

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Town of Aylmer
August 2023

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS.....	IV
1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VI
1 MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW	1
1.1 WHAT IS A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN?	3
1.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.....	3
2 ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PRACTICES	5
3 COMMUNITY OF AYLMER PROFILE.....	7
3.1 CURRENT AND FORECASTED POPULATIONS.....	11
3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN.....	15
3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF NEEDS	16
3.4 RECENT AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS	16
4 PARKS AND RECREATION BENEFITS AND TRENDS.....	18
4.1 BENEFITS	19
4.2 TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES	21
5 PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT	27
5.1 OVERVIEW	28
5.2 PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY	28
5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF PARKLAND.....	36
5.4 PARKLAND COMPARATOR ANALYSIS.....	37
6 TRAIL ASSESSMENT	38
6.1 OVERVIEW	39
6.2 CURRENT TRAIL INVENTORY.....	39
6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF TRAILS	39
7 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES ASSESSMENT	41
7.1 OVERVIEW	42
7.2 OUTDOOR AQUATICS.....	43
7.2.1 SUPPLY	44
7.2.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE.....	45
7.2.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED	46
7.3 BALL DIAMONDS	47
7.3.1 SUPPLY	47
7.3.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE.....	47
7.3.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED	47
7.4 SOCCER PITCHES.....	49
7.4.1 SUPPLY	49
7.4.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE.....	49
7.4.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED	49
7.5 PLAYGROUNDS	50
7.5.1 SUPPLY	50
7.5.2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED	50



7.6	TENNIS & PICKLEBALL COURTS	51
7.6.1	SUPPLY	51
7.6.2	SUMMARY OF USAGE.....	51
7.6.3	ASSESSMENT OF NEED	52
7.7	BASKETBALL COURTS	53
7.7.1	SUPPLY	53
7.7.2	SUMMARY OF USAGE.....	53
7.7.3	ASSESSMENT OF NEED	53
8	INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES ASSESSMENT	54
8.1	OVERVIEW	55
8.2	INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY	56
8.2.1	EAST ELGIN COMMUNITY COMPLEX	57
8.2.2	OLD TOWN HALL	58
9	PROGRAMMING & EVENTS	59
9.1	OVERVIEW	59
9.2	EXISTING RECREATION PROGRAMS & STRUCTURE	60
9.2.1	ICE PROGRAMMING.....	60
9.2.2	AQUATICS PROGRAMMING	60
9.2.3	OTHER PROGRAMMING	62
10	VISION & STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	64
10.1	Vision	64
10.2	Strategic Directions	64
11	RECOMMENDATION & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	65
11.1	OVERVIEW	65
11.2	LEGISLATION AND POLICY STRATEGIES	66
11.3	PARKLAND, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES	69
11.4	INDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES STRATEGIES.....	76
11.5	PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGIES	78
11.6	FINANCING, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF STRATEGIES.....	79
11.7	MONITORING STRATEGIES	81
12	CONCLUSION	82
13	REFERENCES	83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Aylmer Population Forecast 2021-2051 (Based on Elgin County Official Plan Study Population Projections)	11
Table 2: Aylmer Total Household Growth Forecast 2021-2051 (Based on Elgin County Official Plan Study Household Projections)	11
Table 3: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort (2006-2021)	12
Table 4: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort Male Only (2006-2021)	14
Table 5: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort Female Only (2006-2021).....	15
Table 6: Parks and Open Spaces Distribution	31
Table 7: Parkland and Open Space Inventory	32
Table 8: Parkland Service Level Comparison.....	37
Table 9: Service Level Summary of Outdoor Recreation Amenities, Town of Aylmer	42
Table 10: YMCA Pool Programming Usage Splits 2014-2019 by Number of Participants	45
Table 11: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Pools.....	46
Table 12: Service Level Comparison, Splashpads	46
Table 13: Ball Diamonds Supply	47



Table 14: Service Level Comparison, Baseball Diamonds	48
Table 15: Soccer Pitch Supply	49
Table 16: Service Level Comparison, Soccer Pitches	50
Table 17: Service Level Comparison, Playgrounds	51
Table 18: Service Level Comparison, Tennis	52
Table 19: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Pickleball	52
Table 20: Service Level Comparison, Basketball Courts	53
Table 21: Indoor Recreation Facility Inventory	56
Table 22: East Elgin Community Complex Amenity Breakdown	57
Table 23: Recreational Programs Offered by Aylmer in the EECC	60
Table 24: Swimming Programs Offered by Aylmer	62
Table 25: Recreational Swim Rates - Aylmer	62
Table 26: Other Programs Offered by Aylmer	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Engagement Process	vii
Figure 2: Downtown Aylmer	1
Figure 3: Project Phasing Overview	2
Figure 4: Engagement Process	4
Figure 5: Aylmer City Hall	5
Figure 6: Aylmer mural	7
Figure 7: Regional Context	9
Figure 8: Local Context	10
Figure 9: Aylmer Population Distribution by Cohort (2021)	13
Figure 10: Balmoral Park Gardens	18
Figure 11: Benefit Categories of Parks, Recreation, and Culture in Canada	19
Figure 12: Kinsmen Park	20
Figure 14: Palmer Park	27
Figure 16: Example of a Parkette - Palmer Park	28
Figure 16: Example of a Neighbourhood Park - Crystal Park	29
Figure 17: Example of a Town-Wide Park - Kinsmen Park	30
Figure 18: Example of a Regional Park - Steen Park and Conservation Area	31
Figure 19: Parkland Distribution	36
Figure 21: Trail in Steen Park	38
Figure 21: Trail and Sidewalk Distribution	40
Figure 22: Balmoral Park Splashpad	41
Figure 23: Outdoor Recreation Facility Distribution	43
Figure 24: Aylmer Outdoor Pool	44
Figure 25: Baseball Diamond in Steen Park	48
Figure 26: East Elgin Community Complex	54
Figure 27: Indoor Recreation Facility Distribution	56
Figure 28: Recreation Programming	59

Acronyms / Abbreviations

AMP	Asset Management Plan
AODA	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
CIP	Community Improvement Plan
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DCA	Development Charges Act
EECC	East Elgin Community Complex
EEYSL	East Elgin Youth Soccer League
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
OMAFRA	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
OP	Official Plan
PPS	Provincial Policy Statement
PRMP	Parks and Recreation Master Plan
QOL	Quality of Life
RLTMP	Recreation and Leisure Time Master Plan
SWM	Storm Water Management
TAOC	Trails for All Ontarians Collaborative
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Aylmer's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) is a product of the work of a variety of organizations and individuals across the Town. This PRMP includes feedback from Town of Aylmer staff, community members, volunteer associations, agency partners, and local organizations, all of whom generously shared their expertise and experience throughout the parks and recreation planning process. We would like to thank the following groups for contributing their time, knowledge, and experience.

- Elgin County Tourism
- Aylmer Fair Board
- Aylmer BIA
- Aylmer Environmental Advisory Committee
- Catfish Creek Conservation Authority
- Optimist Club
- Audubon Cooperative Society
- YWCA
- East Elgin Community Complex Parks and Recreation Department
- Elgin St. Thomas Health Unit
- Aylmer Lioness Club
- Faith-based organizations
- Local community groups and sports teams
- International Farm Show (OMAFRA)
- Thames Valley District School Board
- London District Catholic School Board
- Elgin County Planning
- Elgin County Library
- Kinsmen Club
- Rotary Club
- Aylmer Community Services
- Township of Malahide
- EECC Interim Board
- Lions Club
- Community Living Aylmer
- Aylmer Minor Baseball
- Local school boards

We would like to extend special thanks to Andy Grozelle, Chief Administrative Officer, Heather James Manager of Planning and Development, Owen Jaggard, Deputy Clerk, and Thom Polland, Parks & Facilities Manager from the Town of Aylmer. Finally, thank you to all the community members who graciously participated in the creation of this PRMP.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Plan

Parks and recreation are important parts of a community. The provision of greenspace, open space, and parks allows residents to spend time outdoors and parks amenities, like playgrounds, are important places where youth can engage in play with others. Recreation programs encourage physical activity, socialization, and expanding interests. Overall, good parks and recreation systems can contribute to a high quality of life. The intention of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide guidance for the Town of Aylmer over the coming years in providing quality parks and recreation services for residents and visitors to enjoy.

In specific, this plan provides direction for managing and developing parks and recreation facilities, planning programming for the needs of the community, and maintaining a strong parks and recreation system over time. The recommendations of this Plan are ultimately based on benefits and trends analyses; local context considerations; needs assessments; community engagement; and studying service delivery viability for each of the priorities.

In developing this Master Plan, a background report was prepared that summarized the existing parks and recreation conditions and needs in Aylmer. From this background report, needs were further explored and refined through stakeholder and public engagement. It is from this background research and public feedback that the direction of parks and recreation for Aylmer stems, culminating in this living, breathing, Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Engagement

The Town of Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed using a three-phased approach, an important part of which was feedback from the community and stakeholders to ensure that the Master Plan aligned with the community’s needs.

Phase 1 involved undertaking background research, including site assessments, and preliminary engagement with the community to establish the needs and vision of parks and recreation in the Town. This engagement was done through four virtual surveys, for public, stakeholders, youth, and seniors.

During Phase 2, an in-person public open house was held to share ideas and collect feedback from the community.

In Phase 3, the project team presented the draft Master Plan to the public through a virtual open house and public commenting period. Each engagement activity offered another opportunity for the public’s voice to shape the Master Plan. Consolidating all the steps into the final Master Plan for Council consideration was the final step in the plan’s development.

The engagement process can be summarized by the graphic below.



Figure 1: Engagement Process

Vision

Parks and recreation are essential to ensuring a healthy community and high quality of life for Aylmer residents. In alignment with the Town of Aylmer Strategic Plan, the vision for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is as follows:

Ensure a safe and inclusive environment for families to live, work, and play through the provision of accessible, affordable, and inclusive recreational programming, facilities, assets, infrastructure and greenspace to meet current and future needs.

The following strategic directions have been identified for Aylmer's Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

Strategic Direction #1 – Provide comprehensive network of parkland, trails, and open space within the Town that allows for a diverse, inclusive, and affordable range of outdoor recreation opportunities that provides connections to nature and encourages an active lifestyle for people of all ages and abilities.

Strategic Direction #2 - Enhance the indoor municipal recreational facilities and services in a manner that focuses on enriching the lives of all community members by supporting accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences, with the Town progressively increasing its leadership role in the coordination of services and standardized partnerships with external providers.




Strategic Direction #3 - Expand the recreational programs being offered by the Town and explore improvements to service delivery and program options to cater to the changing needs of the community, as well as methods of promoting these programs to community members and the broader region.

Strategic Direction #4 - Monitor the Town's assets in a deliberate and structured manner, with a central contact for the public who is responsible for the management of all indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as the overseeing of each of the services provided within those facilities.

Recommendations for Parks and Recreation

This Master Plan provides recommendations that are the result of public feedback, background research, parks and recreation trends, and the assessment of needs and gaps in service in Aylmer. The 68 recommendations fall into six categories: Legislation and Policy; Parkland, Trails and Open Space; Indoor Recreational Facilities; Programs and Services Delivery; Financing, Management and Staff Strategies; and Monitoring.

The recommendations are also broken into short-, mid-, and long-term goals to assist staff in prioritizing various improvements throughout the lifespan of this plan.

Legend	
	Short-Term Priority: 1-3 years
	Mid-Term Priority: 4-6 years
	Long-Term Priority: 7-10+ years

1 MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW



Figure 2: Downtown Aylmer

Stantec Consulting Ltd. (Stantec) was retained by the Town of Aylmer (Town) to develop a strategic framework that will guide the future development of the Town's parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities and services, to address existing needs, while evaluating and planning for the future. The Town highly values their parks and recreation facilities and wish to expand upon what has been implemented to date. The existing recreational trail system is highly utilized and there is a desire for a strategic plan to expand pedestrian and cycling facilities and improve connectivity. Considering anticipated future growth, shifting trends in recreation and changing community expectations, now is a vital time to understand existing and future needs for parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces and have a plan in place to meet those needs.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) for the Town of Aylmer, was developed using a three (3) phase approach. Figure 3: Project Phasing Overview illustrates the following Master Plan Phasing structure:

- **Phase 1:** Background Research
- **Phase 2:** Strategic Direction
- **Phase 3:** Action Plan, Implementation and Monitoring

Phase 1 of the Master Plan involved the gathering of background information to establish the foundation for the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It consisted of creating an inventory of existing facilities and assessing existing conditions. Phase 1 also consisted of developing a consultation plan to ensure the community had a say in the future of Aylmer Parks and Recreation, and included an analysis of trends and best practices, along with a needs assessment, gap analysis and comparator analysis. Generally, the aim of the first phase was to generate a starting point for the Master Plan through an inventory of parks spaces and amenities that the Town already possesses, and compiling data, statistics, and research on Provincial and National Trends and Best Practices.

Phase 2 built off this background research to recognize and highlight current strengths, while simultaneously identifying any noted weaknesses. The second phase also identified areas for improvement in the Town's Parks and Recreation structure, assessed fees and charges between comparator municipalities, as well as determined a strategic direction for future development and management of recreation facilities.

The third and final phase of the Master Plan project established actionable recommendations and included finalization of the Master Plan document.



Figure 3: Project Phasing Overview

1.1 WHAT IS A PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN?

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a strategic document that studies the existing park system and recreation programming, and identifies a planning blueprint to improve, protect and expand the Town's network of parks, facilities, and recreational services for the future.

The Master Plan will provide both a long-term vision for the Town's park and recreation system, and specific policies and standards to direct day-to-day decisions. It will create a framework that will allow the Town to respond to new opportunities as they arise, and ensure that parks, recreation facilities, and programs meet the Town's needs and priorities.

Through research and public input, the Master Plan will examine:

- Parks, open spaces, and trails throughout Aylmer.
- Recreation and sport facilities.
- Programs, events, and activities (those delivered by the Community and the Town).
- Operations such as policy development, staff allocations, communications, etc.
- Implementation strategies, including capital and financial planning and resourcing.

The Master Plan objectives are as follows:

- Identify needs based on changing demographics and participation trends.
- Establish an overall vision for parks and recreation within Aylmer.
- Develop strategies to meet identified needs and future directions.
- Align municipal efforts, operations, and budgets through priority-setting.
- Engage the community in an inclusive and productive process that supports the Master Plan.

1.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was key in the development of the Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

In order to identify and move forward the priorities for Parks and Recreation Master Plan, community engagement activities and tools were used to understand the community needs, values, and aspirations. Over the course of the three-phase Parks and Recreation



Master Plan, various engagement activities are to be held to better understand the community’s needs, both from a municipal staff and public point of view.

Planned Consultation Activities:

- 1) Dedicated PRMP Website Launched on Town’s website
- 2) Engagement Surveys for the Public, Sport & Community Groups, Youth, and Seniors
- 3) In-Person Public Open House #1, during Phase 2
- 4) Municipal Recommendations Workshop
- 5) Virtual Public Open House #2, during Phase 3
- 6) Council Presentation and Plan Adoption



Figure 4: Engagement Process

Generally, respondents were somewhat satisfied with the Town’s parks, trails and indoor recreation facilities. However, respondents also indicated that they would like to see improvements to the existing parks and recreation facilities and an expansion of the offerings. From the surveys, it is clear that approximately half of youth survey respondents and half of senior survey respondents do not think there are enough amenities and programs targeted at their age group.

2 ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PRACTICES



Figure 5: Aylmer City Hall

The Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan is not designed to exist in isolation. The vision, strategic directions, and recommendations of this Master Plan are founded on existing provincial and local parks and recreation related legislation. The following provides an overview of the applicable Provincial and local legislation, policies, plans, and practices that guided the development of the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Some of the policies provided the basis for the powers of the municipality to utilize plans to create safe and healthy communities, while others guided specific land use policies within the Town, related to how parkland should be created and managed.

This Master Plan builds on the needs and themes identified in provincially mandated policies and is in alignment with many other internal guidance documents that support the overall vision for the Town. The relevant internal and external guidance documents include but are not limited to:

EXTERNAL PLANS AND LEGISLATION

- Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022
- Planning Act
- The Covid Economic Recovery Act, 2020
- Municipal Act
- Provincial Policy Statement
- Trails For All Ontarians Collaborative
- County Of Elgin Official Plan

TOWN PLANS AND STRATEGIES

- Town Of Aylmer Official Plan
- Town of Aylmer Zoning By-law
- Town Of Aylmer Community Improvement Plan
- Development Charges By-Law, 2021
- Parkland Conveyance By-Law No. 01-22
- Parkland Regulation By-Law No. 73-95
- Town Of Aylmer Recreation And Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004
- Town Of Aylmer Asset Management Plan, 2022



3 COMMUNITY OF AYLMER PROFILE



Figure 6: Aylmer mural

When planning for the future of Parks and Recreation in the Town of Aylmer, it is important to understand the Town's demographic profile in order to best understand the current conditions, trends, and potential future demands facing the community. The following provides a high-level demographic profile using the most recent Statistics Canada census data available (2016 and 2021). It should be noted that the 2021 data was used where available but not all 2021 census data has been released to date.

The Town of Aylmer is a lower-tier municipality within a two-tier County government in southwestern Ontario. Aylmer is known for its small-town character, with a historic main street area, community museum, the Old Town Hall, beautiful parks, and a creek that runs throughout the Town. It is part of Elgin County and is geographically situated within the Township of Malahide, which surrounds Aylmer in all directions. Aylmer is approximately 12 km east of the City of St. Thomas and approximately 30 km southeast of the City of London. Other nearby municipalities include the Municipality of Central Elgin to the west, Municipality of Bayham to the east, Municipality of Thames Centre to the north, and Township of Southwest Oxford to the northeast. Lake Erie is approximately 12 km directly south of the Town. Aylmer is located on Highway 3 and the closest access point to Highway 401 is approximately 21 km to the north. Nearby airports include the Region of St. Thomas Elgin Airport, the Straffordville Airport, the Tillsonburg Regional Airport, and the London International Airport. Refer to Figure 7 and Figure 8 for regional and local context.

Aylmer acts as a settlement/service hub to the surrounding rural municipalities, providing parks and recreation services to a larger area than its geographic population, such as the Township of Malahide and the Municipality of Bayham. When considering the needs of the community and analyzing service delivery levels, it is important to take into account the userbase of non-residents that travel into the Town to use their services and how they may impact the provision of high-quality parks and recreation programming and facilities.

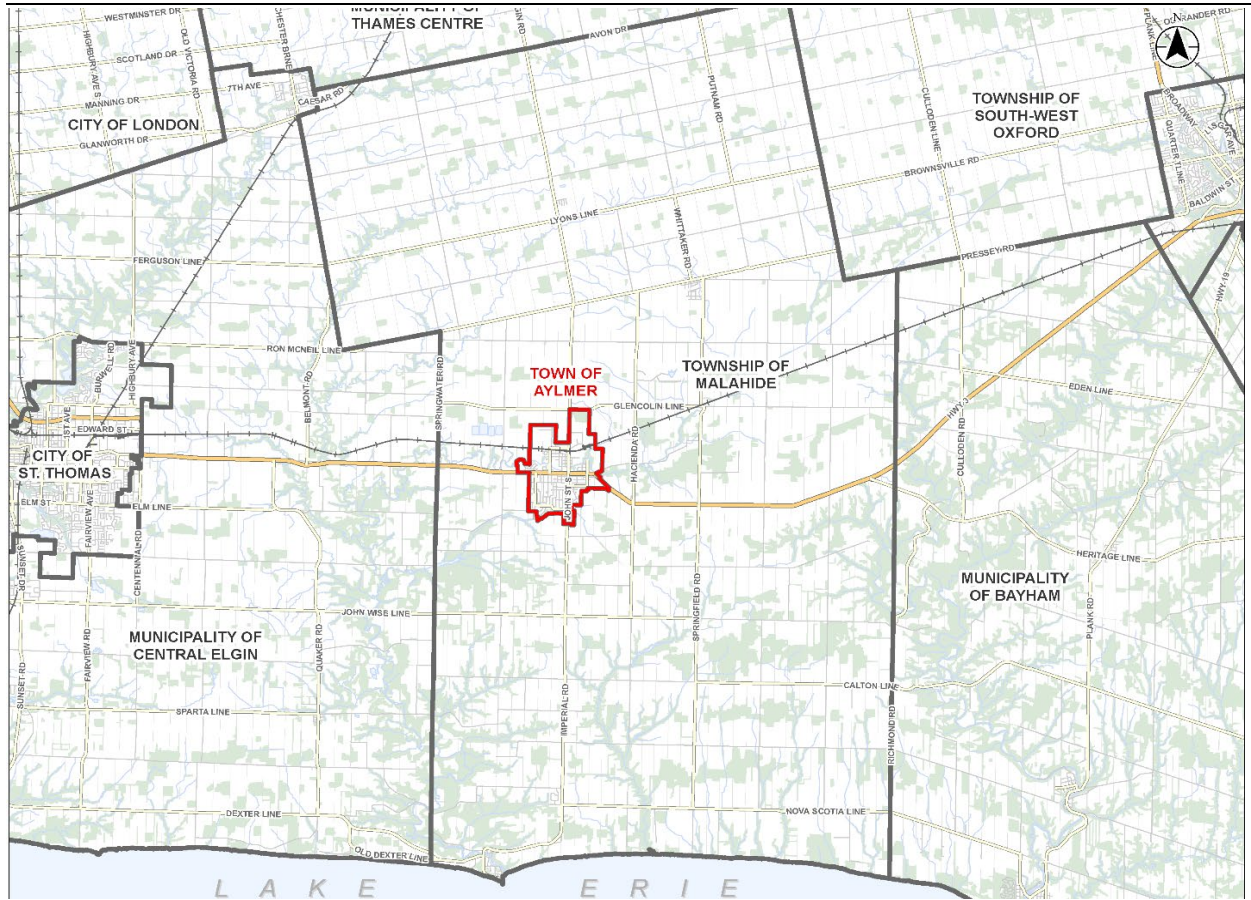


Figure 7: Regional Context



Figure 8: Local Context

3.1 CURRENT AND FORECASTED POPULATIONS

According to the 2021 Census of Population, Aylmer's population is 7,699, indicating a 2.8% percent increase from the 2016 census population, which was a total population growth of 207 people.

Currently, the County of Elgin is undertaking a comprehensive review of their 2013 Official Plan. Based on the most recent population forecasts done by Hemson Consulting as part of their comprehensive review process, Aylmer is projected to grow to a population of 10,760 by 2051, which is a 36.0 percent increase, and would account for 20.5 percent of the growth in Elgin County.

Table 1: Aylmer Population Forecast 2021-2051 (Based on Elgin County Official Plan Study Population Projections)

Year	2021	2051	Growth	Share (of Elgin County)
Aylmer	7,910	10,760	2,850	20.5%

Table 2: Aylmer Total Household Growth Forecast 2021-2051 (Based on Elgin County Official Plan Study Household Projections)

Year	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046	2051	2021-51
Aylmer	3,070	3,280	3,450	3,640	3,840	4,040	4,250	+1,180

Aylmer has seen a gradual increase in population over the years since their population of 7,069 in 2006. The overall population of Aylmer is expected to moderately increase to 2051, with the older population expected to grow in proportion to children and youth (ages 0-19) categories. This is illustrated by the increase in median age of residents from 38.2 in 2006 to 39.2 in 2021. While the median age has dropped very slightly in recent years (39.5 in 2011 and 39.3 in 2016), growth for age cohorts 50+ is expected to drive an increasing share of older residents in the Town. This indicates that demand for all park and recreation culture types will grow, but demand for programs and facilities catering to seniors and older adults will see the strongest demand for new services, which is a common trend due to the expected aging of "Baby Boomers".

Table 3: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort (2006-2021)

Age Cohort	2006	2011	2016	2021
0-4	490	505	555	540
5-9	440	405	485	540
10-14	510	445	455	480
15-19	540	550	490	460
20-24	525	485	530	445
25-29	400	485	470	565
30-34	380	370	450	475
35-39	405	370	365	420
40-44	500	415	405	385
45-49	510	500	400	410
50-54	420	520	485	380
55-59	430	430	555	495
60-64	315	425	460	555
65+	1,200	1,250	1,395	1,550
TOTAL	7,069	7,151	7,492	7,699
Median	38.2	39.5	39.3	39.2
Change		82	341	207
Percent Change		1.2%	4.8%	2.8%
Share of Total Population				
0-4	6.94%	7.06%	7.40%	7.01%
5-9	6.23%	5.66%	6.47%	7.01%
10-14	7.22%	6.22%	6.07%	6.23%
15-19	7.64%	7.69%	6.53%	5.97%
20-24	7.43%	6.78%	7.07%	5.78%
25-29	5.66%	6.78%	6.27%	7.34%
30-34	5.38%	5.17%	6.00%	6.17%
35-39	5.73%	5.17%	4.87%	5.45%
40-44	7.08%	5.80%	5.40%	5.00%
45-49	7.22%	6.99%	5.33%	5.32%
50-54	5.94%	7.27%	6.47%	4.94%

55-59	6.09%	6.01%	7.40%	6.43%
60-64	4.46%	5.94%	6.13%	7.21%
65+	16.99%	17.47%	18.60%	20.13%
TOTAL	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

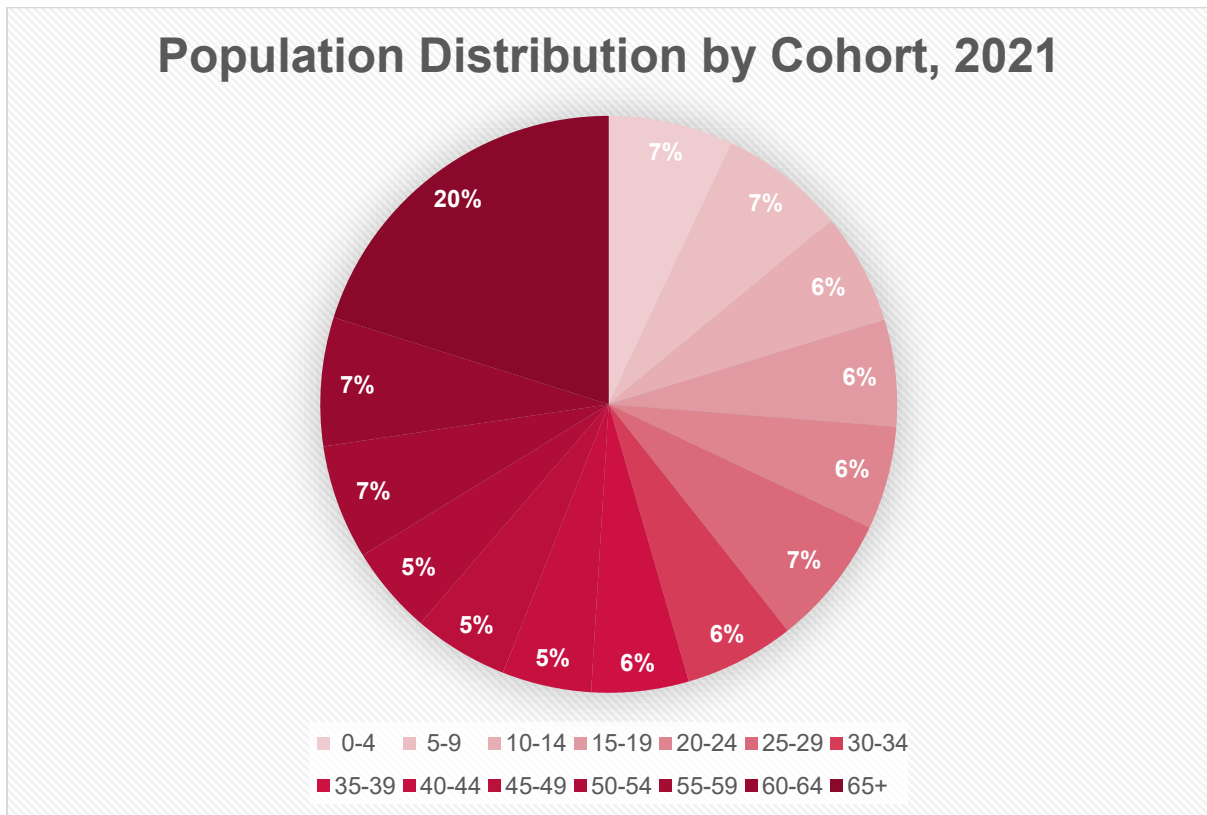


Figure 9: Aylmer Population Distribution by Cohort (2021)

Table 4: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort Male Only (2006-2021)

Population Distribution: Male Only				
Age Cohort	2006	2011	2016	2021
0-4	240	255	260	280
5-9	225	210	240	270
10-14	270	230	240	240
15-19	255	275	260	245
20-24	250	230	270	245
25-29	200	240	225	280
30-34	195	185	225	235
35-39	200	180	170	200
40-44	240	200	205	180
45-49	245	240	200	195
50-54	205	250	230	195
55-59	200	215	260	235
60-64	150	190	220	265
65+	475	510	580	655
TOTAL	3,355	3,415	3,575	3,705
Median	36.1	37.1	37.0	36.4
Change		60	160	130
Percent Change		1.8%	4.7%	3.6%

Table 5: Aylmer Population Growth by Age Cohort Female Only (2006-2021)

Population Distribution: Female Only				
Age Cohort	2006	2011	2016	2021
0-4	260	245	290	260
5-9	220	190	245	275
10-14	240	215	215	240
15-19	280	270	235	215
20-24	270	255	260	200
25-29	195	245	250	285
30-34	190	185	225	235
35-39	205	190	200	220
40-44	255	210	200	210
45-49	265	260	195	210
50-54	220	270	255	190
55-59	230	210	300	265
60-64	160	230	240	290
65+	730	750	815	900
TOTAL	3,715	3,730	3,920	3,990
Median	40.0	41.5	41.3	41.6
Change		15	190	70
Percent Change		0.40%	5.1%	1.8%

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The following provides a brief summary of some of Aylmer's key statistics based on the 2021 and 2016 Census data that may influence decisions around planning for parks and recreation:

- Aylmer's population has grown by 630 people since 2006.
- Aylmer's population has been generally aging since 2006, with a median age of 38.2 in 2006 and 39.2 in 2021 – despite this, the median age has been dropping slightly since 2011, from 39.5 to 39.2.
- Based on 2016 Census data (2021 Census data on languages is not yet available), around 72% of the population speak English as their mother tongue; in addition, the top languages spoken at home other than English are German and Spanish.

-
- 67% of people in Aylmer have a secondary (high) school diploma or above.
 - Approximately 30% of people in Aylmer have some type of post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree in 2016, compared to 45% of Ontarians.
 - The median 2020 household income is \$73,500 and the average 2020 household income is \$84,200.
 - The average household size in Aylmer is 2.5 people, with an average of two children per family.

3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

The population structure is a critical metric for determining demand for most municipal services, and especially important for estimating demand for recreation services. Recreation is strongly influenced by population structure. The age and gender of residents are critical determinants of recreation interests and frequency of use.

While recreation providers strive to engage and serve all segments of the population, youth have traditionally been the largest consumers of recreation programs and users of recreation facilities as group play and competitive intensity is at its highest during childhood and increases into young adulthood. Competitive recreational activity tends to fall off as people age, most turning to more informal and casual recreational sports or passive recreational activities as they age.

Overall, expected population growth and anticipated demographic structure information indicates that a shift in average population age will result in an increased market demand on existing facilities and services, as well as a growing market demand for the development and expansion of new facilities and services across the Town. Research shows that certain demographic groups encounter more barriers accessing resources like parks and recreation services. As a result of the projected increase in population and the estimated higher proportion of seniors, the Town will need to adjust its delivery of existing services, facilities, and programs and focus on providing more informal and casual recreational sports or passive recreational activities to accommodate such growth in older age groups. The details on how these services can be modified will be studied and determined as part of Phases 2 and 3 of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan update.

3.4 RECENT AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS

Recent developments in Aylmer include the development of 19 townhouse units on John Street South, near the Aylmer Fire Hall, the development of the New Hope Transport trucking and transport facility and the new warehousing and office space for Doorway Canada, both on Chipchase Court, and the redevelopment of the Motif cannabis processing facility. These developments have generally been completed in 2019.

A recent ongoing development is the Cottonwood Community near the eastern boundary of the Town, just off of Highway 3, on Cottonwood Boulevard. The first phase consists of 51 single-family homes, with future phases introducing multi-family homes and townhomes. The proposed development is well-connected to Aylmer's main street existing amenities, including parks and recreation facilities. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2022, with some homes ready for occupancy later in the year. Further, the Willow Run subdivision, to be located at the western end of the Willow Drive, is proposed to receive draft plan approval in 2023. The development will create 141 residential dwelling units and 44 vacant land condo units. As part of the conditions for subdivision, the owner will be required to provide 8 hectares in parkland as part of the cash-in-lieu of parkland condition. Within the parkland as part of the subdivision, the trail network will be extended.

Aylmer is a smaller community; any new residential developments can have significant impacts on parks and recreation utilization rates and the demand for more facilities and programs. Connections and impacts to parks, trails and recreation amenities must be considered when accommodating new growth.

4 PARKS AND RECREATION BENEFITS AND TRENDS



Figure 10: Balmoral Park Gardens

Parks and recreation facilities are more than just infrastructure and programs; as elements of the built environment and our social network, they are purposeful strategies that help address some of society's most challenging issues such as childhood inactivity, nature-shortfall disorder (Louv, 2006), physical literacy, social disconnectedness, and community spirit. Parks provide several benefits to their communities including public health, social, economic, and environmental benefits. These benefits become more significant where they can be considered equitable (having the greatest impact on disadvantaged groups of the population) and where their effects extend beyond the immediate users of the park to the larger community. The benefits these spaces bring and the various influences that parks and recreation trends have on society also play an important economic development and diversification role by enhancing the Town of Aylmer's distinguishability and supporting growth.

4.1 BENEFITS

Parks and recreation services have the capacity to bring diverse benefits to the residents, economy, environment, and the community. However, parks and recreation resources need to be approached with purpose and planning for the benefits to have an optimal impact on the community. Research-based evidence shows us that there are many health, social, economic, and environmental benefits related to recreation, sports, and parks/open space.



Figure 11: Benefit Categories of Parks, Recreation, and Culture in Canada

According to the National Framework for Recreation, Parks and Recreation Ontario, and Parks People, recreation and parks can address existing challenges with policies and practices that:

- **Enhance mental and physical wellbeing** by providing services that have an important role in enhancing physical activity.
- **Enhance social wellbeing** through clubs, social organizations, team sports, or providing an environment to make new friends for children and adults (Parks People, 2022).
- **Help build strong families and communities** by being a vehicle for promoting family cohesion, adaptability and resilience through community events that keep neighbours in touch with each other.
- **Help people connect with nature.** Enhanced opportunities to connect with nature can result in both environmental and human benefits (Park People, 2022; Parks and Recreation Ontario, 2015).
- **Provide economic benefits by investing in recreation.** Recreation is an important contributor to community economic development and cost reductions in other areas (i.e., health care, social services, and justice).
- **Increase in food security** associated with urban agriculture (e.g. community gardens) that have been incorporated into local park space (Parks People, 2022).

- **Tourism.** Recreation, sport, and parks programs and services have been shown to draw tourism and contribute directly and indirectly to local economies through employment opportunities, hospitality-related businesses, and other visitor spending.

It is important to understand what the direct and indirect benefits are when making decisions related to investment in parks and recreation services. This information can inform decision makers, administration, and residents on the importance of investing in these ‘amenities.’ Often, other forms of tangible infrastructure are prioritized over investments in parks and recreation without consideration of what the impact is on economic development of the community and “Quality of Life” (QOL) of current and potential residents and visitors.



Figure 12: Kinsmen Park

4.2 TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES

When planning for the future of parks and recreation, it is important to analyze and distinguish prominent trends that influence people's leisure choices at a variety of levels; across Canada, Ontario, and the Town of Aylmer. Understanding the trends in Parks and Recreation allows us to plan better for the needs of tomorrow. The following provides some key trends to consider:



Demographics

- Retirees will remain more active for much longer and will have the income, time, and health to frequently participate in activities and take advantage of facilities. The Baby Boomer generation will be major users of Town parks and recreation services.
- A widening income gap will drive the need to ensure that parks and recreation opportunities remain affordable and that programs are put in place to deliver leisure opportunities equally across incomes.
- To remain relevant, the Town will have to evolve their parks, facilities, and programs to meet the changing needs and interests of a diversifying population. In addition, efforts will be needed to connect a diversifying population to nature and the outdoors.
- The needs for an aging population should be reflected in all aspects of parks delivery and recreation opportunities and programs.
- There is an ever-increasing need to design parks in an inclusive and accessible way, with features for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. In particular, there is increased interest and need for universally accessible design and complementing accessibility features for programming to address accessibility barriers (Parks People, 2022).



Behavioural

- Individuals continue to seek park features that support their daily life functions and activities, such as areas for dog walking/off-leash dog areas; growing, cooking, or eating food; and getting exercise along or on multi-use trails (Parks People, 2022).
- There is a need to embrace a shift away from programmed parks and recreation services to more unstructured, spontaneous activities and informal spaces.
- There is an increase in people seeking connection to nature in a naturalized spaces that are close to home – typically within a 10-minute walking radius (Park People, 2022)
- Designing recreational facilities that allow for social distancing and safe gathering spaces i.e., widened trails, seating configuration, etc. to encourage social distancing, and reduced highly touched surfaces.
- Activities that have an experiential nature and offer challenges such as cultural learning and ecotourism are highly valued by users.
- There is a growing awareness of the health benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. This impacts the design of our living spaces and programs to be delivered to communities.
- Obesity rates in children and youth have tripled over the last 15 years with an increasing concern for long-term health implications.
- On average, Canadian cities have a ratio of 4.4 volunteers for every 1,000 residents, compared to 11.6 volunteers per 1,000 residents pre-pandemic (Park People, 2022). With volunteering declining:
 - New ways will need to be found to inspire the next generation of volunteers;
 - Expectations on volunteers will need to be reconsidered;
 - Attention on volunteer recognition will need to be increased; and,
 - High-quality volunteer experiences are more important than ever.
- While volunteering is declining, there is also trends indicating that people do not feel they have a voice or ability to influence decision-making in their local parks. There is an emerging opportunity to improve communication and collaboration in parks planning to expand meaningful avenues for public engagement (Park People, 2022).



Environmental & Ecological

- A growing sense of stewardship for and learning about water, air quality, and preservation of natural areas.
- There is growing desire for increased access to winter recreation activities in parks.
- Access to winterized public washrooms are essential to year-round comfort and accessibility of park spaces and are reportedly the highest requested amenity by residents across Canadian cities (Park People, 2022).
- Increased use of natural park spaces has also magnified existing challenges with municipalities' ability to maintain biodiversity in natural areas. This increased use has led to municipalities requiring separate and specific biodiversity strategy, and intentional planning, to ensure the preservation of urban biodiversity (Park People, 2022).
- The impacts of climate change are likely to present ongoing challenges for parks planning, due to the damage caused by extreme weather events such as floods, fires, and droughts (Park People, 2022). Risk of flooding may be a particularly relevant challenge for the Town of Aylmer, considering the majority of Aylmer's existing parkland is located within a floodplain. As such, the provision of naturalized spaces within this radius, and in proximity to residential neighbourhoods, will be an important consideration in the future designation and/or acquisition of parkland in the Town of Aylmer.
- Increased expectations that parks and recreation departments will demonstrate high levels of stewardship and environmental sensitivity.
- Increased public interest in the inclusion of naturalized spaces in parks, especially in neighbourhood parks in particular.
- The role of municipal conservation parks will grow as Canada works to meet biodiversity targets through raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging participation in conservation.
- 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).

-
- There is an opportunity to utilize parks for such things as green infrastructure developments (e.g. rain gardens and bioswales).
 - There is an opportunity to improve food accessibility through growing, cooking, and selling opportunities (e.g. community gardens, edible orchards, farmers markets, and bake ovens). As mentioned in the 2022 Canadian City Parks Report, an emerging trend in Parks and Recreation is the increased interest in food growing, cooking, and selling opportunities (i.e. urban agriculture)



Service Delivery

- Recent trends show that 90% of cities reported having a community grant program in place that helps fund park spaces, making this a viable avenue for parks funding (Parks People, 2022)
- 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 (Park People, 2022).
- There is a need to consider more participatory funding options for public spaces, which would allow community members to actively collaborate and contribute to the budgeting and funding of operational costs.
- Municipalities should undertake evaluation of internal policies and practices to ensure that there are policies in place to effectively address barriers to participation and provide sufficient compensation to community-based partners. The assessment of such policies would also include the examination of how relationships may be sustained in the event of municipal staff turnover, as well as considering how outcomes may be shared with engagement participants in a formalized way (Park People, 2022).
- The importance and need for strong inter-municipal partnerships and other partnerships will only grow into the future.
- Relationships should be formed with local community groups and stakeholders to keep municipalities informed about new and emerging community needs. Taking a proactive and neighbourhood-based approach ensures that there is a strong foundation of trust to build from when the time comes for more formal engagement processes (Park People, 2022).

-
- Many municipal parks are built on Indigenous traditional territory, and the Park People report addresses the importance of Indigenous consultation in developing park improvement initiatives (2022).
 - It is important to recognize and honour the role of Indigenous Peoples as the inherent caretakers of lands, as well as supporting their programming for nature education and stewardship activities (Park People, 2022).
 - Tourism and traveler demands. There is a growing understanding between park usage and people’s ability to get to the park and emphasis on providing more parks or programs, such as free transit to large, city-wide parks (Parks People, 2022).
 - Changing provincial priorities and alterations of cost recovery tools in the management of future parkland.



Facilities & Infrastructure

- As our parks and recreation assets near the end of their lifespans we need to identify opportunities to co-locate sustainably designed facilities to attract multiple users to one area creating servicing and operational efficiencies.
- Strong asset management and capital lifecycle planning will become essential as we work to provide access to the quality and diversity of parks and facilities expected by residents.
- Incorporate digital infrastructure to parks, including the implementation of free Wi-Fi and phone charging stations in parks and the creation of park-based apps (Park People, 2022).
- Esports (or organized competitive video gaming) is a growing multi-billion-dollar industry worldwide. Local recreation centers including esports have an opportunity to attract non-traditional users and bring them into facilities for the first time. New recreation design should consider space to accommodate this coming wave of recreational and competitive activity, along with added opportunities to clean and sanitize during and following an event.
- Flexible and accessible multi-purpose spaces which are gender neutral and able to accommodate a variety of activities—are the next big thing. This includes designing recreational buildings so that community amenities are more easily accessible through public transportation or to those with reduced mobility. By doing so, we can reduce sport facility parking requirements and greatly reduces the carbon footprint of the facility.

-
- Inclusivity (facilities without male or female designated spaces) is coming to sports and recreation design in North America, with Canada leading the way. Building gender neutral facilities usually means increased space requirements and upfront investment for larger washrooms or changing rooms, but often there is an operational savings.
 - Synthetic turf is increasing in popularity, particularly because these surfaces have improved dramatically. Artificial turf can offer a safer, more predictable playing surface than natural turf fields and can provide more hours of play to the communities they serve where a high level of play is required.
 - Smaller towns are seeing the value in sports and recreation as a cornerstone for development. A local hockey arena, soccer stadium, or recreation center built for competitive teams can help draw crowds, boost development, and promote active lifestyles in local neighborhoods. A multi-function facility can build the critical mass needed for retail, residential, and other development to take root. The result is a synergy between recreation and community that is likely to be an asset for years to come.

In summary, parks and recreation facilities contribute to the health (mental and physical), well-being, and quality of life of residents and visitors, while playing a role in economic development and in building community cohesiveness. The personal, social, environmental, and economic benefits of parks and recreation contribute to a community in a variety of positive ways.

5 PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT



Figure 13: Palmer Park

5.1 OVERVIEW

Aylmer provides opportunities for all residents to experience outdoor active and passive recreation at a local level. The Town recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation areas to be multi-functional, and flexible spaces 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 following section provides an inventory of the existing parkland and open space in the Town.

5.2 PARKLAND AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

Although not officially classified, the Town includes four types of parks: Parkettes / Tot Lots, Neighbourhood, Town-Wide, and Regional. These classifications are based on the 2004 Recreation & Leisure Time Master Plan. The following provides general definitions of these types of open spaces:



- **Parkettes / Tot Lots** are parks under 0.6 hectare (ha) in size. These parks generally provide visual and natural amenities, with play space for young children, landscaped areas, resting areas, or areas of historic or architectural significance (Town of Aylmer Recreation & Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004).



Figure 14: Example of a Parkette - Palmer Park



- **Neighbourhood Parks** are parks between 0.8 to 4.0 ha. These parks generally provide active sports and recreation facilities, as well as areas for passive recreation activities and natural areas (Town of Aylmer Recreation & Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004).



Figure 15: Example of a Neighbourhood Park - Crystal Park



- **Town-Wide Parks** are parks generally larger than 4 ha. They are intended for large active sports, recreation and cultural facilities, along with areas for passive recreation and natural areas such as woodlots (Town of Aylmer Recreation & Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004).



Figure 16: Example of a Town-Wide Park - Kinsmen Park



- **Regional Parks** typically vary in size but are intended to meet the needs of the broader community and region and can contain a variety of amenities and environmentally unique or sensitive areas (Town of Aylmer Recreation & Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004).



Figure 17: Example of a Regional Park - Steen Park and Conservation Area



The table below provides the distribution of parks and open spaces in Aylmer.





Table 6: Parks and Open Spaces Distribution




Park Typology	Distribution	Total Supply (ha)
Parkettes	3	0.64
Neighbourhood Parks	4	5.22
Town-Wide Parks	3	11.12
Regional Parks	2	10.68

The following table provides a description of each park and open space within the Town.



Table 7: Parkland and Open Space Inventory

Facility Name	Description	Amenities
Park Facilities		
<p>Palmer Park (Parkette)</p> 	<p>Palmer Park is approximately 0.12 hectares, located at the northeast corner of Centre Street and Sydenham in downtown Aylmer. The park is a great spot to stop for lunch or to take a break under the shade canopy of the large mature trees located within the park. The park is also frequently used for local events, celebrations, and casual meetings. Private rentals of the space is available for booking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bandshell • Stage • Committee Room • Wall of Fame - a cultural display • Public washrooms open from 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM (May - mid Oct.) • Water feature outside • 6 Picnic tables • 2 Benches • 1 Ramp that leads to the stage and garbage cans • Accessible path runs through park • Town maintained planting bed • Available for rental
<p>Balmoral Park (Regional Park)</p> 	<p>Balmoral Park is approximately 1.59 hectares, located between John Street and Myrtle along Catfish Creek in downtown Aylmer. This park is a great spot to rest after enjoying a day of shopping in the downtown. The park includes spectacular rock gardens and Aylmer's ever-growing healing garden and newly installed playground (2009). Walk along the paved walking trail and discover this beautiful urban park. It is accessible via a pedestrian underpass/walkway under the John Street Bridge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails • 2.4m wide pedestrian underpass under John St. with access to the Flat's/Steen Park South • Healing Garden • 10-year-old Splash Pad • Picnic tables • Water-filling station • Time capsule for Canada's 150-year Anniversary in a stand on display • 1 accessible and 1 regular portable washroom <p>Pool house:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of showers • 3 bathroom stalls • 2 bleachers <p>Outdoor pool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YWCA is a Town-contracted service to run programming

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mon-Fri (1-4 PM) Public Swim time • Largest outdoor pool in Elgin • 2 Diving boards (3 ft. and 5 ft.) • Has accessible change rooms and bathrooms
<p>Centennial Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Centennial Park is approximately 0.86 hectares and is located in southeast Aylmer, at the end of Alexander Drive. The park is currently being evaluated for some new landscape features and amenities. It is mostly for residential use, as it is tucked in behind homes and not easily accessible. Future connection to Brown Street is anticipated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineered Toboggan hill with a 4:1 slope • 4 Piece Swing Set (3 belt swings, and 1 baby/infant swing) • Well-shaded due to plenty of trees • Surrounded by open green space
<p>Crystal Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Crystal Park is approximately 0.5 hectares, located in southern portion of the Ward McKenna conservation area. The park has unpaved walking trails through the woodlot connecting to the park and the stormwater management (SWM) pond. A full-sized regulation paved basketball court is available; this is a multi-use park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-seasons use • Unpaved walking trails • Basketball court which can also convert to 3 Pickleball courts (unlit) • Trail connects to Lions Park • Open green space
<p>Elgin Estates Park (Parkette)</p> 	<p>This park is approximately 0.25 hectares and is located in the western portion of Aylmer at the end of Sinclair Crescent. The park has a creative play structure, benches, and trees. It is a family-oriented neighbourhood green space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Playground/small play area • 1 set of swings (1 belt swing, and 1 baby/infant swing) • 1 Basketball hoop with a small paved pad
<p>Elmview Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Elmview Park is approximately 1.74 hectares, located in the northwest portion of Aylmer, on Elm Street. The park is a naturalized green space connecting to Rotary Park with a grass pathway along Catfish Creek.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalized open space • Grassed foot path
<p>Kinsmen Park</p>	<p>Kinsmen Park is approximately 1.68 hectares and is located on the west side of Myrtle Street, north of Catfish Creek.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Pavilion with timed lighting and hydro/water

<p>(Town-Wide Park)</p> 	<p>The park is home to the Town's lit tennis courts, a new creative play structure (2005), a large pavilion, and horticultural displays. The park also contains a paved walking trail along Catfish Creek.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-piece swing set • 1 Fire department themed playground (wood chip surface with no surround) • Memorial bench • 2 Tennis Courts with relatively low rental rates • Control panel with key pad for lights at night (for the 2 tennis courts) • Male/Female washrooms open from May-Oct. • Park Operations Building: • Electric heat in portion of the building • 2 bays for workshop/storage in upper mezzanine • Outdoor seacan for extra storage
<p>Lions Park/Ward McKenna Conservation Area (Town-Wide Park)</p> 	<p>This park is approximately 5.06 hectares, located in southern portion of Aylmer. The park is well treed with large well-manicured landscaped areas, a pavilion and play structure. Unpaved walking trails run through the woodlot and to the storm water management (SWM) pond. This is a multi use park with something for everyone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater Management Pond with an unpaved walking/pedestrian trail • Rentable Gazebo with picnic tables • Porta-Pottys available • Playground with play structure and swings (2 belt, 2 infant); wood chip surface with no surround • Walkway from Fath Ave (residential street) • Naturalized trail connecting two parks • Gravel parking lot
<p>Optimist Park (Town-Wide Park)</p> 	<p>Optimist Park is approximately 4.45 hectares and is located on Elm Street, next to Kinsmen Park on the northwest side running along Catfish Creek. The park contains a lit ball diamond, pavilion, creative play structure, disc golf course, picnic areas, paved walking trail along Catfish Creek, and horticultural displays. There is a large woodcarving of a Great Blue Heron that is great for pictures. The</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavilion with timed lighting and water/hydro • Skate park • Basketball court (hoop net material requires replacement) • Graffiti on skate park (permitted/encouraged according to standards) • 2.4m wide accessible trail • Wood carving of Great Blue Heron is the first of its kind in Aylmer



	park is now home to the Town's feature skate park "THE GRIND".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball diamond
<p>Rotary Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Rotary Park is approximately 2.14 hectares, located on the west side of Elm Street, south of Lawrence Crescent. This park is a naturalized and passive park with a butterfly garden, blue bird boxes, purple martin house and the Town's memorial tree planting program. The Audubon Society has certified this park, which is a great space for all outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy year-round. Natural grass walkways run along Catfish Creek and through the naturalized sections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First municipal park in Ontario, second park in Canada, and 46th park in the world to be certified by the Audubon Cooperative Society (Town of Aylmer is the only business in Ontario who is able to use the Audubon letterhead) • Naturalized pockets of Memorial Trees • Grassed path to Optimist Park - connection to Elm St. and Hawthorne Crescent • Naturalized area has a manicured edge • Wetness and slopes in area makes the space difficult to maintain
<p>Steen Conservation Area (Regional Park)</p> 	<p>This park is approximately 9.10 hectares and is located south of Spruce Street between Murray and William Street. The park contains a full size soccer pitch and a lit ball diamond, a disc golf course, a paved walking trail going over two scenic footbridges, a tobogganing hill, and an ornamental tree arboretum that is well underway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball diamond (lit) • Soccer pitch (includes 2 bleachers) • Warning track • Tobogganing hill • 18-hole disc golf course • Naturalized area with bioswale • Informal arboretum/tree showcase • Iron bridge (vehicle accessible) • Pedestrian bridge • Paved paths • Bleachers anchored on concrete pad • Accessible trails • Parking area

5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF PARKLAND

Figure 19 shows the location and distribution of parkland in the Town, with a 400m radius buffer around each park indicating the areas that are within a 5-minute walk of parkland. While a large portion of the Town is within a short walking distance from parkland, there are some parkland deficiencies south of Talbot St W. Most of the Town’s parkland is concentrated north of Talbot St, with only Lions Park, Crystal Park and the Ward McKenna Conservation Area being the main parkland areas south of Talbot St W. Based on walkability of existing parkland, the Town can consider additional parkland in areas outside of the walkable radius.

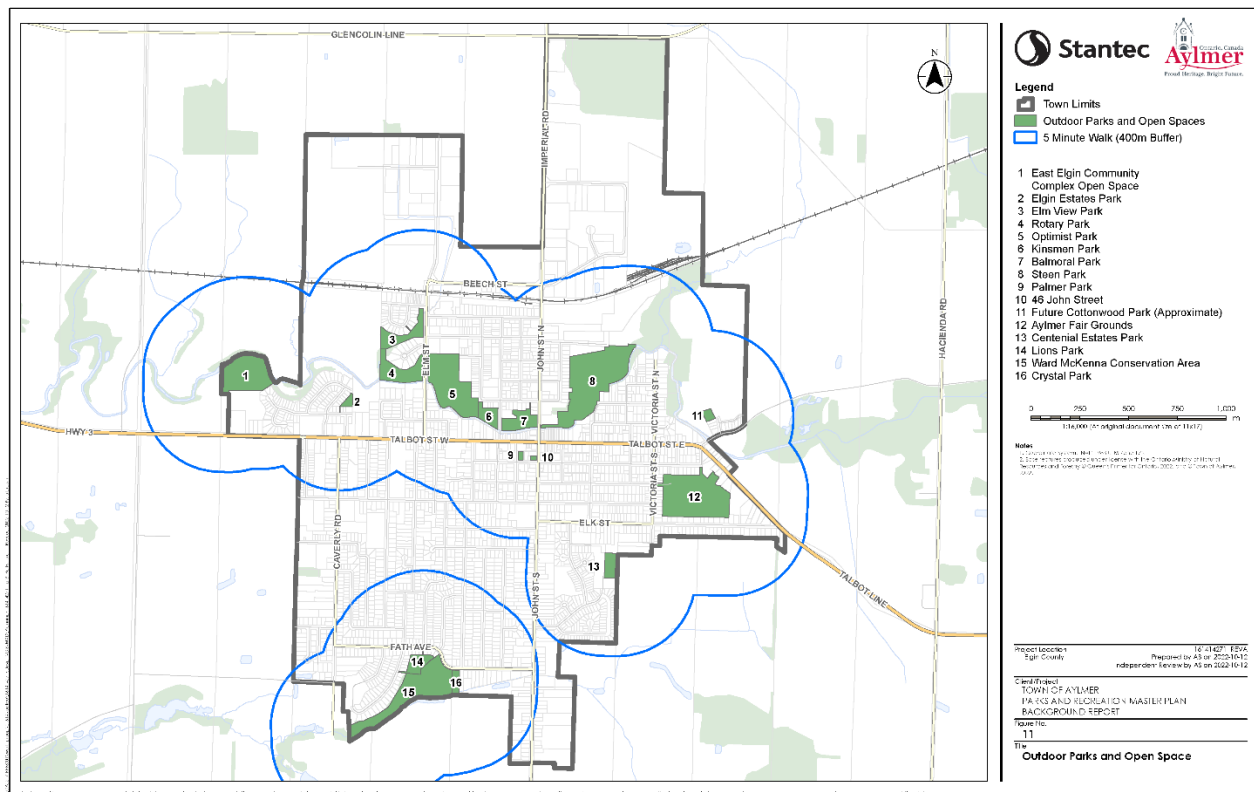


Figure 18: Parkland Distribution



5.4 PARKLAND COMPARATOR ANALYSIS

A comparator analysis was conducted to compare Aylmer's current parkland provision and actual inventory to other similar and nearby municipalities in Ontario.

Table 8: Parkland Service Level Comparison

Municipality	2021 Population	Supply of Parks	Hectares/1,000 population	Target Service Level (ha/1,000 population)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	14	3.57	3.88
Township of Malahide	9,308	7	0.79	2.2
Town of St. Mary's	7,386	19	4.55	4.2
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	18	3.39	2.5 by 2046
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	19	4.29	4.5 by 2031
Town of Petrolia	6,013	14	4.27	4.3 by 2031
Town of Shelburne	8,994	17	6.41	6.41
Town of Goderich	7,881	N/A	N/A	N/A
City of St. Thomas	42,840	43	4.83	4.0
AVERAGE	13,603	18.87	4.01	3.96

Overall, Aylmer has the 3rd lowest actual service level amongst the comparator municipalities in terms of parkland per 1,000 people and is below the average. Based on the Town's 2004 Recreation and Leisure Time Master Plan, the goal was to maintain their 2004 park provision standard of 3.88 ha/1000 people. Since then, the parkland supply has lowered slightly – this is most likely due to the slight increase in population and the types of development the Town has historically had, such as townhomes and infilling, which typically have lower amounts of parkland being conveyed due to the scale of the development. With the addition of new subdivisions, the Town's parkland supply and service level is expected to increase, specifically the addition of Willow Run Park and Trail area.

Residents in the 2004 Master Plan indicated that they were satisfied with the amount of parkland in the Town. Through surveys and public consultation sessions conducted for the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Town can further assess additional parkland needs by both type and location. Having a parkland target will help ensure that the Town can continue to provide an appropriate amount of parkland for its residents throughout the lifespan of this plan. It is recommended that as a starting point, the Town aim to provide parkland at a **4.0 ha per 1,000 people** standard to align with the average provision level of comparator municipalities. For analysis and recommendations related to amenities within parkland, refer to Section 7 of this Master Plan.

6 TRAIL ASSESSMENT

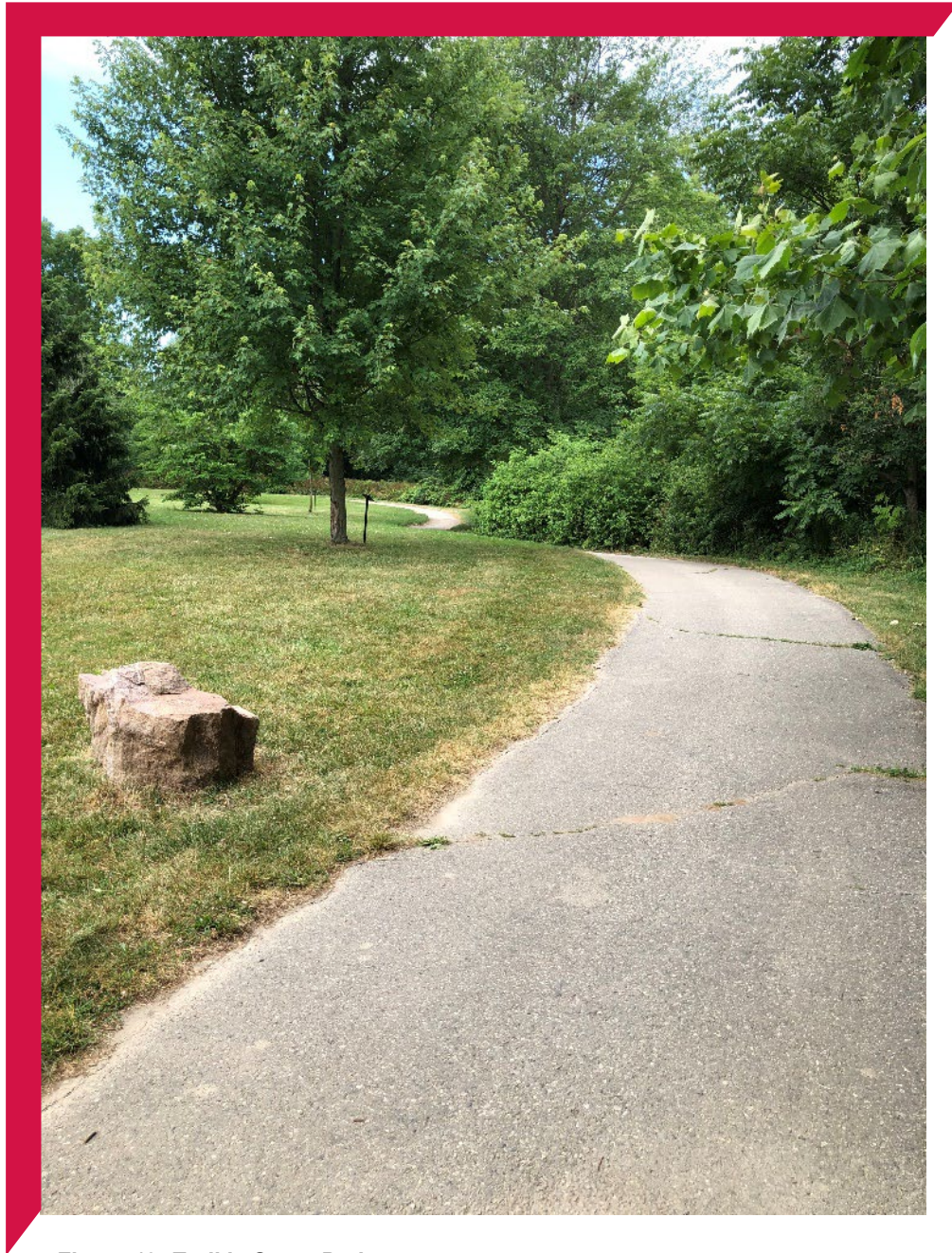


Figure 19: Trail in Steen Park

6.1 OVERVIEW

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.

6.2 CURRENT TRAIL INVENTORY

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. The following section provides a summary of existing trails in Aylmer.

6.3 DISTRIBUTION OF TRAILS

Figure 21 below illustrates the distribution of existing sidewalks (in blue), trails (in orange) as well as potential future sidewalk connections (in red). The Arboretum trail along Catfish Creek connects several parks and park amenities. Rotary Park provides an informal grass foot path within the natural area which expands upon the Arboretum Trail to the west. In Balmoral Park, there is a pedestrian underpass that connects trail users to Steen Park under St. John Street N.

An unpaved trail connects Lions Park and Crystal Park. Within Crystal Park, there are also unpaved walking trails that run through the woodlot and connect the park to the nearby Stormwater Management (SWM) Pond. Additionally, there is a new unpaved trail as part of the new re-naturalized area in Rotary Park. This trail is a grassed path that connects to Optimist Park, with added connection down to Elm Street and Hawthorne Crescent.

The condition of paved trails varies along the length. Several locations have asphalt that has cracked and requires repairs (in some cases from tree roots). Certain locations also have steep, inaccessible grades for trail access. While the width of the trail appears to be well suited for the current use, consideration should be given to trail surface material and width as it relates to future anticipated use. The Town does not currently have any dedicated cycling facilities. Cyclists use local roads to access multi-use trails within the Town.

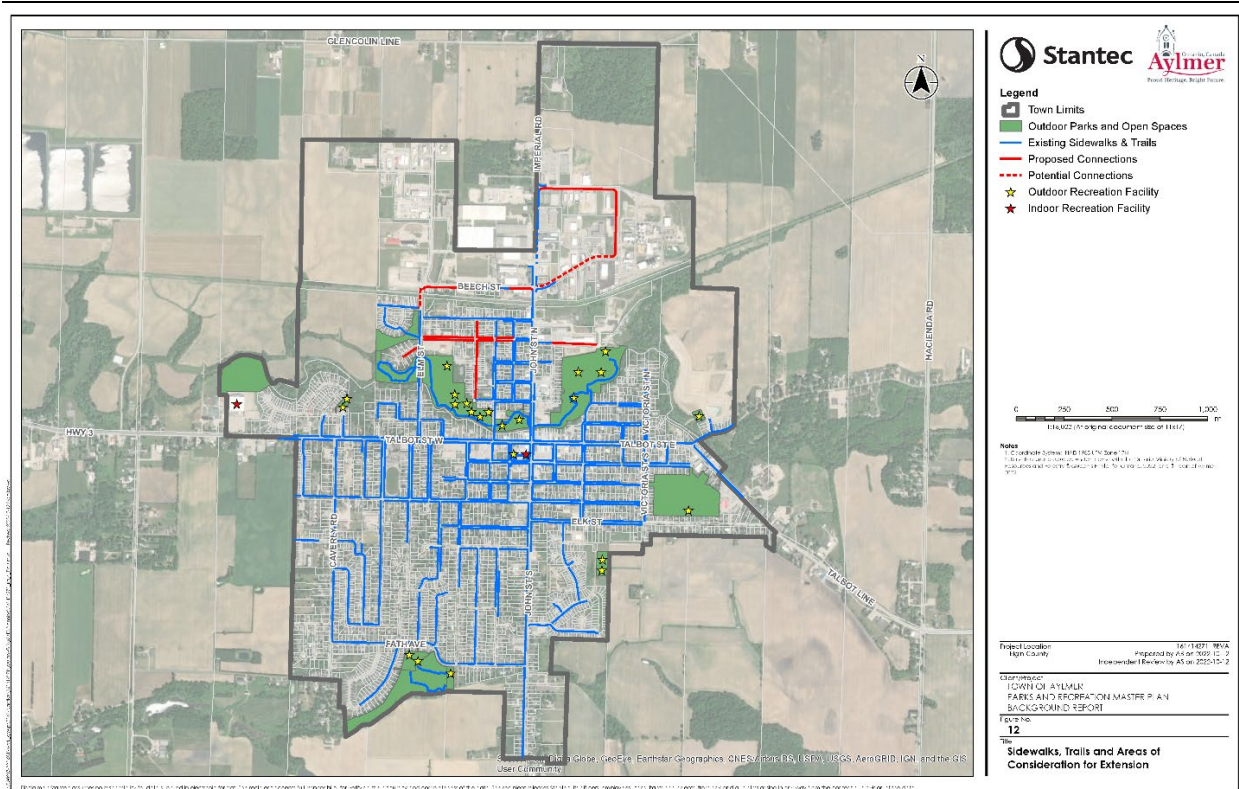


Figure 20: Trail and Sidewalk Distribution

7 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES ASSESSMENT



Figure 21: Balmoral Park Splashpad

7.1 OVERVIEW

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.

Table 9: Service Level Summary of Outdoor Recreation Amenities, Town of Aylmer

Outdoor Recreation Amenity/Service	Total Municipal	Municipal Population Provision
Outdoor Pool	1	1:7,699
Splash Pads	1	1:7,699
Ball Diamonds	2	1:3,849
Soccer/Multi-use Fields	1	1:7,699
Tennis Court	2	1:3,849
Basketball Court	3 (2 full-sized, 1 half)	1: 2,566
Pickleball Court	3	1: 2,566
Skate Park	1	1:7,699
Playground	3	1:2,566
Disc Golf Course	1	1:7,699
Tobogganing Hill	2	1:3,849
Outdoor Event Spaces	4	1:1,925
Off-leash Dog Park	0	N/A
Outdoor Rink	0	N/A

Figure 23 shows the location and distribution of outdoor facilities, along with a 400m radius buffer indicating the area that is within a 5-minute walk of an outdoor facility. Majority of the Town's outdoor facilities are clustered north of Talbot St and are located within parkland.

Note that this assessment of outdoor recreation amenities speaks to quantity and geographic distribution. A detailed facility condition assessment was not undertaken as part of the Master Plan process to assess amenity condition. This will need to be undertaken by the Town as needed throughout the lifespan of this plan.

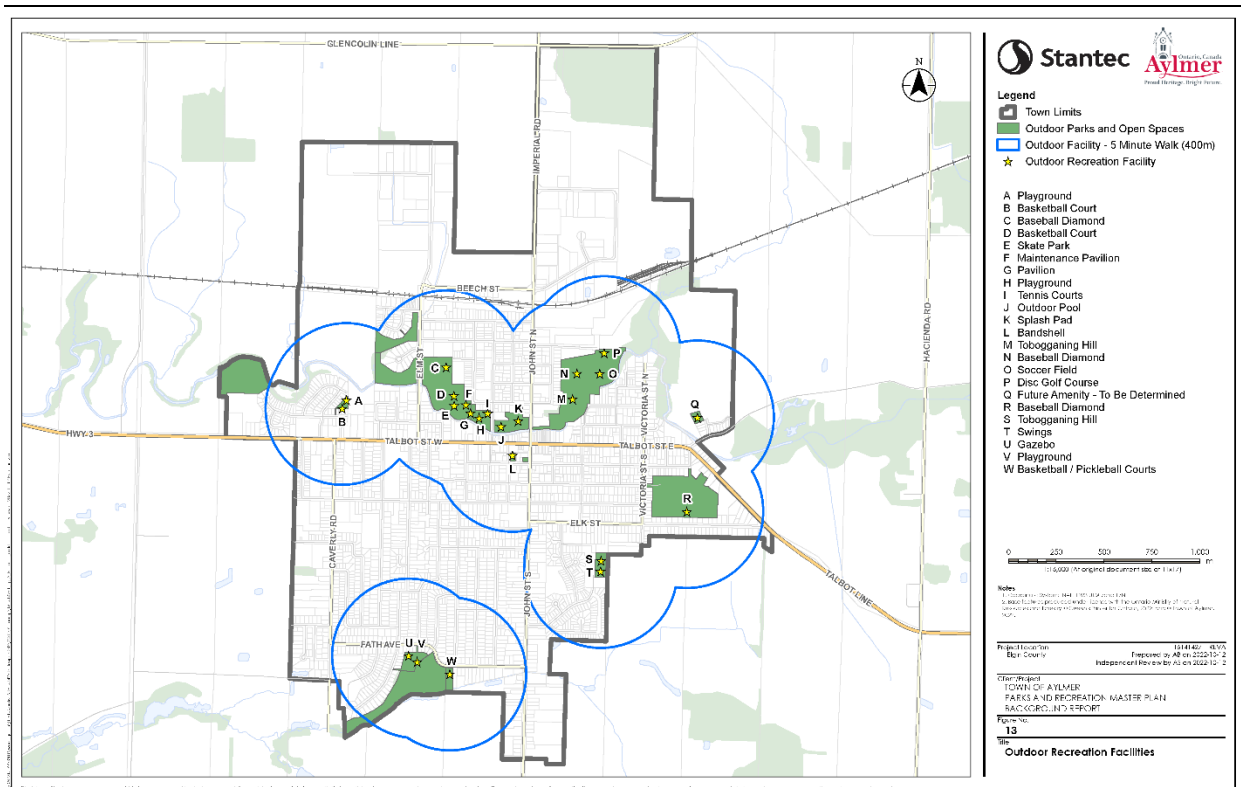


Figure 22: Outdoor Recreation Facility Distribution

7.2 OUTDOOR AQUATICS

Outdoor aquatics, including splash pads and wading pools, are popular public amenities and provide opportunities for play, social gathering, and basic cooling, often for free or low cost. These facilities need to be planned, maintained, accessible, and centrally located to facilitate access to all residents of the Town, while remaining cost effective to operate.

Current trends in municipal service delivery support a movement towards providing splash pads rather than pools or wading pools as splash pads offer a range of benefits that wading pools and pools do not. These benefits include water efficiency (when they are recirculating systems), improved accessibility, increased play value, support a potentially younger age range (toddler – 14 years) and splashpads do not require full-time, trained, aquatic supervision.

On the other hand, a full-sized pool provides greater skill development and has a greater target age range, including teenagers, adults, and seniors. Pools also allow for aquatic fitness and other sport and fitness classes, becoming a more versatile space that supports inter-generational activity, athletic therapy and recovery, and community cohesion in elderly populations.





Figure 23: Aylmer Outdoor Pool

7.2.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer currently has one main outdoor pool, with a kiddie pool and diving well. The Town also has one splashpad. Aylmer’s outdoor pool is the largest in Elgin County and includes changeroom facilities, showers, all within a new bath house. The pool is fully staffed during pool season. The splashpad is a total of 265 m² with 164 m² of spray area. The splashpad is open for all ages from 9am-9pm starting the long weekend in May to the end of September.

There are two privately-owned indoor pools near the Town – one at Terrace Lodge just outside the Town’s boundary to the east on Talbot Street East and one at the Ontario Police College, which is a 5-minute drive northeast of the Town. Both pools are currently not accessible to the public, although the Ontario Police College pool is anticipated to be available for public use in the winter of 2023.

7.2.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

The outdoor pool is open all summer for use, with programs and swimming lessons operated through the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) St. Thomas-Elgin. As it is the largest outdoor pool in Elgin County, many nearby municipalities that do not have their own pool facility, such as the Township of Malahide, utilize Aylmer’s outdoor pool and the programs offered by the YWCA.

The Town has enacted a by-law to authorize the signing of an agreement between the Town and the YWCA for the operation of the Aylmer Pool. The agreement was signed in 2018 and includes five pool seasons. The agreement would be automatically renewed for a further term of three years at the end of the term unless YWCA provides a 180-day notice to terminate the agreement. The agreement states that the YWCA is permitted to use the pool for carrying out swimming pool lessons, public swimming, and any other programs as agreed by the Town. Additionally, the YWCA is required to provide an annual report to the Town detailing the usage and budgeting details of the programs offered. The YWCA must provide at least 20.5 hours a week of programming during pool season.

Based on the historical reports from the YWCA between 2014 to 2019, the following usage splits in terms of pool programming participation between Aylmer and Malahide has been provided.

Table 10: YMCA Pool Programming Usage Splits 2014-2019 by Number of Participants

Usership	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Aylmer	305	N/A	313	291	244	208
Malahide	234	N/A	239	221	247	175
Other	146	N/A	156	138	128	107

Municipalities in “Other” category include Belmont, St. Thomas, Central Elgin, and Bayham. Generally, Aylmer has a slightly higher percentage split compared to Malahide, except in 2018. Approximately 20% of participants are from other nearby municipalities.

It was noted by the YWCA that participants dropped over the pandemic, as swimming programs were not offered in 2020 and were limited by 75% in 2021. However, as the numbers are increasing now that restrictions have been lifted, the biggest barrier to providing more programming is the lack of qualified lifeguards and staff.

Currently, an indoor pool is not feasible unless through partnerships or collaborations with other municipalities or organizations, as industry standards state that a minimum population of 40,000 is required to support an indoor pool (Recreation and Leisure Time Master Plan, 2004). YWCA is looking to come to an agreement to use the indoor pool facilities so that a wider range of programming and options are available for the Town.

7.2.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The following assessment of need is based on a standard population to amenity methodology. This methodology assesses current population numbers with the current supply of outdoor aquatics and compares the service level to that of other similar municipalities in Ontario. This methodology is used by many municipalities to benchmark supply and gives a broad understanding of how the Town compares to other communities.

Utilizing this methodology, the Town currently provides outdoor pools at a service level of 1:7,699 population ratio, or 1:2,566 if the kiddie pool and diving well are counted as separate outdoor pools. The average of the comparators listed in Table 11 provides outdoor pools at an average service level of 1:15,301.

Table 11: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Pools

Outdoor Pool	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	1	7,699
Township of Malahide	9,308	0	0
Town of St. Mary's	7,386	1 (swimming quarry)	7,386
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	0	13,693
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	1 (water park)	18,615
Town of Petrolia	6,013	0	0
Town of Shelburne	8,994	1	8,994
Town of Goderich	7,881	1 (waterfront area)	7,881
City of St. Thomas	42,840	1	42,840
AVERAGE	13,603	1	15,301

For splashpads, the Town currently provides them at a service level of 1:7,699 population ratio, with the average service level of comparators (shown in Table 12) being 1:9,892.

Table 12: Service Level Comparison, Splashpads

Splashpad	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	1	7,699
Township of Malahide	9,308	1	9,308
Town of St. Marys	7,386	1	7,386
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	1	13,693
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	0	0
Town of Petrolia	6,013	0	0
Town of Shelburne	8,994	1	8,994
Town of Goderich	7,881	1	7,881
City of St. Thomas	42,840	3	14,280
AVERAGE	13,603	1	9,892

Aylmer has a healthy supply of outdoor aquatics in comparison to other comparator municipalities. As one of the few comparator municipalities with a dedicated outdoor pool facility, Aylmer should prioritize upgrading and maintaining their aging pool so that it can maintain its status as both a local and regional attraction. While additional outdoor aquatic facilities are not required currently, the Town should examine its partnership with the

Township of Malahide and explore opportunities to increase funding for lifeguard training while maintaining the pool.

7.3 BALL DIAMONDS

7.3.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer has a current supply of three diamonds. The Town owns two softball diamonds, one at Optimist Park and one at Steen Park, which are both lit. In terms of equivalent supply, the Town has the equivalent of 4 diamonds as each lit field counts as 1.5 unlit fields to account for extended evening playing time.

Table 13: Ball Diamonds Supply

Facility Type	Actual Supply	Effective Supply (unlit equivalents)
Town Owned – Ball Diamonds	2	3
*Lit fields are counted as equivalent to 1.5 fields due to extending playtime		
**Diamonds located on property other than Town-owned, but, publicly accessible are counted as equivalent to 0.5 fields due to reduced availability		

7.3.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Baseball diamonds are able to be booked between Victoria Day and Labour Day every year. For any dates outside of that time period, it is a first come first serve basis. Currently, no allocation policy is in place for baseball diamonds and priority is typically given to youth groups and user groups based on historical usage. All booking and invoicing are done through the Book King software.

7.3.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The following assessment of need is based on a standard population to field methodology. This methodology assesses current population numbers with the current supply of fields and compares the service level to that of other similar municipalities in Ontario. This methodology is used by many municipalities to benchmark supply and gives a good broad understanding of how the Town compares to other communities.

Utilizing the equivalent supply of baseball diamonds, the Town currently provides Ball Diamonds at a service level of 1:2,566 population ratio target. Comparators listed in Table 15 provide diamonds at an average service level of 1:1,471, while current trends indicate that population centers over 100,000 generally aim to provide Ball Diamonds at an average of 1:3,000 population ratio target.

Table 14: Service Level Comparison, Baseball Diamonds

Ball Diamonds	2021 Population	Equivalent Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	3	2,566
Township of Malahide	9,308	5	1,862
Town of St. Marys	7,386	12	615
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	12	1,141
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	12.5	1,489
Town of Petrolia	6,013	6	1002
Town of Shelburne	8,994	5	1,799
Town of Goderich	7,881	5.5	1,339
City of St. Thomas	42,840	30	1,428
AVERAGE	13,603	10	1,471

Aylmer is slightly lacking in ball diamonds in comparison to other comparator municipalities. There may be demand for another hardball diamond or a facility for tournaments going forward as the Town's population increases. Based on the comparator assessment above and current trends, it is recommended that Aylmer reach a service level comparable to similar sized Ontario municipalities at 1:1,500.

**Figure 24: Baseball Diamond in Steen Park**

7.4 SOCCER PITCHES

7.4.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer has a current supply of seven full soccer pitches, two youth sized pitches and two mini pitches. The Town owns one full size soccer pitch within the Steen Conservation Area and one youth-sized pitch at Crystal Park. The German Canadian Club at Saxonia Hall owns a five-acre sports field that is equipped with one full-sized soccer pitch and one youth-sized pitch. East Elgin Secondary School also contains a full-sized soccer pitch, but it is not readily available for use. The Knights of Columbus Soccer Complex is just outside of the municipal boundary and consists of four full-sized pitches and two mini pitches, which is used by the East Elgin Youth Soccer League (EEYSL). While these pitches are not within the Town boundary or owned by the Town, they are heavily used by Aylmer residents within the EEYSL.

Table 15: Soccer Pitch Supply

Facility Type	Actual Supply	Effective Supply
Town Owned – Soccer Pitches	2	2
Knights of Columbus Soccer Complex – Soccer Pitches	6 (4 full, 2 mini)	3.5
German Canadian Club – Soccer Pitches	2	0.75
East Elgin Secondary School – Soccer Pitches	1	0.5
Total Combined	11	6.75
*Fields located on property other than Town-owned, but, publicly accessible are counted as equivalent to 0.25 – 0.5 fields (dependent on field size and if lines due to reduced availability)		

7.4.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

The most used fields are the ones utilized by the EEYSL. As the Knights of Columbus Soccer Complex is not within the Town's boundary and is not managed by the Town, facility usage information is not available currently.

7.4.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The following assessment of need is based on a standard population to field methodology. This methodology assesses current population numbers with the current supply of fields and compares the service level to that of other similar municipalities in Ontario. This methodology is used by many municipalities to benchmark supply and gives a good broad understanding of how the Town compares to other communities.

The Town currently provides soccer pitches at a service level of 1:3,849 population if only counting the soccer pitches owned by the Town. When including soccer pitches owned by others and looking at the equivalent supply, the Town provide soccer pitches at a

1:1,140 population ratio. Comparators listed in Table 16 provides fields at an average service level of 1:1,920.

Table 16: Service Level Comparison, Soccer Pitches

Soccer/Multi-Use Fields	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	2	3,849
Township of Malahide	9,308	0 (4 privately owned)	N/A
Town of St. Marys	7,386	6.5	1,136
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	12.5	1,095
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	14.5	1,284
Town of Petrolia	6,013	0 (5 privately owned)	N/A
Town of Shelburne	8,994	3	2,998
Town of Goderich	7,881	3.5	2,252
City of St. Thomas	42,840	52	824
AVERAGE	13,603	10	1,920

Table 16 indicates that Aylmer is lacking in terms of soccer pitches in comparison to the average of other comparator communities. However, as the majority of the soccer pitches used by Town residents are privately owned, no additional soccer pitches are required as long as those pitches remain available to the Town. It is recommended that Aylmer continually work with the EEYSL and the Knights of Columbus to ensure an adequate supply of soccer fields and programs are provided, reducing costs and pressures for the Town to incorporate additional fields. Based on the comparator assessment above and current trends, it is recommended that Aylmer maintain a service level comparable to similar sized Ontario municipalities at 1:1,500 when including privately owned pitches.

7.5 PLAYGROUNDS

7.5.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer has a current supply of three playgrounds located in Kinsmen Park, Elgin Estates Park, and Lions Park.

7.5.2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The following assessment of need is based on a standard population to amenity methodology. This methodology assesses current population numbers with the current supply of playgrounds and compares the service level to that of other similar municipalities in Ontario. This methodology is used by many municipalities to benchmark supply and gives a good broad understanding of how the Town compares to other communities.

Utilizing this methodology, the Town currently provides playgrounds at a service level of 1:2,566. The average service level of the comparators listed in Table 17 is 1:1,703.

Table 17: Service Level Comparison, Playgrounds

Playground	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	3	2,566
Township of Malahide	9,308	5	1,862
Town of St. Marys	7,386	9	821
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	13	1,053
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	14	1,330
Town of Petrolia	6,013	7	859
Town of Shelburne	8,994	2	4,497
Town of Goderich	7,881	20	394
City of St. Thomas	42,840	22	1,947
AVERAGE	13,603	10.5	1,703

Aylmer is slightly lacking in playgrounds in comparison to other comparator municipalities. Rather than a per population level, trends and best practices indicate that it is better to try to supply playgrounds based on a service distance radius striving to have one playground within 500 metres of all or more residential areas to serve youth demands at the neighbourhood level. Based on the comparator assessment in Table 18 and current trends, it is recommended that Aylmer maintain a service level comparable to similar sized Ontario municipalities at 1:1,700 or geographically within 500 metres (5-10min walk) of residential areas.

7.6 TENNIS & PICKLEBALL COURTS

Tennis is a fast-growing sport as Town-provided outdoor courts allow for the sport to remain affordable for players. It is a non-gender-biased sport, which means it is played equally across all genders and it is represented by a large range of ages (~4-100). Tennis Canada also notes that it is popular among new Canadians with 23 per cent of tennis players being born outside of Canada (Tennis Canada, 2019).

Similarly, pickleball is also a rapidly growing sport and is played both indoors and outdoors. It is currently working toward National Sport Organization status and is expected to grow 15 per cent annually (Pickleball Canada, 2018).

7.6.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer has a current supply of two outdoor tennis courts and three outdoor pickleball courts. The two well-lit tennis courts are located at Kinsmen Park and can be rented. The basketball court at Crystal Park can be converted into three pickleball courts, but no dedicated outdoor pickleball courts are currently provided in the Town.

7.6.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Tennis and pickleball court usage is currently not being tracked by the Town.



7.6.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town is currently providing outdoor tennis courts at a service level of 1:3,849 population ratio. Comparator municipalities in Table 18 provide outdoor tennis courts at an average service level of 1:3,861.

Table 18: Service Level Comparison, Tennis

Tennis Court	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	2	3,849
Township of Malahide	9,308	0	0
Town of St. Marys	7,386	4	1,846
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	4	3,423
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	3	6,205
Town of Petrolia	6,013	2 (shared with pickleball)	3,006
Town of Shelburne	8,994	0	0
Town of Goderich	7,881	2	3,940
City of St. Thomas	42,840	9	4,760
AVERAGE	13,603	3	3,861

The Town is currently providing outdoor pickleball courts at a service level of 1:2,566, with the average service level of comparator municipalities being 1:3,060.

Table 19: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Pickleball

Pickleball Court	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	3 (shared with basketball)	2,566
Township of Malahide	9,308	0	0
Town of St. Marys	7,386	0	0
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	0	0
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	0	0
Town of Petrolia	6,013	2 (shared with tennis)	3,006
Town of Shelburne	8,994	0	0
Town of Goderich	7,881	6	1,313
City of St. Thomas	42,840	8	5,355
AVERAGE	13,603	2	3,060

Based on the assessment above, Aylmer is slightly below the average service level of the comparator municipalities. The majority of the comparator municipalities do not have dedicated outdoor pickleball courts as its popularity is still growing. Typically, communities with higher proportions of seniors tend to have higher demand for pickleball facilities. As Aylmer's population is generally aging, the provision of both indoor and outdoor pickleball facilities provides an activity that can be enjoyed all seasons by all ages. As the Town also has six indoor pickleball courts within the EECC, additional tennis and pickleball courts are not anticipated to be in demand at this time. Partnerships with local schools can be explored to implement indoor pickleball courts in school gymnasiums for a more equitable geographic distribution of recreation services.

Based on the above assessment, it is recommended that the Town maintain a service level of 1:4,000 for tennis courts and 1:3,000 for pickleball courts.

7.7 BASKETBALL COURTS

7.7.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Aylmer is currently supplying three basketball courts: 1 full-sized unlit court located at Crystal Park (shared with pickleball); 1 multi-purpose asphalt pad with a single basketball hoop located at Elgin Estates Park; and 1 basketball court located at Optimist Park.

7.7.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Basketball court usage is not currently being tracked by the Town.

7.7.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The following assessment of need is based on a standard population to court methodology. This methodology assesses current population numbers with the current supply of fields and compares the service level to that of other similar municipalities in Ontario. This methodology is used by many municipalities to benchmark supply and gives a good broad understanding of how the Town compares to other communities.

Utilizing the above methodology, the Town currently provides outdoor basketball courts at a service level of 1:2,566. The average service level of comparator municipalities is 1:7,705.

Table 20: Service Level Comparison, Basketball Courts

Basketball Court	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Aylmer	7,699	3 (shared with pickleball)	2,566
Township of Malahide	9,308	1	9,308
Town of St. Marys	7,386	0 (3 owned by others)	N/A
Town of Ingersoll	13,693	3	4,564
Town of Tillsonburg	18,615	1.5	12,410
Town of Petrolia	6,013	0.5	12,026
Town of Shelburne	8,994	1	8,994
Town of Goderich	7,881	1	7,881
City of St. Thomas	42,840	11	3,894
AVERAGE	13,603	2	7,705

Based on the assessment above, Aylmer has an adequate number of basketball courts. Though there may be an opportunity to implement another full-sized basketball court, the Town can continue to maintain a service level below 1:7,700, based on the average service levels of comparator municipalities.

8 INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES ASSESSMENT



Figure 25: East Elgin Community Complex

8.1 OVERVIEW

Quality municipal recreation facilities are essential to the ability of the Town and community to offer effective and efficient recreation services. The Town operates diverse facilities where individuals, families and the community gather for improved health and well-being through social, educational, recreation and fitness opportunities. Its purpose is to provide quality, accessible health, and wellness programs where participants build relationships and learn. By working collaboratively with stakeholders and partners, it is important to help children and youth reach their full potential, supports families with services, connects and engages with seniors and enables individuals to thrive.

Recreation and community services and programs are offered by municipal recreation facilities and the quality and accessibility of these facilities is essential for effective and efficient recreation and culture services.

Trends in recreation have changed significantly since many of the Town's recreation facilities were built. Firstly, facilities that integrate multiple uses and bring together recreational, cultural, and civic services, along with greenspaces, helps break down barriers to participation and offers residents a true centre of community life. New facilities should emphasize an integrated approach in design and service delivery and be a model for energy efficient design within the community.

Another trend in the provision of municipally owned indoor recreation facilities is meeting the unique needs of different age groups while ensuring their active participation through all stages of life. Success means a variety of purposefully designed spaces and programs, from early childhood development to youth, family, adult, seniors, and intergenerational opportunities.

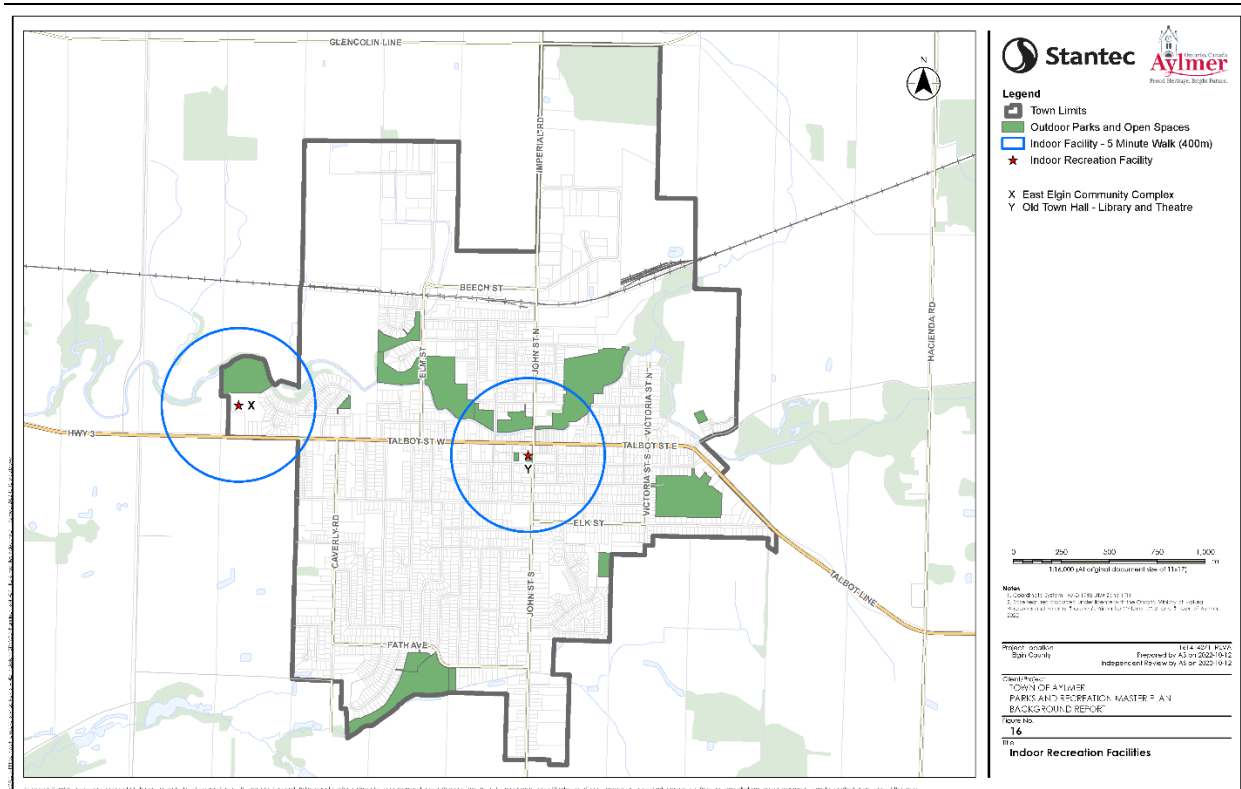


Figure 26: Indoor Recreation Facility Distribution

8.2 INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY

The Town currently owns/operates two indoor recreational facilities. The following table provides a summary of the indoor amenities found in Recreation Facilities in Aylmer.

The following sections details the activities, amenities and uses associated with each indoor recreational facility.

Table 21: Indoor Recreation Facility Inventory

Indoor Recreation Amenity/Service	Total Municipal & Private	Municipal/Private Per Population Provision
Ice Pads	2	1:3,849
Pickleball Courts	6 (in the EECC)	1:1,283
Multi-purpose spaces & meeting rooms	7	1:1,100
Theatre	1	1:3,849
Library	1	1: 2,566
Indoor Pool	0	N/A
Multi-Purpose Gymnasium	0	N/A
Fitness Spaces	0	N/A

Figure 27 shows the location and distribution of indoor facilities in the Town, with a 400m radius buffer indicating the area that is within a 5-minute walking distance to the facility. As the Town only owns two facilities, most of the Town residents are not within short walking distance to an indoor recreation facility.

8.2.1 EAST ELGIN COMMUNITY COMPLEX

The East Elgin Community Complex is a major community centre, which is jointly owned and operated by the Town of Aylmer and the Township of Malahide. The complex first opened to the public on May 29, 2004 and is situated on 17 acres of land. It includes a multi-purpose community hall, a hall on the mezzanine level that overlooks the Eastlink Arena, which has a seating capacity of 178 people. A brief summary of notable features and amenities in this complex is outlined below.

Table 22: East Elgin Community Complex Amenity Breakdown

Name	Amenities/Features
Imperial Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seats up to 600 people • Used for weddings, pickleball, shuffleboard, and other indoor programming and events • Can be divided into 3 smaller halls
Eastlink Arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHL sized ice pad • Home ice of the Aylmer Spitfires and Aylmer Minor Hockey • Chair-style seating • Seating Capacity: holds 756 people in the stands
Kinsmen Arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHL sized ice pad • Home ice of the BAD Girls Hockey Association and Aylmer Figure Skating club • Bleacher-style seating • Seating Capacity: holds 366 people in the stands
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-shop featuring skates sharpening • 2 Concession booths • A commercial kitchen • 13 Dressing rooms

8.2.1.1 Ice Allocation Policy

One ice pad is kept in all year round, with the second ice pad removed at the end of May and is installed again the first week of August. Ice allocation is done twice a year – once for ice time from September-March and another time for April-August. The policy is in place to ensure that the ice time is equally divided between each major user. The guideline followed during the allocation of ice time is as follows:

1. Resident Youth Groups (Aylmer Minor Hockey Association, B.A.D. Girls Hockey Association, Aylmer Skating Club, East Elgin Schools)
2. Junior C and Senior A

-
3. Resident Adult Groups (Leagues, Teams and Individual Groups)
 4. East Elgin Community Complex Programs
 5. Private/Commercial Rentals

Once a user has requested this ice time and it is allocated to them, they cannot return this ice time. Youth groups are prioritized when it comes to ice time allocation and they get a discount from the regular prime rate, paying only 80% of the costs with the remaining 20% subsidized by Aylmer and Malahide. The EECC also allocates time for public recreational skating, tiny tots, adult skate, shinny, mini shinny, and figure skating.

8.2.2 OLD TOWN HALL

The Old Town Hall was built in 1874 and completed restored in the 1980s, and is now home to the Aylmer library, theatre plays, and musical performances hosted by the Aylmer Community Theatre and the Aylmer Performing Arts Council. The theatre within the Old Town Hall can be rented for special occasions, such as company parties, weddings, or birthday dinners. The capacity for the Old Town Hall is 180 people, with the main floor able to hold 85 people and the balcony holding 95.

Other amenities within the Old Town Hall include elevator access, a large projection screen, a Kiawa piano, microphones, a refreshment counter, dressing rooms for theatrical performances, and a small kitchen with a fridge and stove. Old Town Hall also provides table and chair set-up and in-house light and sound technicians.

9 PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

9.1 OVERVIEW

The Town provides several recreational programs, including various skating programs and indoor pickleball. Independent sports committees, organizations, groups, or teams also run various programs within the Town, utilizing municipal, school board or private facility space. Rental fees are only required for some of the spaces available. If a rental fee is required, it is collected by a user group rather than the Town.

For events, event permits are not required for users and therefore it is common for groups to set up informal events within Town parks throughout the year without consultation with the Town to ensure there is appropriate insurance and safety measures in place. While pavilion rentals and large gatherings in parks are documented, other informal gatherings may also take place in parks that do not have a paper trail.

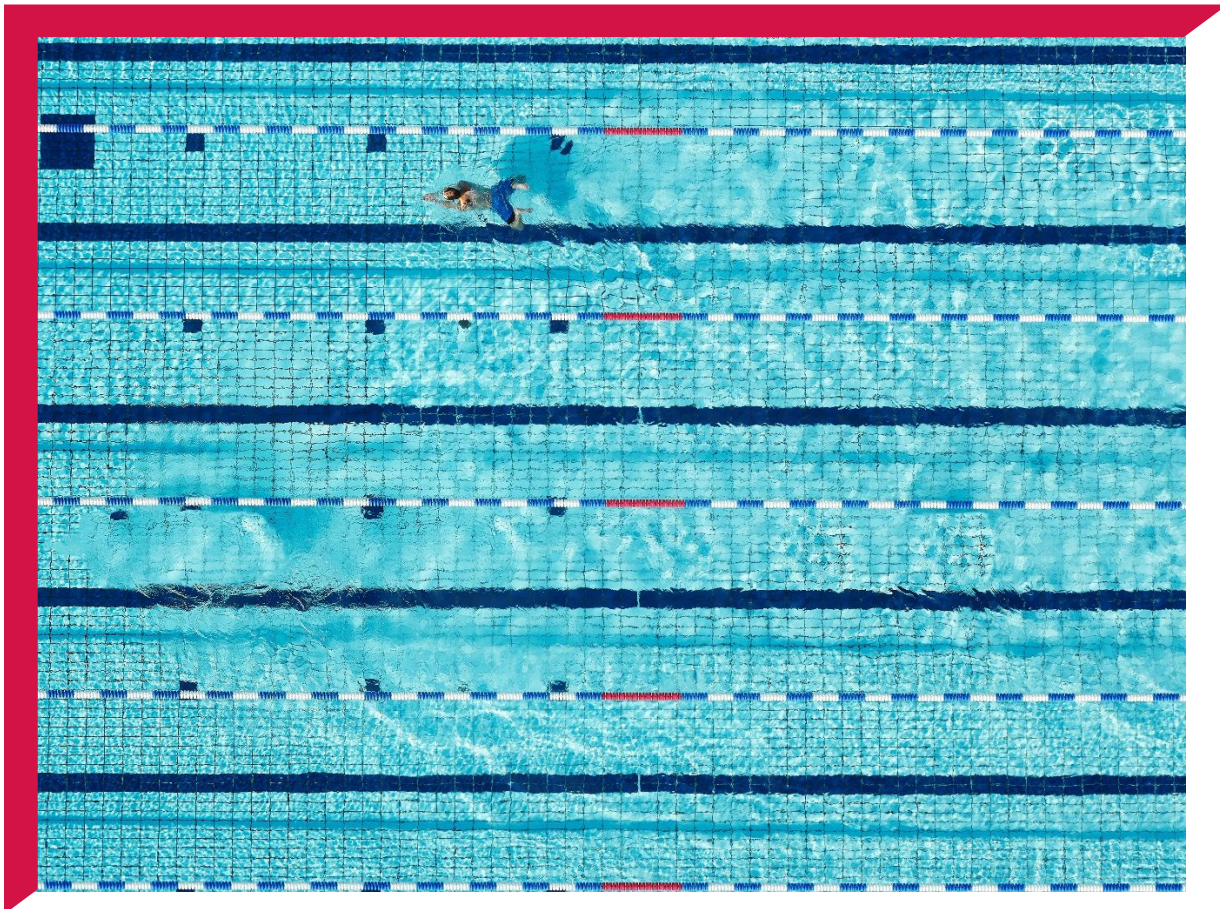


Figure 27: Recreation Programming

9.2 EXISTING RECREATION PROGRAMS & STRUCTURE

9.2.1 ICE PROGRAMMING

The Town of Aylmer offers a variety of programming and activities for people of various age groups in the community. Some of the existing recreational programs provided by the Town are outlined in the table below:

Table 23: Recreational Programs Offered by Aylmer in the EECC

Program/Activity	Description
Adult Skate	Adults come and enjoy recreational drop-in skating. No pucks or sticks allowed.
Family Skate	Time for families to enjoy skating together; occurs every last Friday of the month.
Figure Skating	Scheduled ice time for figure skaters to practice their craft in supplement to club programs.
Shinny	All-ages pick-up hockey scheduled at the East Elgin Community Complex (EECC).
Mini Shinny	A unique combination of Tiny Tots and the Shinny program. This is an opportunity for parents to bring their preschool aged children (5 and under) to play hockey.
In Be-“tween” Shinny	Pick-up hockey scheduled for individuals between the ages of 6 and 12.
Super Shinny	Pond hockey; Full equipment is recommended. For ages 20+
Tiny Tots	A time for parents to bring their preschoolers out to learn how to skate. For ages 5 and under.

9.2.2 AQUATICS PROGRAMMING

Aquatics programming located in the outdoor pool is coordinated by the YWCA as a contracted service with the Town of Aylmer. While working in partnership with the Town, YWCA is responsible for the booking and scheduling of lessons, aquatics training, lifeguard certification, and recreational swim at the largest outdoor pool in Elgin County. The outdoor pool is located in Balmoral Park, at 7 Myrtle Street in the Town of Aylmer.

Registration in advance is required for all swimming lessons, lifesaving and lifeguarding training courses, and it is also available for some recreational swimming programs to reserve a spot/secure a space. All registration is on a first come, first served basis, and payment is required at the time of registration to secure a spot. Spaces are limited at the outdoor pool, and in some cases, waitlists are maintained where possible. The YWCA cites that the provision of notice may be minimal in unexpected situations such as inclement weather, pool fouling, mechanical issues or facility closure. For safety reasons, the pool is also closed for 30 minutes following any perceived thunder.

In accordance with the information provided by the YWCA, delayed, missed, or cancelled programs or swim times are not rescheduled. However, changes will be communicated in a timely manner to the best of staff ability.

Furthermore, changerooms, washrooms, and showers are also available onsite of the outdoor pool. As well, viewing areas during swim lessons will also be made available along the outside of the fence perimeter. However, seating on the deck is not permitted during these swim lessons.

9.2.2.1 Lessons and Structured Swim/Programming

Currently, the Town's outdoor pool offers a variety of structured aquatics programs. A key provider of one of the most notable programs – the Swim for Life program – is the Lifesaving Society. This program offers swim lessons for children ages 5 to 12 and accommodates their progression through the different skill levels as they progressively increase in difficulty and challenge. The Swim for Life program helps build basic and foundational swimming skills in children and youth, and the program is broken up into sessions that run throughout the summer months (July – August) and are each approximately a week in length. The pool is reserved for swim lessons during the day and evenings, typically from 10:00 AM – 12:15 PM, and from 4:15 PM – 5:15 PM. Private lessons are also offered at the outdoor pool during specified sessions, and typically run during evening hours (4:45 PM – 5:15 PM) on a specific day of the week, for four consecutive weeks in the summer for each session.

Other aquatics programming includes Lifesaving & Lifeguarding Training. These programs are also provided by the Lifesaving Society and are also broken up into distinct skill levels. Lifesaving and Lifeguarding training programs are run Monday-Thursday from 9:30 AM – 12 PM (noon) throughout the summer.

9.2.2.2 Recreation Swimming

Recreation swimming is available during summer months starting in July and is provided based on pool supervision and capacity requirements/limits. As such, space and availability for recreation swimming may be limited, and registration is required for some recreational swim programs. The table below summarizes and outlines the recreational swim programs that are available at the outdoor pool.

Table 24: Swimming Programs Offered by Aylmer

Recreational Swimming Programs	Description	Days	Times
Preschool Playtime	Recreational swim time in the wading pool for children under 5 years of age, accompanied and supervised by a parent/guardian. Registration available or pay as you go (space permitting).	Monday-Thursday Sessions vary and run throughout the summer (July-August)	10:15-11 AM 11:15-12 PM
Public Swim	Pay-as-you-go recreational swim time for all ages.	Monday-Friday	1-4 PM
Lane Swim, Water Walking & Exercise	Recreational swimming in 2 lanes, water walking & swimming exercise in the other 3 lanes of the main pool. Lane swims are a great workout, while water walking is more of a low-impact exercise that mixes the benefits of walking with the buoyancy of water. Water walking reduces stress on the joints while helping to strengthen muscles. Registration available or pay as you go (space permitting).	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	4:15-5:15 PM

Recreational Swim Rates and fees for the pay-as-you-go option at the pool for each daily swim program are also shown in the table below:

Table 25: Recreational Swim Rates - Aylmer

Recreational Swim Rates	Day Pass	Swim Pass (12 Swims)
Child (17 & under)	\$3	\$30
Adult	\$5	\$50
Family (up to 6 people of the same household, up to 2 adults)	\$14	\$140

Data is currently unavailable for indoor aquatics programming in the Town.

9.2.3 OTHER PROGRAMMING

In addition to ice and aquatics programs, the Town also offers several other programs, with many targeted towards the adult and senior population, as shown in the table below.



Table 26: Other Programs Offered by Aylmer

Program/Activity	Description
Shuffleboard	One of the Town's most popular programs. A game where discs are slid with a prolonged cue along a smooth, level surface toward triangular targets – which are painted on the surface and divided into numbered scoring areas.
Pickleball	A racquet sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis. Two, or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite material to hit a perforated polymer ball over a net. A fast-growing sport and program.
Adult Horseshoes	This drop-in program is offered to all adults free of charge. Only offered from June to August.
Junior Horseshoes	This drop-in program is offered to all juniors free of charge (ages 6-12). Only offered from June to August.

10 VISION & STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

To guide the establishment of recommendations for the Town of Aylmer Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a Vision, and series of four (4) Strategic Directions were developed.

10.1 Vision

Parks and recreation are essential to ensuring a healthy community and high quality of life for Aylmer residents. In alignment with the Town of Aylmer Strategic Plan, the vision for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is as follows:

Ensure a safe and inclusive environment for families to live, work, and play through the provision of accessible, affordable, and inclusive recreational programming, facilities, assets, infrastructure and greenspace to meet current and future needs.

10.2 Strategic Directions

The following strategic directions have been identified for Aylmer's Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

Strategic Direction #1 – Provide comprehensive network of parkland, trails, and open space within the Town that allows for a diverse, inclusive, and affordable range of outdoor recreation opportunities that provides connections to nature and encourages an active lifestyle for people of all ages and abilities.

Strategic Direction #2 - Enhance the indoor municipal recreational facilities and services in a manner that focuses on enriching the lives of all community members by supporting accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences, with the Town progressively increasing its leadership role in the coordination of services and standardized partnerships with external providers.

Strategic Direction #3 - Expand the recreational programs being offered by the Town and explore improvements to service delivery and program options to cater to the changing needs of the community, as well as methods of promoting these programs to community members and the broader region.

Strategic Direction #4 - Monitor the Town's assets in a deliberate and structured manner, with a central contact for the public who is responsible for the management of all indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as the overseeing of each of the services provided within those facilities.

11 RECOMMENDATION & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 OVERVIEW

The recommendations outlined in this Master Plan result from public and stakeholder feedback, municipal comparators, parks and recreation trends analysis, and the assessment of needs and gaps within the services provided by the Town of Aylmer. They cover actions related to local parks and recreation governance, capacity-building, collaboration, communications, indoor and outdoor sports, recreation facilities and amenities, seasonality, trails, parks and open spaces, and accessibility and inclusion. Some recommendations will have greater relevance or importance in the short term compared to medium and long-term recommendations. Overall, the recommendations work together through the short, medium, and long-term to achieve the following Master Plan goals:

- Strive to provide a target of 4.0 hectares of parkland for every 1,000 residents to meet the needs of Aylmer's growing population.
- Enhance outdoor and indoor municipal recreational facilities and services in a manner that focuses on enriching the lives of all community members. This can be achieved through supporting accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences, with the Town progressively increasing its leadership role in the coordination of services and standardized partnerships with external providers.
- Monitor the Town's assets in a deliberate and structured manner, with a central contact for the public who is responsible for the management of all indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as overseeing each of the services provided within those facilities.




The recommendations provided in this section are not intended to be a definitive list, as additional capital repairs, operating expenditures, and other initiatives outside the scope of this Plan may be identified and prioritized on a case-by-case basis throughout the lifespan of this Master Plan. By receiving the Master Plan, the Town is not bound to implementing every recommendation; rather, this Master Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined.

The implementation of said recommendations is accomplished through an implementation strategy. This strategy provides a framework to ensure that the most critical recommendations are dealt with in a timely fashion while the less critical recommendations are implemented over the lifespan of the Master Plan, based on staff and fiscal capacity. Simply, the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should







be implemented. All recommendations are important and, if properly implemented, will benefit Parkland, Trails, and Open Space; Indoor Recreational Facilities; Programs and Services Delivery; and Financing, Management and Staff Strategies within the Town. The priority/timing of recommendations in this section are organized into the following three categories: short-term, mid-term, or long-term priority.

The recommendations are based on what is needed and not what is financially achievable within the Town at the present time. The priority of each recommendation considers current needs while also considering budgetary pressures and other factors that may impact implementation. Priorities set as a part of this Master Plan are for guidance purposes only and should regularly be revisited throughout the lifespan of this plan and prior to the annual preparation and development process for key capital and operating budgets. The impacts of Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, on these recommendations will need to be continually monitored due to its implications associated with parkland and parkland reserve funds among other factors.





Legend	
	Short-Term Priority: 1-3 years
	Mid-Term Priority: 4-6 years
	Long-Term Priority: 7-10+ years

11.2 LEGISLATION AND POLICY STRATEGIES



<p>1. The Town should review a range of alternative parkland acquisition strategies and not solely rely on subdivision developments for acquiring new parkland. This recommendation entails updating the Town’s Parkland Conveyance By-law to require rental housing developments that surpass a certain number of units to provide parkland conveyance or cash-in-lieu. This ensures that the Town can maintain an adequate parks supply going forward. Impacts from Bill 23 will need to be considered in the feasibility of this recommendation.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
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<p>2. Review and adjust Development Charges rates to provide funding that reflects the needs and expectations of the community in terms of parks and recreation services.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>3. Develop standard minimum parcel criteria within the Town when accepting the conveyance of land as parkland. Consultation with Developers and the School Boards should be completed as per s.51.1 of the Planning Act. Bill 23 may impact how parkland can be identified for conveyance purposes through allowing landowners to select parkland based on provincial criteria.</p> <p>The following provides examples of criteria when assessing land as future parkland:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Land to be conveyed to the Town must satisfy the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lands are free and clear of all legal and other encumbrances. • Record of site conditions should satisfy a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). b. Land is deemed unsuitable when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land has been or will be conveyed to the Town for stormwater management purposes, highways, roadways, walkways, or other non-parkland purposes. • There is presence of natural hazards, including flood prone lands. • The location, grade and configuration of lands are constrained or undesirable. • The lands have unsuitable or unstable soil conditions. • It includes utility rights-of-way or easements. • There is contamination as determined by an ESA. c. The applicant must restore the land to be conveyed as parkland to a condition satisfactory to the Town. 	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>4. As a part of the community planning process, provide updated mapping for parks, trails, pathways, and facilities. This can be done in collaboration with Elgin County and their online interactive mapping so that information remains up to date. Up-to-date mapping can highlight opportunities and constraints when</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 






<p>reviewing development applications and provides a visual consolidation of the Town’s parks and recreation inventory.</p>	
<p>5. Linear pathways / trails and pedestrian connections should be considered in the Town’s review of Draft Plans of Subdivision and other development applications, including infill. Parcel dedication for trails and pedestrian links, in addition to parkland parcels, enhances community connectivity and reduces the disruption of the existing pedestrian network. Additionally, site plan reviews should consider and encourage multi-use spaces and elements that could enhance the pedestrian experience and the connectivity of parkland.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>6. The Town should consider developing a Town-wide Community Improvement Plan (CIP) that provides incentives and funding programs to encourage additional active transportation linkages and the provision and enhancements of parks, recreation, and culture facilities. For example, the Town could provide loans for private business owners to enhance active transportation amenities in front of their businesses to create a seamless and attractive pedestrian experience. Moreover, the CIP could encourage private property owners to provide land to expand trail linkages between public lands.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>7. Create a formalized application process for community members looking to suggest new Town-owned recreation and/or culture facilities and/or amenities. This process would put the responsibility of conducting the required research and analysis of preparing the required background studies into the justification and feasibility of the project onto the applicant and not the Town. Based on the justification and information provided, the Town would make the final decision on whether the application is approved.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>8. The Town should review the updated population projections provided by the Province and County when available and re-align, as needed, the recommended targets for parks, recreation and culture as projected within the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan. This review ensures that the service level targets identified within this Master Plan comply with future forecasts completed by the County and/or Town for the duration of this Master Plan.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 





11.3 PARKLAND, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

<p>9. The Town should formalize their Parks Classification System so that parkland can be properly assessed and categorized, while ensuring that the different park typologies are equitably distributed and that park amenities are consistent throughout the Town’s parkland system. The following factors are recommended to be considered and included in such a system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A focus on proximity of parkland to residents who will use them. b. The establishment of frequency and diversity in types of parks and open spaces providing interest and variety for the community. c. The development of parks and open space programming that is diverse and reflects the interests of the community who will use them. d. The establishment of size requirements, typical amenities and level of service based on the type of park or open space. 	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>10. The Town should implement a formal trail classification system and a trail development strategy specific to Aylmer to shape the future of the trail network and to assist with future Town-wide strategies on trail improvements and upgrades. The following factors are recommended to be considered for such a system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A focus on connecting residents to parks, amenities, key destinations, and schools. b. A hierarchy of trails that provide diverse, multi-modal facilities (consider opportunities four-season trail usage). c. A focus on providing universal and inclusive access and enjoyment, including trail amenities such as accessible benches and rest stops, bike repair stations, wayfinding / trail markers, trailhead signage, and refuse and recycling bins. d. Expansion and improvements to the Arboretum Trail, including expansion west to the East Elgin Community Complex (EECC), expansion east to future residential lands, improved road crossings, and accessible trail connections. e. Expansion of the trail system in the southern park of Aylmer to provide safe and accessible connections to the overall park and trail system. 	<p>Short-Term</p> 







<p>11. Prior to the addition of new amenity spaces and/or facilities to meet existing need or recommended service level targets, a cost benefit analysis should first be undertaken to determine whether improvements to existing facilities/amenities, that would extend usability and/or playing time of an amenity (e.g., lighting, surfacing, fencing, etc.), would be more cost effective to sufficiently meet community need.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>12. The Town of Aylmer should adopt a parkland service level target of 4.0 hectares per 1,000 population and should not go below a service level of 3.5 hectares per 1,000 population. Parks should be provided within a 5–10-minute walk (500m radius) to residents to provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities for the entire community.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>13. The recommended service level for outdoor pools is set at 1 outdoor pool for 15,301 of population (1:15,301). Based on the population growth projection by Elgin County, the Town of Aylmer will not require additional outdoor pools by 2051 to meet the target service level. This understanding should be reassessed over time based on updated population projections.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>14. The recommended service level for splashpads is set at 1 splashpad for 9,892 of population (1:9,892). The Town of Aylmer currently has the appropriate number of splashpads. Based on the population growth projection by Elgin County, the Town should provide one additional splashpad to meet the target service level by 2051. When reviewing locations for the addition of any new splashpads, the overall distribution of outdoor aquatic facilities should be assessed; areas of the Town without a splashpad or outdoor pool should be prioritized. Consideration for locations with needed servicing, amenities and/or space for amenities, such as accessible washroom facilities is also recommended.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>15. The recommended service level for baseball diamonds is set at 1 baseball diamond for 1,500 of population (1:1,500). Currently, the Town of Aylmer is in deficit of 3 baseball diamonds. Based on the population growth projection by Elgin County, the Town of Aylmer will continue to be in deficit of 4 baseball diamonds if no additional diamonds are created by 2051. An interim solution to providing additional diamonds is the improvement of diamonds with more durable field material and lighting to extend the use of existing</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 








<p>space. Consideration for providing baseball diamonds on table land (outside of the floodplain) is recommended to provide a more consistent level of play. It is recommended that the Town coordinate with local baseball associations (i.e., Aylmer Minor Baseball) to determine specific needs for facilities based on current / future needs (i.e., size, location, age group served, storage, amenities).</p>	
<p>16. The recommended service level for soccer pitches is set at 1 soccer pitch for 1,900 of population (1:1,900). The Town currently owns 2 soccer pitches. An additional 9 pitches are privately owned, including by the Knights of Columbus, which runs East Elgin Youth Soccer. As such, no additional soccer pitches are required to meet the target service level to 2051. It is recommended that the Town continue to work together with the Knights of Columbus and other partners to ensure an adequate supply of soccer pitches are provided.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>17. Playgrounds should be geographically located within 500 metres or a 5–10-minute walk of residential areas. The recommended service level for playgrounds is set at 1 playground for 1,700 of population (1:1,700). The Town of Aylmer is currently in deficit of 2 playgrounds based on this target service level. Based on the Elgin County population growth projections, the Town will continue to be deficit of 4 playgrounds if no additional playgrounds are created by 2051. All new playgrounds should focus on design for accessibility and inclusion for a range of age groups.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>18. The recommended service level for outdoor tennis courts and pickleball courts is set at 1 tennis court for 4,000 of population (1:4,000) and 1 pickleball court for 3,000 of population (1:3,000). Currently, the Town of Aylmer is meeting both service level targets. Based on the Elgin County population growth projections, the Town will be in deficit of 1 tennis court and 1 pickleball court if no additional courts are created by 2051. As there are currently no dedicated pickleball courts within the Town (the basketball court at Crystal Park converts into the 3 outdoor pickleball courts) it is recommended that the Town implement at least 2 dedicated pickleball courts by 2051. The Town should look for opportunities to coordinate with local tennis and pickleball user groups on new / upgraded courts to gain input on facility amenities, surfacing, level of play, etc.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 



<p>19. The recommended service level for basketball courts is set at 1 basketball court for 7,700 of population (1:7,700). The Town of Aylmer currently has the appropriate quantity of basketball courts based on the 2021 population. Based on the Elgin County population growth project, the Town will not require additional basketball courts by 2051 to meet the target service level. This understanding should be reassessed over time based on updated population projections.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>20. Complete a review of existing playground facilities to determine timelines for replacement of aging infrastructure. Coordinate upgrades to playground facilities with improvements to playground design and amenities for accessible, inclusive, and innovative play spaces, Provide amenities such as accessible pathway connections, seating and picnic areas, water fountains, shade coverage (i.e., trees, shade structures), and refuse bins. Consider opportunities for unique / themed playgrounds, nature-based features, play features for a range of age groups (pre-school and school aged through to pre-teen / teen age groups), and rubber safety surfacing.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>21. Existing parks, trails and open spaces should be adequately maintained and upgraded as required to support the growing population and evolving needs of the Town. Specifically, baseball diamonds in the Town have been noted through public feedback to require more attention in terms of upgrades and maintenance. Upgrades to baseball diamonds should consider improvements to backstops / fencing, dugouts, players benches, playing surface, additional equipment storage and shade.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>22. Provide more outdoor facilities targeted towards seniors to support Aylmer’s active aging population, such as spaces for low intensity activities and less structured and/or passive recreation spaces, where feasible. Specific activities can include pickleball and bocce ball courts, lawn bowling, shuffleboard, horseshoe, trails, and outdoor fitness equipment. Fitness equipment should provide a range of exercise options and difficulty levels, with a focus on fixed elements to reduce the number of moving parts.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>23. The Town should explore opportunities to provide additional outdoor recreation amenities targeted towards pre-teens and teens to further engage this age group and encourage an active lifestyle. It is recommended to locate and distribute youth</p>	<p>Short-Term</p>



<p>recreation amenities at a minimum radius of 1,000m. Some features to consider including in parks and outdoor spaces that can encourage more youth and young adults to interact with the space include free outdoor Wi-Fi and access to power in urban parks, food trucks and outdoor café areas, interactive lighting and art, outdoor study spaces, outdoor concerts and events. Sports facilities and amenities that provide for increased physical challenges would be beneficial to this age group, including skate / BMX pump track, basketball / ball hockey multi-use courts, agility / fitness circuit, and beach volleyball.</p>	
<p>24. When considering the addition of new amenities, focus on exploring opportunities to add parkland and/or additional amenities to existing parks south of Talbot Street to address parkland walkability gap and the geographical imbalance of parks / amenities within the Town.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>25. Explore opportunities to work with community members and volunteer organizations to support community-led recreation initiatives such as, winter ice rinks within parks, community gardens, tree planting, and other community initiatives.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>26. Explore opportunities to work with volunteer organizations and community partners to enhance culture within the Town’s recreation areas. Examples include murals / public art, interpretive features that highlight cultural / natural heritage, and local events / markets / concerts.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>27. When planning outdoor spaces, the Town should consider designing these spaces to be low/no-cost to users, intergenerational, and multi-purpose so that all age and income groups can utilize and enjoy the space. This could include incorporating outdoor fitness equipment and / or sport courts for seniors, adults, and teens with the playgrounds for preschool and school age children within a park space.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>28. The Town should consider the addition of a dog-friendly outdoor amenity space (e.g. Dog Park). The following factors should be considered for such an amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Located on underutilized, Town-owned land; b. Located away from existing Residential uses to avoid conflict in uses 	<p>Long-Term</p> 





<p>c. Specific guidelines are put in place regarding amenity use (e.g. hours of operation, etc.)</p>	
<p>29. When exploring options for new outdoor facilities, aim to create multi-use recreational centres that include a combination of outdoor and indoor amenities in one location, allowing users to have access to a variety of facilities and amenities at one location. Additionally, the Town should consider expanding outdoor recreation amenities at existing Town-owned facilities (e.g., EECC) to provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities to users and create a central location for indoor and outdoor recreation.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>30. Future sports fields can be developed to be multi-use so that there is designated space that can accommodate a variety of sports, allowing these spaces to be flexible and responsive to parks and recreation trends as they evolve.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>31. Maintain ongoing coordination with developers during the development application review process so that opportunities to incorporate new parkland, outdoor recreation facilities or potential linkages with the trail system are identified and planned for early in the process, including strategies to incorporate new parkland and facilities within the existing system and confirming the ongoing operations and maintenance of the space.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>32. Ensure that new and existing trails are accessible for people of all ages and abilities, including those using strollers and those with mobility restrictions. All new trails should be designed with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards, where possible, providing appropriate surfacing and accessible slopes. The Town should identify gaps in paving, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and inadequate signage and lighting in existing trails and make the necessary upgrades so that residents are continually encouraged to choose active transportation modes.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>33. Look for opportunities for partnerships with other local agencies and organizations (e.g., County of Elgin, school boards, Township of Malahide, Catfish Creek Conservation Authority, Trans Canada Trails) to bring larger scale park, trails and open space improvements that can serve the broader region.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 








<p>34. Design and enhance new and/or existing parks, trails, and open spaces with a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach. The main objectives of CPTED include encouraging the diverse use of outdoor spaces to help establish informal surveillance within public spaces and promoting the presence of people in public spaces in order to avoid isolated areas.</p> <p>There are three main principles when developing outdoor spaces through the lens of CPTED and these principles should be combined together to provide better safety for all users:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide ways to encourage natural surveillance by increasing visual permeability, adding lights in strategic locations, and reducing the presence of walls, opaque/privacy fencing, and overgrown shrubs. b. Provide natural access control of areas where the public is not encouraged to be in, such as maintenance areas, by way of fences, low walls, gates, and landscaping. It should be noted a minimum of two accesses/gates should be provided in a controlled area. c. Provide territorial reinforcement or the “sense of ownership”. The territorial reinforcement is also encouraged in a multi-use space where there is a diversity of activities and uses provided to users. 	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>35. Promote a climate-conscious approach in park, trail and open space development / redevelopment. A climate-conscious approach to park, trail and open space design includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Considering energy conservation and generation in the planning of new amenities and facilities. b. Reviewing day-to-day operations and the maintenance of parks and open spaces. c. Incorporating more sustainable design features into the development of parks such as bioswales, raingardens and pollinator gardens. d. Promoting a Tree Planting Strategy to encourage the selection and promotion of native plants. e. Developing a Tree Canopy Policy/Tree Management Plan to encourage the planting of a minimum of one tree for every tree removed. f. Utilizing locally sourced and sustainable building materials. g. Assessing the interest in community gardens within parks. h. Promoting naturalized / vegetated waterways. 	<p>Long-Term</p> 


<p>i. Identifying areas of significant ecological value such as wetlands, creeks, and woodlands within the Town boundaries to conserve / enhance biodiversity.</p>	
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11.4 INDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES STRATEGIES





<p>36. The recommended service level for ice pads is set at 1 ice pad for 7,500 of population (1:7,500). The Town currently supplies 2 ice pads, which is appropriate for the current size of the population. Based on the Elgin County population growth projections, no additional ice pads are required to meet the target service level to 2051. This understanding should be reassessed over time based on updated population projections.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>37. The recommended service level for multi-purpose spaces and meeting rooms is set at 1 room for 3,070 of population (1:3,070). The Town of Aylmer is currently in surplus of 4 multi-purpose spaces and meetings rooms. Based on the Elgin County population growth projections, the Town will not be requiring additional multi-purpose spaces and meeting rooms to meet the target service level to 2051.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>38. Consider establishing Joint Use Agreements between the Town and School Boards for the use of indoor facilities within schools after school hours, specifically the use of school gymnasiums. The Town of Aylmer currently does not have any municipally-owned gymnasiums; having a standardized agreement with School Boards can ensure that school gymnasiums are efficiently used and consistently accessible for municipal-run programs, while being properly maintained.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>39. Consider investing in the refurbishment and/or expansion of the EECC and other existing indoor spaces in collaboration with local partners so that additional space is added to address the growing population and evolving needs of the community. Based on public feedback, additional space could be provided for a multi-use gymnasium, a walking track, indoor fitness equipment, and a senior centre. When considering the location for a new or expanded indoor facility, the location's accessibility for senior residents should be considered, along with the integration with existing and planned trails and open spaces.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 








<p>40. When developing new indoor recreation facilities, consider creating a modern multi-use centre where residents can access a variety of recreation options and programming at one location. This can include one large community centre that houses indoor aquatics, arenas, gymnasiums, a library, and meeting rooms. Additionally, consider locating a new indoor recreation facility in the southern portion of the Town, which is currently lacking in terms of indoor facilities.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>41. Ensure that the ongoing partnership with the Township of Malahide in the ownership and operation of the EECC continues so that the facility is properly maintained to support both populations and indoor programming at this facility can continue to be efficiently provided. Regular communication and coordination between the two municipalities is recommended so that the needs of both municipalities can be addressed through potential upgrades and renovations.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>42. Based on public feedback, the Aylmer Old Town Hall Library (run by Elgin County) has been identified as one of the most frequently visited indoor facilities. The Town should explore opportunities to coordinate efforts with Elgin County and other local community groups in the efficient provision of age-specific programming and events within indoor spaces.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>43. Consider incorporating energy efficiency upgrades and rainwater harvesting initiatives to existing and planned indoor recreation facilities.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>44. Promote a climate-conscious approach when developing new or redeveloping existing indoor recreation facilities. A climate-conscious approach to indoor recreation facility design includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The reduction of energy cost, carbon emissions, and environmental footprint. b. A review of the day-to-day operations and maintenance of indoor recreation facilities. c. Utilizing locally sourced and sustainable building materials. 	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>45. Identify areas that require upgrades in order to continue to provide a high level of service to the growing population and</p>	<p>Short-Term</p>

<p>review which facilities and amenities should be prioritized above others. Continue to monitor the operating costs of indoor facilities and work to schedule capital investments according to the life cycle costs of the facility.</p>	
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11.5 PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGIES






<p>46. The Town of Aylmer should annually evaluate usage and participation/satisfaction rates of rental spaces and recreational programming to better respond to community needs as they change over time. This could be accomplished through online surveys or through documentation on an online booking system.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> 
<p>47. The Town should consider fostering partnerships and open dialogue with community organizations to provide recreation programs so that there is no duplication of service offerings and events. Additionally, programming not provided by the Town but requested by the community can also be provided through these partnerships, such as fitness classes, wellness workshops, board game sessions, and various hobby classes for all ages.</p>	<p>Mid-term</p> 
<p>48. Explore more options in the promotion and advertisement of programs and events being offered by the Town to increase awareness and inclusion throughout the community. This can be done through monthly recreation newsletters posted online and/or distributed to residences, event calendars, frequent social media updates, and flyers posted in highly visible locations.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> 
<p>49. Transition to an online booking, payment and registry system that allows the public to see available rental facilities and programming that is open for sign-up. This change can reduce staff involvement so that their time can be allocated to other activities.</p> <p>An online booking system can assist with tracking information related to user groups and participation/booking rates. This automated tracking can allow the Town to understand the level of service it should be providing for user groups and the overall population. Utilizing the information gathered from the online booking system, the Town should reassess the service level targets provided in this Master plan to determine whether revisions are required.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> 

<p>50. Support training opportunities for Town staff on the use of new and emerging technology and software that can allow for the more efficient management, tracking and delivery of recreation services and programming.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>51. Based on the fees and charges analysis, revisit payment options to a scheduled classes and programs format (i.e., by class, multi-passes, or an all-inclusive membership to all facilities and programs).</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>52. Explore collaboration and partnerships with local school boards in the form parkland sharing agreements or indoor facility agreements to ensure that parks adjacent to schools and indoor school recreation facilities are efficiently used and managed. Any existing agreements should be reviewed and updated to reflect the changes in parks and recreation facilities and community needs.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>53. Promote volunteering programs to encourage community involvement and the success of events, festivals and recreation programming.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>54. Develop a service level standard for programming provided by the Town; should activities/programming go beyond that base level of service to benefit one user group, user fees may be increased to accommodate the increase in resources and time required from the Town.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 



11.6 FINANCING, MANAGEMENT AND STAFF STRATEGIES




<p>55. Work with a park design consultant to create a Park Design Guidance Document for meeting industry standards in the development of parks and open spaces.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>56. Maximize the efficiency of facilities and infrastructure systems to ensure their long-term sustainability, utilizing thoughtful design to ensure services are provided in a safe, reliable, and affordable way.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Undertake life-cycle audits for parks and recreation facilities to identify opportunities for the redevelopment, renovation or decommissioning of amenities and facilities. b. Establish maintenance programs and budgets tied to population growth to reflect the increased use and maintenance requirements. 	
<p>57. Increase efficiencies in administration and management to create an effective department which is well-managed, efficient, and innovative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and implement a central departmental asset and resource management system. b. Implement a process for continuous service improvement, annually identifying service areas for review with the goal of improving service, function and efficiency. 	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>58. Build staff leadership capacity by attracting and maintaining qualified team members and staff who are passionate about what they do and are committed to building a strong and health community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase competency-based professional development programs for staff to build knowledge, increase capacity, and grow with expertise in terms of providing parks and recreation services. b. Provide new job skills training to staff and internship opportunities for youth, young adults, and newcomers. c. Focus on converting part-time staff to full-time staff. 	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>59. Continue to explore opportunities for additional funding resources that are more reliable and sustainable for parks and recreation facilities and programming. Annual grant research should be undertaken to ensure the Town is applying to all applicable grant applications.</p>	<p>Short-Term</p> 
<p>60. The Town should maintain a full list/inventory of recreation services and programs being delivered in Aylmer, including the service providers delivering these services. This list/inventory should be updated on a regular basis and posted on the Town's website.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> 
<p>61. A complete list/inventory of Town-owned equipment should be developed and maintained.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p>

	
62. Consider implementing facility allocation policies as demand increases for recreation facilities.	Long-Term 
63. Lease agreements for use of parks and facilities should be standardized across all facilities, amenities, and user types.	Short-Term 
64. Demonstrate fiscal responsibility through the cost-efficient management of facilities and resources and apply reasonable and appropriate user fees that are annually reviewed.	Long-Term 
65. Work together with secondary schools to advocate for volunteering opportunities with the Parks and Recreation Department that can fulfill the mandatory number of volunteering hours needed for secondary school students and address staffing capacity issues for the Town	Short-Term 

11.7 MONITORING STRATEGIES

66. As a continuation of the public outreach associated with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a regular survey of residents of the Town of Aylmer is recommended to be undertaken every three (3) years to evaluate community needs, satisfaction with the services provided currently, and to identify any gaps in service.	Mid-Term 
67. Tools/metrics should be established and administered at or near the time-of-service delivery to understand user satisfaction with the service provided. User satisfaction should regularly be assessed to determine whether services need to be modified to meet changing trends and needs.	Mid-Term 

<p>68. Timelines and recommendations from the Town’s Asset Management Plan should be taken into consideration when upgrading aging parks and recreation facilities.</p>	<p>Long-Term</p> 
<p>69. The Town’s parks and facilities should be regularly assessed to identify any deficiencies and opportunities for upgrades.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 
<p>70. Identify existing and future municipal policy documents where parks and recreation recommendations can be incorporated into.</p>	<p>Mid-Term</p> 

12 CONCLUSION

This Master Plan will serve the Town of Aylmer community’s parks and recreation needs over the next ten years. As the recommendations of this plan are implemented, the parks and recreation system will continue to align more closely with the community’s vision and priorities, making Aylmer a place for everyone to play, visit, and enjoy.

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