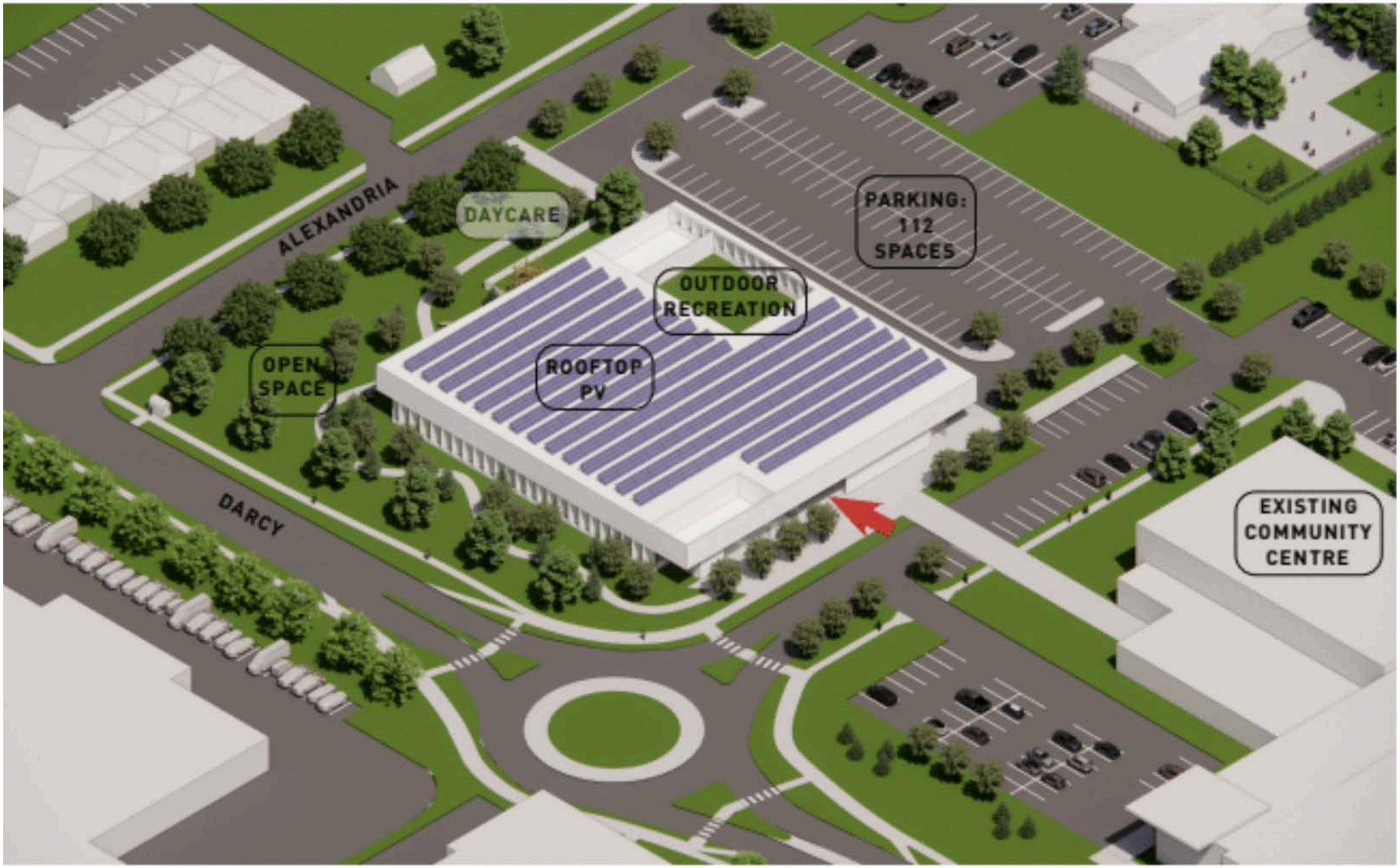

Figure 3.9: Preferred Layout: Scheme #3 (Square) - Cobourg Community Centre YMCA Site Options (MJMA, no date)

4.0 PROGRAMS & EVENTS

This section assesses the balance of recreation programs, activities, and events available to current and future residents and visitors in Cobourg.

4.1 Programs Context

Municipal Supply

Table 4.1 lists the municipal recreation programs organized by Community Services staff, with details on the age groups served and season(s) active.

Table 4.1: Municipal Recreation Program Supply

Program	Format	Age (years)
Public Skating	Drop-in	All Ages
Drop-in Ability Skate	Drop-in	All Ages
Open Gym	Drop-in	All Ages
Parent/Tot Skate	Registered program	2-6
Learn to Skate	Registered program	4-10
Learn to Play Hockey	Registered program	4-10
March Break Camp	Registered program	4-10
Summer Camp	Registered program	4-10
Girls Hockey Development Summer Camp	Registered program	7-14
Stick and Puck	Drop-in	6 and under
Adult/Youth Pickleball	Drop-in	12+
Pickleball Clinics	Registered program	12+
Open Gym	Drop-in	18 and under
Youth Shinny	Drop-in	18 and under
Youth Basketball	Drop-in	18 and under
Table Tennis	Drop-in	18+
Recreational Skate	Drop-in	18+
Shinny	Drop-in	18+
Ladies Shinny	Drop-in	18+
Zumba	Drop-in	18+
Pickleball	Drop-in	55+
Drawing	Drop-in	55+
Painting	Drop-in	55+
Active Fit	Drop-in	55+
Chair Zumba	Drop-in	55+
Zumba Gold	Drop-in	55+

Program	Format	Age (years)
Cardio & Core	Drop-in	55+
Tai Chi	Registered program	55+
Yoga	Registered program	55+
Gentle Yoga	Registered program	55+
Chair Yoga	Registered program	55+
Active Yoga	Registered program	55+
Bridge	Drop-in	55+
Partner Bridge	Drop-in	55+
Carpet Bowling	Drop-in	55+
Euchre	Drop-in	55+
Bid Euchre	Drop-in	55+
Quilting	Drop-in	55+
Camera Club	Drop-in	55+
Friendship Group	Drop-in	55+
Square Dancing	Drop-in	55+
Line Dancing	Drop-in	55+
Table Tennis	Drop-in	55+
Shinny	Drop-in	55+

YMCA Northumberland

The Cobourg YMCA offers a number of programs for various age groups at drop-in and membership rates. In addition to licensed child care and childminding services for parents using the facility, the YMCA's recreation programs include:

- **Aquatics** (e.g., swimming lessons, fitness, lane swim, sensory swim) for adults, seniors, new parents, and all ages (year-round)
- **Fitness** (e.g., strength training, yoga) for adults, seniors, and new parents (year-round)
- **Sports** (e.g., basketball, volleyball, squash, pickleball) for children, youth, and adults
- **Day Camps** for children (March Break, PA Days, summer)
- **Leadership Courses** (e.g., babysitting, safety, aquatics) for youth
- **Open Gym/Kids' Night Out** for children and youth
- **Themed Youth Dances**

Other Program Providers

Table 4.2 on the following page shows recreation and cultural programs available in Cobourg by non-municipal providers, grouped by organizer, program name, age group, and season. Note this is not an exhaustive list of current and past activities, and excludes the YMCA, described above.

Table 4.2: Non-Municipal Recreation Program Supply

Organizer	Program	Age Group	Season
Northumberland Minor Hockey Association	Hockey	Youth	Fall, Winter
West Northumberland Wild Girls Hockey	Hockey	Youth	Fall, Winter
Northumberland Bulldogs	Hockey for PWD	All Ages	Fall, Winter
Cobourg Mercantile Hockey League	Hockey	Adults	Fall, Winter
United Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu & Cobourg Tae Kwon Do	Martial Arts	Youth, Adult	Year-round
Canadian Tai Chi	Martial Arts & Wellness	Adults, Seniors	Year-round
AbZolutely Choir & Happy Harmony Women's Choir	Arts & Music	Adults	Fall, Winter, Spring
Cobourg Scottish Country Dancers	Dance	Adults, Seniors	Fall, Winter, Spring
Studio 11 Dance Company	Dance	Children, Teens	Fall, Winter, Spring
Northumberland Breakers	Volleyball	Youth	Fall, Winter, Spring
Invado Volleyball	Volleyball	Adults	Year-round
Soul Beach Volleyball	Beach Volleyball	Youth, Adults	Summer
Viva Volleyball	Volleyball	Adults	Fall, Winter, Spring
West Northumberland Curling Club	Curling	Youth, Adult	Fall, Winter
Cobourg Jr. Angels & Legion Minor Softball	Baseball/Softball	Youth	Spring, Summer
Northumberland Baseball Association	Baseball/Softball	Youth, Adults	Spring, Summer
Cobourg Soccer Club	Soccer	Youth, Adults	Summer, Winter
Northumberland Minor Lacrosse Association	Lacrosse	Youth, Adults	Spring, Summer
Cobourg Saxons	Rugby	Youth, Adult, Masters	Spring, Summer, Fall
Coverdale Tennis Club	Tennis	Youth, Adults, Seniors	Spring, Summer, Fall
Sinclair Tennis Club	Tennis	Adults, Seniors	Spring, Summer, Fall

Organizer	Program	Age Group	Season
Cobourg Pickleball Club	Pickleball	Adults, Seniors	Year-round
Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club	Lawn Bowling	Adults, Seniors	Summer, Winter
Cobourg Dragon Boat & Canoe Club	Water Sports	Youth, Adult	Summer
Cobourg Yacht Club (Learn to Sail)	Water Sports	Youth, Adult	Summer
Survivor Thrivers	Dragon Boating	Adults	Summer
Cobourg Cycling Club & Northumberland Hills	Cycling	Youth, Adults	Spring, Summer, Fall
Ganaraska Freewheelers	Cycling	Adults, Seniors	Spring, Summer, Fall
Pine Ridge Hiking Club	Hiking	All ages	Year-round
Cobourg Garden Club	Gardening & Horticulture	Adults, Seniors	Spring, Summer, Fall
Community Living & Respite Services	Recreation for PWD	All ages	Year-round

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of current and past activities.

Community Feedback

Minorities of telephone (24% of 300) and online (38.4% of 487) respondents indicated they or members of their household participate in municipal programs at the CCC such as Seniors Activity Centre programs, adult programs, children's programs, youth programs, and family programs. These residents were then asked for feedback regarding various aspects of program delivery. Majorities indicated their needs are met with respect to the location of recreation programming at the Cobourg Community Centre and are satisfied with program affordability, communication, and quality. Over the term of this Plan, there are opportunities to improve the accessibility, scheduling, and variety of municipal programs.

The survey invited participants to identify their household's top five program/activity interests by type and age group. The greatest interests for each age group were as follows:

- **Babies & Toddlers (0-3 years):** aquatics programs
- **School-aged Children (4-12 years):** sports leagues/tournaments, aquatics programs
- **Teenagers (13-19 years):** sports leagues/tournaments
- **Adults (20-39 years):** fitness classes
- **Adults (40-64 years):** fitness classes
- **Seniors (64-74 years):** fitness classes, social clubs/groups
- **Seniors (75+ years):** social clubs/groups

In additional comment sections, online survey respondents emphasized a gap in available activities for young- to middle-aged adults (i.e., aged 19-49 years). Working professionals, parents, and students asked for programs in the early evenings and on weekends; some 55+ residents noted that non-seniors would also benefit from evening classes. Several respondents shared that popular programs like pickleball are filled quickly and difficult to get into. One user noted the frustration of having to join the seniors centre just to take a general art class.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES & THIRD SPACES

Through the engagement process, the overall consensus from both the public and staff was that there is a significant lack of recreation opportunities for youth in Cobourg. As one respondent to the online survey commented, "There is not enough in Cobourg for our teens to do."
During the focus group conducted with students at Cobourg Collegiate Institute (CCI), youth expressed interest in single-day leagues and tournaments (e.g., basketball) and more age-specific programs: they prefer playing sports within smaller age groups (e.g., 13-15 year-olds and 16-18 year-olds) to be alongside peers in similar stages of physical, cognitive, and emotional maturity.

They also expressed a desire for age-appropriate environments where they can hang out without feeling out of place. The term "third space" was introduced by American sociologist Ray Oldenburg to describe the places outside of home (first place) and school or work (second place) where people can gather, socialize, and connect with their community.[66] These are informal, welcoming environments where participation is voluntary and access is not limited by cost. Third spaces play a critical role in supporting social connection, mental health, and a sense of belonging, while contributing to unify the community.[67]

As they typically cannot drive yet, teenagers need safe, independent access to spaces without heavy reliance on parents and older siblings. These can be publicly-owned places such as parks, community centres, and libraries, or non-profits like faith centres.[68] Historically, shopping malls have been the ultimate third space for youth, offering a safe, accessible, climate-controlled space to wander independently without direct adult management. CCI students specifically noted the decline of offerings at the local shopping centre, pointing to recent store closures and the absence of a food court. While malls function like town squares, they are indeed privately-owned spaces whose primary goal is commerce. When teens spend hours socializing with minimal spending, their loitering is seen as a nuisance and can lead to chaperone policies or bans on unaccompanied minors. This disproportionately impacts youth from lower-income families who rely on free, accessible spaces to gather, as they may be priced out of structured recreation like sports leagues or paid entertainment venues.

In Cobourg, third spaces present an opportunity to directly respond to the gap in youth and teen recreation by integrating more flexible and unprogrammed environments into parks and public spaces. Distributed across the Town as multi-functional areas, these can support casual, informal use and appeal to a range of preferences. This Plan encourages the development of

[66] Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). *Ray Oldenburg*. https://www.pps.org/article/roldenburg

[67] University of Chicago English Language Institute. (2023, November 1). *Third places: What are they and why are they important to American culture?*. https://esl.uchicago.edu/2023/11/01/third-places-what-are-they-and-why-are-they-important-to-american-culture/

[68] School Mental Health Ontario. (2025, March 4). *What's your third place?*. https://smho-smso.ca/whats-your-third-place/

public spaces that are adaptable and responsive to evolving community needs, particularly for youth who may not engage with traditional recreational programming.

Analysis of Existing Provision

Models for delivering recreation programming, activities and events can differ significantly from one municipality to another. In Cobourg, public agencies, non-profits, volunteer organizations, and private industry collaborate to provide recreational offerings to residents.

As shown in Table 4.1, the Town offers over 40 active programs with a balanced mix of drop-in and registered formats. This caters to both residents who want structured, ongoing learning and those who require flexible, commitment-free recreation. There is a heavy focus on older adults, with more than half of municipal programs exclusively dedicated to the 55+ age group. These programs are dominated by low-impact fitness (e.g., chair Zumba, gentle yoga, chair yoga, Tai Chi) and social/leisure time (e.g., bridge, euchre, quilting, camera club). Programs for children are heavily focused on ice activities (e.g., learn to skate, parent/tot skate, youth shinny) and seasonal care (March Break and summer camps). There is a solid offering of accessible, all-ages drop-in programs, including public skating, ability skate, and open gym.

The non-municipal sector is the primary provider of organized sports including competitive, team-based hockey, volleyball, baseball/softball, soccer, tennis, rugby, and lacrosse. These programs are fairly well-distributed across youth, adult, and seniors age groups. The supply is seasonally robust, with year-round programs (e.g., martial arts, pickleball), fall/winter indoor/ice sports, and spring/summer field/water sports. Given Cobourg's location on Lake Ontario, there is a strong presence of water-based and outdoor recreation provided by third parties including the Cobourg Dragon Boat & Canoe Club, Cobourg Yacht Club, Pine Ridge Hiking Club, and local cycling clubs. The YMCA is the sole provider of aquatics programming in Cobourg, and like the Town, it offers children's day camps, fitness classes, and drop-in sports. Residents also leave Cobourg to access aquatics programs in Port Hope at Jack Burger Sports Complex.

Both the municipal and non-municipal sectors show an emerging commitment to inclusive recreation, with the Town offering a Drop-in Ability Skate, the YMCA offering Sensory Swim, and groups like the Northumberland Bulldogs offering Special Needs Hockey.

New & Emerging Program Trends

Recreation programming is evolving beyond traditional activities delivered in parks and facilities to embrace a more holistic, technology-driven, and community-oriented approach to wellness and leisure. Changing demographics and new lifestyle priorities are redefining how people connect, play, and find balance in their shared spaces. Table 4.3 on the following page outlines new and emerging trends in community recreation programs and activities.

Table 4.3: New & Emerging Trends in Recreation Programs & Activities

Program/ Activity Trend	Description & Details
Niche & Hybrid Sports	• Pickleball remains the fastest-growing recreational sport in Canada, with the most significant recent increase occurring in Ontario and among the 35–54 years demographic. • Padel is also on the rise, blending elements of tennis and squash on an enclosed court that naturally mitigates noise. Its smaller dimensions, underhand serve, and specialized equipment make it highly accessible for beginners. • The influx of newcomers is driving massive demand for sports like cricket, futsal (indoor soccer), and badminton. • Indoor climbing and bouldering are also evolving as a major trend, particularly for youth. • Competitive gaming and e-sports are now part of mainstream recreation and no longer seen as just "screen time." Digital tournaments engage Gen Z and younger demographics.
Self-Directed and Unstructured Recreation	• Since the pandemic, there has been a permanent shift away from rigid, multi-week registered programs (e.g., 8-week Tuesday night league) toward flexible, drop-in, and self-directed recreation. • High demand for multi-use trails, outdoor fitness equipment, and off-leash dog parks. • Municipalities are actively converting prime facility hours from registered leagues into flexible drop-in times. This includes open-gym basketball, drop-in pickleball, and punch-pass fitness classes that allow residents to recreate on their own unpredictable schedules.
Technology-Enhanced & Gamified Experiences	• Technology is bridging the gap between the digital and physical worlds to get people moving outdoors. This includes setting up QR-code guided historical walks, geocaching challenges, or "story walks" along trails, serving both local families and seasonal tourists. • Augmented reality is increasingly being used in parks to create gamified fitness challenges and interactive nature walks where users can point their mobile devices at flora and fauna for real-time identification.
Mental Health, Stress Relief & Community Connection	• Programming is pivoting toward mindfulness, outdoor yoga, meditation retreats, and trauma-informed community care. • Recent data shows a significant jump in people attending recreation programs specifically to cure loneliness and connect with neighbours. • The PaRx initiative enables Canadian healthcare providers to formally prescribe nature therapy/forest bathing to treat various medical conditions.

Program/ Activity Trend	Description & Details
Inter- and Multi-generational Activities	• Recreation is moving away from isolated "kids only" or "seniors only" activities to programs and spaces that can engage multiple generations simultaneously (e.g., coding classes, technology mentoring, outdoor fitness equipment, community gardening). • Concurrent/intergenerational scheduling is occurring more often. Scheduling a youth gymnastics class at the exact same time and in the same building as an adult fitness class removes the barrier of childcare for young parents, allowing the whole family to participate in recreation simultaneously. The Cobourg YMCA has adopted this approach through its indoor Pentel Playground & Climbing Centre, allowing children to play during adjacent adult gym programming.
Outdoor Play, Environmental Stewardship & Eco-Volunteering	• Outdoor fitness classes exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic and proved to have permanent staying power. Municipalities are programming outdoor yoga at the beach, boot camps in park pavilions, and guided trail hikes, capitalizing on their natural assets during the warmer tourist months. • Climate resilience is also being woven directly into community activities through programs such as invasive species removal and community gardening. • Programming is also shifting toward outdoor survival skills, guided nature hikes, and non-motorized water sports like kayaking and paddleboarding.
Pet-Friendly Programming	• With pet ownership at an all-time high, recreation programming is expanding beyond off-leash dog parks to structured canine recreation including agility course training, aquatic events, yoga with dogs, "yappy hour" social events for owners and pets, and dog-friendly 5K runs.

4.2 Community Events Context

Current Supply

The Town organizes a number of events throughout the summer (e.g., Movies Under the Stars, Canada Day, Cobourg Sandcastle Festival) and winter (e.g., Christmas Magic, Santa Claus Parade, First Night, Family Day) that are open to all ages in the Cobourg community. Significant events led by external partners (such as the Cobourg Waterfront Festival) utilize an extensive amount of Town resources for logistics and operations. Other events in Cobourg include fundraiser walks/runs, heritage activities (e.g., Dickens Walk, self-guided heritage tours), music and performing arts activities (e.g., theatre, concerts), car shows, home/garden shows, festivals, and sidewalk sales.

Community Feedback

The surveys indicated that 73.4% of 492 online households and 18.7% of 300 telephone households participate in municipal events. For the most part, residents indicated their satisfaction with event locations and other aspects, but there is room for improvement with respect to variety and communication of events. One in five comments in the additional feedback section mentioned a need for effective advertising and promotion: many respondents reported hearing about events only after they happened, citing vague social media posts and the void left by the closure of the local newspaper. Alongside requests for more advance promotion, notice of shifting times/locations, and a centralized event website, many residents highlighted downtown parking challenges and the high costs associated with food and activities. To alleviate congestion and improve accessibility, several suggested spreading festivities to other community spaces like Cobourg Conservation Area[69] or Donegan Park and exploring solutions like free household parking passes.

While staples like the evening Santa Claus Parade, Busker Fest, and Movies in the Park remained highly praised, there is a growing consensus that the broader event lineup has become repetitive. In their additional comments, residents described feeling a "Groundhog Day" effect, noting that many downtown festivals rely on the same vendors and shopping-focused formats. There is a strong community desire to revitalize declining favourites, particularly the Waterfront Festival, which many feel has become too expensive and lost its appeal in recent years.

When asked if more events are needed in Cobourg, 25.3% of 300 telephone respondents and 41.7% of 477 online respondents agreed. Majorities (61.6% of 315 online respondents, 68.7% of 76 telephone respondents) feel the Town should be the provider of these events, as opposed to community groups or private companies. The top interests are in:

- **Festivals** (e.g., music, food, art, cultural heritage)
- **Holiday celebrations** (e.g., Easter egg hunts, Canada Day fireworks, etc.)
- **Markets** (e.g., farmers' markets, craft fairs)

[69] The Cobourg Conservation Area is owned by the GRCA and managed by the Town of Cobourg per GRCA's *Cobourg Conservation Area Master Plan* (2002). Any use of the land for events must be discussed with the GRCA.

Analysis of Existing Provision

Generally, the Town organizes annual events with a focus on large-scale, civic, and holiday traditions. The Downtown BIA holds events to drive foot traffic to the core. The majority of events are organized by community organizations, charities, and independent groups, ranging heavily from specialized festivals (e.g., Ribfest, Soccer Festival) to charity walks (e.g., Walk A Mile, Parkinson's Walk) and niche interest shows (e.g., Motor City Car Show, Comic Con). The sheer volume of events shows a highly engaged community that actively programs local spaces.

Unsurprisingly, summer is the busiest season for programming in Cobourg. It is well-supported by all organizers, featuring major draws like the Sandcastle Festival, Movies Under the Stars, and the Lakeside Antique & Classic Car Show. The “shoulder” seasons of fall and spring are dominated by non-municipal community groups’ charity walks, fundraisers, arts, and specialty showcases. Winter has the lightest programming, whereTown events include Family Day, Christmas Magic, First Night, and the Santa Claus Parade.

Cobourg’s event supply is very strong in traditional festivals, charity walks, and civic holidays. To diversify the portfolio and attract different demographics or off-season tourists, future offerings could focus on filling gaps in culinary/food events, dedicated arts/music festivals, competitive cycling or water sports, and robust winter-weather activities beyond the holiday season.

New & Emerging Event Trends

The landscape of community events is also shifting significantly. While traditional fairs, festivals, and markets will always have their place, municipalities and event organizers are adopting new strategies to make gatherings more inclusive, sustainable, and engaging. Table 4.4 on the following page outlines new and emerging trends in community event planning based on current industry trends.

Table 4.4: New & Emerging Trends in Community Events

Event Trend	Description & Details
"Soft" Socializing & Micro-Events	• Following years of digital fatigue and overstimulation, residents are seeking "low-stakes" ways to connect without the pressure of massive crowds or loud environments. • There has been a surge in popularity for niche, relaxed gatherings like outdoor puzzle competitions, flower-arranging workshops in park pavilions, and sunset acoustic sessions. • Municipalities are dispersing funds into a series of smaller, lower cost, micro-events that cater specifically to locals who want to prioritize intimacy over scale, fostering deeper, more meaningful connections.
Participatory "Co-Creation" Events	• There is a rise in "cause-based" or builder events as people want to actively participate and leave a tangible mark on their community (e.g., community art builds/mural painting, large-scale clothing swaps, collaborative shoreline cleanup).
Sustainability	• Sustainability is becoming a foundational requirement for community events. Organizers are prioritizing eco-friendly initiatives like zero-waste street fairs and tree-planting drives. • There is a growing trend of redistributing surplus event food to local community organizations and charities to minimize waste and support those in need.
Mindfulness & Wellness Zones	• Event organizers are increasingly incorporating dedicated quiet spaces for attendees to step away from the noise and crowds to meditate, recharge, or connect quietly. • Low-stimulation areas also create a more inclusive environment for disabled attendees who may need a safe reprieve from sensory overload.
Gamification	• Organizers are using technology to turn passive attendees into active participants, particularly to engage younger demographics. For example, communities are hosting tech-enabled scavenger hunts and charity e-sports tournaments to raise funds and awareness for local causes.
Mashup Events	• With demographics shifting from a predominantly older population to a mix of retirees, newcomers, and young families, towns are looking for ways to bridge the generational divide by combining two seemingly unrelated interests to draw a diverse, mixed-age crowd (e.g., "Coffee & Run" clubs, "Sip & Needlework" nights featuring local craft cider, indie book clubs held at a local brewery).
Hybrid Delivery	• Physical and digital communities are merging through live-streaming or virtual participation options, which connect and include those who cannot physically attend.

4.3 New Opportunities for Recreation Activities in Cobourg

Active Aging

With a current median age of 54.8 years and 64% of households being singles or couples without children, recreation options should include a focus on low-impact wellness, social connection, and accessibility. Given the interest in social clubs/group programming from residents aged 64 years and greater, the Town should consider organizing and promoting social walking clubs: free, scheduled weekly meetups on paved trails like the Waterfront Trail.

To complement the outdoor walking clubs and ensure year-round continuity, the Town can migrate these groups to the indoor walking track at the Cobourg Community Centre during the winter. Structured "Walk and Talk" hours at the CCC would provide a safe, slip-free environment while naturally funneling participants into the existing programming, including at the Seniors Activity Centre, effectively bridging the gap between physical health and the social combat against winter isolation.

Because mobility levels vary widely within the active aging demographic, the Town should also prioritize the expansion of low-impact, highly social court sports. Pickleball continues to see explosive growth among older adults; expanding both dedicated outdoor municipal courts (see section 3.3) and beginner clinics at the CCC will address this sustained demand.

Youth Spaces & Activities

Engaging youth and teens aged 12–18 is notoriously one of the most difficult challenges in municipal parks and recreation. This demographic generally ages out of structured summer camps and traditional sports leagues, seeking unstructured social spaces (see section 4.1) and skill-based experiences instead.

To retain youth and teens within the municipal recreation system, and support the growth in families expected over the term of this Plan, Cobourg should pivot from highly structured programming to facilitating autonomous, unstructured, and skill-based experiences focused on empowering teens rather than supervising them.

POP-UP TOURNAMENTS

The online and telephone surveys revealed the top activity interest for teenagers was sports leagues/tournaments. Cobourg's user groups currently provide hockey, volleyball, baseball/softball, soccer, tennis, rugby, and lacrosse programs. In the focus group, high school students were interested in single-day leagues and pop-up tournaments; older teens often cannot commit to a traditional sports league because of part-time jobs or homework.

The Town should pilot "micro-commitments" such as single-day, round-robin pop-up tournaments on PA Days, focusing on low-roster sports like 3v3 basketball or 3v3 ball hockey. Per youth feedback, there should be a "Junior Bracket" (ages 13-15) in the morning and a "Senior Bracket" (ages 16-18) in the afternoon,

ensuring physical parity and keeping the social dynamics comfortable. Local restaurants (e.g., pizzeria) could donate gift card prizes for the winning teams.

CCC TEEN TAKEOVER

The Town could pilot a monthly "Teen Takeover" at the CCC, where the facility (or a portion of it) is closed to adults and younger children. This would address the lack of unstructured, free spaces for youth to hang out, and the teenage desire for autonomy away from parents and siblings.

To foster a sense of ownership and ensure high attendance, the Town should form a peer-led “Youth Advisory Group” or “Takeover Task Force.” Consisting of local high school students (potentially offering them volunteer hours required for graduation in exchange for their time), this group will select the music and decide on a theme or activities for the month (e.g., glow-in-the-dark sports night, winter-exam de-stress night). When teens have ownership over an event, they self-police their peers and protect the facility. The peer-led organizing group could also develop skills in community business partnerships, seeking a rotating title sponsor to supply food each month.

Instead of standard facility security or parent volunteers, the event should be staffed with young adults (e.g., college-aged recreation staff, local youth workers, or young community mentors). Their role should be to facilitate the environment (e.g., handing out subsidized pizza from a local business) and acting as passive, relatable role models. This will cultivate a safe, liability-compliant environment without feeling authoritarian. To maximize impact, programming should appeal to a broad spectrum of youth interests while maintaining a delicate balance of safety and autonomy. In addition to accessing the double gymnasiums for unstructured sports, the Town should simultaneously activate adjacent multi-purpose rooms as “chill zones.” These could include an e-sports and tech lounge with a projector set up for a Smash Bros. or Mario Kart tournament, and a study/art café with lo-fi music, soft lighting, board games, art supplies, and comfortable seating.

OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS

Teens crave novelty and off-site experiences, aging out of traditional municipal programming because they find it "boring." Offering organized trips provides high-thrill, novel experiences like rock climbing or visiting a major sports complex without reliance on parents for transportation. However, excursion-based recreation is expensive. When organizing these trips through a youth centre/organization, which typically operates with provincial funding, community donations, and municipal backing, trips can be offered at a highly subsidized rate, ensuring that youth from all socioeconomic backgrounds get to experience regional recreation, not just those whose families can afford weekend trips.

Case Study: Adventure Saturdays - Wasaga Beach, ON

The Town’s dedicated Youth Programmers and Recreation Coordinators organize supervised, municipal-led field trips that take teens out into the community and the broader region. Teens meet at the Wasaga Beach Youth Centre and travel together as a cohort. By using these high-value activities like to get teens through the door, the municipality builds trust; participants are more likely to return to the Youth Centre’s drop-in space for cooking classes, video games, homework help, and art supplies.

The Town is home to non-profit organizations including Rebound Child & Youth Services and Northumberland Youth Unlimited (The Beacon Youth Centre), which provide mental health support, tutoring, and after-school drop-in spaces. Municipal staff should explore partnerships with existing youth agencies to replicate Wasaga Beach's model and launch a subsidized excursion program for teens. With easy highway access to Toronto and other regional recreation spaces, municipal vans or local transit could be used to travel to the Northumberland County Forest, nearby ski hills, or rock climbing and bouldering gyms.

"Missing Middle" Programming

The resident surveys revealed a critical need to expand programming for the "missing middle": working professionals, parents, and adults aged 20 years and older. These groups have a strong desire for fitness programming but require evening and weekend options. To better serve this demographic, the Town should adopt "Simultaneous Scheduling" at the Cobourg Community Centre, where possible, explicitly aligning adult evening fitness classes with youth sports activities to reduce childcare barriers for parents.

SOCIAL SPORTS LEAGUES

To alleviate bottlenecks in sports like pickleball, the Town could introduce 19+ "Social Sports Leagues" in the evenings (e.g., 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM). Accessible, low-barrier sports like co-ed spikeball, casual indoor volleyball, or introductory "Pickleball 101" clinics could be specifically reserved for the working adult demographic. A local downtown pub or brewery could be approached as an official post-game sponsor, encouraging players to connect over subsidized appetizers or drinks after the game.

BITE-SIZED WORKSHOPS

In the online survey, a younger adult mentioned having to join the Seniors Activity Centre to take an art class. The Town should consider using the CCC's multi-purpose rooms and commercial kitchen on Thursday or Friday evenings for specialized, "bite-sized" single-night workshops or two-week masterclasses in arts, culture, and life skills series explicitly aimed at the 19-55 demographic. The focus could be on trend-driven, accessible crafts and life skills such as:

- a smartphone photography workshop teaching residents how to use their phone cameras for better family photos or small-business social media marketing
- a two-week workshop where participants bring in thrifted clothing or small furniture and learn basic sewing, mending, or refinishing techniques
- single-evening workshops focused on building terrariums, making macramé plant hangers, or arranging seasonal floral centerpieces
- a class on spring bike maintenance basics, teaching adults how to change a tire, grease a chain, and tune up their bikes before hitting the Waterfront Trail
- a two-week masterclass covering the basics of baking sourdough bread, fermenting, or canning and preserving seasonal produce
- intuitive collage nights assembling magazine clippings, books, textures, and words

The Town should actively recruit local entrepreneurs, artisans, and skilled residents to serve as instructors. Empowering neighbours to teach neighbours fosters deeper social connections and transforms municipal facilities into dynamic hubs for community skill-sharing. To keep programming costs

accessible while still adequately rewarding community instructors, the Town could consider implementing a skill-trade compensation model. Under this framework, local residents and artisans who lead a workshop could be compensated with free enrollment in a masterclass taught by another instructor. This barter-style approach not only minimizes the impact on the municipal programming budget but also cultivates a tightly knit, collaborative network of local makers cross-pollinating their skills and supporting one another's classes.

Equipment Lending Library

In addition to books, films, and music, the Cobourg Public Library offers guitars, ukuleles, video games, LEGO kits, puzzles, garden seeds, and provincial park passes that can be borrowed using a free library card. The Town should partner with the library to support self-directed recreation opportunities as an alternative to formal sports leagues. Using their library cards, residents would be able to sign out equipment such as footballs, basketballs, volleyballs, baseballs, soccer balls, and Frisbees to use in public parks. The CCC could also serve as a sign-out point for sports equipment.

The Town and Library could approach local organizations, service clubs, and/or businesses to sponsor and/or supply the equipment. Previous municipalities have had success securing equipment through government grants, as noted in the South Dundas case study below.

Case Study: Lending Library - South Dundas, ON

The Municipality of South Dundas has developed and implemented a free lending library to support active, healthy lifestyles and participation in sports and leisure activities in the community. After signing up for a membership, residents can access a wide array of sporting equipment including soccer balls and small portable nets, footballs, volleyballs, basketballs, bocce ball set, a road hockey set (goalie pads, blockers, gloves, sticks, balls), horseshoes, croquet sets, bicycles (adult and youth road bikes, mountain bikes, helmets) as well as equipment for water sports (stand-up paddleboards, single and double kayaks, canoes, life jackets, paddles), winter sports (cross-country skis, poles, boots; snowshoes), and racket sports (badminton/tennis/pickleball nets, rackets, paddles, birdies, balls). In order to borrow equipment, individuals must be a resident of South Dundas, provide identification, and complete a Loan Agreement Form. If under 18, a parent or guardian must be present. Pickup and dropoff is based at the local arena and appointments are mandatory, with reservations made at least 24 hours in advance. Once signed out, equipment can be kept for three days. The Lending Library was established with funding from a Trillium Grant and expanded by a Canada Healthy Communities Initiative grant.

Park Crawls & Scavenger Hunts

For a number of years, the David Suzuki Foundation led a day-long park crawl event between four City of Toronto parks along Toronto's former Garrison Creek corridor. Participants flowed from park to park by foot, bike, and portaged canoe, supported by food booths, entertainment, and eco-activities in each park.[70] In Alberta, parent-child clubs have developed a park

[70] https://www.goodfoodrevolution.com/park-crawl/

crawl series, visiting a different park in their community each week.[71] The City of Surrey, British Columbia, has also used the StoryMaps function in ArcGIS to invite residents and tourists to get to know the City's parks. Six themed park crawls are shared online, focused on municipal green spaces best suited to bird watching, public art, flowers, ponds and creeks, forest bathing, and young children. A virtual map tour powered by ESRI marks the locations and tour route.

To promote a connected parks and open space system and bring residents together, Cobourg should explore creating distinct park "crawls"/routes in the shoulder seasons. These could be scheduled for particular days as standalone events with programming at each location (e.g., musical performance, honey tasting, local bird identification, tree scavenger hunt, egg & spoon race, arts and crafts), or developed and promoted as a self-guided, ongoing activity to be enjoyed at any time. An interactive component such as a printable map or passport can task park goers with locating a placemaking element, plaque, or sign[72] (e.g., painted rock, outdoor stamp station, secret message) in each park and recording it on the map/passport.
To engage teenagers and young adults, digital gamification could be introduced. For example, the Town could partner with a digital scavenger hunt platform like GooseChase, where participants upload photos or videos of themselves completing tasks at each space (e.g., "Take a selfie with the floral clock at Victoria Park," or "Record a 5-second video skipping stones at the Waterfront Nature Park") to earn points for municipal prizes.

[71] https://mamabearplayclub.com/family-park-crawl

[72] These should be positioned at AODA-compliant heights (typically 0.9m-1.2m from the ground).

Themed park crawl routes tailored to specific demographics are suggested below.

PAWS IN THE PARK

A dog-focused park crawl could route pet owners between on- and off-leash areas and feature local pet vendors or mobile agility courses at each stop. Following the above example of Surrey, British Columbia, Cobourg could use ArcGIS StoryMaps to create a mobile-friendly interactive guide. In addition to the park crawl route, the map would include "bio-stops" for dogs (e.g., locations of water bowls, pet waste stations, shaded rest areas). As users reach a specific park, the map could trigger a pop-up with a digital pawprint and a fun fact about that park's history or local wildlife.

To gamify the experience and encourage participation across the entire route, the Town could develop a physical "Paws-port." Participants would be tasked with collecting unique paw-print stamps at each designated off-leash area or vendor station along the crawl. Partnering with local pet supply businesses to offer a small reward (e.g., branded dog bandana or locally made treats) for a completed Paws-port would incentivize residents to explore municipal parks they might not typically visit.

The dog-focused park crawl could be supported by a community-led social media campaign. Participants would be encouraged to take a photo of their dog at specific landmarks (e.g., the pier, the flower clock, off-leash gate) and post it using the hashtag #CobourgPawsport. The Town could host a live "Pup-Up Gallery" on the municipal website or on a screen at the Cobourg Community Centre, pulling in the hashtagged photos to show the community's dogs enjoying the parks in real-time.

The Town could also explore using augmented reality markers (viewable through a smartphone camera): when a participant reaches a specific point in the park, a "virtual treat" or 3D trophy would appear on their screen next to their dog, making for a unique and shareable photo opportunity.

ROLL AND STROLL ROUTE

A “Roll and Stroll” park crawl would be an explicitly AODA-compliant and barrier-free route, designed for older adults, wheelchair users, and parents with strollers. The map would include flat, paved pathways like the Waterfront Trail and clearly highlight the locations of accessible washrooms and rest benches. To gamify this experience without compromising accessibility, the Town could create a “Bench Bingo” card available digitally online or physically at the CCC. Small, weather-proof plaques or stickers could be placed on specific benches along the route, at accessible heights directly adjacent to paved surfaces. Each plaque/sticker would feature a unique symbol, a piece of local Cobourg trivia, or a QR code.

Alternatively, the Bingo card could have an “I Spy” focus using visual markers easily seen from the paved path (e.g., spot the Cobourg East Pier lighthouse, find a bench dedicated to someone born before 1950, find a tree with a trunk wider than your wheelchair/stroller). Participants would check off the corresponding box on their Bingo card, and a completed Bingo line could be redeemed for a Town of Cobourg lapel pin or pen. These low-barrier activities encourage intergenerational play and regular resting, ensuring the route is both functional and engaging.

GLOBAL COBOURG CULTURAL CRAWL

This park crawl would tie to the Town's newcomer and BIPOC inclusion goals. The route could feature temporary installations of international art in different parks, and/or stops at diverse local businesses, restaurants, and community organizations that sit along the corridors between the green spaces. To gamify the experience and encourage full participation, the Town could develop a “Cultural Passport” (available physically and digitally). Attendees would collect unique stamps at each park or participating diverse local businesses. To ensure the initiative remains highly inclusive and trauma-informed, the passport stamps should focus on welcoming cultural identifiers (e.g., greetings in the diverse languages spoken across Northumberland County, custom motifs designed by local BIPOC artists, cuisine) rather than relying on national flags, which can sometimes carry complex geopolitical associations for refugees and newcomers.

GEOCACHE TOUR

Another option is to establish an official "Cobourg Parks Geocache Tour," with small, permanent logbooks hidden in distinct parks. Geocaching is a free, community-driven, family-friendly activity enjoyed in trails, parks and open spaces. It is a self-guided and year-round treasure hunt aided by GPS. There is already geocaching activity in Cobourg: currently, the mobile app shows there to be about 40 active geocaches in the Town. Other Ontario municipalities have supported geocaching as a facet of small-town tourism and recreation; a notable example is the Municipality of Highlands East, which has claimed the title of Canada’s best “GeoTour.”

Winter Programs & Events

As discussed in section 4.2, there are fewer events hosted by independent community groups or the BIA during the winter, and Town events during this season focus on holidays. Given Cobourg's aging demographic, influx of newcomers, and need for affordable options, winter programming can encourage participation that combats social isolation and strengthens community.

WELCOME TO WINTER

To stimulate winter tourism, embrace Cobourg's location on Lake Ontario, and integrate new residents from warm climates, the Town could develop a "Welcome to Winter" program. Activities might include free or subsidized beginner clinics for new residents to try Canadian winter staples like ice skating, snowshoeing, or tobogganing in a safe, non-intimidating environment with free or subsidized equipment rentals. Structured clinics could take place at Victoria Park, Donegan Park, the outdoor rink at Rotary Harbourfront Park, and the grounds of the CCC. These supervised, no-pressure sessions could include how to safely walk on ice, use snowshoes, or begin skating using balance aids, catering to the immigrant population and older adults who have lost their winter confidence. The equipment lending partnership with the public library (discussed above) could also be expanded to include ice cleats, walking poles with ice tips, and snowshoes.

WINTER WELLNESS WEEKENDS

To elevate Cobourg's winter activity offerings, the Town should explore a "Nordic Wellness" hot-cold contrast therapy program/festival at the Victoria Park campground (see section 2.2). This concept leverages Cobourg's locations on Lake Ontario while activating the campground during the traditionally quiet winter months. Nordic cycling, the practice of alternating between intense heat, cold exposure, and rest, has grown significantly in popularity for its cardiovascular and mental health benefits. Introducing this to Cobourg creates a unique regional draw and a high-value wellness amenity that addresses seasonal affective disorder and encourages outdoor winter participation.

Case Study: Temporary Event Permits - Collingwood, ON

In the Collingwood and Southern Georgian Bay region, municipalities manage the massive public demand for winter contrast therapy without dedicating permanent parkland to private businesses. Instead of long-term leases, they utilize a temporary event permit or commercial park use model. Private operators mount traditional cedar barrel saunas on heavy-duty flatbed trailers and apply for weekend permits to park at highly trafficked municipal waterfronts such as Sunset Point Park. Because the saunas are completely self-contained on the trailers (requiring no deep utility trenching or permanent structural foundations) they operate on a strict "Leave No Trace" policy. Once the weekend concludes, the trailer is driven away, leaving the public park completely untouched. This model allows the municipality to test the public appetite for winter wellness with zero capital investment while fully transferring the operational and safety liability to the private operator's commercial insurance policy.

Case Study: Off-Season Concessions - Muskoka, ON

Municipalities are actively using mobile saunas to monetize their public docks and waterfronts during the winter months when boating traffic ceases. At locations like the Muskoka Wharf, the Town relies on an off-season concession framework. Just as a

paved pad might be leased to a food truck or paddleboard rental kiosk in July, the same 10x20 foot space is leased to a mobile sauna operator from January through March. The municipality's only responsibility is to provide the designated parking space near the water and outline strict fire-safety guidelines for wood-burning stoves (or provide access to a standard electrical hookup). The private company assumes total responsibility for customer bookings, water-safety protocols, and daily maintenance.

Case Study: Fire and Ice Festival - Bracebridge, ON

Through its Fire and Ice Festival, the Town of Bracebridge has concentrated hot-cold wellness activities into one supervised weekend. Rather than a season-long lease to a private business, Bracebridge uses mobile saunas and massive winter activations (such as transforming its main street into a giant toboggan run) as short-term anchor attractions for a municipality-led winter carnival. Under this model, the Town pays a private mobile sauna company a flat event fee to park their units near the downtown waterfront or festival grounds for a single weekend. The public is then able to experience the saunas and guided cold plunges for free or by donation.

Cobourg has already established a food truck concession program at Victoria Beach. The Town could extend this existing framework to include "Winter Wellness Vendors" at the Victoria Park campground pads. Through a Request for Proposals, the Town would lease a small number of underutilized winter campsite pads near the beach's edge to a private mobile sauna operator. The Town would provide the land and access to utilities, while the operator would manage bookings, liability, and staffing in exchange for a revenue share or site rental fee.

To test market viability without a full-season commitment, the Town could hire a mobile sauna operator for one weekend as the anchor attraction for a "Cobourg Winter Carnival" or Family Day event, or expand to monthly "Winter Wellness Weekends." Participants would use the wood-fired or electric mobile saunas for heat, the shallow waters of Lake Ontario for the cold exposure phase, and temporary heated yurts or beach fire pits for the rest phase, fostering a highly social, community-focused atmosphere.

This initiative aligns directly with Cobourg's demographic needs and affordability metrics. While contrast therapy appeals to younger crowds and regional tourists, it is highly beneficial for older adults as well, aiding in the reduction of joint inflammation and improving circulation. The communal nature of group sauna sessions also combats winter isolation. To ensure the program remains inclusive and respects Cobourg's average household income, the operational agreement with the private vendor should mandate tiered pricing, such as a weekly subsidized "Community Day" or established discounts for residents.

The planned completion of accessible, family-style washrooms at Victoria Beach aligns with the need for modern, heated infrastructure for participants to change safely and comfortably before and after their sessions. Winter swimming carries inherent risks, and the program must clearly delineate a shallow, safe dip zone, require the private operator to provide trained attendants, and establish strict operational protocols regarding ice shelves and water conditions.

Ultimately, a Victoria Beach Nordic spa experience would serve as a powerful economic and cultural driver for the Town. Cobourg is a bustling tourist hub in the summer but experiences a drop in activity during the winter. This program would draw visitors from the regional catchment area and broader Greater Toronto Area in

the off-season, driving vital foot traffic to downtown restaurants and local businesses. By monetizing the Victoria Park campground year-round, the Town can transform a strictly seasonal asset into a continuous source of community wellness and municipal revenue.

Newcomer Inclusion

To ensure Cobourg's recreation programming is intentionally welcoming and reflects the changing face of the community, initiatives should go beyond simply inviting newcomers to participate in traditional Canadian activities. True inclusion means providing spaces for newcomers to share their own cultural recreation and traditions with the broader community.

"TASTE OF HOME" COMMUNITY KITCHEN SERIES

Food is the ultimate cultural bridge. The Town can use the commercial kitchen and multi-purpose rooms at the Cobourg Community Centre to host a monthly culinary exchange during the fall, winter, and spring. Each month, a different community member or local cultural association could lead a workshop teaching residents how to cook a traditional dish (e.g., Syrian flatbreads, Ukrainian perogies, Indian curries). This would bring together Cobourg's older, established residents (who often attend community centre programming) and new immigrant families in a social, indoor environment that combats winter isolation.

Case Study: Newcomers Community Kitchen - Stratford, ON

The Local Community Food Centre successfully operates a Newcomers Community Kitchen for newly arrived families to cook traditional meals, which are then shared communally with established residents, sponsors, and volunteers. Stratford's model proves that in smaller regional hubs, utilizing municipal or community kitchen space for cultural exchange is an effective, low-barrier method to foster a shared sense of family, practice language skills, and build relationships across demographics.

TAPE-BALL CRICKET GAME

While traditional baseball and hockey are mainstays, there is a massive, growing demand for cricket and international soccer across Ontario driven by newcomer populations. Tape-ball is a variation of cricket using a tennis ball wrapped in electrical tape, which can be played safely on existing baseball outfields or multi-use grass fields like at Legion Fields or Westwood Park. Hosting a game or tournament featuring tape-ball cricket is a low-cost, high-impact way to show newcomers that their sports are valued. It also provides a fun, low-stakes environment for longtime Cobourg residents to learn a new sport.

NORTHUMBERLAND NIGHT MARKET

Night markets are a staple of community life in many Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean cultures, blending food, commerce, and entertainment in a public park setting. The Town could transform Rotary Harbourfront Park into a bustling mult-cultural evening market once a month during the summer. Staff could continue to work with the Downtown BIA and Downtown establishments to share their food, crafts, and music. This would create a vibrant, inclusive tourism draw for Cobourg's 50,000-person regional

catchment area, and signal to prospective residents that Cobourg celebrates diversity while providing a vital economic stepping stone for newcomer small businesses. The Town could partner with the Northumberland Diverse People Coalition, an organization that advocates for and supports initiatives that enhance diversity and inclusivity in the region.

Case Study: Perth Night Market - Perth, ON

Each September, the Town of Perth closes its historic downtown to vehicle traffic for a pedestrian-only one-night festival. There are typically 120+ vendors selling handmade goods, art, fashion, and unique finds while over 40 downtown brick-and-mortar shops stay open late for the event. The streets are filled with live music, DJs, street performers, and interactive magic shows. There are also usually family-friendly activities like face painting and petting zoos set up early in the evening.

Case Study: Steel Pan Concert - Port Hope, ON

In partnership with the Northumberland Diverse People Coalition, Port Hope supports an annual steelpan concert that transforms Memorial Park into a vibrant hub of Caribbean culture, featuring live steelbands, DJs, and diverse food vendors. The event is marketed broadly as a town-wide musical celebration rather than a targeted "newcomer event," which encourages long-time residents to set up lawn chairs and enjoy the evening alongside newcomers and BIPOC residents.

GLOBAL CINEMA SERIES

Cobourg's Movies Under the Stars programme takes place from early July to early September at Victoria Park, with five films projected on a large outdoor movie screen at dusk. Respondents to the online survey expressed interest in more outdoor movies held during the summer as well as into fall.

The Town should consider integrating a "Global Cinema" element to the screening schedule to address public demand while being culturally responsive and advancing municipal goals for newcomer inclusion. This could include international films celebrating specific cultures[73] as well as performances prior to the feature presentation: for example, the space in front of the screen could be used for a cultural performance like a Bollywood dance troupe or newcomer storytelling session. Similar to the Northumberland Night Market, the Town could partner with diverse entrepreneurs and food vendors to set up stalls; for example, a film set in India could be paired with a local vendor selling samosas and chai. As the weather cools in early fall, the global cinema series could transition indoors to a multi-purpose room at the Cobourg Community Centre (perhaps coinciding with the "Taste of Home" community kitchen series.

[73] Reading subtitles on outdoor screens can be challenging for some community members. Highly visual films should be selected over dialogue-driven stories, or films that are accessible in English or easily dubbed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PE1. Organize and promote social walking clubs on trails.

PE2. Schedule structured "Walk and Talk" hours on the indoor track during colder months.

PE3. Offer pop-up sports tournaments for teens on PA days with separate junior and senior brackets.

PE4. Pilot a monthly, youth-organized Teen Takeover night at the CCC to support autonomous recreation and community building.

PE5. Explore partnerships with existing youth agencies to launch an off-site excursion program for teens.

PE6. Adopt and promote simultaneous scheduling of adult fitness classes with youth activities to reduce childcare barriers for parents.

PE7. Introduce evening Social Sports Leagues for the working adult demographic.

PE8. Recruit residents to serve as instructors for single night/two-week arts, culture, and life skills workshops targeted to adults.

PE9. Partner with the Cobourg Public Library to launch an equipment lending library for self-directed recreation (e.g., volleyballs, frisbees).

PE10. Approach local organizations, service clubs, and business to sponsor or supply equipment for the lending library.

PE11. Explore creating park crawls that guide participants to different parks in town under a common theme.

PE12. Consider developing a “welcome to winter” program for newcomers with free or subsidized beginner clinics.

PE13. Explore the feasibility of a Nordic wellness hot-cold contrast therapy program at the Victoria Park Campground.

PE14. Host a monthly culinary exchange with newcomers and local cultural organizations.

PE15. Consider a dedicated event in support of inclusion and diversity such as a Northumberland Night Market, tape-ball cricket game, or global cinema series.

5.0 SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

5.1 Introduction

This discussion addresses approaches to delivering parks and recreation services to the community to support successful implementation of the Master Plan's recommendations in each of the foregoing service areas. Assessments and recommendations are presented under the following main topic headings:

- Municipal Organization for Service Delivery
- Volunteers
- Municipal Levels of Service
- Partnerships and Agreements
- Financing Service Provision
- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Service Planning and Evaluation

5.2 Municipal Organization

Role of the Municipality

The Town of Cobourg operates as an indirect service provider by:

- providing parks and facilities for general community recreation either for self-directed activity or supervised activities such as public skating
- hiring staff to manage and coordinate the use of these spaces by volunteer groups and individuals that deliver programs and services

The YMCA and the Town have distinct but complementary roles in service provision. YMCA staff, operating out of its facility in Cobourg,provide services that the Town does not offer (e.g., aquatics, fitness). The Town operates the CCC and other municipally owned facilities that provide the community with indoor and outdoor spaces for residents and organized community-based groups to use for recreation (e.g., ice sports, baseball, soccer, etc.)

Figures 5.1-5.5 on the following pages outline the staffing structure of Community Services, which is responsible for delivering parks and recreation services. There are four (4) managers that report to the Director in each of the following areas: Parks; Culture, Tourism and Events; Recreation; Facilities. Each Manager is responsible for a range of staff positions and associated tasks within their respective sections.

Interest in municipal assistance among user groups emerged in a number of areas (see section 5.3). Given its role in facilitating program and service provision, the Town should provide dedicated staff support to volunteer user groups - specifically for promotion, funding, communications, and liaison work - either by expanding existing roles or hiring specialists.

Section 5.6 includes discussion on expanding efforts in revenue generation. A position dedicated to marketing and revenue generation is likely warranted to provide the focus needed to maximize opportunities and results, and the specialized nature of the field.

The Town Operational Plan (KPMG, 2025) indicated the need to hire a new Asset Management Coordinator and a new Manager, Infrastructure and Major Capital (p.6). While these positions may not sit within Community Services, it is expected that parks and recreation assets and projects would be part of their portfolios.

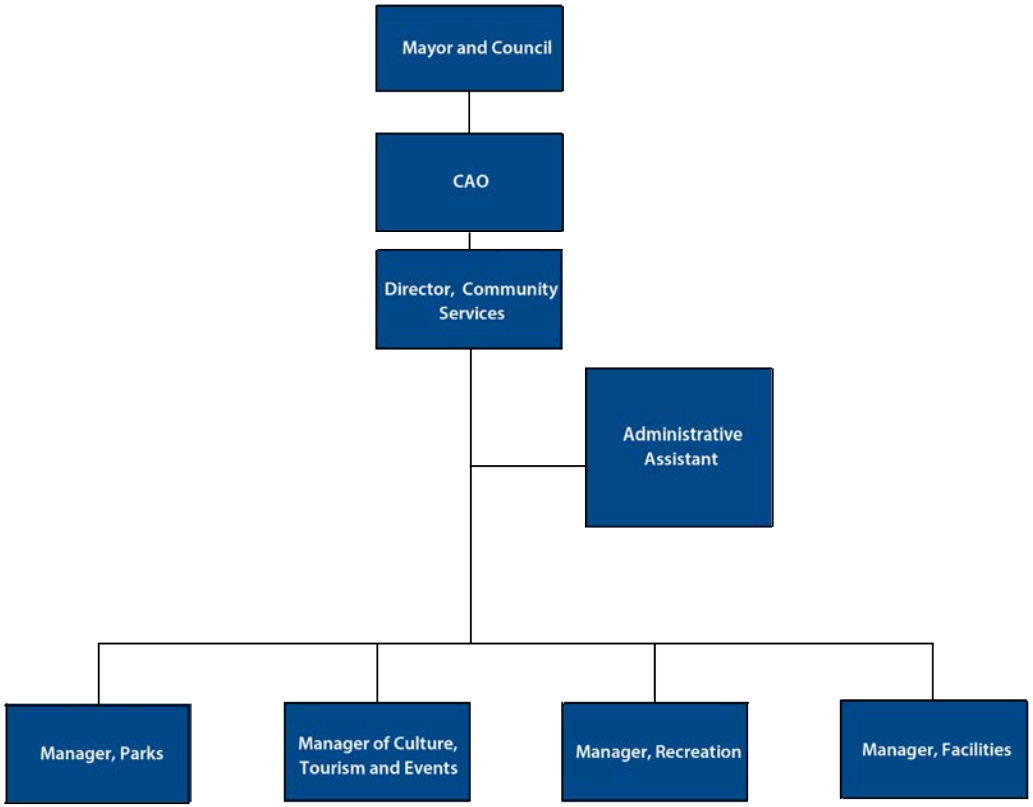

Figure 5.1: Department of Community Services - Senior Leadership Staffing Structure

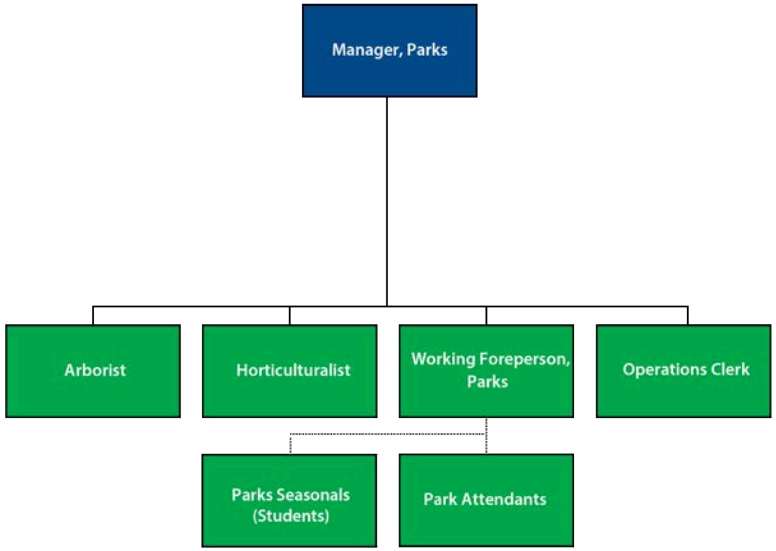

Figure 5.2: Department of Community Services - Parks Staffing Structure

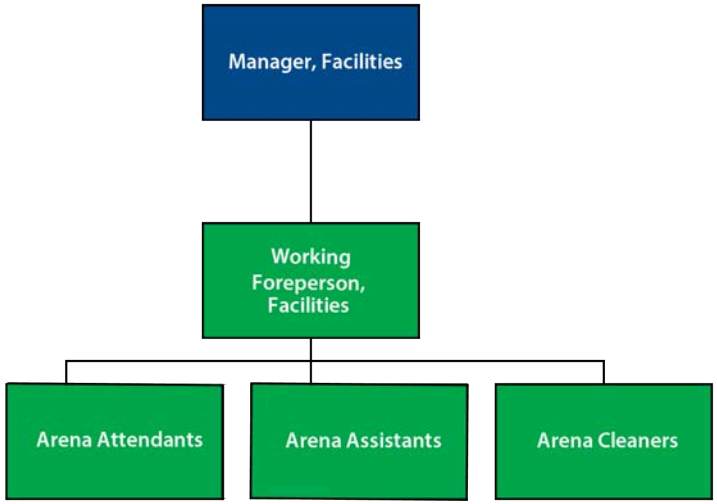

Figure 5.3: Department of Community Services - Facilities Staffing Structure

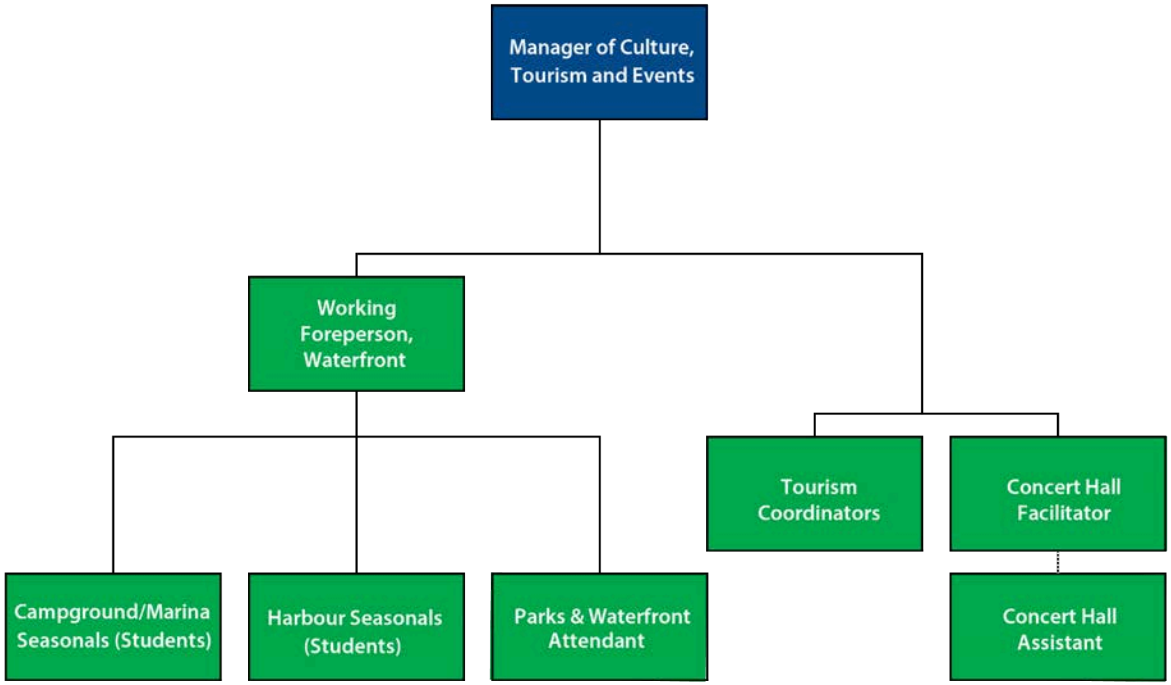

Figure 5.4: Department of Community Services - Culture, Tourism & Events Staffing Structure

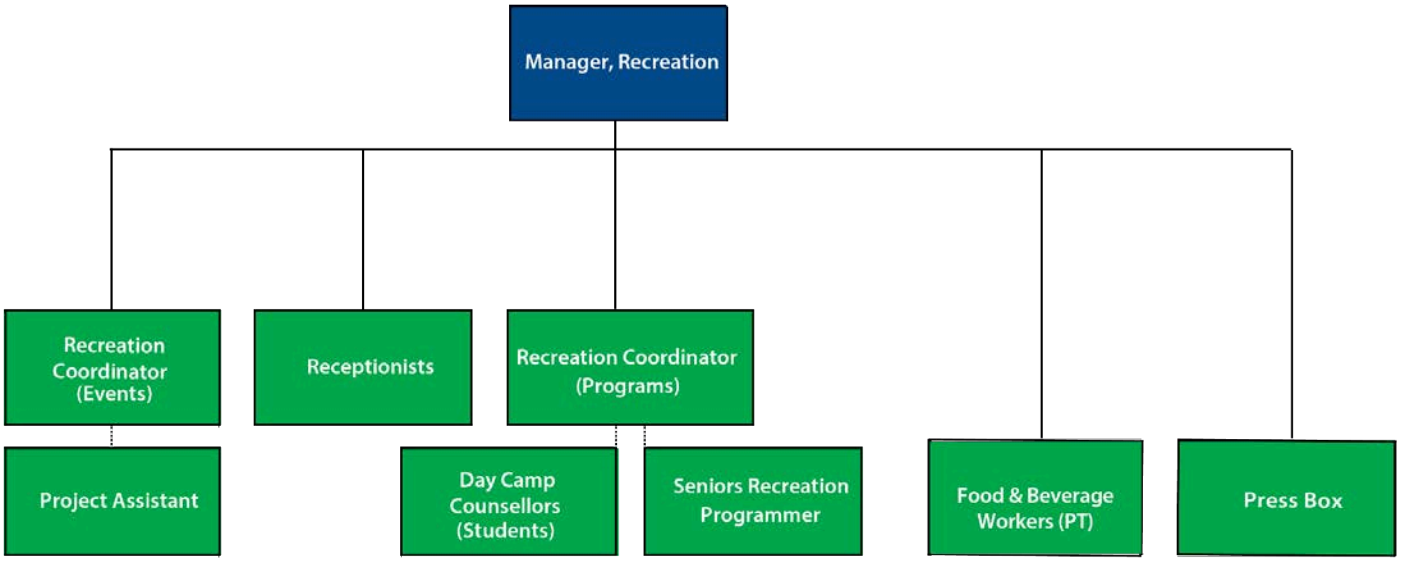

Figure 5.5: Department of Community Services - Recreation Staffing Structure

Committees of Council

There are no parks and recreation standing committees of Council. The Town struck an ad hoc Task Force for the purposes of contribution to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan's preparation. The mandate of the Task Force is to "support and advise the Town of Cobourg in the comprehensive update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, ensuring that the full range of municipal parks - including natural areas, waterfront parks, recreation spaces, and green infrastructure - are addressed with environmental, cultural, accessibility, and community-focused consideration." It comprises ten (10) members, including nine (9) public and one (1) non-voting Council members. Its work is supported by two (2) staff liaisons. The Task Force will remain in place for the duration of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update process. The Task Force will be dissolved after presentation of final recommendations and Council's receipt of the final plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD1. Provide dedicated staff to support volunteer user groups by expanding roles or hiring specialists.

SD2. Institute a staff position exclusively responsible for marketing and revenue generation.

5.3 Volunteers

Parks and Recreation Volunteers in Cobourg

In an indirect approach to service delivery, community volunteers are integral to implementing sports and recreation programs and special events. The Town's website lists over 50 community-based organizations involved in providing programs and service in the area of parks, recreation, arts, culture and leisure, all of which are run by volunteers.

Enhanced Support to Volunteers

A key role for the Town is supporting community-based volunteer organizations to provide programs. As shown in Figure 5.6, the largest proportion of Cobourg organizations (44% or 14 groups) reported interest in additional municipal assistance, while 28% (9 groups) opposed and an equal proportion were unsure in this regard. The areas of assistance identified by the groups are shown in Table 5.1 in order of frequency.

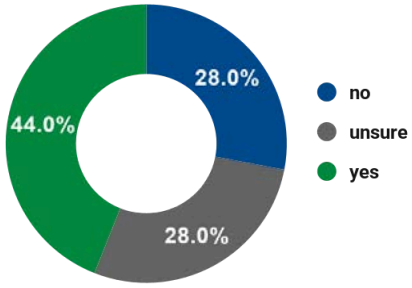

Figure 5.6: Additional Municipal Assistance Needed

A quarter of respondents (25% of groups) expressed interest in digital advertising and promotion, followed by 21% each reporting assistance with funding applications, communicating with the municipality and/or better facility scheduling.

Table 5.1: Interest in Additional Municipal Assistance

Area of Support/Assistance	# of groups	% of 24 total groups[74]
Digital advertising and promotion	6	25.0%
Better facility scheduling	5	20.8%
Assistance with funding applications	5	20.8%
Communicating with the municipality	5	20.8%
Fundraising	4	16.7%
Facilitating partnerships with other service providers	4	16.7%
Volunteer recruitment, training, or recognition	4	16.7%
Print advertising and promotion	3	12.5%
Insurance (e.g., securing, cost)	2	8.3%
Making program(s)/event(s) more inclusive	2	8.3%
Accessing facilities in neighbourhood communities	2	8.3%

[74] Includes one waterfront group reporting one of the listed options

In the comments section at the end of the survey, a number of groups added to these points and noted interest in help with financing aspects of service provision including sustainable and diversified funding with partnerships directed to this end, cost reductions to use facilities, project-specific funding/grants, programs/services affordability for the whole community, and increasing awareness of their group and its services (i.e., marketing).

Better facility scheduling, as noted in the table, may be tied to other comments such as facility availability, and groups' reported need for more time on diamonds, fields and ice. Nine (9) groups noted 'facilities in Cobourg are not available to rent when needed' as one of the reasons they travel to other communities to access time at facilities. To what extent this means availability alone or availability at preferred times is unknown. At the same time, the facility needs assessment indicates that, with the possible exception of ice time, there is considerable time available if currently unused time on weekends is integrated into regular scheduling.

The Town should consider issuing an open invitation to all volunteer groups operating in Cobourg to attend a forum(s) to explore this topic collectively. The object of this work would be ascertaining the extent of need across all volunteer providers, to better understand the specific needs for more support, and how the Town could respond.

Depending on the outcomes of this work, the Town may find it useful to develop a Community Group Affiliation Policy (see volunteer policies below) to support equity and consistency in assistance that is appropriate for the municipality to provide and within its capacity to deliver. Although this type of policy may not

be required now, service development during the term of the Plan may benefit from such a directive.

Volunteer Support Policies

MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY GRANTS (2023)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and consistent distribution of public funds to support
to qualify community organizations that:

- extend or complement the community services provided by the municipality, deemed to be in the best interests of the inhabitants of the Town of Cobourg.
- are seen to be of significant value to a wide segment of the citizens of Cobourg.
- benefit the community by assisting the arts, culture, and social well-being of the community and its citizens.

The types of grants available include one-time assistance for a start-up or short-term community project (excluding capital projects); annual operating grants; in-kind contributions of municipal assets or resources, and one-time or first-time special events pursuant to a formal event application, a recurring community event as per Council's determination, and permitted discounted parking.

The policy outlines the principles for its application, funding eligibility and ineligibility, the review and award process, the budget allocation to awarded organizations, and the recipient's obligations to submit a report on the outcomes of the project and financial verification.

The policy has been in place for two years and should be reviewed and evaluated at the five-year point (or sooner if required) to ensure it is meeting the Town's objectives.

COMMUNITY GROUP AFFILIATION

A Community Group Affiliation Policy describes the services available from the municipality to registered (affiliated) community groups in providing their program and services, in relation to the capacity of the municipality to provide them. Although not-for-profit community groups or organizations must be registered to receive municipal assistance, registration does not guarantee support. A standard, typically annual or every second year, registration/application process for eligible groups interested in municipal assistance "affiliates" them with the municipality and establishes a formal, consistent process for reviewing requests and monitoring policy effectiveness. Municipal staff review applications and make recommendations to Council for approval. The support provided is typically in-kind, with any major funding provided through a separate mechanism. In Cobourg, this would be the annual Municipal Community Grants Program.

Criteria for applicant groups to be eligible for affiliation, often stipulate that the organization:

- is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization that provides and supports leisure activities for municipal residents
- operates under the authority of a volunteer board or executive committee, composed of not less than five members and elects these members through a democratic process

- exists for the benefit of the community and provides services that are available to all residents of the municipality
- has existed in the community for a specified period of time (e.g., minimum one year)
- can carry out its objectives and financial obligations
- holds an annual general meeting
- meets criteria to measure the merit of the group's programs/ services (e.g., does not duplicate existing programs/ services, fosters physical activity/healthy lifestyles, etc.)
- reports to the municipality on a regular basis
- has a minimum of a stipulated percentage of its membership/registrants who are residents of the municipality
- adheres to the Ontario Human Rights Code and makes membership available to all municipal residents without restriction or if membership restrictions are warranted (e.g., based on skill, age, etc.) the organization must demonstrate that municipal residents have priority in becoming members.

While requiring a majority of members to be municipal residents has been a standard, measurable criterion in the past, it is becoming less useful as organizations become more regionally serving and so more likely to comprise membership from municipalities in the broader area. The potential for variation in membership composition by place of residence may require a further differentiation in the policy that links available support to the proportionate size of municipal residents. For some groups, a majority of community residents might be an appropriate criteria. In other cases, Cobourg membership comprising the largest proportion may be a more reasonable measure for eligibility.

The benefits of municipal affiliation could include:

- reduced rates for Town facilities and municipal sign advertising
- assistance in securing liability insurance, sourcing potential grants, and/or completing applications for non-municipal grant programs (e.g., Ontario Trillium Foundation; private sector, etc.)
- advanced seasonal and event bookings in Town facilities
- limited free use of meeting rooms each year
- delivering programs and services that align with municipal goals/objectives in, for example, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- help from Town staff who will act in an advisory capacity
- marketing and promotion of distribution of approved print and digital promotional materials
- help connecting with other community organizations and government programs
- assistance with volunteer recruitment and recognition
- assistance with program planning, registration, fees processing, evaluation, etc.
- municipal sponsorship of volunteer development training programs common to all organizations (e.g., preparing grant applications, inclusive programming, fundraising strategies, etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD3. Work with volunteer organizations to clarify support requirements in service development and provision in relation to the Town's capacity to respond.

SD4. Develop a Community Group Affiliation Policy to clarify the range of in-kind support services available

to volunteer groups and what they must do to be eligible to be, and remain, affiliated.

SD5. Review and evaluate the Municipal Community Grants policy at five years from its adoption to ensure it is meeting the Town's objectives.

5.4 Levels of Service

Ongoing Maintenance and Operations

AI was used to gather general information and summarize findings on service levels for grass diamonds and playing fields in Ontario as of May 2026. Application in practice differs by municipality and may also vary for irrigated and non-irrigated fields. Discussion on maintenance of general parkland is found in section 2.2.

L1 (Level 1) grass maintenance for municipal sports fields represents a high-intensity, "premium" care program, often reserved for elite, premier, or heavily used athletic surfaces. These programs are designed to maintain high-quality turf, maximize playability, and ensure safety throughout the season.

L2 (Level 2) grass maintenance on municipal sports fields generally refers to a "mid-level" standard, designed for active community use, such as local league soccer or baseball, rather than high-intensity premium venues.

The following are specified at each facility service level, and may vary by municipality within parameters of proven practices, and may differ in some respects for irrigated and non-irrigated fields:

- maintenance standards:
  - mowing frequency
  - mowing height
  - trimming
  - aeration and cultivation
  - fertilization and nutrient management
  - overseeding
  - weed control
  - watering (irrigation)
  - infield surface management

- operations standards:
  - safety and playability are assigned priority and may determine field closures
  - equipment (e.g., sharp mower blades) prevents damage to grass
  - field closure management
  - waste management (of trimmings)

Table 5.2 is a hypothetical summary of levels of service that could be assigned to facility classifications, for grass turf ball diamonds and rectangular fields. Appendix G contains an example of a detailed policy on ball diamonds from Owen Sound.

In Cobourg, diamonds are largely clay and chip/dust surfaces, so levels of service would need to be revised accordingly. AI was used to gather information on clay diamonds.

Service levels for municipal clay ball diamonds are generally classified as Premier/AAA, Community/AA, A, B, or

Neighbourhood/C, which directs the frequency of grooming, grass cutting, and infield maintenance. Premier/AAA diamonds are often lit, irrigated and suitable for high-level competitive play. AA/A/B diamonds support high to moderate use fields by leagues and for tournaments, and C diamonds accommodate moderate to low use for house league or casual play.

Table 5.2: Example of Diamond and Field Classifications and Levels of Service

Classification	Level of Service	
	Ball Diamond	Rectangular Field
A+	lights, dragged and lined once per day, L1 grass maintenance	lights, lined every two weeks, L1 grass maintenance
A	dragged and lined once per day, L1 grass maintenance	lined every two weeks, L1 grass maintenance
B	dragged once a week, no lining, L1 grass maintenance	lined up to three times per season, L2 grass maintenance
C	dragged up to three times per season, L1 or L2 grass maintenance	

Key maintenance standards for clay diamonds include:

- Infield Grooming: High-use fields are often dragged daily (or 5 days/week) while lower-tier fields may be groomed 1-3 times per week.
- Lip Maintenance: Edging and removing grass buildup on the edge of the clay (the "lip") is done periodically, with some municipalities targeting 5-7 repairs per year to prevent water retention and unsafe conditions.
- Raking & Leveling: Baselines and infield-to-outfield transitions are raked regularly to remove irregular grades and prevent puddling.
- Clay Top-up: Infield clay is added to high-traffic areas (pitcher's mound, batter's box, baselines) to maintain safe levels.
- Grass Cutting: Turf surrounding the infield is commonly mowed twice a week to a height of approximately 6.35cm (2.5 inches).
- Line Painting: Outfield lines are often repainted weekly to maintain visibility.
- Routine Maintenance: Daily or weekly tasks often include cleaning debris, dragging, and leveling the pitching rubber

Operation Standards include:

- Rain Out Protocol: Fields are closed when visual puddles exist, the surface is saturated, or foot traffic causes significant sinking.
- User Maintenance: In some cases, user groups are responsible for dragging and grooming (e.g., between games of a doubleheader) or cleaning up trash.
- Staff Training: Proper maintenance involves specialized training for staff on mound construction and infield skin maintenance, often facilitated by local suppliers.

In developing this program, each of the municipality's fields occupies a class and is maintained and operated according to the standards of its classification. The names and location of diamonds and fields by class, and the rental fees/length of rental

period (e.g., 2-hour single diamond/field use; daily diamond/field tournament use) for each class of facility for different uses (e.g., adult game or tournament, minor game or tournament) can be published on the municipality's website to provide comprehensive, current information to potential users.

The Town will be preparing a turf care management plan, which will align with the maintenance and operations component of the field/diamond classification categories. It will outline consistent standards of care for turf by type.

Managing Demand for Access to Facilities

The Town is currently developing a sports field allocation policy to ensure an equitable process in allocating time on facilities across user groups. Allocation policies are particularly useful to distribute available time when demand is high for access to the same fields and time periods. This policy will dovetail with those related to levels of service.

Capital Investment

This topic relates to how the municipality views its mandate in providing recreation facilities.

An approach to controlling costs can be documented in policy that covers recreation facilities in general. It should clarify what is considered the basic facility service level the Town is able and willing to provide and, in relation to this, what types of upgrades or enhancements to the basic service is considered a 'special project' and so warrant a pre-determined funding split between organized users and the municipality. The definition of a special or enhancement project would be based on various criteria depending on the facility and its typical uses.

A 'basic' Premier/AAA diamond, for example, may be lit and irrigated but not developed to the extent required to accommodate high-level competition. Any investment beyond the basic facility would require confirmation that there is a market for higher level competition, the enhancements that would be needed, and the proponent groups can raise its share of the funds to make the required upgrades. In other cases, it may be more appropriate to consider the balance of facility use between organized users and the general public. If, for example, courts are allocated to exclusive use by tennis or pickleball clubs for a portion of available time, enhancements or upgrades for club use would warrant a shared investment.

The ongoing maintenance costs of an 'beyond basic' facility may need to be reflected in higher rental fees or in agreements that require user groups that benefit from the enhancements to be responsible for ongoing maintenance costs and minor capital expenditures.

The classifications that apply in Cobourg's will depend on the types of facilities the municipality chooses to deem basic (i.e., those that will best serve community-wide interests).

Storage Policy

Secure storage for equipment and supplies is often an issue for both municipalities and volunteer community groups. It is important, therefore, to ensure available space is being used effectively. The following protocols are suggestions for managing the distribution and use of storage for program providers.

Charging users for renting storage space is practiced by some municipalities. Charging fees is less about generating revenue than managing and encouraging more efficient use of available space. Fees charged should be set at a level directed to sustaining optimal use of a finite amount of storage space. The following protocols should be considered when developing a policy:

- No person, unless authorized by the Community Service shall place, install or erect any temporary or permanent storage structure on any Town property.
- Temporary storage in Town parks and buildings may be authorized by permit for short-term events/uses. Community Services will authorize the specified dates, duration, location and size of authorized storage spaces.
- Only groups that provide organized community program(s) and/or league(s) that operate using Town facilities or parks on a regular basis may be considered for long-term storage within storage facilities or spaces within buildings.
- Only designated storage containers or spaces within buildings shall be used for storage. The Town will remove and dispose of material or equipment found stored in other areas, after notifying the owner and allowing two weeks for removal.
- Authorized storage within facilities or structures in parks shall be subject to applicable fees, and will be charged, via a rental agreement, of the required duration.
- Groups are responsible for the contents stored and applicable insurance coverage.
- It is the responsibility of the user to remove all material and equipment from the storage area or structure, within one week of expiry of the allotted period, after which the Town will remove and dispose of any items remaining.

Food Services

Section 3.3 on facility improvements notes the strong interest in food services being provided at various recreation facilities more often. The Town provides food services via several methods:

- There is a three-year contract to a vendor for food trucks at the waterfront, which also allows other food vendors to be on site during special events.
- The canteen inside the CCC is staffed part time and is considered an opportunity for Cobourg youth to find employment.
- The canteen on the CCC Campus grounds is currently being operated by user groups that are permitted to do so during tournaments.

The Town is considering the possibility of resuming operations of the outdoor canteen, which would include municipal staffing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD6. Develop a classification-based policy and standard operating procedures for the ongoing maintenance and operations of ball diamonds and rectangular fields.

SD7. Develop a turf management plan to support facility service level objectives.

SD8. Continue working on a sports field allocation policy to ensure equitable access to ball diamonds and rectangular fields among organized users.

SD9. Develop policy to distinguish between standard recreation services funded by the Town and 'special project' upgrades to be funded by user groups.

SD10. Develop a policy on storage at Town parks and facilities to optimize the use of limited space and to better manage the allocation and tenure of available storage.

SD11. Continue to explore options to increase food services in municipal recreation spaces.

5.5 Partnerships & Agreements

Existing Agreements

The Town has several current agreements with community organizations for use of municipal facilities and spaces. Some examples include:

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND THE COBOURG LAWN BOWLING CLUB (JULY 2025)

The MOU clarifies the relationship between the Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club (CLBC) and the Town, and their respective responsibilities. Key points include:

- The Town is not responsible for any the CLBC operations, assets, or service delivery
- The priorities of the CLBC shall be determined by the CLBC Board, informed by their articles of incorporation and strategic plans and decisions.
- The CLBC commits to making reasonable efforts to align its strategic plans with the Town's strategic plans.
- The CLBC shall submit annual activity/performance reports to Council summarizing their volunteer hours, events, and a general summary of their contribution to Cobourg's culture and society.
- The MOU's term is ten (10) years, running until December 31, 2034, with an optional ten-year extension, and review will occur on an 'as-needed' basis.

COMMERCIAL LEASE AMENDMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND THE WEST NORTHUMBERLAND CURLING CLUB (MAY 2025)

This amendment to the original lease authorizes the Curling Club to use the Jack Heenan Arena for activities in addition to curling (i.e., parties, rehearsals/performances, community group meetings, kitchen/lounge use, cornhole), and that all funds raised from these activities will be used by the Club in meeting its responsibilities for the ongoing maintenance of the Arena.

LEASE RENEWAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND THE COBOURG YACHT CLUB (SEPTEMBER 2024)

This agreement extends the original lease for a further term ending May 31, 2027 with an optional ten-year to extension to May 31, 2047. The lease covers use of the 10,000 sq.ft. main building and the 17,000 sq.ft. compound, which are maintained by the Cobourg Yacht Club.

LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND THE COBOURG FARMERS MARKET (APRIL 2022)

This agreement authorizes the Market to lease the Rotary Harbourfront Park, and the Victoria Hall Square Parking Lot on Saturdays between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. from Saturday, May 7, 2022, through to Saturday, December 23, 2022.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GANARASKA REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY AND THE TOWN OF COBOURG (January 1, 1991)

This agreement licences the Town of Cobourg to use Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority lands to "develop and maintain...them...for park and recreational purposes, and for no other purpose except with the approval in writing of the Authority and shalÌ comply with alI governmental requirements, all at its cost" (p. 1). The agreement covers the land on which the Town built and operates four unlit, youth rectangular fields. Its original term was twenty (20) years, with an automatic renewal for another twenty (20) years unless there is notification by either party to terminate it. The current term runs to December 31, 2030, at which time it will be up for renewal.

LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND THE NORTHUMBERLAND SOCCER CLUB (MARCH 2006)

This agreement provides the Northumberland Soccer Club (NSC)[75] with exclusive use of municipal fields for a period of 45 years, from March 2006 through February 2051, at a rental rate of $2.00 per year. It covers ten (10) fields at the CCC. The lease was largely the result of the Club's contribution of approximately $400,000 between 1992 and 2010 to the capital costs of field provision.

The lease specifies the responsibilities of the Town and the NSC related to use, repair and ongoing maintenance of the fields, and prohibits sub-leasing to other users without the Town's permission in each instance.

The agreement with the Northumberland Soccer Club precludes municipal control over the majority of its inventory of rectangular fields, which is not ideal.

[75] The agreement names the Cobourg Soccer Club as the tenant, which is now the Northumberland Soccer Club.

Future Agreements

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF COBOURG AND NORTHUMBERLAND YMCA

Should the YMCA locate on the CCC campus (see section 3.5), the Town and the YMCA will enter an agreement or agreements that will reflect the complexity of the facility's location on municipal land, and each party's responsibilities with respect to capital costs, operations, and capital improvements.

RECIPROCAL USE AGREEMENTS WITH SCHOOL BOARDS

User groups reported using school gyms and/or fields in the area, and some named the schools used: C.R. Gummow Elementary school, St. Anthony's Elementary School, Ganaraska Trail Elementary school, Port Hope High School, Clarke High School, and St. Mary's Secondary School. While an important reason provided for using schools was that municipal facilities are not available when required, it was also noted by some that school facilities are less expensive to rent than Town spaces.

Reciprocal use agreements between municipalities and school boards outline the exchange of each party's access to the other's facilities. Typically, the Boards are able to use municipal facilities, and the municipality and volunteer groups are granted access to school spaces via the agreement. Specific facilities and times of use exchange are covered in the agreement (e.g., arena ice time for students during academic hours in exchange for gymnasium time for the community during non-academic hours). The exchange can be no-fee or a formula-based rate to cover cost differentials where they occur. The potential to enter reciprocal use agreements with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District and the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington (PVNC) Catholic District School Boards should be investigated.

Partnerships and Collaborations

The Town's interest in controlling the costs of service provision will likely require greater reliance on collaborations with current, and potentially new, partners. The municipality's position on these arrangements could be documented in policy that can provide guidance on the circumstances that prompt agreements with non-municipal agencies/organizations in service delivery, and the purpose, scope and terms of the Town's involvement. It should cover items related to:

- why and for what purposes the municipality is interested in, and encourages these, relationships
- the types of relationships it envisions
- the need to align with the Town's image, values and standards, and its goals, objectives, policies and by-laws
- rationale for non-municipal involvement in service areas that are best provided by the commercial/private sector
- a framework that describes the types of collaborations/partnerships to be considered and aligns these with the agreements that will support them (e.g., program/service contracts, license or lease, reciprocal use, corporate sponsorship / advertising, joint facility development and/ or joint operating/use agreement), the relevant agencies/ organizations (e.g., other public, not-for-profit, small commercial, corporate), and other relevant factors (e.g., binding/non-binding agreements)

- requisite compliances (e.g., statutes, by-laws, standards, no conflict of interest, etc.)
- non-eligible potential partners (e.g., businesses in tobacco manufacturing or sales; alcoholic beverages in services directed to those under legal drinking age; weapons production, distribution, sales, etc.)

Although successful collaborations must be mutually beneficial to all parties involved, the Town must consider community benefit as a priority in entering these arrangements and supporting them through formal agreements.

CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

The Town of Cobourg's climate action initiatives are contained in its Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (Intelligent Futures, 2023). It responds to Council's 2019 resolution to "declare a climate emergency and accelerate its transition to a more sustainable future, as defined by net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions" (p. 1). It addresses goals in five areas: built environment, natural environment, economy, society and culture, and governance. In a section that discusses roles and responsibilities, the ICSP refers to several key areas in which the Town engages with non-municipal parties to achieve community-wide sustainability actions (p. 24):

Capacity Builder: The Town of Cobourg improves the ability of other organizations to deliver and partner on shared actions.

Convener: The Town of Cobourg brings people and organizations together to explore, strategize and work through opportunities and challenges.

Coordinator: The Town of Cobourg supports various individuals and organizations to align and coordinate initiatives, programs, funding, etc.

This approach is supported by initiatives being undertaken in communities across the country. A recent article in the National Observer reported on Canadian municipal partnerships in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.[76] It noted that because "approximately half of GHG emissions fall under the control or influence of local governments in Canada," actions to achieve a recommended global target of net-zero emissions by 2050 will rest largely with municipalities.

Research by the Municipal Net-Zero Action Research Partnership (N-ZAP) on cross-sector partnerships has produced two guidance documents, which may be useful to the Town in the ongoing implementation of its climate action plans. As in other areas of municipal responsibility where collective action has proved valuable, collaborative efforts with other organizations in the public, not-for-profit and business sectors can improve progress on local targets to reduce GHG to broader benefit.

"Community Partnerships for Equitable Local Climate Action" provides evidence-based examples of 12 partnerships comprising 55 partners from across Canada. The research suggests that municipalities engaged in cross-sector partnerships report higher GHG emission reductions. The guide provides direction on how to establish these partnerships, and to engage groups that are at greater risk to the impacts of climate change but are often left out of the discussions.

[76] Cloutier, M. How partnerships help Canadian municipalities reduce their emissions. National Observer. May 20, 2026.

An associated guide was developed to provide local governments with key steps in budgeting climate action initiatives, with examples of approaches used by various Canadian municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD12. Ensure all collaborations between the municipality and non-municipal organizations/agencies are supported by the appropriate formal agreements.

SD13. Investigate the possibility of entering reciprocal use agreement with the public and Catholic School Boards for access to school facilities for community recreation in exchange for school use of municipal recreation facilities during academic hours.

SD14. Develop a policy on the Town's role and approach to collaborations and partnerships with non-municipal agencies and organizations in recreation service provision.

5.6 Financing Service Provision

User Fees and Contributions

User groups were asked about their willingness to contribute to providing facilities that meet their organization's needs via several methods. Among 32 groups that responded, the statement that elicited the strongest agreement was helping with fundraising for facility development (63% or 20 groups). Forty-one percent (13 groups) indicated disagreement or uncertainty about contributing to capital costs to develop new facilities. Similar proportions (34% or 11) reported agreement or disagreement with paying higher user fees to improve facility quality. Table 5.3 shows user groups' level of agreement with statements on their potential financial support for facility provision.

Table 5.3: User Group Level of Agreement with Options to Support Facility Provision

Area of Support/Assistance	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
We would start paying/would pay higher user fees to improve facility quality.	34.4% (11 of 32 groups)	34.4% (11 of 32 groups)	31.2% (10 of 32 groups)
We would contribute to the capital costs to develop new facilities.	18.7% (6 of 32 groups)	40.6% (13 of 32 groups)	40.6% (13 of 32 groups)
We would help with fundraising activities for facility development.	62.5% (20 of 32 groups)	15.6% (5 of 32 groups)	21.9% (7 of 32 groups)

Several groups provided additional commentary on this question with respect to raising fees:

- "Most of our members are seniors on a fixed income.Raising membership prices is a very serious concern."
- "Fields are not equitably distributed between various sporting codes."
- "If funding is required for upgrade/maintenance we expect membership and, therefore, community programming to plummet back to previous years when no programming existed."

Other comments in the survey indicate user group interest in more financial support from the municipality in the form of, for example, discounted rates for high ice use, which runs counter to initiatives to increase fees.

The resident surveys also asked a question about contributing to the development/improvement of municipal recreation facilities or services in Cobourg through a variety of methods. The results are shown in Table 5.4.

In both surveys, donating to a capital campaign/fundraising and volunteering to organize or assist with fundraising effort were the two most frequently selected methods: 34% and 32% of telephone respondents, respectively, and 24% and 27% of online survey participants, respectively. Just under one quarter of respondents to each survey indicated support for user fee increases, at 24% among telephone and 23% in the online survey, respectively.

Collectively, these findings suggest that there are several potential options to pursue in growing direct contributions to the cost of providing services, including increases in user fees. A framework for setting and incrementally increasing user fees over time can be developed in consultation with the community in a formal pricing study. The Town can work internally to determine and promote other areas in which residents can make in-kind contributions to service provision. The following section provides examples of other ways the community can support services financially.

Table 5.4: Resident Interest in Contributing to Service Improvements

Area of Contribution	Telephone Survey (N=300)		Online Survey (N=466)	
	#	%	#	%
Donating money to a capital campaign/fundraising effort	102	34%	110	24%
Volunteering to organize/assist with fundraising efforts	96	32%	128	27%
Paying higher user fees	72	24%	107	23%
Paying higher property taxes	25	8%	31	7%
Volunteering to write applications for grants or seek out donors/sponsors	72	24%	40	9%
Joining a volunteer stewardship group (e.g., Friends of 'x' Park)	48	16%	91	20%
None of the above	68	23%	94	20%
Not sure	13	4%	108	23%

Revenue Generation

The facilities assessment in section 3.0 proposes optimizing use of both indoor and outdoor facilities to preclude the need to invest in expanding supply prematurely. Optimizing community use of both indoor and outdoor facilities will also increase revenue to offset more of the costs of providing existing assets. Examples of ways to increase revenue are summarized below. Some municipalities allocate staff to expanding efforts in revenue generation.

ADVERTISING

The Town currently provides advertising opportunities at both the arenas, based on a 3-year contract and ranging from $618.00 to $1,854 for rink board ads to in-ice logos. This program could be extended to other facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields, and tennis or pickleball courts.

NAMING RIGHTS

A number of the Town's facilities have been supported by local businesses and other groups through naming rights. As the Master Plan is implemented, other opportunities to secure naming rights may emerge and can be identified for targeted campaigns.

PROGRAM/EVENT SPONSORSHIP

These are typically one-time contributions by area businesses to a program (e.g., public skate, swim) or an event, with opportunities to contribute advertised or requests made directly, and sponsors names publicized. Cobourg's annual signature Sandcastle Festival event is strongly promoted and offers 12 opportunities for sponsorship. The Battle of the Badges Charity Hockey Game provides 6 sponsorship opportunities. Other events that are open for sponsorship include Christmas Magic, the Santa Clause Parade and Movie Under the Stars and all are promoted under the banner 'Experience Cobourg.'

The Town sometimes hosts free or sponsored public skating, which are typically special events and not part of its regular weekly ice schedule. In 2025, for example, the West Northumberland Girls Hockey Association sponsored a free public skate honouring the memory of hockey player Grace Bowen and celebrating Sick Kids Hospital's 150th birthday. In addition to such special events, the Town should investigate opportunities to schedule a regular weekly or bi-weekly sponsored public skate if a local business could be found to fund its provision.

AMENITIES

Commemorative amenities programs are designed to encourage residents to commemorate people or events through donations that 'purchase' parks-based amenities, some of which are eligible for charitable tax receipts. Amenities can include park benches, trees (hardwood and conifers), bike racks, picnic tables, sun shelters, sports equipment (basketball standards, tennis nets, soccer goals, etc.), memorial plaques, etc. Ideally, the selection of amenities is to be guided by master plans for the parks or other locations where they are requested for installation. Amenity donations, however, do not have to be commemorative. Interest in donating a playground, for example, could come from an individual or group with a desire to contribute to the development of a park in their community. While the amenities are donated at no cost to the municipality, their ongoing maintenance will be part of the Town's operating budget.

DONATIONS

Monetary donations can be directed to identified categories such as recreation services in general (i.e., most needed), specific waterfront areas, and trails, in program areas that require development or a fund to cover no-fee access to those who need it; a tax receipt can be issued for donations exceeding a specified minimum amount (e.g., $20).

FACILITY RENTALS

Last Minute

Although typically directed to ice and indoor artificial turf, a last minute facility rental program can also be applied to other indoor spaces. A policy typically requires scheduling from 24 to 72 hours in advance of intended use, can be transacted online and offers from a 25% to 40% discount of regular rental fees. The programs primarily serve not-for-profit, community-based or non-commercial users. Conditions often include full payment at time of booking with no refund option; proof of mandatory liability insurance at check-in, and the inability to use a last minute booking to replace an existing regular booking.

The Town is interested in transitioning to a comprehensive online facility booking system in stages, which will enable last minute rentals to be integrated into the system once it is operational.

Non-prime Time

As noted in section 3.0, there is ample non-prime time available Monday to Friday, which could be rented to generate additional revenue. An initial focus on business sector rentals for company tournaments, etc. provides a target market to pursue.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD15. Prepare a formal pricing study to determine the framework for setting and incrementally increasing user fees.

SD16. Consider methods such as stewardship groups, fundraising campaigns, grants research, etc. in which residents can provide in-kind contributions to service provision.

SD17. Expand revenue generating initiatives to include additional advertising opportunities and naming rights, and regular program sponsorships.

SD18. Create an umbrella program for donations to support parks and recreation services provision including commemorative amenities, facility funding, and cash.

SD19. Increase facility revenue generation through marketing non-prime time to the business sector and last minute rentals.

5.7 Accessibility & Inclusion

The Town prepared an EDI Strategy for implementation between 2022 and 2026. The following outlines the Strategy phases (p.9).

Phase One: Internal Strengthening of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- To create more cultural competence in leadership and our staff to engage meaningfully with our residents, we first need to work on some internal practices. This will allow our staff to have the tools, resources, and

understanding they need to engage meaningfully with our residents and their diverse and unique needs.

Phase Two: Audit and Assess Goods, Programs, Services, and Information

- To ensure that we are taking diverse needs into consideration, we will work to audit and assess the way we create, advertise, adjust, and assess the success of goods, programs, services, and information. This will coincide with the implementation of the EDI Lens creation to help our Staff assess their work using checklists and self-reflection.

Phase Three: Collaborate and Build More Inclusive Practices for the Town of Cobourg

- This Phase will also include more awareness, understanding, and collaboration with external partners such as our urban Indigenous population as well as Alderville First Nations.

Inclusion Policy

Parks and Recreation Ontario's audit of the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada[77] references several policy areas for consideration by municipalities. These encompass the need to address concerns regarding affordability, diversity, and inclusion. While attention may be paid in practice to some or all these concerns, interest in documented policy is becoming more apparent. It can also build on/ dovetail with legislated requirements of the AODA and support the relevant Committee of Council. The Town, therefore, should consider developing one that fits the needs and aspirations of the community.

Inclusion policy can be corporate-wide or specific to recreation services. The latter focuses on the topics addressed in the Framework:

- affordable access
- enabling people of all ages to participate in recreation
- actively engaging persons of diverse and racialized backgrounds in developing, leading, and evaluating recreation and park activities
- developing and monitoring policies, programs, and practices to facilitate full participation of women and girls in all types of recreation
- ensuring non-discrimination of, and providing a welcoming and safe environment for, people of all sexual orientations and sexual identities
- working with persons with disabilities to facilitate their full participation in recreation across all settings by removing physical and emotional barriers

Inclusion can be narrowly or broadly defined. In formulating relevant policy, therefore, the meaning of 'inclusion' and what it will encompass is important to clarify as it represents a promise to the community. It should, therefore, be tied to the capacity of the municipality to realize stated goals and objectives and specify where this will require assistance from other public or not-for-profit agencies and community groups to achieve.

A recent publication by Active Abilities Canada provides direction to municipalities in disability inclusion in Recreation and Physical

[77] https://www.cpra.ca/framework. The 2015 Framework has since been updated (March 2024). Upon inquiry, CPRA noted that the audit remains applicable to the current version of the Framework.

Activity.[78] The purpose of the guide is to provide "how-to strategies for staff at all levels in municipal recreation departments to make sure persons with disabilities are included in their programs and activities." It looks at a range of areas of practice including programming, the built environment, partnerships, and evaluation. It includes important definitions on the meanings of relevant words and phrases, which are replicated here:

- **Inclusion** means making sure everyone can take part in activities, programs, events, or roles to the best of their ability.
- **Accessibility** is the foundation that allows everyone to be included. Inclusion helps create meaningful experiences. When these experiences happen regularly, they lead to high-quality participation.
- **Inclusive physical activity:** Physical activity programs where persons with and without disabilities participate together in the same activities.
- **Adapted physical activity:** Sports, games, exercise, or physical activity programs that are modified so persons with disabilities can fully participate.
- **Integrated physical activity:** Physical activity programs or settings where persons with disabilities are brought into a program that has been designed for persons without disabilities.

[78] Active Abilities Canada and Canadian Disability Participation Project 2.0 (2025, December 3). Municipal Guide for Disability Inclusion in Recreation and Physical Activity. Active Abilities Canada. Canada. https://activeabilities.ca/municipal-guide/

Rzone Policy

The purpose of an Rzone Policy is to create a positive, safe, enjoyable and supportive environment for all users of municipal recreation services. It is based on zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour and it promotes appropriate behaviour through Respect for self, Respect for others and Responsibility for your actions. The City of St. Catharines Rzone Policy provides an example of one such initiative.[79]

The policy sets out:

- expectations for behaviour of all users (staff, volunteers, participants, spectators, visitors, coaches, parents, etc.) in all municipal recreation settings: programs, facilities and properties owned or operated by the municipality.
- protocols to address inappropriate behaviour or violence in all municipal recreation settings.

Components of the policy include:

- definitions of inappropriate behaviour, vandalism or violence
- expectations that major permitted users of municipal facilities will adopt policies that align with the municipality's Rzone policies, and the role of staff in assisting with compliance and in supporting any sanctions imposed by the permitted user
- roles and responsibilities of municipal staff, major user group representative in acting in response to an incident

[79] https://stcatharines.civicweb.net/document/70598/!PRCS-RZONE.pdf?handle=8FC7999BAA9A45B590B D0E672843334A

- description of steps to be taken in four possible scenarios:
    - upon witnessing or suspecting physical violence
    - upon witnessing continued verbal abuse or activity
    - upon reported actions of physical violence by community group/representative or volunteer
    - upon reported actions of verbal abuse or activity by community group/representative or Volunteer
    - when police are to be contacted
- consequence(s) of individual(s)' non-compliance to the terms of the Rzone policy the depending on the severity of the offense could include permanent or temporary barring from recreation programs, facilities and properties; restitution in cases of vandalism; police reports
- an appeal process for individual(s) wanting to dispute imposed sanction(s)
- reporting protocols and procedures on incidences of inappropriate behaviour, vandalism or violence
- duty to report to municipal staff, police, etc. at the time of the incident and any required follow up on a resolution

The Town of Cobourg should consider developing an RZone Policy, particularly in view of the potential for it and an Inclusion Policy to support the goals and objectives of the EDI Strategy.

At the time of its adoption, the City of St. Catharines allocated $30,000 to promote and educate the community about its new Policy. Cobourg should consider a similar initiative, which could be directed to education on Inclusion, Respect and Responsibility.

Inclusive Multi-sport Court

These facilities provide users of all abilities to participate in both organized sport and casual play. They are designed for a variety of sports and allow accessible programming for all ages. Features include:

- adjustable basketball nets
- high-contrast four-square court and hopscotch play area
- contrasting colours to support visual impairment
- shaded double-wide benches for improved accessibility
- wheelchair-accessible seating and tables
- shaded accessible bleachers
- cushion-comfort Plus Laykold acrylic surfacing system
- court lighting

At 13,200 sq. ft. the Town of Uxbridge's facility is configured to enable users to play a variety of sports and para-sports (Figure 5.7) including pickleball, sitting volleyball, tennis, volleyball, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, ball hockey, badminton, and basketball.

Figure 5.7: Inclusive Multi-sport Court - Uxbridge, Ontario

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD20. Develop an inclusion policy.

SD21. Develop an RZone Policy.

SD22. Allocate a budget to promote and educate the community on both the Inclusion and the Rzone policies.

SD23. When planning new or renewing existing facilities, investigate opportunities to provide those that are designed to be inclusive.

5.8 Service Planning & Evaluation

The motivation for formal planning, monitoring and evaluation processes is to contribute to informed decision-making, direct investment in parks and recreation services based on 'needs' vs. 'wants' and ensure investment in needs is judicious and generates returns. Further, there is a requirement to both anticipate future needs and manage existing assets. Planning is essential to a rational and prioritized approach to required investment.

Computerized platforms can be used to collect much of the data needed to inform planning functions. The Town's recreation management software can be used to support this work. The key components of information collection and use in needs-based planning are summarized below under the following headings:

- Verify community service needs
- Monitor and evaluate use to determine the success of response
- Incorporate results in subsequent planning activities

The discussions include tasks that may already be conducted by the Town to show where they fit in relation to other activities. Although both facilities and program services are both tracked on a seasonal/annual basis, facility (infrastructure) planning is typically a longer-term endeavor than program planning, which is annual or even seasonal.

VERIFY COMMUNITY SERVICE NEEDS

Maintain a Single, Comprehensive Inventory

- Document and regularly update an inventory of all facilities and relevant information by type. Ideally, all facilities now or potentially available for community use in the Town should be included in a single, integrated database.
- Document and regularly update an inventory of all programs and relevant information by type. Ideally, all programs/services available either directly or indirectly through collaborations with the Town should be included.

Document Data on Use Related to Capacity

- Track actual hours of facility use in relation to capacity (within total prime and non-prime time hours, where applicable).[80] Include all uses by (i.e., practices, games, tournaments, etc.).

[80] Actual use is the same as scheduled use if all scheduled use occurs.

- Institute periodic, rotating checks on unscheduled facilities to document use at different times.
- Track program/service fill rates in instances with a capacity limit or simple counts of participants/users/attendees when there is no limit on capacity.
- Document registration/participant figures from volunteer organizations using municipal facilities.

Develop Indicators of Unmet Demand

- Document information on unmet demand for facilities, programs and services from organized users, online community engagement, resident inquiries/requests to the Town, periodic surveys, etc.

Recreation management software enables information collection on service use and trends in performance to inform the planning and evaluation process. The Town has software it uses for recreation services management functions. In expanding its planning and evaluation capacity, staff can develop a comprehensive menu of information requirements - based on needed indicators in all service areas.

MONITOR AND EVALUATE TO DETERMINE SUCCESS OF RESPONSE

Measure Service Performance Against Targets

- Using the tools noted above to gather feedback, evaluate success of individual facilities and programs/services on an ongoing basis with organized and casual users, program participants, and instructors, in relation to predetermined performance targets.

INCORPORATE RESULTS IN SUBSEQUENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Adjust Service Plans According to Evaluation Findings

- As a cyclical activity covering both short and long-term service provision, the findings on evaluation can be used to maintain alignment between the supply/delivery of services and community needs.

The results of this work will reveal patterns of use/participation over time, available facility/program capacity that is not being used, and measures of outstanding demand. The Town can determine if the response to unmet demand will be adding more facilities to supply or improving the performance of existing assets.

The results of the monitoring and evaluation will also inform annual planning and budgeting and can be used to update relevant components of the Plan. The extent that these measures can be used to project into the future will also assist in confirming longer-term facility requirements. At the same time, long-term projections must be subject to ongoing monitoring, verification and, if required, adjusted to reflect changing levels of participation and use. A sport or activity that shows high growth in participation today may level off or decline in future years and initially projected facility needs might require adjustment.

With respect to programs and related services, joint planning work with other non-municipal organizations, will reveal areas for change and the party with responsibility for this work will depend on the nature of verified need.

Engaging Other Service Providers

Joint service planning with other key providers in the community - the volunteer sport/recreation sector, library, schools, service clubs, etc. - should also occur on a regular basis or as needed, with a view to integrating the efforts of all in developing facilities, programs and services. The municipality can take a leadership role in facilitating joint planning activities.

The number of sessions per year in which all participants should engage can be determined collectively (e.g., one per year, one per season, as required, etc.). Ideally, sessions should be scheduled to align with both service and budget planning but this might not be possible with multiple participants.

Smaller group planning sessions, therefore, by specific service area may be more reasonable in terms of accommodating other organizations, with the Town feeding this information into internal planning activities. Engagement in major project planning/development or one-time events can be more narrowly defined in terms of the parties involved and the number of 'sessions' needed. Periodic joint sessions may also be needed to address new/unforeseen topics of relevance to the parties involved. A process that works for the Town and other providers, therefore, should be developed and implemented in the short-term and can grow over time, as needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

SD24. Enhance the existing recreation management database to accurately assess community needs, evaluate program success, and shape all future recreation planning.

SD25. Take the lead in developing and implementing regularly occurring joint services planning sessions with other key non-municipal providers in Cobourg.

SD26. Conduct project, program or service specific planning sessions with other providers, as required.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Important Considerations

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan contains a total of 175 recommendations for Cobourg's current and future parks and recreation needs over a 10-year term. The recommendations were developed by an independent consulting team and are not rigid rules or requirements. The Plan is intended to be a strategic guiding document, providing Council and staff with a high-level framework to prioritize investments, manage assets, and develop policies over to 2036. While it identifies broad priorities and spatial needs, the specific execution of these recommendations (including individual review, detailed design, community consultation, and exact timelines) will occur through future, project-specific planning and the Town's annual budget process.

The Plan and its recommendations are based on the current (2025) context and anticipated change. Long-term projections should be regularly reviewed and updated as participation levels change. For example, a sport that is growing quickly today might slow down or decline in the future, meaning the original plans for new facilities may need to be scaled back.

The Plan is intended to be a living document. Therefore, in monitoring and evaluating the implementation strategy outlined below in section 6.2, the Town should track the progress of recommendations from initiation to completion in annual work plans and budgets. Tracking should include any changes to implementation resulting from an evolving context.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

IM1. Use the ongoing results of planning and evaluation activities to update the Master Plan on an annual basis in conjunction with the budgeting process.

IM2. Conduct a comprehensive review of the Master Plan halfway through its term in 2031.

6.2 Implementation Schedule

This final section of the Plan contains a suggested implementation schedule over the 10-year term to 2036. This includes timelines (Short Term: Years 0-2, Medium Term: Years 3-5, Long Term: Years 6-10) and capital costs (if applicable) estimated by the consulting team as of 2026. The proposed roll-out of the recommendations is based on the information available at the time of the Plan's development and considers staff resources, flexibility, dependencies and efficiencies.

Many recommendations are operational in nature: this means their implementation would be undertaken by staff as part of their day-to-day activities. The remaining capital recommendations, and those to undertake supplementary studies/plans, require discrete budget allocations for execution. This includes both improvements/repairs to existing facilities, as well as the design and construction of new facilities and amenities. The capital cost estimates for park amenities and facilities include design fees, initial project start-up permits, insurance, protection fencing, construction signage, contingency, and a cash allowance. The estimates are based on the consulting team's ongoing work with current market tender prices and material suppliers.

Costs for some recommendations are yet to be determined. These have been noted in the forecast and would be in addition to the numbers provided in the Plan. Another factor to consider is cost premiums/fluctuations due to inflation and implications of the current economic environment. It may take longer to complete the identified activities.

Table 6.1 below provides a summary of the Master Plan's recommendations and costs by service area and time frame. On the following pages, Table 6.2 lists each of the recommendations and its corresponding suggested implementation timeframe and 2026 cost estimates provided by the consulting team.

Table 6.1: Capital Cost Summary of Master Plan Implementation by Service Area & Time Frame

Service Area	# of Recos	Short Term (Years 0-2)	Medium Term (Years 3-5)	Long Term (Years 6-10)	Total Capital Cost Estimate
Parks & Open Spaces	88	$1,040,500	$2,550,000	$3,030,000	$6,620,500
Recreation Facilities	44	$351,500	$105,000	TBD	$456,500+
Programs & Events	15	-	-	-	-
Service Delivery	26	$70,000	-	-	$70,000
Implementation	2	-	$50,000	-	$50,000
TOTAL	**175**	**$1,462,000**	**$2,705,000**	**$3,030,000+**	**$7,197,000**

Table 6.2: Master Plan Recommendations with Suggested Implementation Schedule

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
PARKS & OPEN SPACES				
Parkland Provision & Classification	PO1	Adopt the revised parkland classification system outlined in this Plan as the framework for future parks planning and design.	Short Term	
	PO2	Merge the following Connector Parks into their adjacent park systems to improve clarity: -Morley Cane Walkway to merge with Morley Cane Park -Tillson-Conservation Lands Connection and Frei-Conservation Lands Connection to merge with Cobourg Creek Conservation Area -Donegan Park Connection to merge with Donegan Park	Short Term	
	PO3	Reclassify the following parks to better reflect their existing conditions and use: -Cobourg Creek Conservation Land from Connector to Nature -King St W Parklands from Connector to Nature	Short Term	
	PO4	Remove Connector Parks as a park type and incorporate them into the Active Transportation and Trails classification.	Short Term	
	PO5	Use the Plan's design directions to guide the planning and redevelopment of Cobourg's parks.	Ongoing	
Parkland Distribution	PO6	As the Tannery District is developed, secure at least 0.8 ha of municipal parkland to address the neighbourhood's park service gap.	Medium/ Long Term	
	PO7	Explore opportunities to enhance connections in Central Cobourg, including improved pedestrian and cycling routes that support access between surrounding parks, the downtown, and the waterfront.	Ongoing	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Parkland Distribution	PO8	Integrate green infrastructure and low-impact development within industrial or transitional areas where parkland may not be needed.	Ongoing	
	PO9	Explore opportunities to acquire underutilized green space north (adjacent to the hospital parking lot) and south (adjacent to the SWM pond and Children's Aid) of DePalma Drive for future parkland. Where acquisition is not feasible, coordinate with Northumberland Hills Hospital and other landowners to explore shared-use agreements to support public access to parkland and open space.	Short Term	
	PO10	Explore opportunities to integrate parkland within or nearby the proposed nursing home/long-term care development in northwest Cobourg.	Medium Term	
	PO11	Integrate parkland provision and open space into future planning initiatives, including the Cobourg West Business Park Secondary Plan, using this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide distribution and design.	Ongoing	
	PO12	Prioritize low-impact development (LID) strategies within industrial and commercial lands to support environmental performance.	Ongoing	
	PO13	Use this Parks and Recreation Master Plan to inform parkland provision within the Cobourg East Community Secondary Plan.	Ongoing	
	PO14	Integrate a connected trail and open space network through Cobourg East to support accessibility and connectivity.	Ongoing	
	PO15	Coordinate park planning with future institutional uses (e.g., schools, community facilities).	Ongoing	
	PO16	Ensure perpetual public access to parkland provided at 390 King St. E.	Ongoing	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Parkland Distribution	PO17	Consider working with the school board to formalize shared use of C.R. Gummow Public School lands to expand reliable public access outside school hours.	Short Term	
Parkland Levels of Service	PO18	To maintain current service levels, secure approximately 49.5 ha of new parkland over the next 10 years.	Ongoing	
	PO19	Prioritize conveyance of physical, developable parkland for large-scale greenfields.	Ongoing	
	PO20	Accept cash-in-lieu of parkland for smaller infill projects and/or sites located in neighbourhoods already well-served by parkland.	Ongoing	
	PO21	Update the Official Plan to reflect policies for privately-owned public spaces.	Medium Term	
	PO22	Update the Urban and Landscape Design Guidelines to reflect considerations relating to privately-owned public spaces.	Medium Term	
	PO23	Continue using development charges to their full capacity to support parks and recreation services.	Ongoing	
Accessibility	PO24	Strive for universal design by integrating accessibility upgrades within existing open spaces.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[81]
	PO25	Ensure all new parks, trails, and open spaces are accessible and comply with affiliated AODA regulations.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	
Public Health	PO26	Enhance lighting in Victoria Park to improve visibility.	Short Term	$7,500

[81] Allocate approximately $15,000 for new accessible seating, signage, etc. in one location. Possible funding opportunity: RBC Barrier Busting Grants Program

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Public Health	PO27	Provide additional clear signage guiding residents on how to report community health hazards.	Short Term	$15,000
	PO28	Continue to prioritize safe, inclusive public parks through core operations, service delivery, and lower-tier jurisdictional responsibilities.	Ongoing	
Drinking Water	PO29	Add drinking water fountains and/or bottle fillers to remaining Regional Parks, where possible.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[82]
	PO30	Work with developers to include a drinking water amenity/connection in future parks, where possible.	Ongoing	
Shade & Shelter	PO31	Include shade structures in new park designs to support community health and safety in all weather conditions.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[83]
	PO32	Maintain an ongoing tree planting program to replace aging trees in existing parks, where possible.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[84]
	PO33	Ensure developers include sufficient tree planting and protection in all new park and open space parcels.	Ongoing	
Washroom Access	PO34	Pilot extending the seasonal washroom availability in Sinclair Park and/or Delanty Park.	Short Term	

[82] Allocate approx. $10,000 per unit

[83] Allocate $20,000 for a small 9.2 m^2 size (covers 1 bench), $50,000 for a medium 18.5$m^2$ size (covers 1 picnic table), and $200,000 for a large 111$m^2$ size (covers 8 picnic tables)

[84] Allocate approximately $3,200 for trees in one location ($800/tree x 4 trees per park). Possible funding opportunities include Growing Canada's Community Canopies (Green Municipal Fund via Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Government of Canada), Edible Trees Community Tree Grant (Tree Canada), Jack Kimmel Grant (Canadian Tree Fund), and Treemendous Communities (Tree Canada)

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Washroom Access	PO35	Procure and install a winterized, high-durability, pre-fabricated washroom unit at Donegan Park.	Short Term	$300,000
	PO36	Evaluate the new washroom at Donegan Park and consider installing a similar facility along the waterfront to support year-round users.	Medium/ Long Term	
	PO37	Develop a digital map of public toilets for the municipal website.	Short Term	
	PO38	Where applicable, add signage in municipal parks and open spaces indicating the location and walking distance to nearby public washrooms.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[85]
Maintenance	PO39	Ensure all new park developments, expansions, or amenities undergo an operational impact assessment to budget for ongoing staffing, equipment, and lifecycle replacement costs before capital approval.	Ongoing	
	PO40	Provide a dedicated municipal liaison to support and safely coordinate volunteer-led 'Friends Of' groups in local park upkeep and ecological care.	Ongoing	
Ecology & Environment	PO41	Seek opportunities to integrate LID practices in park planning and design, where appropriate.	Ongoing	
	PO42	Utilize LID-lite strategies in parks where site or budget constraints limit large scale LID implementation.	Ongoing	
	PO43	Utilize provincial guidelines and manuals to inform implementation of LID and stormwater management strategies.	Ongoing	
	PO44	Develop a policy to support environmentally focused park and waterfront development and management.	Short Term	

[85] Allocate $5,000 per sign

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Ecology & Environment	PO45	Continue to pursue naturalization in parks and open spaces as per Action 11 in Cobourg's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.	Ongoing	
	PO46	Develop naturalization guidelines for public lands as per Action 11 in Cobourg's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.	Short Term	
	PO47	Consider pursuing partnerships with the GRCA, Trent University Environmental and Life Sciences, Indigenous communities, and local volunteers for expertise and engagement.	Ongoing	
	PO48	Prioritize proactive shoreline stabilization through naturalization strategies, implementing hard armouring (e.g., rip rap, breakwaters) in high risk erosion and flood areas.	Ongoing	
	PO49	Protect shoreline ecology by expanding vegetated buffers, restoring degraded areas with native plant species, limiting disturbance (e.g., public access), and developing strategies to ensure no net loss of habitat.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	
	PO50	Plan for climate and shoreline change by integrating hazard mapping into shoreline development and planning decisions and establishing appropriate setback standards.	Ongoing	
	PO51	Continue coordination with experienced regulatory agencies, including the GRCA and MNRF.	Ongoing	
Trails	PO52	Develop an Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan.	Short Term	$60,000
	PO53	Develop a coordinated Wayfinding and Signage Strategy for trails that integrates with parks and POPS signage, where possible.	Short Term	[86]
Trails	PO54	Integrate trail planning into growth and development areas by requiring trail connections through approvals, securing corridors early	Ongoing	

[86] Allocate $50,000 if an external consultant is procured

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
		(e.g., easements and parkland dedication), and aligning with Secondary Plans such as the Cobourg East Secondary Plan.		
	PO55	Implement the recommended Trail Classification Hierarchy when developing new trails and updating existing trails until the Active Transportation Master Plan is complete.	Short Term	
Playgrounds	PO56	Consider a phasing plan to update all playgrounds to meet current Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and CSA Z614-20 requirements for play equipment and surfacing.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	
	PO57	Introduce a new playground at Pine Tree Park (847 McMurdo Drive) to serve the New Amherst area's high concentration of children.	Short Term	$300,000[87]
	PO58	Continue to explore options to provide a playground for the Pebble Beach-Cedar Shores-Monk's Cove neighbourhood to address the 800 m service gap and support the high concentration of children in this area.	Ongoing	
	PO59	Explore retrofitting the large existing playground at Victoria Park into a fully inclusive, destination playground, incorporating features such as rubber surfacing, a range of play types, perimeter containment, and increased ground-level play elements.	Long Term	$2,500,000[88]
	PO60	Include a new playground as part of the Tannery District development.	Long Term	$300,000[89]

[87] For a typical minor playground less than 500m^2. Includes equipment, engineered wood fibre surfacing, installation and labour, site preparation and drainage, and consulting and design fees

[88] Large playground that includes rubber surfacing, range of play equipment and challenge levels, perimeter containment, installation, site preparation, and consulting and design fees

[89] For a typical minor playground less than 500m^2. Includes equipment, engineered wood fibre surfacing, installation and labour, site preparation and drainage, and consulting and design fees

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Playgrounds	PO61	Plan for a minimum of three evenly distributed playgrounds within the Cobourg East Secondary Plan area to support future population growth.	Ongoing	
Outdoor Play Amenities	PO62	Replace the existing splash pad in Victoria Park.	Medium Term	$1,500,000[90]
	PO63	Add water features to at least three parks distributed across Cobourg (i.e., west, central, east).	Short Term	$60,000[91]
	PO64	Engage the skater community in fundraising and design development to replace the existing skate park with a larger concrete amenity that includes features for multiple ability levels and uses.	Medium Term	$750,000[92]
	PO65	Install five additional basketball courts across town over the 10-year term of this Plan.	Short Term	$240,000[93]
	PO66	Explore the feasibility of promoting paid use of the underutilized East and West beach volleyball courts given the available prime time.	Short Term	
	PO67	Continue to monitor usage of the disc golf course during the term of this Plan.	Ongoing	
	PO68	Work with developers to include creative outdoor fitness equipment in new park parcels.	Ongoing	

[90] Accounts for existing splash pad footprint of approx.180 m^2 and includes removal, new concrete surface, new splash pad components, shade structure, seating, planting, and consulting and design fees

[91] Shaded misting structures could include large shade sails, canopies, arches, hexagons. Allocate additional $60,000 for medium term and $60,000 for long term

[92] Includes design, construction, minor landscaping and amenities. Does not include lighting, seating, bike parking

[93] Allocate $120,000 per full-size basketball court (15m x 29m). Includes site prep & grading, granular base, concrete slab, acrylic surfacing, hoop system, line painting. Allocate additional $240,000 in medium term for two more courts and $120,000 in long term for additional court

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Outdoor Play Amenities	PO69	Consider including creative outdoor fitness equipment in playground upgrades.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[94]
	PO70	Continue to monitor usage of the outdoor rink during the term of this Plan.	Ongoing	
Gathering & Event Spaces	PO71	Design future Regional and Town parks with amenities to accommodate events and activities such as parking, water and electric site servicing, where possible.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	
Gardens	PO72	Add interpretive signage to locations with ecology gardens to communicate the purpose and benefits of ecological gardening practices.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	[95]
	PO73	Work with Cobourg Ecology Garden volunteers to improve its safety and comfort by activating the space through increased programming and events, monitoring use, and incorporating CPTED strategies (e.g., lighting) where appropriate.	Ongoing as part of park budgets	
	PO74	Monitor interest in establishing new community gardens and support residents in their development.	Ongoing	
	PO75	Consider developing a sensory garden alongside the recommended inclusive playground.	Long Term	$50,000[96]
Water Access Points	PO76	Install automated usage sensors at the public boat launch and dock to determine peak use over the next 1-2 seasons.	Short Term	$8,000

[94] Allocate $30,000 for a station with 5-8 units, surfacing, and signage.

[95] Allocate $5,000 per sign

[96] Includes clearing and grubbing, plants, and materials

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Water Access Points	PO77	Evaluate usage data to explore the feasibility of installing an additional public boat launch in Cobourg.	Ongoing	
	PO78	Update all Town data, mapping, GIS file, signage, and communications materials to reflect the park's new name as Waterfront Nature Park.	Short Term	
	PO79	Establish clearly defined boundaries for Waterfront Nature Park through further engagement with Town staff, Council, advocacy groups, and the public.	Short/ Medium Term	
Off-Leash Dog Parks	PO80	Initiate a conversation with the dog park's property owner to determine the likelihood of severing the land for municipal ownership or engaging in a land swap.	Short Term	
	PO81	Establish at least one permanent off-leash park on municipal parkland.	Ongoing	
	PO82	Engage developers in discussions for a potential new off-leash park/trail in Cobourg East.	Ongoing	
Cobourg Campground	PO83	Consider reducing the number of RV/trailer sites along the most premium waterfront edge and explore integrating alternative overnight uses during the off-season as an additional municipal revenue stream (e.g., yurts, glamping pods).	Short/ Medium Term	
	PO84	Develop a dedicated, year-round Tourism Strategy.	Short Term	$50,000
	PO85	Consider partnering with mobile sauna operators to offer hot-cold experiences in the winter.	Ongoing	
117 Durham St	PO86	Sever the southern 1.36-acre portion of the lands to ensure the identified environmentally sensitive area remains preserved as municipally-owned open space, and reclassify the severed portion as a Nature Park under this Plan's parks classification system.	Short Term	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
117 Durham St	PO87	Rezone at least 1 acre of the remaining 2.8 acres as a Park Area and appropriately classify the space in accordance with the parkland classification system.	Short Term	
	PO88	Conduct additional public consultation with the community to engage constructively on the future use of these lands.	Short Term	
RECREATION FACILITIES				
Ice Pads	RF1	Based on confirming the intention to continue meeting regional needs for indoor ice, plan to add one pad within the next ten years.	Long Term	TBD
	RF2	Prepare a detailed study of the market demand for a regional-serving facility, the capital and operating costs to provide it, and the potential to partner with other area municipalities for its construction and/or ongoing operation.	Medium Term	$75,000[97]
	RF3	Review existing ice allocations to improve distribution to all users in terms of needed increases, scheduled times, and seasonally.	Short Term	
	RF4	Increase promotion directed to the private/commercial sector to build non-prime time ice use.	Ongoing	
Gymnasiums	RF5	Optimize the use levels of the CCC gymnasiums to accommodate demand generated by population growth during the term of the Master Plan for gym-based sports and recreation programs/activities.	Ongoing	
	RF6	Review existing gym allocations to improve distribution to all users in terms of needed increases and scheduled times.	Ongoing	
	RF7	Track participation in various gym activities to inform plans for an additional multi-use gymnasium to be provided after 2036.	Ongoing	

[97] May be less if regional market is not part of the study, as per RF1

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Gymnasiums	RF8	In designing future gymnasium space, consider specialty, user-specific requirements as upgrades or additions with fundraised contributions from potential user groups.	Long Term	TBD
Multi-purpose Space	RF9	No additional multi-purpose space will be needed during the term of the Master Plan due to population growth.		
	RF10	Investigate cost-benefit opportunities for renovations/reconfigurations that add functions and features to improve the use of existing spaces.	Ongoing	TBD[98]
	RF11	Increase use of the Grand Hall, as required, for suitable programs/activities.	Ongoing	
	RF12	Continue to direct requests that cannot be accommodated at the CCC or other Town owned multi-purpose spaces to community-based facilities belonging to not-for-profits.	Ongoing	
	RF13	Monitor the use of all municipally owned multi-purpose spaces to identify opportunities to optimize the use of those located elsewhere in the community.	Ongoing	
Curling Rink	RF14	Continue to support the Curling Club in maintaining its facility for programs and social activities..	Ongoing	
Arts Spaces	RF15	Continue to support community-based arts in Cobourg by implementing the recommendations of the 2019 Cultural Master Plan.	Ongoing	
Indoor Pool	RF16	Consider preparing a detailed feasibility study for a municipal indoor pool at the CCC if the YMCA proposal does not proceed.	Short Term	$100,000+
Indoor Artificial Turf	RF17	As part of a decision to provide an indoor artificial turf facility, consider the option to repurpose the Memorial Arena building.	Short Term	TBD

[98] Capital costs will depend on required renovations, and their timing

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Other Indoor Facilities	RF18	Limited demand for squash and racquetball facilities, along with the niche nature of these sports, does not support municipal provision of courts in Cobourg.	Short/ Medium Term	
Ball Diamonds	RF19	Formally define prime time on lit and unlit ball diamonds to include and specify both weeknight and weekend hours, and schedule accordingly.		Short Term
	RF20	Prepare a detailed revitalization strategy and master plan for Donegan Park.	Short Term	$100,000
	RF21	Work with ball diamond user groups to prioritize investment and optimize use of facilities.		Short Term
	RF22	Monitor and evaluate use on an ongoing basis to work towards aligning ball diamond supply with demand.	Ongoing	
Rectangular Fields	RF23	Formally designate all outdoor facilities intended for field sports as rectangular fields to facilitate multi-sport use of all fields through both definition and scheduling.	Ongoing	
	RF24	Formally define prime time on lit and unlit rectangular fields to include and specify both weeknight and weekend hours, and schedule accordingly.		Short Term
	RF25	Integrate all field scheduling and monitoring of prime time/non-prime time use into a Town operated tracking program.	Ongoing	
	RF26	Determine plans for future indoor facility development and its implications for maintaining an appropriate supply of rectangular fields.	Short/ Medium Term as per RF2 & RF16	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Rectangular Fields	RF27	Based on a Town decision to host local/regional tournaments, determine required design features and amenity requirements to include in capital improvement or field replacement plans.	Medium/ Long Term	TBD[99]
Racquet Courts	RF28	Designate Sinclair courts as pickleball courts for organized use and invest in required facility upgrades/improvements to this end.	Ongoing/ See RF32	
	RF29	Conduct a comprehensive monitoring program to verify use levels of the Coverdale courts during both organized and public use times and use the results to assess the potential to reallocate the distribution of hours between the two types of use.	Short/ Medium Term	
	RF30	Eliminate damaging uses of tennis court surfaces by providing a second hard surface for use by wheeled equipment or finding a secure locking method for the courts when not being used for tennis.		
	RF31	Resurface tennis and pickleball courts at Sinclair and Delanty Parks.	Short Term	$100,000
	RF32	After implementing warranted changes to allocations and scheduling, determine the need for an additional court at Coverdale.	Long Term	[100]
Lawn Bowling Green	RF33	Provide appropriate municipal support to the Lawn Bowling Club as an established volunteer community group that delivers recreation services to the community.	Ongoing	
Outdoor Pool	RF34	Consider preparing a design and cost estimate for a comprehensive revitalization of Centennial Pool.	Short Term	$50,000

[99] Capital costs will depend on required renovations, and their timing
[100] Allocate approximately $350,000 for a new tennis court in 10 years. Includes (de)mobilization, site preparation, clearing and grubbing, asphalt surface, line painting, 3m high fencing with gate, tennis net and posts, lighting, misc. amenities (seating, signage), consulting and design fees

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Outdoor Pool	RF35	Consult with the YMCA to identify strategies to increase revenue generation at the pool and/or reduce expenses to offset more of the operating deficit.	Short/ Medium Term	
	RF36	Introduce wristbands for drop-in pool users upon payment/entry to the pool to confirm attendance figures and monitor trends.	Short Term	$1,500[101]
Other Outdoor Facilities	RF37	Monitor trends in emerging recreational sports and, as demand warrants, respond to the need for facilities in consultation with user groups.	Ongoing	
	RF38	In cases where new facilities are required, investigate the feasibility of repurposing existing facilities before building new.	Ongoing	
Improvements	RF39	Consult with indoor and outdoor facility user groups to clarify specifics on requested capital improvements to existing facilities.	Short Term	
	RF40	Use consultation findings to inform the feasibility of needed/preferred improvements that emerge from consultations.	Medium/ Long Term	TBD
	RF41	Consider deferring required capital improvements to existing outdoor facilities at the CCC campus to align with Campus Plan decisions, including the need to relocate facilities if warranted.	Ongoing	
	RF42	Using consultation findings, identify capital improvements that can help optimize the use of existing outdoor facilities.	Medium/ Long Term	TBD
CCC Campus Planning	RF43	Update the CCC Campus Plan to reflect facility decisions for the site as they are confirmed for implementation.	Short Term	TBD
	RF44	Prepare a traffic and parking study for the CCC.	Medium Term	$30,000

[101] Cost depends on wristband system, which can vary between Tyvek colour-coded paper bands and Tyvek scannable barcode/QR code waterproof bands. For reusable silicone bands with RFID microchips, allocate $2-$4 per band and $1500 for RFID scanner at entrance

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
PROGRAMS & EVENTS				
New Opportunities for Recreation Activities	PE1	Organize and promote social walking clubs on trails.	Ongoing	
	PE2	Schedule structured "Walk and Talk" hours on the indoor track during colder months.	Short Term	
	PE3	Offer pop-up sports tournaments for teens on PA days with separate junior and senior brackets.	Short Term	
	PE4	Pilot a monthly, youth-organized Teen Takeover night at the CCC to support autonomous recreation and community building.	Short Term	
	PE5	Explore partnerships with existing youth agencies to launch an off-site excursion program for teens.	Medium Term	
	PE6	Adopt and promote simultaneous scheduling of adult fitness classes with youth activities to reduce childcare barriers for parents.	Ongoing	
	PE7	Introduce evening Social Sports Leagues for the working adult demographic.	Medium Term	
	PE8	Recruit residents to serve as instructors for single night/two-week arts, culture, and life skills workshops targeted to adults.	Short Term	
	PE9	Partner with the Cobourg Public Library to launch an equipment lending library for self-directed recreation (e.g., volleyballs, frisbees).	Short Term	
	PE10	Approach local organizations, service clubs, and business to sponsor or supply equipment for the lending library.	Short Term	
	PE11	Explore creating park crawls that guide participants to different parks in town under a common theme.	Short Term	
	PE12	Consider developing a “welcome to winter” program for newcomers with free or subsidized beginner clinics.	Medium Term	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
New Opportunities for Recreation Activities	PE13	Explore the feasibility of a Nordic wellness hot-cold contrast therapy program at the Victoria Park Campground.	Short Term	
	PE14	Host a monthly culinary exchange with newcomers and local cultural organizations.	Medium Term	
	PE15	Consider a dedicated event in support of inclusion and diversity such as a Northumberland Night Market, tape-ball cricket game, or global cinema series.	Medium Term	
SERVICE DELIVERY				
Municipal Organization	SD1	Provide dedicated staff to support volunteer user groups by expanding roles or hiring specialists.	Ongoing	
	SD2	Institute a staff position exclusively responsible for marketing and revenue generation.	Ongoing	
Volunteers	SD3	Work with volunteer organizations to clarify support requirements in service development and provision in relation to the Town's capacity to respond.	Short Term	
	SD4	Develop a Community Group Affiliation Policy to clarify the range of in-kind support services available to volunteer groups and what they must do to be eligible to be, and remain, affiliated.	Short Term	
	SD5	Review and evaluate the Municipal Community Grants policy at five years from its adoption to ensure it is meeting the Town's objectives.	Medium Term	
Levels of Service	SD6	Develop a classification-based policy and standard operating procedures for the ongoing maintenance and operations of ball diamonds and rectangular fields.	Short Term	
	SD7	Develop a turf management plan to support facility service level objectives.	Short Term	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Levels of Service	SD8	Continue working on a sports field allocation policy to ensure equitable access to ball diamonds and rectangular fields among organized users.	Short Term	
	SD9	Develop policy to distinguish between standard recreation services funded by the Town and 'special project' upgrades to be funded by user groups.	Short Term	
	SD10	Develop a policy on storage at Town parks and facilities to optimize the use of limited space and to better manage the allocation and tenure of available storage.	Short Term	
	SD11	Continue to explore options to increase food services in municipal recreation spaces.	Ongoing	
Partnerships & Agreements	SD12	Ensure all collaborations between the municipality and non-municipal organizations/agencies are supported by the appropriate formal agreements.	Ongoing	
	SD13	Investigate the possibility of entering reciprocal use agreement with the public and Catholic School Boards for access to school facilities for community recreation in exchange for school use of municipal recreation facilities during academic hours.	Short Term	
	SD14	Develop a policy on the Town's role and approach to collaborations and partnerships with non-municipal agencies and organizations in recreation service provision.	Short Term	
Financing Service Provision	SD15	Prepare a formal pricing study to determine the framework for setting and incrementally increasing user fees.	Short Term	$45,000
	SD16	Consider methods such as stewardship groups, fundraising campaigns, grants research, etc. in which residents can provide in-kind contributions to service provision.	Ongoing	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
Financing Service Provision	SD17	Expand revenue generating initiatives to include additional advertising opportunities and naming rights, and regular program sponsorships.	Ongoing work of staff in SD2	
	SD18	Create an umbrella program for donations to support parks and recreation services provision including commemorative amenities, facility funding, and cash.	Ongoing work of staff in SD2	
	SD19	Increase facility revenue generation through marketing non-prime time to the business sector and last minute rentals.	Ongoing work of staff in SD2	
Accessibility & Inclusion	SD20	Develop an inclusion policy.	Short Term	
	SD21	Develop an RZone Policy.	Short Term	
	SD22	Allocate a budget to promote and educate the community on both the Inclusion and the Rzone policies.	Short Term	$25,000
	SD23	When planning new or renewing existing facilities, investigate opportunities to provide those that are designed to be inclusive.	Ongoing	
Service Planning & Evaluation	SD24	Enhance the existing recreation management database to accurately assess community needs, evaluate program success, and shape all future recreation planning.	Short Term	
	SD25	Take the lead in developing and implementing regularly occurring joint services planning sessions with other key non-municipal providers in Cobourg.	Ongoing	
	SD26	Conduct project, program or service specific planning sessions with other providers, as required.	Ongoing	

Service Area	#	Recommendation	Suggested Timeline	Capital Cost Estimate (if applicable) as of 2026
IMPLEMENTATION				
Implementation	IM1	Use the ongoing results of planning and evaluation activities to update the Master Plan on an annual basis in conjunction with the budgeting process.	Ongoing	
	IM2	Conduct a comprehensive review of the Master Plan halfway through its term in 2031.	Medium Term	$50,000

APPENDIX A: Consultation & Engagement Summary Report

APPENDIX B: User Group Survey Participants

The following parks and recreation user groups and stakeholders were sent an invitation to participate in a dedicated online survey for this Plan. Groups that are **bolded** completed the survey. Municipal staff followed up with non-respondents via email and phone calls.

- **Art Gallery of Northumberland**
- **Base Church**
- Canadian Tai Chi
- Cobourg Alliance Church
- Cobourg Collegiate Institute
- **Cobourg Garden Club**
- Cobourg Cougars
- **Cobourg Dragon Boat and Canoe Club**
- **Cobourg Ecology Garden**
- **Cobourg Jr. Angels**
- Cobourg Kodiaks Lacrosse
- **Cobourg Lawn Bowling Club**
- **Cobourg Legion Minor Softball**
- **Cobourg Pickleball Club**
- Cobourg Police Services
- **Cobourg Saxons Rugby**
- **Cobourg Yacht Club**
- Community Health Centres Northumberland
- Community Living & Respite Services
- **Coverdale Tennis Club**
- **F.U.N. Development**
- **Greg Jillings Memorial Basketball Tournament**
- HKNP
- Invado Volleyball
- **Kevin Burns - Tuesday Hockey Group**
- Lakeshore Minor Basketball Association
- My Broadcasting Corporation
- Muslim Community of Northumberland
- New Canadians Centre
- **Nicholas Cartlidge - Men's Soccer**
- **Northumberland Baseball Association**
- **Northumberland Breakers Volleyball Club**
- **Northumberland Challenger Baseball**
- Northumberland Electric Aviators
- **Northumberland Jacks Baseball**
- Northumberland Manufacturers Association
- Northumberland Minor Basketball
- **Northumberland Minor Hockey Association**
- Northumberland Minor Lacrosse Association
- **Northumberland Soccer Club**
- **Northumberland St. Pats Hockey**
- Ontario Hockey Association
- Ontario Junior Hockey League
- Ontario Volleyball Association
- Port Hope Figure Skating Club
- Port Hope High School
- **Puck It Development**
- **Quinte Regional AAA Minor Hockey Association**
- Rebound Child and Youth Services
- Rotary Club of Cobourg
- Scarborough Health Network
- **Short Mat Lawn Bowling Club**
- **Sinclair Tennis Club**
- **Soul Beach Volleyball**
- St Mary Secondary School
- **Studio 11 Dance Company**
- **Survivors Thrivers Dragon Boat Team**
- Viva Volleyball
- **West Northumberland Curling Club**
- **West Northumberland Wild Girls Hockey Association**
- Williams Academy

APPENDIX C: Online Survey Results

APPENDIX D: Telephone Results