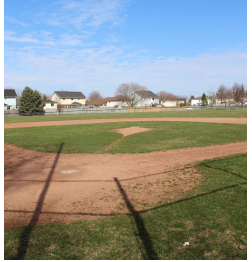



Cobourg
Ontario • Canada





Parks and Recreation Master Plan

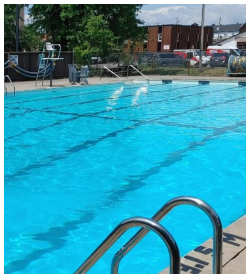
Town of Cobourg Council Meeting

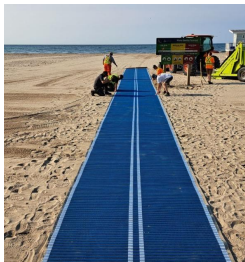


Madison Busby & Danielle Lenarcic Biss

thinc design

January 28, 2026



Agenda

1. **Project Overview**
    - What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?
    - Cobourg Currently vs. Cobourg Coming Up
    - Project Process
    - Background Research & Data Assembly
2. **Consultation Activities & Findings**
3. **Next Steps**

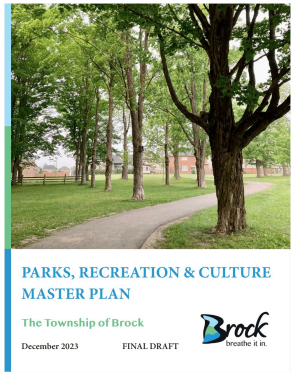
thinc.

mehak, kelly & associates.

oraclepoll RESEARCH

What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

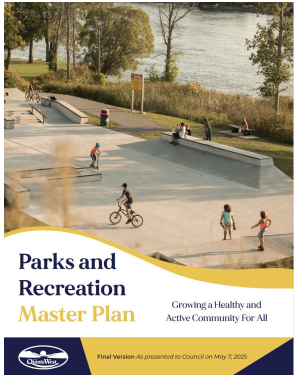
- **roadmap** for parks, open spaces, sport facilities, recreation programs, events, and service delivery over a specific time frame (e.g., 10 years)
- high-level, **strategic** document to **align** with existing plans and policies, provide **direction** and **prioritization** to staff and Council, and support annual budgeting





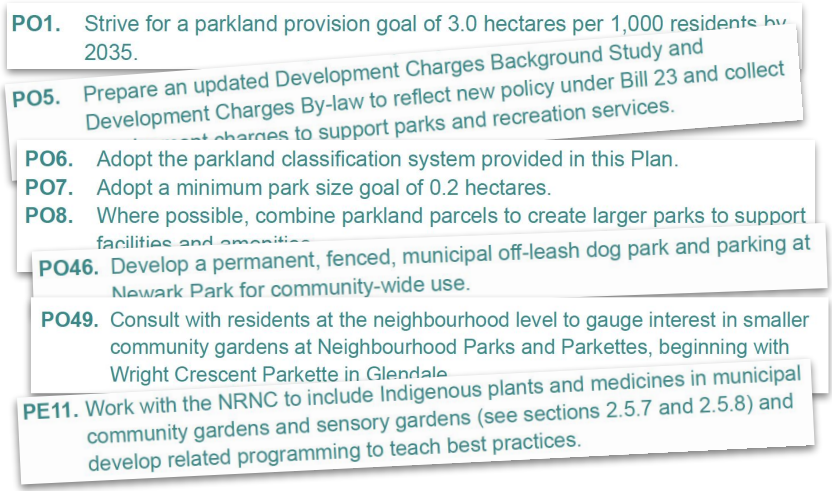


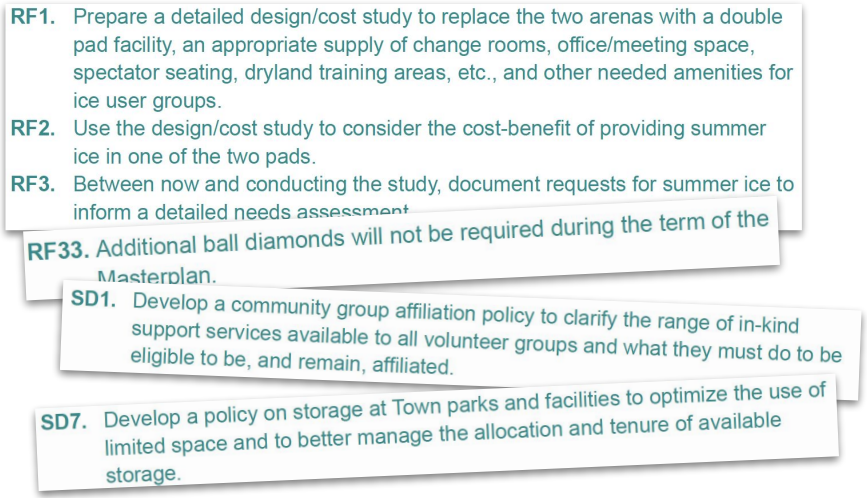




What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

- short-, medium-, and long-term **recommendations** based on **various data sources** including site observations, sector trends, projected growth, usage data, facility schedules, surveys, interviews, in-person conversations, challenges and opportunities, etc.
- samples from a recently completed Master Plan:





What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

- short-, medium-, and long-term **recommendations** based on **various data sources** including site observations, sector trends, projected growth, usage data, facility schedules, surveys, interviews, in-person conversations, challenges and opportunities, etc.
- samples from a recently completed Master Plan:

RF 3. Prepare a detailed feasibility study to determine the potential to build and operate a state-of-the-art four-pad arena complex.

RF 20. Create a two-diamond facility for organized use and tournaments at Wooler Park by upgrading the pavilion and inferior diamond, and adding a washroom.

RF 31. Plan to provide up to two more tennis courts to meet needs to 2039.

PO 1. Develop policy in the Official Plan to help guide decision making for accepting parkland dedication vs. cash-in-lieu.

PO 2. When possible in new subdivisions, combine parkland parcels to create City/Community Parks.

PO 4. Implement the forthcoming Tourism Wayfinding Strategy to align with City branding across all park and open space typologies as defined in the parks classification system.

PO 8. Develop a City-wide Trails Master Plan to build on the 2018 Active Transportation Master Plan and previous waterfront trail concept plans.

SD 1. Assign the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as the primary body to support staff and Council in implementing the Master Plan.

SD 6. Work with area School Boards to secure access to school facilities for community use and consider the potential for reciprocal agreements between the Boards and the City.

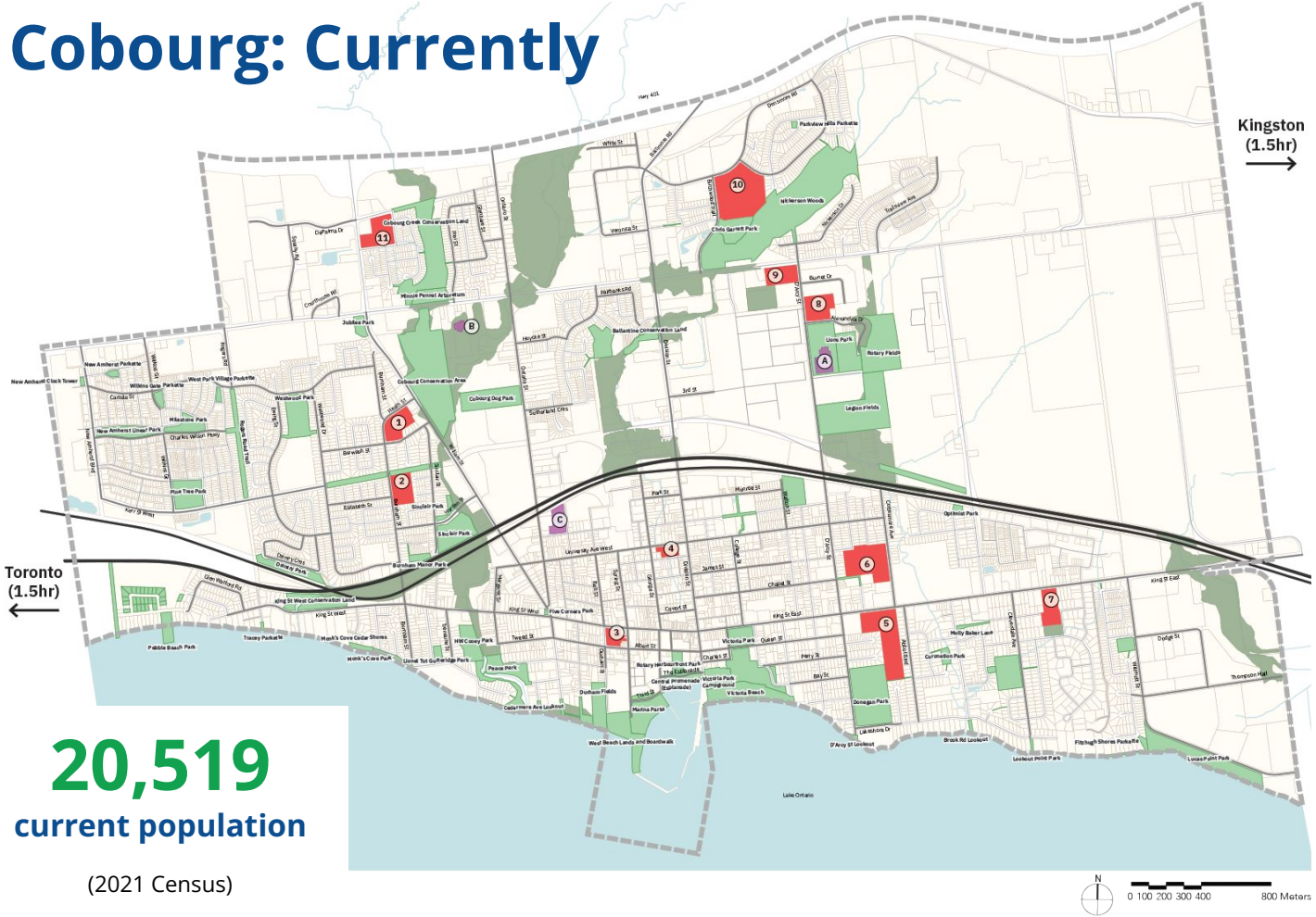
SD 9. Support all collaborations with agreements and avoid granting exclusive use of municipal facilities to community groups if they are underused as a result.

SD 11. Conduct a service pricing study as the basis for setting fees in relation to cost recovery targets, and to inform a pricing policy.

SD 13. Develop a community group affiliation policy to provide clarity and consistency in terms of the range of support services available to all volunteer groups and what they must do to be eligible to be, and remain, affiliated.

SD 17. Develop a policy on storage at City parks and facilities to optimize the use of limited space and to better manage the allocation and tenure of available storage.

Cobourg: Currently



Legend

- Water
- Road (major)
- Road (minor)
- Railroad
- Park/Open Spaces
- Significant Woodlands
- Municipal Indoor Recreation Facilities
- Schools

Indoor Recreation Facilities

A. Cobourg Community Centre
B. Cobourg YMCA
C. Jack Heenan Arena/Cobourg Curling Club

Schools

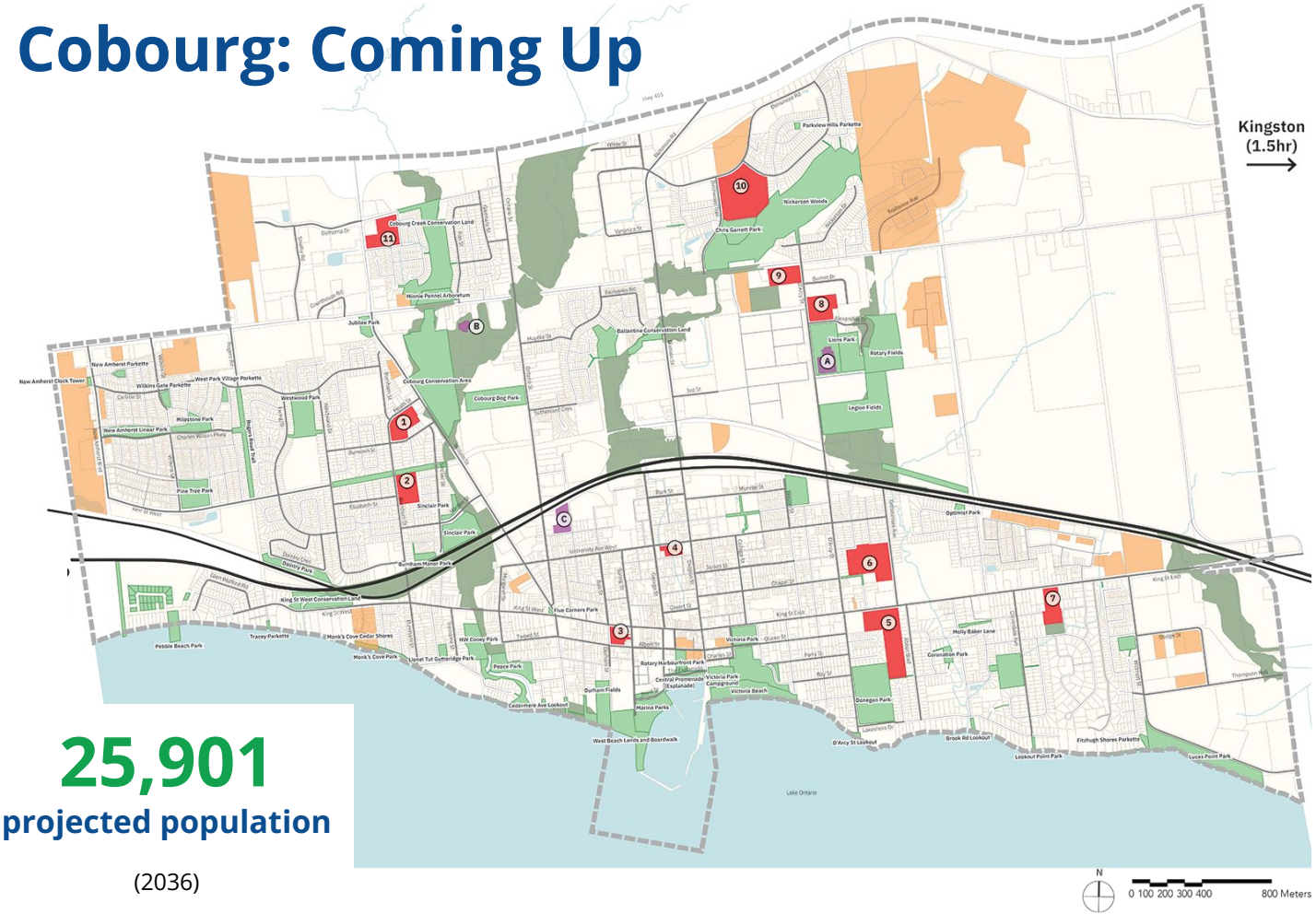
1. Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School
2. Burnham Public School
3. William Academy Cobourg West
4. St. Michael Catholic Elementary School
5. Cobourg Collegiate Institute
6. C.R. Gummow School
7. Merwin Greer School
8. Northumberland Centre for Individual Studies
9. St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School
10. St. Mary C.S.S.
11. Terry Fox Public School

20,519

current population

(2021 Census)

Cobourg: Coming Up



25,901

projected population

(2036)

Project Process

Phase 1: Current Context and Background Work

Summer 2025

1.1. Project Kick-off Meeting
1.2. Data & Document Assembly
1.3. Review of Previous Plan & Strategy
1.4. Socio-demographic Update
1.5. Mapping & Inventories
1.6. Project Team Meeting

Phase 2: Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Fall - Winter 2026

2.1. Representative Telephone Survey
2.2. Council & Staff Interviews
2.3. User Groups Online Survey
2.4. Project Team Meeting
2.5. Site Tour & In-Person Community Workshop
2.6. Seniors Focus Group
2.7. Youth Focus Group
2.8. Public Online Survey & Engage Cobourg Page
2.9. Stakeholder Focus Groups/Interviews
2.10. Engagement Summary: Presentation to Council

We are here!

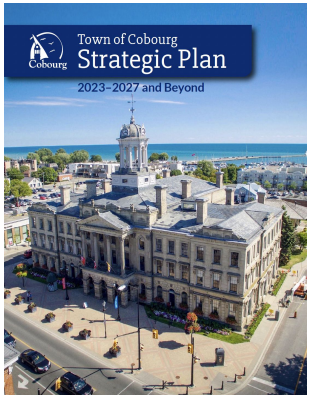
Phase 3: Assessments and Plan Development

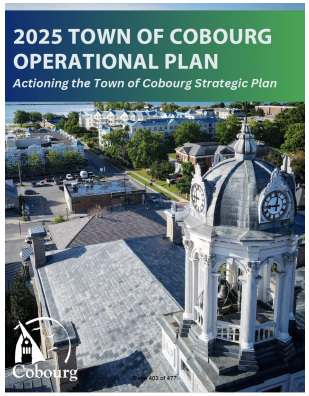
Spring - Summer 2026

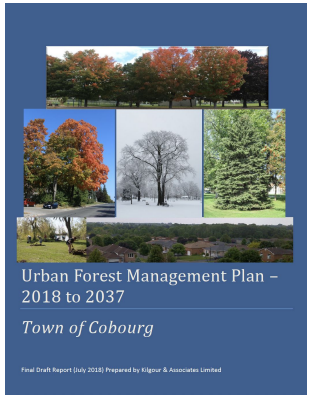
3.1. Project Team Meeting
3.2. Programs Assessment
3.3. Parks & Open Space Assessment
3.4. Recreation Facilities Assessment
3.5. Service Delivery Assessment
3.6. Preliminary Master Plan
3.7. Project Team Meeting
3.8. Draft Master Plan & Implementation Strategy
3.9. Project Team Meeting
3.10. Revised Master Plan & Implementation Strategy
3.11. Project Team Meeting
3.12. In-Person Public Open House
3.13. Engage Cobourg Online Feedback Period
3.14. Project Team Meeting
3.15. Final Master Plan & Executive Summary
3.16. Presentation to Council

Background Research & Data Assembly

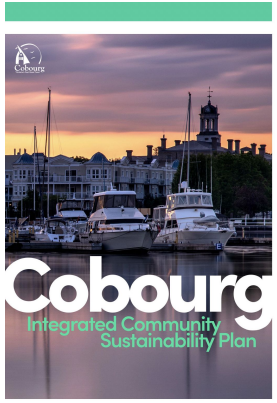


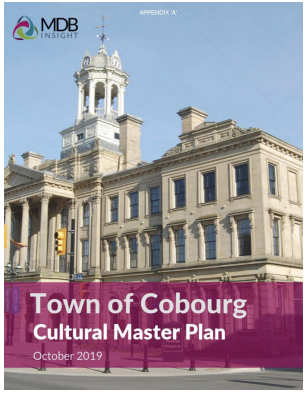


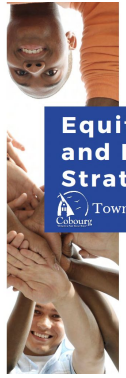








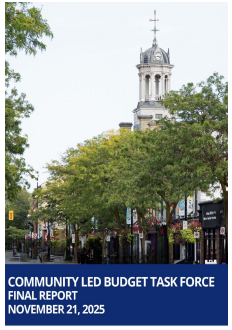




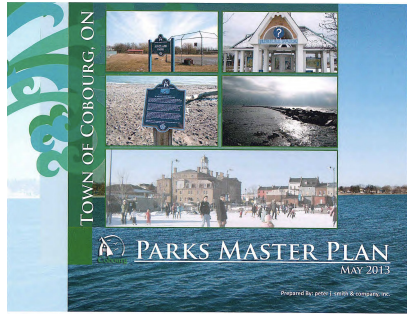


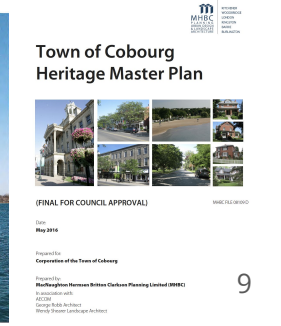












Consultation Activities

User Groups & Stakeholders

- Invitational Online Survey: **20** respondents
- Virtual Interviews/Focus Groups: **7** groups
- Waterfront User Needs Assessment (2018) Consultation: **30** groups

Municipal Representatives

- Virtual Interviews: **6** Members of Council, **15** Town Staff

Residents

- Telephone Survey: **300** households
- Online Survey: **471** respondents
- Engage Cobourg Tools: **241** contributions
- Community Workshop: **29** attendees
- Youth Focus Group: **19** participants
- Seniors Focus Group: **2** participants

Consultation Findings: User Groups

Source:



Online Survey

Interviews/Focus Groups

Field Users

- ✓ Northumberland Baseball Association
- ✓ Cobourg Angels
- ✓ Northumberland Jacks
- ✓ Cobourg Legion Minor Softball
- ✓ Northumberland Challengers Baseball
- ✓ Adult Men's Soccer

Court Users

- ✓ Greg Jillings Memorial Basketball Tournament
- ✓ Coverdale Tennis Club
- ✓ Cobourg Pickleball Club

Ice Users

- ✓ West Northumberland Wild Girls Hockey Association
- ✓ Quinte Regional AAA Minor Hockey Association
- ✓ Puck-It Development & Pro Shops
- ✓ Northumberland Minor Hockey Association
- ✓ Northumberland St. Pats Hockey
- ✓ Tuesday Night Adult Hockey Game
- ✓ NK Seeds Invitational Classic

Other Users

- ✓ Studio 11 Dance Company

Consultation Findings: User Groups

Source:
Online Survey

- Majority of groups (18) indicated **need for additional facilities** of the same type used now (e.g., ice time/arenas, diamonds, courts)
- Between 15-100% of groups' regular season participants live in Cobourg (average: **60.7%**)
- Needs are generally met for indoor facilities; interest in **updated outdoor facilities** with more **amenities** (e.g., drinking water, food services, washrooms)
- **10 groups** use municipal recreation facilities outside of Cobourg

	AGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	TOTAL
We would start paying/would pay higher user fees to improve facility quality.	40.00% 8	35.00% 7	25.00% 5	20
We would contribute to the capital costs to develop new facilities.	10.00% 2	30.00% 6	60.00% 12	20
We would help with fundraising activities for facility development.	65.00% 13	5.00% 1	30.00% 6	20

Consultation Findings: User Groups

Source:

Interviews/Focus Groups

Ball Field Users (3 Groups)

- **Facility Conditions:** Donegan needs major revitalization (skate park conflict); Sinclair surface issues; Legion needs better daily maintenance
- **Infrastructure Needs:** lit diamonds, indoor training space, proper washrooms (portable toilets are a major concern)
- **Growth and Utilization:** Participation is growing; some leagues rely on regional diamonds due to scheduling volume

Arena Ice Users (2 Groups)

- **Allocation and Scheduling:** Town requests ice needs too early, priority favours for-profit/Jr. A teams; groups want flexibility to return unused ice
- **Facility Constraints:** CCC parking/layout are challenging during peak use; groups want on-site dryland training space
- **Regionality:** Associations serve the wider county (~43–60% local) and use nearby arenas to meet demand and find lower costs

Outdoor Courts Users (2 Groups)

- **Safety and Maintenance:** Sinclair is in poor/unsafe condition; Coverdale conditions are better but practice court is unusable
- **Amenities:** both groups identified missing essentials (shade, seating, drinking water) and inconsistent washroom access/hours
- **Demand:** Sinclair is over capacity as Pickleball grows rapidly, Coverdale notes that if Sinclair is converted, additional courts would be needed to maintain programming

General Themes and Financials

- Groups are willing to **fundraise/partner** on facility upgrades, noted **lost revenue opportunities** (e.g., canteen), and want a **consistent Town contact** to improve communication and operations

Consultation Findings: User Groups

Source:
Waterfront User Needs Assessment

Waterfront Users & Other Groups

- ✓ Marina
- ✓ Cobourg Yacht Club
- ✓ Survivor Thrivers
- ✓ Cobourg Dragon Boat & Canoe Club
- ✓ Willow Beach Field Naturalists
- ✓ Cobourg Ecology Garden
- ✓ Independent boaters (non-CYC members)
- ✓ Friends of the Victoria Park Campground
- ✓ Cobourg Horticultural Society
- ✓ The Concert Band of Cobourg
- ✓ Cobourg Saxons Rugby Football Club

Key Issues

- Tourism at Victoria Park Beach leads to **overcrowding**, litter, traffic, illegal **parking**, insufficient washroom facilities
- Boat storage blocks waterfront **views**
- Conflicting, **shared use** of the harbour (e.g., paddlers need training space)
- Marina operations, expansion, and profit
- Polarizing views on waterfront **campground**
- East Pier safety concerns and new opportunities
- Linkages and connections (signage, accessibility, trail extension?)

Consultation Findings: Council & Staff

Source:
Virtual Interviews

Cobourg's Core Strengths:

- **Waterfront:** competitive edge, big tourism draw
- **CCC:** flagship facility and community hub
- **Staff dedication:** high praise for front-line staff
- **Events:** lots happening to drive the local economy and define the Town's identity

Cobourg's Critical Challenges:

- **Regional hub:** ~50,000 catchment area funded by ~20,000 tax base
- **Aging infrastructure:** "tired" assets (e.g., skate park, campground, pool, diamond); need for lifecycle plan; rapid population growth is outpacing maintenance, staff, amenities
- **Parking & crowding:** residents feel squeezed out (especially at the beach), CCC is at capacity

Consultation Findings: Council & Staff

Source:
Virtual Interviews

Recreation Facilities & Park Amenities:

- **Ice time:** loss of regional ice pads has put pressure on CCC; need for 3rd pad anticipated within 10 years
- **Swimming pool:** Centennial is at the end of its life; decision needed (repair? decommission? partner?)
- **Missing links:** demand for indoor turf (soccer/lacrosse), municipal gymnasium (schools' are booked), dedicated pickleball courts, free activities for youth (e.g., basketball, modernized skate park); municipal dog park is on leased land and at risk of redevelopment

Programming & Service Delivery:

- **Underserved non-active/creative youth:** programming is skewed toward seniors and organized sports
- **Campground controversy:** opinions are split between modernizing for revenue vs. reclaiming for public use
- **Partnerships:** need formal relationships with YMCA and school boards; desire to offload some service delivery (e.g., aquatics, child care)

Consultation Findings: Council & Staff

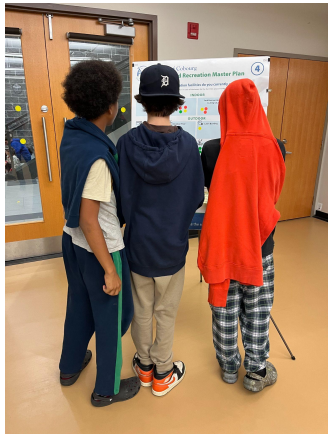
Source:
Virtual Interviews

Top Priorities:

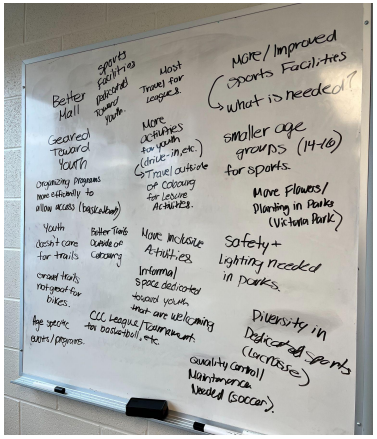
- **Asset management:** move from building new facilities to fixing and maintaining what we have
- **Consider youth:** shift the focus from a retirement community to one that attracts youth and families
- **Financial sustainability:** develop strategies for non-resident user fees, paid parking, and “business case” justifications for new spending in partnership with user groups (e.g., shared funding model)
- **Data-driven decisions:** move away from “loudest voice” advocacy to decisions based on actual usage data and demographics





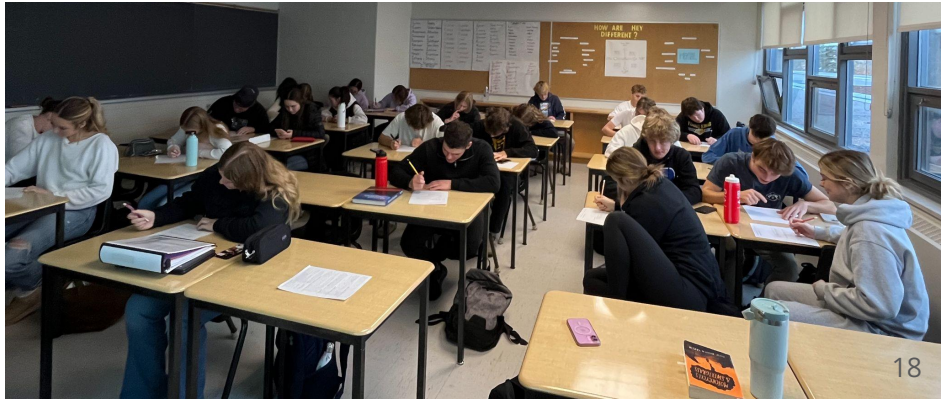






Consultation with Residents & Youth

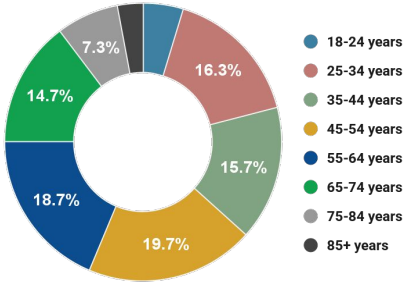




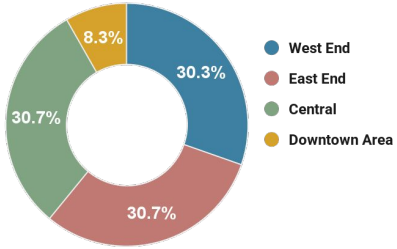
Consultation Activities: Resident Surveys

Telephone Survey Demographics

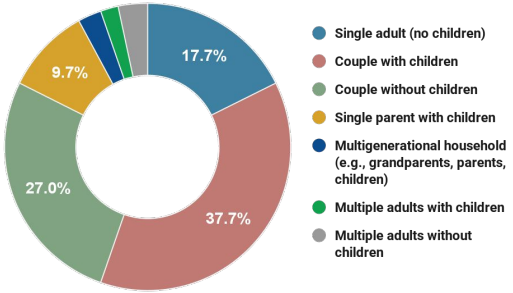
What is your age?



Where do you live in Cobourg?

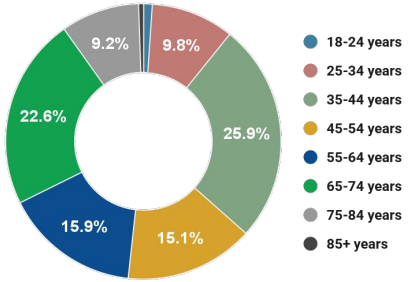


Which of the following best describes the household you are responding on behalf of?

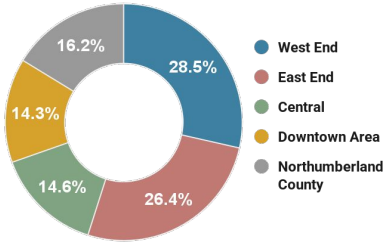


Online Survey Demographics

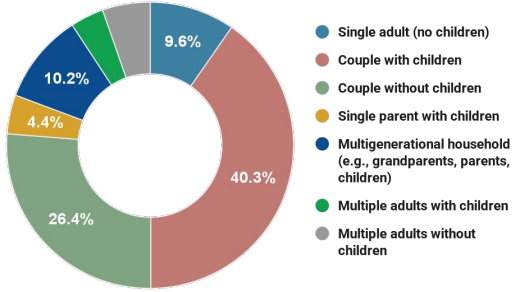
What is your age?



Where do you live in Cobourg?



Which of the following best describes the household you are responding on behalf of?



Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:
Online Survey
Telephone Survey

Indoor Facilities

Online Survey (Self-Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Indoor Facilities:** CCC (69%), YMCA (48%)
- **Top Requested Indoor Facilities:** swimming pool (59%), fitness facilities (32%), artificial turf fields (31%)
- **Indoor Facility Improvements:** variety of facilities (42%), number of facilities (37%), food options (33%)
- **High Demand for Facility Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded indoor (65%) recreation facilities are needed

Telephone Survey (Randomly Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Indoor Facilities:** none (41%), CCC (23%)
- **Top Requested Indoor Facilities:** swimming pool (31%), walking/running track (26%), fitness facilities (23%)
- **Indoor Facility Improvements:** number of facilities (31%), parking (29%), variety of facilities (26%)
- **Low Demand for Facility Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded indoor (77%) recreation facilities are NOT needed

Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:
- Online Survey
- Telephone Survey

Outdoor Facilities

Online Survey (Self-Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Outdoor Facilities:** soccer fields (37%), outdoor pool (33%), tennis/pickleball courts (28%)
- **Top Requested Outdoor Facilities:** swimming pool (43%), walking/running tracks (34%), artificial turf field (23%)
- **Outdoor Facility Improvements:** washrooms (47%), up to dateness (46%), variety of facilities (41%)
- **High Demand for Facility Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded outdoor (63%) recreation facilities are needed

Telephone Survey (Randomly Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Outdoor Facilities:** none (44%), outdoor pool (37%), ball diamonds (28%)
- **Top Requested Outdoor Facilities:** swimming pool (32%), ball diamonds (28%), ice rink (28%)
- **Outdoor Facility Improvements:** variety of facilities (28%), up to dateness (24%), food options (19%)
- **Low Demand for Facility Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded outdoor (80%) recreation facilities are NOT needed

Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:

Online Survey

Telephone Survey

Parks & Open Spaces

Online Survey (Self-Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Park Facilities:** beaches (81%), trails (61%)
- **Most Requested Park Facilities:** waterfront trails (39%), trails (36%)
- **Park Facility Improvements:** washrooms (60%), amenities (drinking water, foundations, seating) (48%), cleanliness/ maintenance (43%), parking (43%)
- **High Demand for Park and Open Space Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded parks and open spaces (61%) are needed

Telephone Survey (Randomly Selected Participants):

- **Most Used Park Facilities:** beaches (32%), none (26%), off-leash dog park (24%)
- **Most Requested Park Facilities:** waterfront trails (46%), trails (36%)
- **Park Facility Improvements:** variety of parks/open spaces (21%), number of parks/open spaces (20%), parking (18%), shade/canopy (18%)
- **Low Demand for Park and Open Space Expansion and Improvements:** additional or expanded parks and open spaces (70%) are NOT needed

Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:

Online Survey

Telephone Survey

Participation & Service Delivery

Online Survey (Self-Selected Participants):

- **Barriers to Participation:** don't know what's available (26%), too busy (24%), not enough opportunities for adults (23%)
- **Contribution:** volunteering with fundraising (27%), donating (24%), not sure (23%)
- **Communication:** social media (70%), word of mouth (55%), Engage Cobourg (41%)
- **Outside Municipalities:** 64% travel outside of Cobourg for recreation due to gaps in local facilities and programs, and leagues are based elsewhere

Telephone Survey (Randomly Selected Participants):

- **Barriers to Participation:** nothing limits participation (39%), inconvenient hours (15%), too far (15%)
- **Contribution:** donating (34%), volunteering with fundraising (32%), paying higher user fees (24%)
- **Communication:** social media (62%), municipal website (33%), Engage Cobourg (29%)
- **Outside Municipalities:** 11% travel outside of Cobourg for recreation due to leagues being based elsewhere, costs are lower, and hours are more convenient

Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:

Online Survey

Telephone Survey

Top Priorities

Online Survey (Self-Selected Participants):

1. Improvements/expansions to municipal parks and open space amenities (e.g., trails, gazebos, playgrounds, skate parks, beaches) **(62%)**
2. Improvements/expansions to municipal outdoor facilities (e.g., sports fields, courts, ball diamonds) **(44%)**
3. Improvements/expansions to municipal indoor recreation facilities (e.g., arenas, community centres, multi-purpose rooms, halls) **(42%)**

Telephone Survey (Randomly Selected Participants):

1. Improvements/expansions to recreation programs **(33%)**
2. Improvements/expansions to municipal outdoor sport/recreation facilities **(30%)**
3. Improved maintenance **(29%)**

Consultation Findings: Residents

Source:
Community Workshop

Community Workshop:

- Preference for **more small, walkable parks** with fewer amenities **over few centralized, larger parks** that have more amenities
- Prioritize **improving outdoor recreation facilities and parks** over indoor recreation facilities
- Provide **more opportunities for self directed recreation activities** (e.g., hiking) over organized recreation activities
- **Most Used Outdoor Facilities:** skateboard park, waterfront activities, walking trails
- **Most Used Indoor Facility:** CCC
- **Top Program Interests:** outdoor/nature based recreation, self-directed sports and physical activities, general interest/skills, and organized sports/physical activities
- **Top 3 Parks & Recreation Improvements:** maintenance, more variety of outdoor facilities, updated indoor and/or outdoor facilities

Consultation Findings: Residents (Youth)

Sources:

Community Workshop

Youth Focus Group

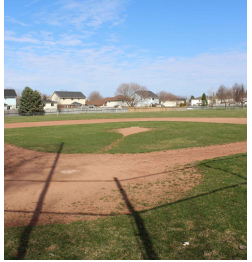
- Youth want **informal**, welcoming **3rd spaces** that reflect their interests and needs
- **Lighting + safety** upgrades needed in parks
- Interest in **1-day leagues**/tournaments (e.g., basketball) and age-specific events/programs
- Youth play **pickleball**, too!
- Prefer **smaller age groups** for sports (e.g., 13-15 & 16-18 years rather than 13-18 years)
- Would like to see more **maintenance on bike trail** in the forest → difficulty riding on gravel
- Appreciate **flowers and planting** in parks (e.g., Victoria park)
- **Often travel outside of Cobourg** for activities (e.g., trails, drive-in)

Next Steps

1. **Meet** with Town staff to confirm any remaining data requests, missing documents, etc.
2. Begin **assessments** (programs, parks & open spaces, recreation facilities, service delivery)
3. **Meet** with Town staff to discuss **preliminary Master Plan** ideas/recommendations
4. Deliver **full first draft** of the Master Plan & Implementation Strategy
5. **Meet** with Town staff to discuss document revisions
6. Deliver **updated draft** Master Plan
7. Meet with the **Parks and Recreation Task Force**
8. Deliver **revised draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
9. **Share** for community comment (In-Person Open House, Engage Cobourg online feedback)




Cobourg
Ontario • Canada



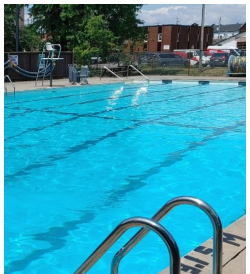


Thank you!

Madison Busby
mbusby@thincdesign.ca

Danielle Lenarcic Biss
dlenarcicbiss@thincdesign.ca





thinc.