



2024 PARKS MAINTENANCE PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation services play a significant role in the health and wellbeing of a community, its residents, economy, and environment. Research regularly demonstrates that recreation facilities, parks and open/green spaces benefit the physical, social, economic, and environmental health of a community. For the community to fully reap these benefits, however, it is necessary that the management of parks and recreation resources be approached with purpose and proper planning. Thus, it is important to understand the direct and indirect impact of our decisions related to our investment in Town-owned parks and recreation services. This information informs decision makers, Town administration, and our residents on the importance of investing in these amenities.

As evidenced in the feedback received through the Town's budget survey process, as well as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan public consultations, the community of Aylmer ranks the maintenance of the Town's parks and outdoor recreation facilities as a high priority.

In 2023, the Town completed its Parks and Recreation Master Plan, established a Parks and Beautification Advisory Committee, implemented an Adopt-a-Park program, and began the work of rejuvenating its parks and recreation facilities. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified that *"With increased park use levels that emerged during the pandemic – a trend that is likely to continue into the future – operating budgets will need to increase to meet the new demands of parks maintenance."*

In 2024, Council allocated additional funds to implement some of the recommendations outlined in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as well as to continue to build on the maintenance works completed in 2023.

The 2024 Parks Maintenance Program (2024PMP) was developed with the guidance of the Parks and Beautification Advisory Committee, with regard paid to the recommendations outlined in the Town of Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As such, the 2024PMP was designed to fall within the budgetary limits established by Council and to ensure the strategic deployment of maintenance programs that will support the initiatives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and build on the works completed in 2023. The 2024PMP does not seek to address all aspects of parks maintenance, but rather intends to outline a strategy for the maintenance and beautification of the Town's greenspaces and recreational facilities in 2024.

The 2024PMP establishes service level standards for 2024 and is recommending enhanced trail and facility maintenance, a reduction in the number of downtown hanging baskets and annuals, and a move toward lower maintenance perennials plantings enhanced by annuals. The plan leverages private contractors and public-private partnerships to better manage commitments, provide service enhancements, and generate cost savings, allowing the Town to better focus efforts on areas requiring special attention. The inclusion of service standards in the 2024PMP is to promote

better tracking and monitoring to assist the Town in assessing its performance. The goal is to include performance evaluations in future reporting.

OVERVIEW

The Town of Aylmer manages 12 parks/green spaces. These include small parkettes, neighbourhood parks, Town wide regional parks and trails. In total, there is approximately 27.6 hectares of parkland in Aylmer.

Aylmer provides opportunities for all residents to access outdoor active and passive recreation at a local level. The Town recognizes the need for outdoor recreation areas to be multi-functional, flexible spaces in order to meet the needs of residents today and in the future. Aylmer currently offers a variety of outdoor recreation spaces that include both programmed and unprogrammed amenities. Parks in the Town are generally closed between midnight and 6am. The Town's inventory of the existing parkland and open space include: 3 parkettes totalling 0.64 ha., 4 neighbourhood parks totalling 5.22ha, 3 town-wide Parks totaling 11.12 ha and 2 regional parks totaling 10.68ha.

Trails are one of the most popular outdoor amenities in many communities across North America including Aylmer. They offer numerous opportunities for informal activities and are used for walking, hiking, running, and cycling. People enjoy trails because they can be used at no cost at any time, while offering diverse experiences of the natural environment. Trails also help with forming an active transportation network and can provide connections between key locations within a community, encouraging a healthier and more active lifestyle overall. The Town of Aylmer has one paved and accessible trail, the Arboretum Trail, that is approximately 1.6km in length, connecting Optimist Park to Steen Park along Catfish Creek. While the Arboretum Trail is the main accessible multi-use trail, there are also several less-formal trails in the Town that expand upon the main trail. As shown in the Maintenance table, the 2024 Parks Maintenance Program includes enhanced regular trail maintenance for the paved portion of the trails.

The following Outdoor Recreation Services are available within the Town to residents and community members. The table below illustrates outdoor recreation amenities and services provided by the Town: 1 Outdoor Pool, 1 Splash Pad, 2 Ball Diamonds, 1 Soccer/Multi-use Fields, 2 Tennis Court, 3 Basketball Court (2 full-sized, 1 half), 3 Pickleball Courts, 1 Skate Park, 3 Playground, 1 Disc Golf Course, and 4 Outdoor Event Spaces.

As shown in the Maintenance table and detailed in the paragraphs below, the 2024 PMP includes enhanced regular maintenance for a number of the facilities.



MAINTENANCE OVERVIEW

As outlined in the maintenance table within, the 2024PMP includes enhanced regular maintenance for several Town-owned recreation facilities. In the following paragraphs, additional information providing insight into the development of specific services levels has been provided.

TURF MAINTENANCE

The Town maintains a high service level standard for grass cutting on its properties. This extends beyond parks to include grass around Town buildings, Town-owned infrastructure, and other Town-owned lands. In general, grass mowing in park areas occurs once a week based on the rate of growth to the service standards set in the maintenance table below. The work schedule is altered throughout the season based on need. Private contractors are utilized in some areas to efficiently and cost effectively manage the Corporation’s obligations. Environmental conditions and facility usage typically dictate the maintenance schedule; however, as a general rule, sports fields, such as baseball diamonds, are routinely mowed once every three to four days.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

As identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, *“The condition of paved trails varies along the length. Several locations have asphalt that has cracked and requires repairs.”* For 2024, hard surface trail maintenance has increased to include monthly sweeping. This service level change has been recommended as a trial program to assess the impact of the new service on resources. Trails will be swept once per month and will be scheduled based on the availability of resources (labour and equipment). The Parks & Recreation Department is also intending to make minor modifications to several areas along the trails to facilitate better drainage, thereby extending the useful life of the trail system’s hard surface. Maintaining good drainage is the first step in maintaining good trails. This work will fulfill two of the short-term recommendations of the Master Plan - to have Town-wide strategies on trail improvements and upgrades, and to *“adequately maintain”* the trail system.

WASTE RECEPTACLES, BATHROOMS, & PAVILIONS

Public washrooms are inspected daily when open, excluding weekends. During regular maintenance activities, pavilions and picnic tables are routinely inspected for signs of vandalism or disrepair. Garbage receptacles in the parks and at sports fields are emptied every other day during the week and more frequently during baseball and other tournaments.

Service for public washrooms, fountains, garbage collection, and picnic tables is scheduled to start on May 15, and will continue until immediately after Thanksgiving weekend. The tennis nets are scheduled to be installed the first week of April and will be in place until the last week of October. Please note that all above schedules are weather permitting.

POOLS & SPLASH PAD

As identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, “Aylmer should prioritize upgrading and maintaining their aging pool so that it can maintain its status as both a local and regional attraction.” To support this goal, staff intend to implement the minor maintenance recommendations contained in the 2023 Pool Condition Assessment.

The pool and splash pad inspections and maintenance tasks are scheduled to maintain compliance with Southwestern Public Health Unit regulations. During the operating season, many of the inspection and maintenance activities are performed daily as required, including water and chemical testing/analysis, water turnover monitoring, mechanical, as well as health and safety inspections. Staff time at the pool and splash pad averages approximately 240 hours over the season.

For the 2024 season, the splashpad is expected to open May 15 and operate until immediately after Thanksgiving, while the pool is scheduled to operate from July 1 until August 31. Please note that the above schedule is dependent on seasonal weather.

SPORTS FIELDS/ BASEBALL DIAMONDS/ COURTS/ SKATE PARKS

For 2024, maintenance of the hard-surfaced outdoor recreational facilities has been increased to include monthly sweeping and/or blowing. This is being recommended as a trial program to assess the impact on resources. The hard surface courts and skate parks will be swept or blown off once per month and will be scheduled based on the availability of resources.

Baseball diamond surfaces require the Town to undertake maintenance activities every other day during their operational period. Depending on the condition of the playing surface, maintenance averages approximately 15 hours per week.

WEED CONTROL/ GARDEN MAINTENANCE/ HANGING BASKETS

Hanging baskets require a very high level of maintenance and consume a considerable amount of summer student time. These baskets are watered every other day, excluding weekends, from the time they are installed to the time the growing season ends. To reduce capital and maintenance costs, the Town and BIA have worked together to reduce the number of hanging baskets. The BIA will be using their summer banners to fill the spaces that become available as a reduction in the baskets. Staff feel that the combination of hanging baskets and summer banners will be sufficient and that there will be no appreciable difference in the downtown core as a result of this cost saving initiative.

Weed control and garden maintenance is carried out as per the maintenance table below. Where possible, spray weed control is completed early in the season to limit the growth rate of invasive and undesirable plants. This work is managed in consultation with the Catfish Creek Conservation Authority to ensure compliance with relevant regulations. Despite this schedule, environmental conditions directly impact the effort required to provide this program.

Maintenance Table		
TURF	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Sports fields -Steen & Optimist	3 to 3.5 inches	2 x/week
Sports fields - Steen & Optimist -roll & aerate (Spring)	once pre-season	once pre-season
Rotary	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Police/Gateway	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Lions & Crystal/Fath Ave	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Fire Hall, Melanie, Kyle, Erin, Brown, Lawrence, Elm, Leslie, Davis, Streets	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Centennial Estates	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Downtown core; Library, Cenotaph, Palmer Park, Town Hall	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Balmoral	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Steen South & Flats	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Steen North	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Kinsmen	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Optimist	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Elgin Estates	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Pumping station	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
Lagoons	3 to 4 inches	1 x /week
GARDENS	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Balmoral Garden	weeding as required	1 x /week
Lions Garden	weeding as required	1 x /week
Palmer Park	planting/watering/fertilize/ weeding	1 x /week
Cenotaph	planting/watering/fertilize/ weeding	1 x /week
Town Hall-other	weeding as required	1 x /week
Downtown planters (11)	planting/watering/fertilize	2-3 x /week
Bridge Boxes (29)	watering/fertilize	2-3 x /week
Hanging Baskets (34)	watering/fertilize	2-3 x /week
Watering	garden beds as required	as needed
Fertilizing	garden beds; liquid & granular	during Spring planting
OTHER MAINTENANCE	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Waste receptacles at parks/sports fields	change at half full	2 x /week
Crack & crevice control	as required, weeding & sweeping	1 x /month
Infield grooming (baseball)	dragging diamond	5 x /week

Outfield grooming (baseball)	lining outfield foul lines	2 x /week
Warning tracks (baseball)	dragging	5 x /week
Machine maintenance-grease	general maintenance	1 x /week
Blade sharpening & exchange	general maintenance	1 x /week
Public washrooms, shop & bandshell	check and clean as required	5 x /week
Trail maintenance	sweeping; May-November	1 x /month
Pavilions/picnic tables	waste receptacles, sweeping; inspection	2 x /week
POOL & SPLASHPAD	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Pool	water chemistry, checks etc.	5 days/week
Pool	backwash, clean strainer basket etc.	3 x /week
Splash Pad	inspection, add dichlorination	5 days/week
Facility opening/closing: Pool	drain/fill; paint; pressure wash; concrete repair; water chemistry balancing; general maintenance; training for program staff; inspections (opening and mid-season)	240 hrs (2 staff; 40 hours per week for 3 weeks) *weather dependent
Facility opening/closing: Splash pad	pressure wash; concrete repair; inspections (opening and mid-season)	
HARD SURFACE COURTS & PLAYGROUNDS	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Tennis courts (Kinsmen)	crack/crevice, sweeping	1 x/month
Basketball courts (1 full; Crystal Park, 1 half size; Elgin Estates)	crack/crevice, sweeping	1 x/month
Pickleball courts (3)	crack/crevice, sweeping	1 x/month
Playgrounds: Elgin Estates, Balmoral, Lions, Kinsmen, Centennial Estates	Inspections	1 x/month
INSPECTIONS	SERVICE LEVEL STANDARD	ANTICIPATED FREQUENCY
Ball diamond	general/recorded inspection	5x/week
Trails	general/recorded inspection	1 x/month
Footbridge	general/recorded inspection	1 x/month
Playgrounds	general/recorded inspection	1 x/month
General Park condition	general/recorded inspection	1 x/month
Skatepark	general/recorded inspection	1 x/month
Toboggan hill	general/recorded inspection	2 x/week
Downtown/Police station- winter control	Salting/shovelling as required	2 x/day x 5 days/week
Pool/splashpad	With SWPH	4 hrs 2 x/season





MAINTAINED FLOWER BEDS & PLANTERS

The Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified “*Incorporating more sustainable design features into the development of parks such as bioswales, raingardens and pollinator gardens,*” as a long-term goal. The Master Plan identified that “*There is growing interest in incorporating natural features in parks such as native plant gardens, naturalized spaces within parks, and adventure play (including nature playgrounds or loose parts play).*”

In 2023, the Town once again partnered with the Aylmer and District Horticultural Society to establish a Pollinator Garden in Steen Park. Elsewhere, in Balmoral Park, many of the non-native and more maintenance-intensive plants species were removed and replaced with lower maintenance species, with the aim being to further develop sustainable gardens.

The 2024 Planting Plan has been designed to compliment the goals of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan and build on the work completed in 2023. The 2024 Planting Plan incorporates more sustainable native perennial plantings enhanced by the colour provided by annuals.

CENOTAPH

The Cenotaph is an important memorial dedicated to the memory of Aylmer’s veterans. Its location in the downtown, adjacent to Town Hall, gives it prominence among Aylmer’s downtown gardens. Plantings are planned to enhance the monument and its edged gardens, while providing year-round interest. While this garden was previously planted with annuals, perennial plantings are considered for 2024 to further align with the Town’s goal to beautify its greenspaces, while minimizing maintenance needs.

Planned plantings for 2024 include:

- Flanders & Perennial Poppies
- White Sweet Alyssum
- Karl Rosenfield Peonies
- Little Princess Spirea
- Firecracker Salvia
- New Guinea Impatiens

TOWN HALL

Town Hall is located at the corner of Talbot Street West and Centre Street. The building is iconic and is recognizable as the being the centrepiece of the Town's logo. There are no formal gardens, but there are 3 locations on the west side of the building that have low-maintenance shrubbery.

PALMER PARK

Palmer Park is a small parkette located behind Town Hall. This park hosts a music in the park event each Wednesday evening of the summer and is heavily used from spring to early winter by people having picnics and outdoor gatherings. The park has an elevated sloped flower bed and a two-sided water feature with annual plants. Planned plantings for 2024 are as follows:

- Caladiums
- Purple Fountain Grass
- Coneflower
- Heuchera
- New Guinea Impatiens
- Petunias
- Creeping Phlox

OLD TOWN HALL

Old Town Hall is planted and maintained primarily by the Aylmer Horticultural Society. The walkway area along the southern wall hosts a perennial and shrubbery bed. The green space adjacent to the walkway and at the corner of John Street South and Sydenham Street West is known as the 46 John Street Parkette.

BALMORAL PARK

Balmoral Park has a variety of gardens along the walking trail at the northern section of the park and toward the park entrance on John Street. Areas of Balmoral Park were identified as requiring hardier plantings during the 2022 season. Revisions were made to the planting list in 2023, with the focus being planting native and hardy perennials in order to achieve better outcomes and minimize maintenance obligations. The planned plantings for 2024 are as follows:

- White Sweet Alyssum

LIONS PARK

Lions Park has a perennial garden located along the border of the woodlot. This raised garden was once maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers and staff; however, it is now maintained by staff. Planned plantings for 2024 are as follows:

- Elephant Ears

HANGING BASKETS & DOWNTOWN PLANTERS

The hanging basket program sees the temporary installation of 34 baskets in the downtown area. The Town currently manages the purchasing, installation, and maintenance of the baskets. For 2024, the PBAC, working with the BIA, selected plantings comprised of bubble-gum petunias with green potato vine and bacopa.

The need for watering these baskets every other day means the program requires considerable staff time. The Town and BIA have worked together to reduce the number of hanging baskets planned for 2024. The goal was to reduce capital and maintenance costs without minimizing the overall aesthetic impact in the downtown. As noted elsewhere in this plan, the BIA is planning to augment the Town's hanging basket program with their summer banner program.

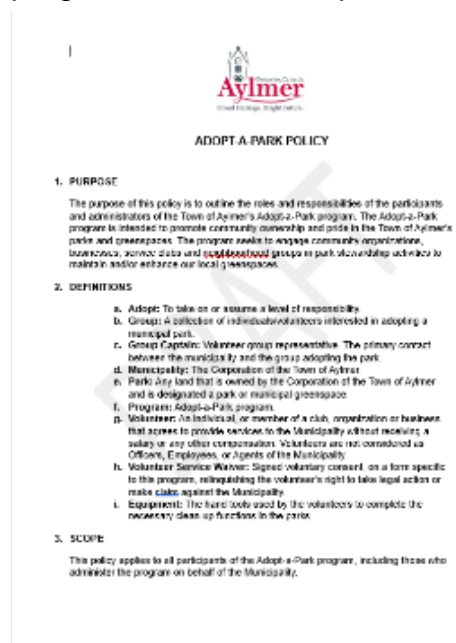
Downtown planters have been designed to compliment the hanging baskets and will feature elephant ear, bubble-gum petunias and green potato vine.

ADOPT-A-PARK/ VOLUNTEER SUPORT

The Town of Aylmer has recently introduced, at the recommendation of the Parks & Beautification Advisory Committee, an Adopt-a-Park program. The Adopt-a-Park program is intended to promote community ownership and pride in the Town of Aylmer's

parcs and greenspaces. The program seeks to engage community organizations, businesses, service clubs and neighbourhood groups in park stewardship activities to maintain and/or enhance our local greenspaces. The program will see the Town formalize existing partnerships with groups such as the Aylmer Horticultural Society, The Lions and Community Living, as well as forge new ones with interested community groups and residents.

The Adopt-a-Park program is now active, and applications are open for interested parties to apply. Include a section about adopt-a-park opportunities.



HARD SURFACE BEAUTIFICATION/ MURALS

With the goal of beautifying hard surfaces and utilitarian structures in the Town's parks and greenspaces, the Parks & Beautification Advisory Committee is proposing the implementation of a mural program on a trial basis. The program would see interested artists/community groups propose and install murals on existing hard surfaces. For its

part, the Town of Aylmer would provide anti-graffiti coatings and surface preparation for the murals. This program is anticipated to be a low-cost program, with funds being drawn from the Parks Department's operating budget to cover the cost of speciality coatings and project preparation.