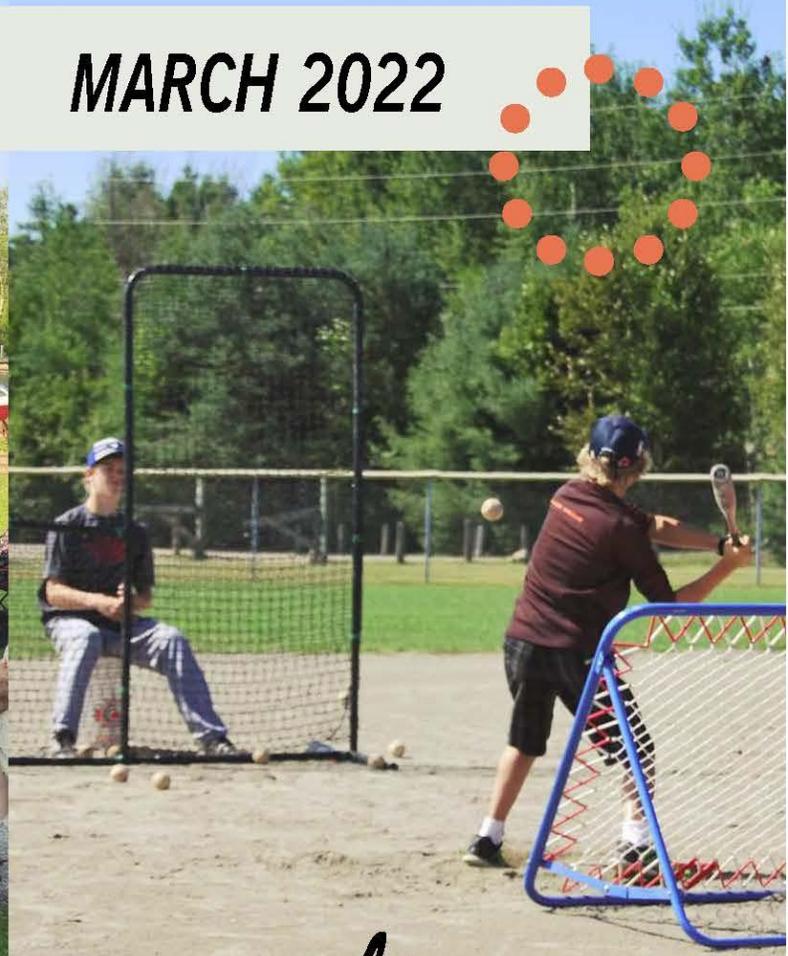




# TOWN OF HUNTSVILLE

# COMMUNITY SERVICES MASTER PLAN

MARCH 2022



*mbpc*  
Montelth ♦ Brown  
planning consultants

**tra.**  
TUCKER-REID & ASSOCIATES



# Town of Huntsville Community Services Master Plan

March 2022



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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who contributed to the development of the Town’s Community Services Master Plan. This Plan is a product of the vision and dedication of the community, the Project Team, and Town Council. We also extend our thanks to the many residents and community groups within Huntsville whose feedback has made the Plan a document that embodies the core values, beliefs, and priorities of the community.

### Town Council (2018 – 2022)

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<b>Mayor</b>	Karin Terziano
<b>Deputy Mayor</b>	Nancy Alcock
<b>Councillors</b>	Dan Armour
	Jason Fitzgerald
	Dione Schumacher
	Bob Stone
	Brian Thompson
	Jonathan Wiebe
	Tim Withey

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### Master Plan Project Team

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Director of Community Services	Simone Babineau (Project Manager)
Manager of Facility Operations, Sales and Customer Service	Greg Piling
Manager of Recreation, Culture and Heritage	Trish Conley-Knight
Manager Muskoka Heritage Place	Ron Gostlin
Manager of Aquatics	Cameron Labonte
Aquatics Supervisor	Jennifer Eberhardt
Theatre Manager	Matt Huddleston
Maintenance Manager	Jason Fisher
Customer Service Manager	Amanda Hill
Recreation and Leisure Coordinator	Jessica Smith
Program Coordinator	Kayla Wadden
Customer Service Coordinator	Alison Purser
Collections Coordinator	Sara White
Lead Hand Maintenance	Pete Kingshot
Lead Hand Custodial	Claire Braun

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### Project Consultants

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Monteith Brown Planning Consultants
Tucker-Reid & Associates

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Through this Master Plan, we acknowledge the land that has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples from the beginning. As settlers, we are grateful for the opportunity to use these lands for recreational activities and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land – for thousands of years.

In particular, we acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, especially the Ojibway, the Chippewa and the Algonquin peoples. This territory is covered by the Williams Treaty of 1923 and the J. Collins land purchase of 1785.

We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples have made, both in shaping and strengthening this community in particular, and our province and country as a whole.

As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous People must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Master Plan Overview

High-quality inclusive and affordable community services contribute to Huntsville’s health and wellness, environmental and economic sustainability, and community vibrancy. As a small community that is blessed by lush natural surroundings characterized by forests and lakes, the Town of Huntsville is able to offer a number of parks, recreation, and cultural experiences through its own complement of offerings along with those of its partners and community providers.

The Community Services Master Plan (the “Master Plan”) provides guidance to inform effective budgeting, implementation, and delivery of stated goals and objectives of the Town’s Community Services Division.

**The Master Plan identifies needs related to parks, recreation, and culture in Huntsville over the next 10 years and establishes key strategies to meet these needs**, potentially in partnership with the community and others. The Plan aligns with Council’s priorities as identified in its Strategic Plan and should be implemented in conjunction with the Town’s Official Plan, Unity Plan and other related studies.

To ensure that the Master Plan is responsive to community needs, it is grounded in public and stakeholder input and research into best practices, trends, demographic shifts, growth forecasts, service gaps, and park and facility requirements. Understanding that circumstances can change over the course of the next ten years, the Master Plan contains decision-making frameworks and recommendations to help the Town explore and evaluate new opportunities as they arise.

As a living document, the Master Plan needs to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it responds to new opportunities and changing needs of the community. In doing so, the Master Plan will assist the Town in prioritizing corporate initiatives and departmental budgets, and support the search for external funding, partnerships, and alignment with related initiatives.

More specifically, the scope of the Master Plan is to analyze and provide recommendations for the following:

- Recreation and cultural facilities;
- Recreation and cultural programs, activities, and events;
- Parks, open spaces, and trails amenities; and
- Service delivery policies and practices.

The audience for this Master Plan is broad. For the Town, it provides an outline to guide future investment, partnerships, park and facility design, programming, service delivery, and policy development. The Master Plan also serves as a resource for other community facility and service providers, potential partners, and others interested and/or involved in the delivery of parks, recreation, and cultural services in Huntsville.

Successful implementation of the Master Plan after the planning process has concluded requires ongoing community engagement, flexibility in approach, partnerships, and funding from a variety of sources.

## 1.2 Benefits of Community Services

Community services and facilities are integral to Huntsville’s success and wellbeing. They contribute in a significant way to our social, economic, and environmental priorities by providing spaces for services and programs that benefit residents and support community-building. Universal access to recreation, culture, and parks opportunities that address diverse needs and offer affordable high-quality opportunities is vital to individual and community health and prosperity.

Huntsville is fortunate in having many parks, trails, facilities, and programs that deliver these benefits within the community. Local parks and open spaces provide places for unstructured play, respite, and opportunities to experience nature, while the trails found throughout the Town connect parks and facilities while promoting active transportation choices. Playgrounds and other outdoor amenities are among the many spaces the local community and children socialize with their neighbours, play and be active, and develop valuable skills. Modern sports fields and the Canada Summit Centre provide opportunities for children and adults to play as a team, develop confidence, and be active.

These community services also benefit from – and provide a destination for – seasonal residents and visitors that come to Huntsville each year, thereby contributing to the local economy. The Town recognizes these benefits and will advance them through this Master Plan and its implementation.

### Community Services Benefits:

- Enhance mental and physical wellbeing
- Enhance social wellbeing and promote engagement and inclusion
- Help build strong families and communities
- Help people connect with nature
- Help people develop critical and creative thinking skills;
- Provide wide-ranging economic benefits



### 1.3 Our Planning Process

This Master Plan project began in February 2021. Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. led the development of this Plan with assistance from Tucker-Reid & Associates and oversight from a Project Team consisting of Town staff. Input and guidance were also sought from key stakeholders and Town Council at key points throughout the process.

Development of the Master Plan was organized into four phases: (1) Project Initiation, Data Gathering and Analysis; (2) Stakeholder Engagement; (3) Recommendations and Priorities; and (4) Final Master Plan. Each phase was designed to accomplish a variety of tasks and also included internal meetings and reporting.

**Figure 1: Project Work Plan**

<b>Phase 1: Project Initiation, Data Gathering &amp; Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review of Background Materials</li> <li>– Community Demographic Analysis</li> <li>– Inventories, Tours &amp; Mapping</li> <li>– Service &amp; Program Profiles</li> <li>– Trends &amp; Utilization Analysis</li> <li>– <b>Phase 1 Report (combined with Phase 2)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Community Engagement Strategy</li> <li>– Staff and Council Consultation</li> <li>– Community Survey</li> <li>– External Stakeholder Consultation</li> <li>– Public Input via Project Website</li> <li>– Strategic Framework</li> <li>– <b>Phase 2 Report (combined with Phase 1)</b></li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3: Recommendations &amp; Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Service Delivery Assessment</li> <li>– Programming &amp; Event Assessment</li> <li>– Facilities Assessment</li> <li>– Parks, Trails &amp; Park Policy Assessment</li> <li>– Implementation Strategy</li> <li>– <b>Draft Master Plan</b></li> </ul>
<b>Phase 4: Final Master Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Virtual Public Information Centre</li> <li>– Committee Meetings</li> <li>– Council Presentation</li> <li>– <b>Final Master Plan</b></li> </ul>

## 2. Planning Context

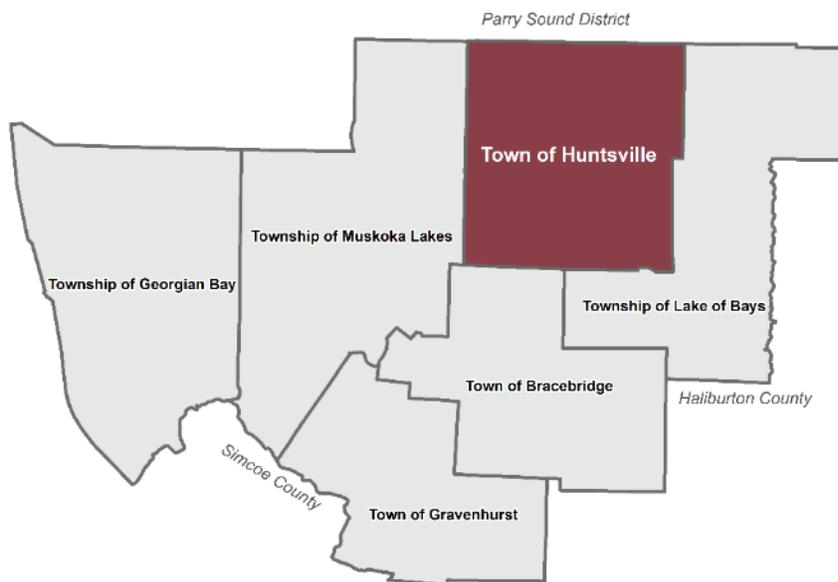
Several inputs are considered through the master planning process so that future directions are reflective of broad trends and best practices while remaining cognisant of the unique characteristics of Huntsville.

Note: Much of the following demographic data draws from the 2016 Statistics Canada Census; data release dates for the 2021 Census are staged throughout 2022.

### 2.1 Community Profile

Located on the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, on doorstep of Algonquin Park, and in the “Heart of Muskoka”, Huntsville is known for its high quality of life. This is supported by an active and engaged community, cottage-goers and vacationers, a beautiful and rugged natural landscape that offers numerous outdoor and waterfront recreation opportunities, as well as various attractions such as the Canada Summit Centre, Algonquin Theatre, and Muskoka Heritage Place. In addition, the town offers numerous parks, lakes and rivers, and trails that have come to define the area.

**Figure 2: Geographic Context, District of Muskoka**



The town is the most populous of the municipalities in the District of Muskoka, which – along with it being a gateway to Algonquin Park – has influenced Huntsville’s historic and contemporary role as a commerce and service centre. Huntsville has a unique and distinctive character – both constantly evolving – that sets it apart from surrounding communities. Huntsville boasts a large tourist and seasonal-resident population due to people seeking a closer connection with nature, a variety of recreational lifestyle opportunities, and an area rich in arts, culture, and heritage.

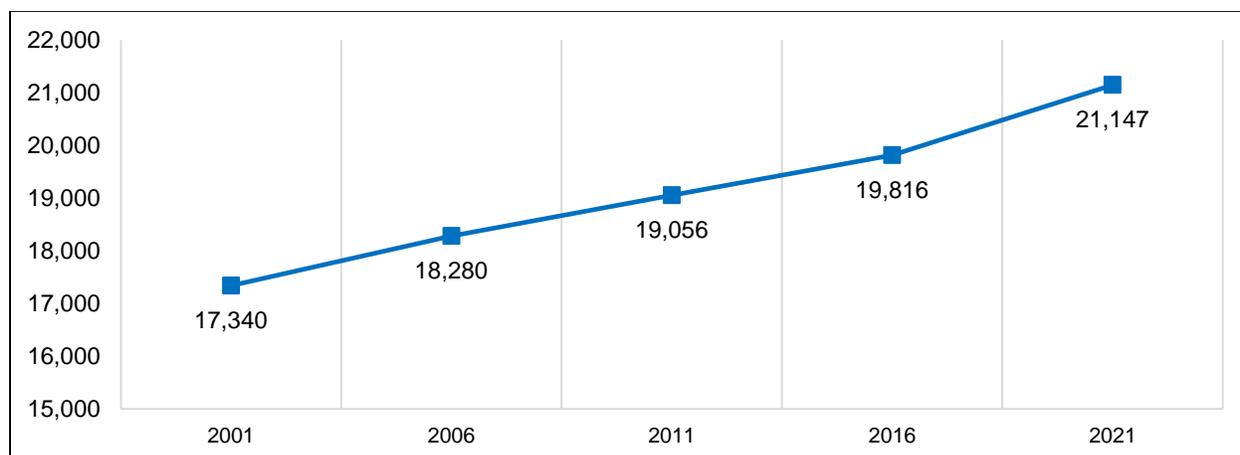
Most residents live in proximity to Huntsville’s historic downtown core; however, the Town is also comprised of the communities of Port Sydney, Utterson, Novar (split community with Township of Perry), the Hidden Valley Recreational Resort and Lifestyle Area (including Deerhurst Resort Village), and a large rural area.

Understanding the “who, how, and where” of population growth in Huntsville will position the Town’s community services system to adapt to changing needs. The following subsections outline the historical and projected population, age profile, and other community characteristics to paint a comprehensive picture of local needs and changes.

### Historical Population

The town is growing and becoming more diverse. Statistics Canada reported a population of 21,147 for Huntsville in 2021, an increase of 14% since 2001. The Town covers 710 square kilometres resulting in a population density of 28 persons per square kilometre. The chart below shows steady population growth since 1996.

**Figure 3: Year-Round Population (Census), Town of Huntsville (2001-2021)**



*Source: Statistics Canada Census Data 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 & 2021 (excluding undercount).*

The most recent population estimate for 2021<sup>1</sup> suggests that the Town continues to grow, with an estimated 27,400 residents living in the Town of Huntsville. **Of this figure, 77% (21,000) are year-round residents and 23% (6,400) are comprised of seasonal residents.** The 2021 Census release suggests that this year-round estimate may be low as the town has experienced greater than average growth since 2016.

The maps contained on the following pages illustrate population densities throughout Huntsville, as well as the population distribution of various age cohorts within the Town (i.e., 0 to 14 years of age, 15 to 64 years, and 65+ years) as of 2016. The highest population densities are seen within proximity to Huntsville’s historic downtown core, an area that has pockets of young, middle-aged and older age cohorts.

<sup>1</sup> Muskoka District Official Plan, 2019.

## Population Growth

The District of Muskoka’s Official Plan forecasts the Town’s year 2031 population to reach 30,300 persons, comprised of 23,600 permanent residents and 6,700 seasonal residents. Both permanent and seasonal residents will be considered within the Master Plan as they collectively represent taxpayers that have access to community services. The following table summarizes permanent and seasonal growth projections for Huntsville through to 2031.

**Table 1: Population Projections, Town of Huntsville (2016 – 2031)**

Resident Type	2016 Census	2031 Projection	2016 – 2031 Forecasted Growth	2016 – 2031 Forecasted Growth
<b>Permanent</b>	19,816	23,600	3,784	19%
<b>Seasonal</b>	6,200	6,700	500	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,016</b>	<b>30,300</b>	<b>4,284</b>	<b>16%</b>

*Source: Statistics Canada Census Data 2016 (excluding undercount) and District of Muskoka Official Plan (2019).*

**Huntsville is expected to grow from 27,400 residents in 2021 to 30,300 in 2031. Just less than one-quarter (22%) of these are seasonal residents.**

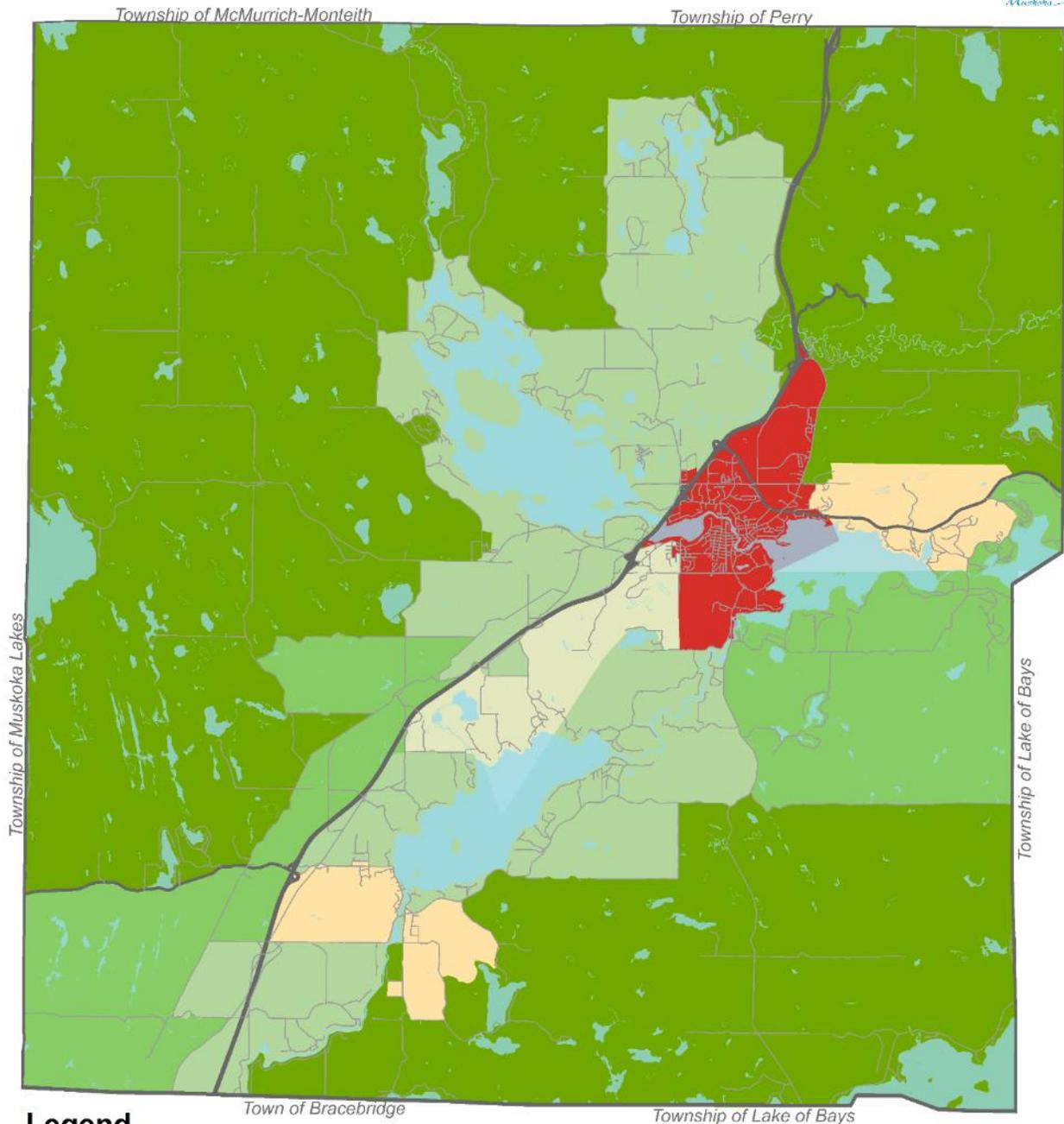
**Greater demands for year-round community services can be anticipated while growth in seasonal numbers may amplify peak-season demands.**

Since 2017, residential building permits have doubled, for an average of approximately 170 new units per year. Continued strong growth can be expected to create demand for new or expanded leisure opportunities while generating opportunities to optimize existing facilities and programming. As supported by the 2021 Census release, there has been a trend toward seasonal residents making Huntsville their primary residence since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Figure 4

# Community Services Master Plan 2016 Population Density



## Legend

### Population Density per Square Kilometre

0 - 14	60 - 74
15 - 29	75 - 89
30 - 44	90 - 104
45 - 59	105+



0 1 2 4 6 Km  
Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021



Figure 5

# Community Services Master Plan 2016 Population by Age 0-14 Years

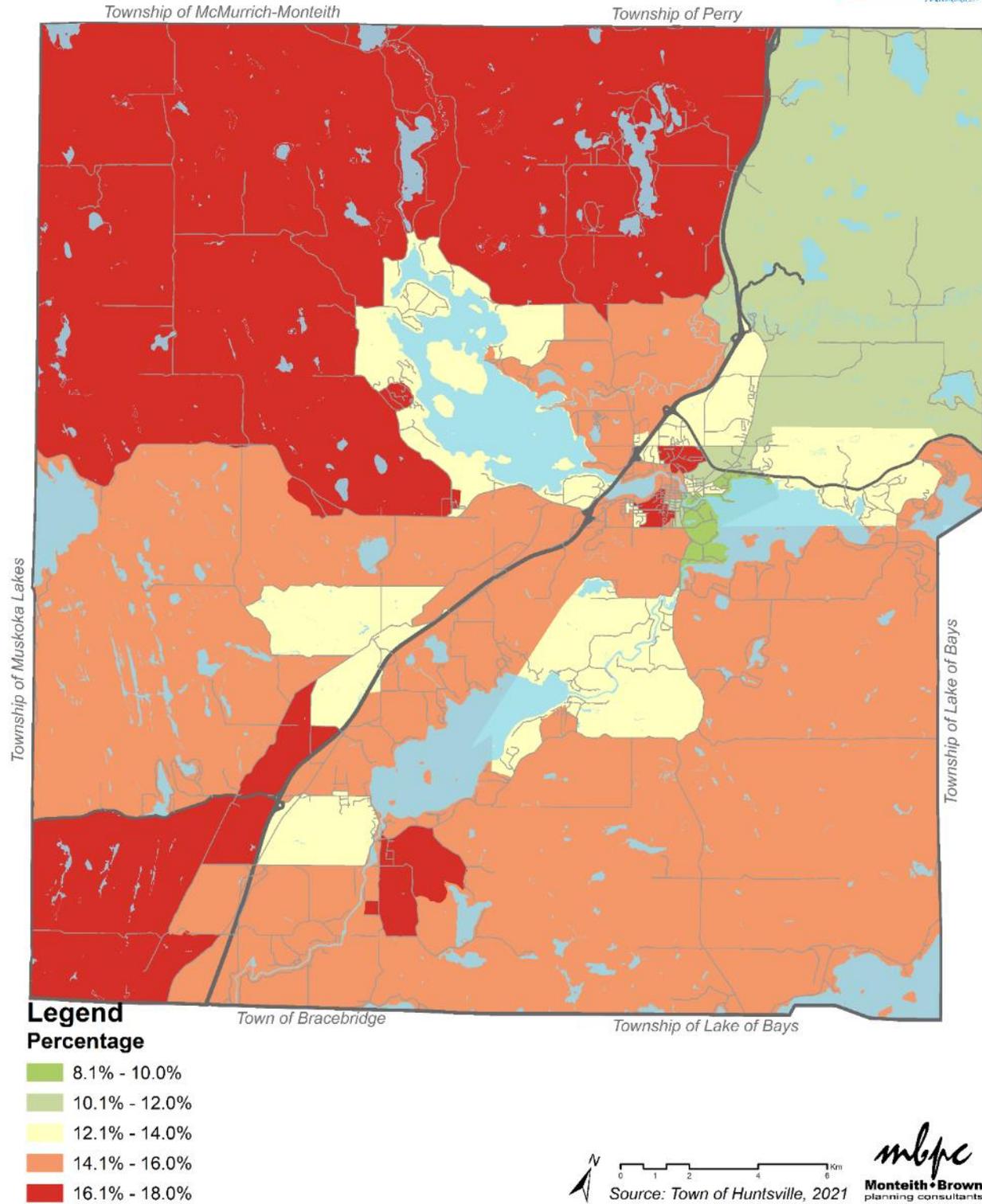


Figure 6

# Community Services Master Plan 2016 Population by Age 15-64 Years

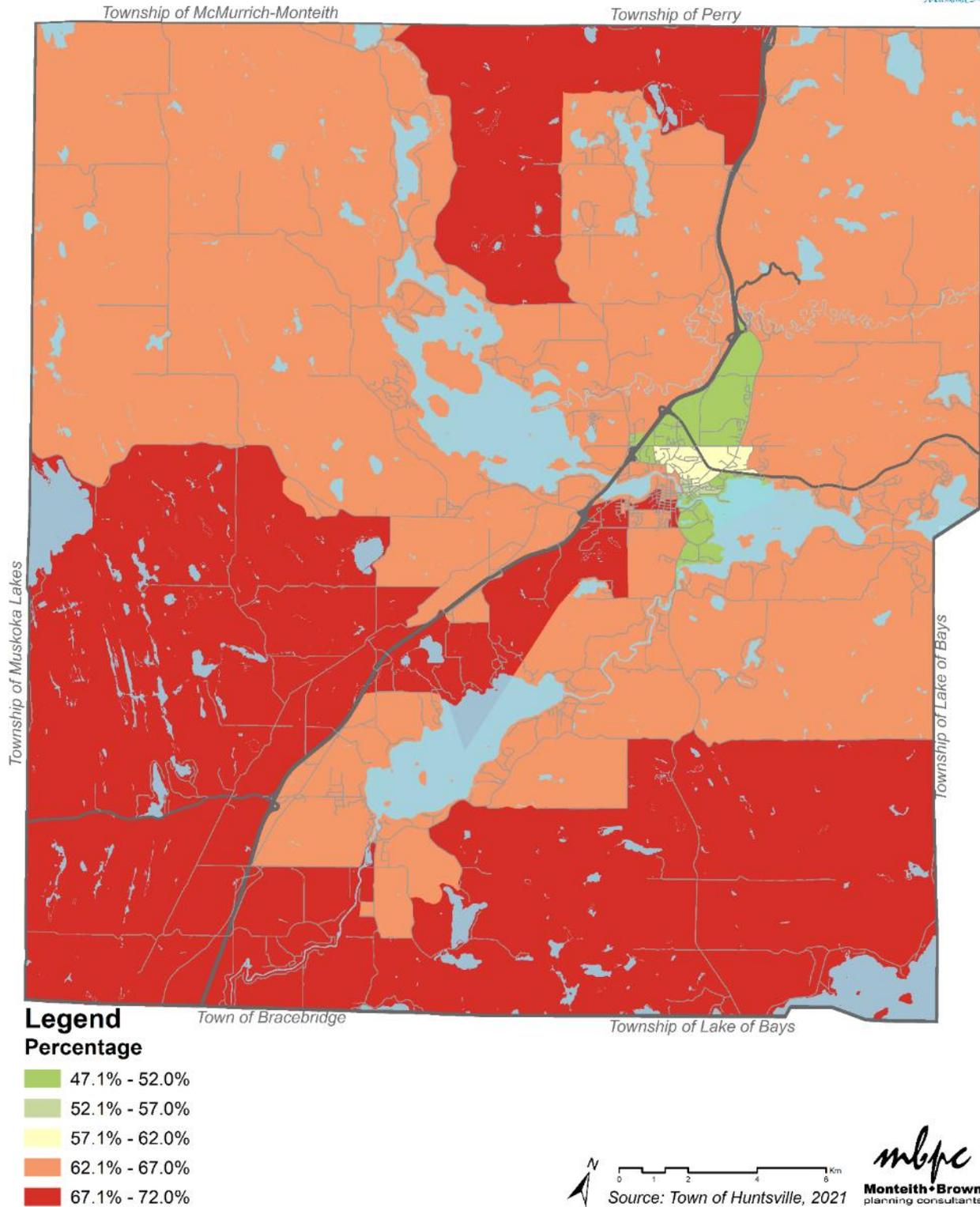
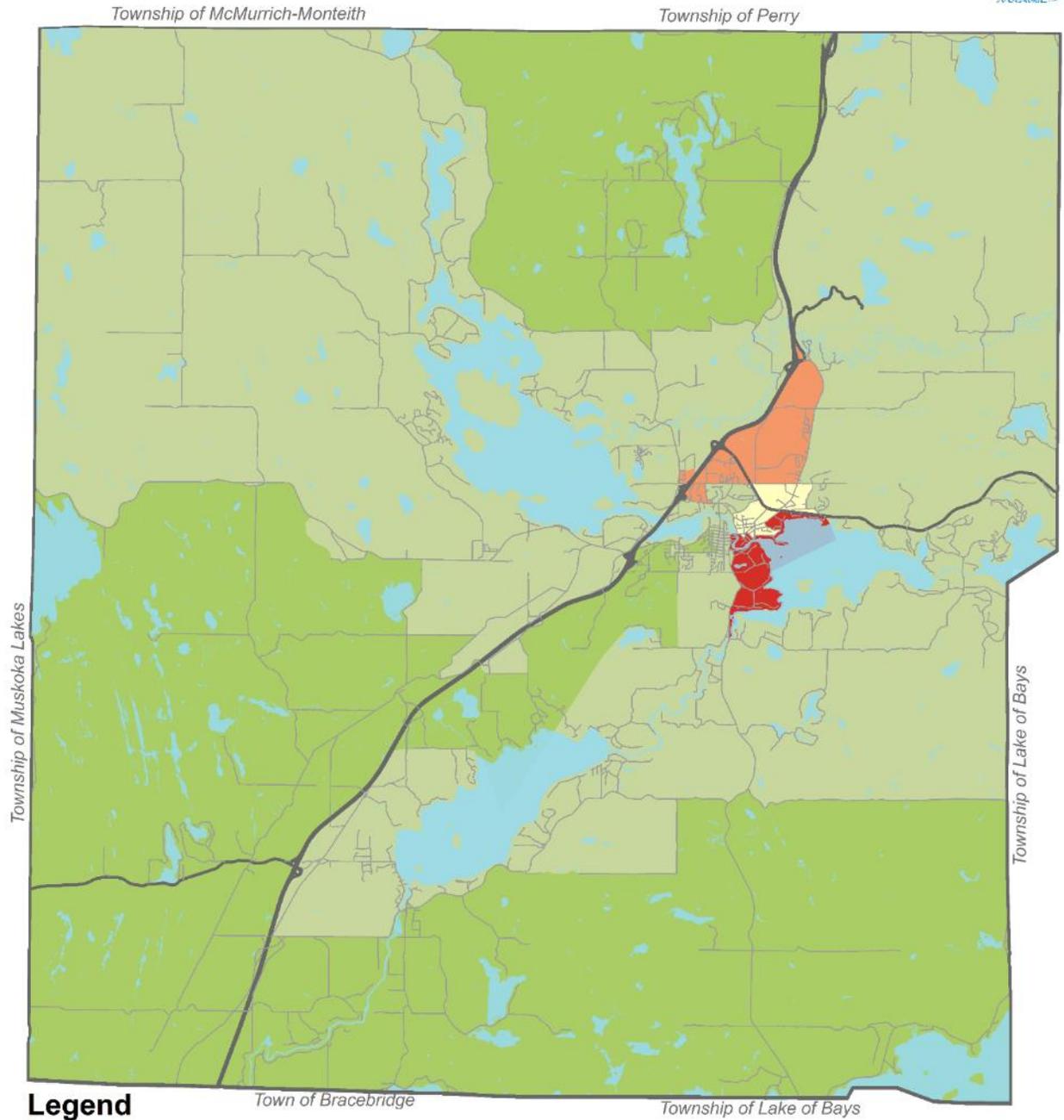


Figure 7

# Community Services Master Plan 2016 Population by Age 65+ Years



**Legend**  
**Percentage**

12.1% - 19.0%
19.1% - 26.0%
26.1% - 33.0%
33.1% - 40.0%
41.1% - 47.0%

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

The majority of future residential growth will occur within the primary urban area of Huntsville. Future development is anticipated to be a combination of lower density subdivisions and medium- to higher-density condominium development. Subdivision growth is more likely to occur away from the downtown core (on the fringe of the urban area, such as Huntsville Highlands at the south edge of the urban area), whereas the medium- and high-density development is expected to occur within infill situations as well as areas near lifestyle areas such as the Deerhurst and Hidden Valley resort areas.

## Age Composition

Age is an important factor in planning for community services. Meeting the diverse needs of families with children and aging populations is a primary focus for many municipal Community Service Departments.

Notably, the aging of Canada’s population has been influencing parks, recreation, and culture requirements for some time. This trend is driven by older adults wishing to remain active as they age, including those seeking lifelong learning opportunities and persons managing chronic illness, disease, and/or those that are seeking low impact, therapeutic, and rehabilitative programs. The Town’s Community Services Division offers a broad range of fitness, culture, and drop-in programs geared towards older adults and seniors including pickleball, trails, aquafit, and other activities to ensure that these age groups continue to lead healthy and active lifestyles. Additionally, younger populations tend to frequent recreation facilities at a higher rate and prioritize programs for children and youth. Steps have also been taken to improve accessibility for all through the Town’s Accessibility Plan.

The following table indicates that all age groups experienced varying levels of growth between 2011 and 2016, with the exception of youth (ages 10 – 19) and mature adults (ages 35 – 54), which declined by 9% and 7% respectively. The number of older adults (55 – 69) and seniors (age 70+) both experienced substantial growth (19% and 14% respectively). Furthermore, children (ages 0 – 9) and young adults (ages 20 – 34) experienced growth as well (2% and 7% respectively).

**Table 2: Population by Age, Town of Huntsville (2011 & 2016): A Comparison (Permanent Population only)**

Population by Age	2011	2016	% Change (2011 – 2016)	Proportion of 2016 Population
Children (0 – 9)	1,800	1,830	2%	9%
Youth (10 – 19)	2,305	2,095	-9%	11%
Young Adults (20 – 34)	2,955	3,175	7%	16%
Mature Adults (35 – 54)	5,420	5,020	-7%	25%
Older Adults (55 – 69)	3,915	4,650	19%	23%
Seniors (70+)	2,675	3,045	14%	15%

*Source: Statistics Canada Census Data 2011 & 2016 (excluding undercount).*

Overall, the Canadian population is aging as the baby boom generation enters their senior years. The following table shows the rising median age in the District of Muskoka and Ontario between 2001 and 2016. It is interesting to note that the median age declined slightly in Huntsville between 2011 and 2016 as this is

contrary to the overall trend across the province. While the population is not likely to get younger in the immediate future, this does underscore the community’s attractiveness to families and job-seeking adults.

**Table 3: Median Age (2001 – 2016) (Permanent Population only)**

Location	2001	2006	2011	2016
Huntsville	40.2	43.4	45.7	44.8
District of Muskoka	42.2	45.3	48.0	51.3
Ontario	37.2	39.0	40.4	41.3

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data 2001, 2006, 2011 & 2016 (excluding undercount).

**The median age in Huntsville declined slightly between 2011 and 2016, contrary to the overall trend across the province.**

**The number of seniors (aged 70 years and over) is expected to increase from 1 in every 5.5 residents to 1 in every 4 residents by 2046.**

In considering community services for older adults, research has indicated that the needs and expectations of emerging older adults (who are expected to be healthier and more active than previous generations) may be very different than past generations. For some, “seniors” programs or facilities may appear unattractive because they may not yet identify as “seniors”. Many older adults continue to be engaged, active, and working longer than other generations. For others, there may be barriers to accessing community services due to health challenges and disabilities.

The following table shows how age distributions are forecasted to change between 2021 and 2046 for the District of Muskoka; detailed age cohort projections are not available for the Town of Huntsville specifically. It is anticipated that there will be no real change in proportion of children (ages 0 – 9) and mature adults (ages 35 – 54). Both youth (ages 10 – 19) and young adults (20 – 34) are expected to face a slight proportional decrease and older adults (ages 55 – 69) are expected to see a proportional notable decrease. Conversely, seniors (age 70+) are anticipated to experience a notable proportional increase by 2046.

**Table 4: Population Projections based on Age Cohorts (2021, 2031, and 2046) – District of Muskoka**

Age Cohorts	2021	2031	2046	Trend 2021 - 2031	Trend 2021 - 2046
Children (0 – 9)	7.6%	7.5%	7.6%	No Change	No Change
Youth (10 – 19)	8.7%	8.0%	8.0%	Slight Decrease	Slight Decrease
Young Adults (20 – 34)	16.3%	15.9%	15.1%	Slight Decrease	Slight Decrease
Mature Adults (35 – 54)	22.9%	22.8%	23.1%	No Change	No Change
Older Adults (55 – 69)	26.4%	23.0%	20.5%	Notable Decrease	Notable Decrease
Seniors (70+)	18.1%	22.8%	25.7%	Notable Increase	Notable Increase

Source Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2020-2046 Population Projections (2021) – District of Muskoka.

## Employment

In 2016, the Town of Huntsville had a higher labour force participation rate than the District of Muskoka, but a slightly lower rate than Ontario. Huntsville's unemployment rate is also slightly lower than both the District of Muskoka's and Ontario's. Between 2011 and 2016, labour force participation has somewhat shrunk and the unemployment rate has also slowly been on the decline.

**Table 5: Labour Force Participation and Unemployment (2011 – 2016) (Permanent Population only)**

Employment	2011 Huntsville	2011 Muskoka	2011 Ontario	2016 Huntsville	2016 Muskoka	2016 Ontario
Participation Rate	63.9%	61.1%	65.5%	62.8%	60.1%	64.7%
Unemployment Rate	7.7%	7.4%	8.3%	6.7%	7.1%	7.4%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016 (excluding undercount) & National Household Survey 2011.

Looking ahead, as outlined in the District of Muskoka Official Plan (2019), the community is anticipating the number of jobs to increase by 2,210 between 2016 and 2036.

**Table 6: Employment Projections, Town of Huntsville (2016 – 2036)**

2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	Employment Growth 2016 – 36	Employment Growth 2016 – 36
10,160	10,790	11,410	12,000	12,370	2,210	21.8%

Source: District of Muskoka Official Plan (2019).

## Income

Income disparity is a growing concern in Ontario, causing a shift in recreational and cultural offerings to include more low- to no-cost alternatives. Participation rates are declining among many registered activities in response to increasing costs of participation, such as registration, equipment, and travel.

Higher levels of income are typically associated with higher levels of participation in recreation and cultural activities since cost can be less of a barrier as income rises. By comparison to higher income earners, lower-income households may face greater barriers to participation.

**Access to affordable recreation opportunities is essential for broad community participation. 12% of Huntsville's households are considered low income (2016).**

**Table 7: Median Income of Households (2005 – 2015) (Permanent Population only)**

Location	2010	2015	% Change (2010 to 2015)
Huntsville	\$62,673	\$69,332	10.6%
District of Muskoka	\$60,587	\$67,880	12.0%
Ontario	\$66,358	\$74,287	11.9%

Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census (excluding undercount), & National Household Survey 2011.

Since 2010, Huntsville’s median income has been lower than the provincial median, but higher than that of the District of Muskoka. In addition, the proportion of households considered to be low-income median after-tax (LIM-AT) in Huntsville (12.1%) is slightly lower than both the District of Muskoka (13%), and the Ontario average (14.4%). Studies have identified a number of barriers that low-income families face in accessing recreation and culture opportunities including: lack of awareness of programs, parental mistrust, lack of knowledge on the importance of recreation, lack of transportation, unaffordable user fees, stigmatizing subsidy processes, transportation costs, equipment costs, and lack of places for both informal and structured recreation and culture.

Despite a higher median household and lower proportion of low-income residents compared to the Town’s broader counterparts, financial barriers remain a reality for many. Huntsville has taken further steps to minimize these barriers through its Affordable Access to Recreation Policy in which the Town offers children and youth (up to 17 years old) annual access to public swimming, public skating, and a variety of youth and adult programs.

**Education**

Education is often correlated with income and past research has shown that higher levels of education are also correlated with increased participation in recreation and cultural activities. Compared to the District of Muskoka, Huntsville has a slightly higher percentage of residents with a post-secondary education. The following table summarizes educational attainment in Huntsville compared to the District of Muskoka, and Ontario averages.

**Table 8: Educational Attainment (2011 – 2016) (Permanent Population only)**

Education	2011 Huntsville	2011 Muskoka	2011 Ontario	2016 Huntsville	2016 Muskoka	2016 Ontario
No certificate, diploma, or degree	20.3%	20.1%	18.7%	17.6%	17.9%	17.5%
High school diploma, or equivalent	26.9%	28.7%	26.8%	30.4%	30.5%	27.4%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree	52.8%	51.2%	54.6%	52.1%	51.6%	55.1%

*Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016 (excluding undercount), & National Household Survey 2011.*

**Cultural Diversity**

The Town of Huntsville has a relatively homogenous ethnic population, as the large majority of residents (93.5%) were born in Canada. As of 2016, 7.4% of Huntsville residents were born outside of Canada, a slight decrease compared to 2006 (8.4%). Furthermore, 2% of residents identify as a visible minority and 2.7% identify as Aboriginal through the 2016 Census.

**Table 9: Immigration, Town of Huntsville (2006 – 2016) (Permanent Population only)**

Immigration	2006 (#)	2006 (%)	2011 (#)	2011 (%)	2016 (#)	2016 (%)
<b>Non-Immigrant</b>	16,420	91.4%	17,360	93.5%	17,910	92.5%
<b>Immigrant</b>	1,515	8.4%	1,165	6.3%	1,435	7.4%
<b>Non-Permanent</b>	35	0.2%	35	0.2%	25	0.1%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006, & 2016 (excluding undercount), & National Household Survey 2011.

Into the future, it can be expected that Huntsville will slowly become a more culturally diverse community through its sustained growth and its tourist economy. Different cultures value community services differently, or may be interested in non-traditional recreational activities.

## 2.2 Key Municipal Studies

This Master Plan has regard for other municipal plans, studies, reports and policies so that it forms part of an integrated decision-making framework. The pages that follow summarize key documents that have been considered to date, listed generally in order of relevancy. Additional summaries are contained in **Appendix A**.

### Town of Huntsville Official Plan (2019)

The Town of Huntsville Official Plan identifies a community vision that is reflective of the image of the Town presently and into the future. It recognizes the strong identity and community values the Town has in terms of the natural landscape. The vision (below) is intended to assist decision-making for the Town moving forward:

*“Huntsville is a vibrant, caring and welcoming community. We are stewards of our natural environment, arts, culture and heritage. We value a strong and resilient economy. Growth will continue and will be sustainable and balanced with the public interest and the impact to our quality of life.”*

Part D of the Official Plan addresses healthy communities, active transportation, parks, and protection of cultural heritage resources. Additionally, this part includes policies applying to community-based land use designations, including Open Space. The guiding statement for this part of the Official Plan is as follows:

*“Social resiliency involves the balanced provision of needs for housing, education, health care, employment, food, safety, security, and cultural and recreational opportunities. Individual needs vary with age, income, ability, skills, background, and interests. As communities change and grow, it is important to provide for these needs and ensure that a high quality of life is maintained, contributing to a socially resilient community.”*

Several goals are identified to assist the guiding statement, but the following are most relevant to parks, recreation, and culture:

- Protect and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the Town.
- Identify and protect the Town's arts, culture, and heritage resources.
- Promote and expand/implement opportunities for active transportation.
- Promote equal access to goods, services, and employment provided by the Town.
- Promote accessibility for everyone in all public and private environments.

Furthermore, the Plan outlines objectives in order to achieve the goals laid out in this part. Selected objectives include:

- Connect residential, employment, commercial, and recreational hubs within the Town's active transportation routes.
- Enhance and preserve opportunities for continued public access to water.
- Encourage the use of universally accessible design in all new and renovated Town facilities, outdoor public spaces, and all development.
- Provide facilities to satisfy the social, health, education, and leisure needs of existing and future residents.
- Support older persons and the aging population in obtaining housing, recreation, transit, health, and social services to meet their changing needs.
- Recognize the importance of the Town's cultural heritage, inclusive of indigenous culture, and identify opportunities to enhance and celebrate it.

### **Town of Huntsville Strategic Plan (2019 – 2023)**

The vision established within the Town's Strategic Plan is that of:

*A vibrant, inclusive, healthy community that inspires innovation and growth, celebrates arts, culture, and heritage and promotes recreation while developing a resilient economy founded on social caring and environmental stewardship.*

The Strategic Plan outlines a mission for the Town of:

*Providing superior and sustainable services for the people of Huntsville.*

Building off of previous Strategic Plans, the new Plan re-works various goals that existed in the past so that it fits within the current context of the Town and the Key Strategic Areas (i.e., Roads and Infrastructure, Communications, Culture and Wellness, Economic, Governance, and Natural Environment and Sustainability).

**Selected goals** that are relevant to this Community Services Master Plan include:

- Recreation and Leisure – Promotion of healthy active living in Huntsville and providing the programs and opportunities for recreation for all.
- Arts, Culture and Heritage – To inspire innovation, growth and celebration of arts, culture and heritage toward a vibrant, inclusive, healthy community.

- Sustainability – Integrate sustainability principles into planning and development policies and processes
- Capital Improvements – Ensure infrastructure and services are built with sustainability and climate change principles to in mind
- Asset Maintenance – Includes all asset maintenance goals - roads, sidewalks, parks, trails, cemeteries, facilities
- Continuous Improvement – Ensure Town infrastructure and service levels respond to the needs of a prosperous and progressive community
- Strategic Resource Allocation – Apply a strategic approach to budgeting and resource allocation
- Municipal Services and Operations – Ensure municipal operations are streamlined, sustainable, inclusive, efficient and effective
- Human Resources – Build organizational resiliency
- Awareness – Increase awareness of Town Services and events
- Community Engagement – Increase opportunities for public engagement
- Marketing - Increase participation of town services and events

The Plan was further updated in 2021 to remove several sub-goals that were operational in nature, including those that have since been completed. **Selected objectives and sub-goals** that are relevant to this Community Services Master Plan include:

- Complete a Community Services Master Plan including short, medium and long terms projects to meet the needs of current and future user groups (#CW.2.1)
- Creation of MHP Greenhouse (#CW.2.8) – new
- Prepare and implement a five-year business plan for the Algonquin Theatre in 2019 (#CW.3.2)
- Complete a long-term strategy for the future of Muskoka Heritage Place (#CW.3.5)
- Extend town dock to the edge of River Mill Park (#RdINF.3.5)
- Complete improvements to Lion’s Lookout including accessibility improvements (#RdINF.3.6)
- Construct Splash Pad in River Mill Park (#RdINF.3.7)
- Move the existing community garden to larger location (#RdINF.3.8)
- Finalize a plan for Pitmans Bay (#RdINF.3.9)

### **Unity Plan (2010) and Sustainability Report (2015)**

The community, a working group, stakeholders, partners, and the Town worked together to create the Unity Plan which identifies sustainability goals for the community as well as strategies and actions on how to reach the established goals and vision.

The Unity Plan is long-term and addresses various environmental, social/cultural, and economic issues in Huntsville through the use of implementing action plans and monitoring their effect over time. The Plan identifies 12 themes/areas to direct sustainable efforts towards: Environmental Protection; Municipal Operations and Infrastructure; Energy Conservation; Transportation; Land Use Planning; Social Well-Being; Healthcare; Recreation; Arts, Culture, and Heritage; Economic Development; Affordable Housing; and Education.

Regarding community services, the Unity Plan set the following goals:

- **Environmental Protection:** The community will protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the terrestrial and aquatic environments and biodiversity of Huntsville and surrounding area by being responsible stewards of the environment.
- **Transportation:** The community will support, encourage, and promote safe active transportation, such as walking and cycling, and will ensure that infrastructure to support these activities is convenient and accessible for all.
- **Healthy Active Community:** Huntsville will continue to support and encourage healthy, active lifestyles through supporting the continued provision, maintenance, and expansion of opportunities for recreation for all residents of all ages, cultures, and abilities.

Additionally, the Unity Plan sets out several strategic directions that promote the provision of adequate public and green spaces, and spaces that can be used for recreational purposes, while also providing direction to encourage active transportation and development that ties in with the active transportation stance the municipality had taken. The open spaces and recreational resources that exist in Huntsville are critical components of the quality of life in the Town and provide recreational opportunities for a healthy and active community.

The Sustainability Report was completed during the fifth year that the Town had reported on the Unity Plan. The report provided an analysis on where the community stood in regards to reaching the goals and directions originally set out in the Unity Plan. Additionally, the report highlights various initiatives the community had taken upon themselves to promote sustainability, or various activities that promote a sustainable lifestyle (e.g., the Mayor’s Bike Ride, Earth week, etc.). The Report’s main purpose was to increase awareness to the Unity Plan and sustainability overall – it hopes to encourage more people in Huntsville to come forward and champion their own sustainable projects, to get involved and to help to continue carrying forward the Unity Plan and its goals and directions.

### **Additional Studies, Reports and Policies**

The following reports are summarized in Appendix A:

- Cultural Strategy (2011)
- Muskoka Heritage Place – Operations/Business Plan and Projections (2017)
- Land Development Standards – Draft (2021)
- Sidewalk Master Plan (2021)
- Asset Management Plan (2020)
- Consolidated Budgets (2021)
- Development Charges Background Study (2019)
- Waterfront Development Strategy Design Brief (ongoing)
- Downtown Community Improvement Plan (2010)
- Wayfinding Strategy – Draft (2021)
- Public Infrastructure Division Operational Review (2013)
- Active Transportation Workshop Report (2011)

- Muskoka Active Transportation Strategy (2010)
- Accessibility Plan (2018 – 2022) and Achievements (2020)
- Affordable Access to Recreation Policy (2018)
- Facility Allocation Policy (2018)

## 2.3 Trends

The provision of community services is influenced by a number of trends that are being experienced across Ontario and beyond. This section explores key trends that are considered throughout the development of this Master Plan, with local references where appropriate.

### Participation Trends

**Growing Focus on Health and Wellness:** A holistic and multi-faceted approach to health and wellness (health promotion, socialization, mindfulness, and management of stress and anxiety, etc.) is significantly influencing active living. Another trend influencing how programs are structured and delivered is the adoption of Sport for Life’s Long-Term Development Models and the introduction of physical literacy in programs and training. The Town of Huntsville provides a variety of active and passive leisure opportunities such as skating and swimming programs, pickleball, cultural experiences at the Muskoka Heritage Place and opportunities to get outside and explore nature through trails and parks. These programs and experiences are complemented by those delivered by community groups and sports organizations to provide a well-rounded portfolio of parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities.



**Physical Inactivity is Increasing:** Research has found that physical activity levels are low and have not improved in the past number of years due to high reports of increasingly busy lifestyles and the rise of sedentary behaviours. To combat this decline in physical activity, many service providers are working together to increase communications, modify programs and service levels, encourage participation, and support healthy and active lifestyles. The Town attempts to curb physical inactivity through the implementation of its Active Transportation Plan, through providing an Affordable Access to Recreation Policy and by communicating recreation and cultural opportunities through social media, the Town’s website, and the Leisure Guide. There is an opportunity to work with local partners to promote, provide for and increase physical activity levels in Huntsville.



**Active Transportation is on the Rise:** Active transportation is becoming a core element of complete communities. Human-powered modes of travel that are undertaken for utilitarian (day-to-day) purposes such as cycling, walking, or skateboarding are common forms of active transportation. Examples of active transportation facilities may include dedicated cycling infrastructure, signed pathways and trails, or wayfinding and navigation assistance. Guided by various strategies, the Town boasts a comprehensive trail network for walking, running, hiking, and cycling – some of which are available year-round. Huntsville is situated along the Trans Canada Trail which provides the community with numerous active transportation opportunities and also draws users from surrounding communities and seasonal visitors.



### Programming and Policy Trends

**Increased Demand for Unstructured Activities:** Participation is gradually shifting away from structured programs and set participation schedules as people are demonstrating a desire for more drop-in, unstructured, and self-scheduled times to participate. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking activities in the evening, a shift from traditional daytime or late-evening provision. Participation in adult activities is also growing and youth engagement is being embraced in many communities. The Town of Huntsville offers an abundance of drop-in programs ranging from table tennis, to jam sessions, to card games, as well as outdoor spaces that promote unstructured use.



**Inclusivity – Serving All Ages, Abilities, and Backgrounds:** Inclusion and access is a key goal for Huntsville’s Community Services Division. To ensure access for all, the following barriers to participation should be considered: economic (e.g., costs associated with participation); information (e.g., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities); geographic (e.g., equitable distribution of facilities and services), and inclusivity (e.g., ensuring all participants feel welcomed and supported). The Town’s Accessibility Plan outlines several ways Huntsville has responded to ensure that recreation, parks, and cultural opportunities are inclusive to all residents and visitors with disabilities. The Town has partnered with Community Living on key programs. In addition, the Division offers a financial assistance grant for camp programs and one-on-one support for campers requiring inclusion support.



**Use of Technology:** Technological advances have enabled both service providers and users to be more aware of the parks, recreation, and culture opportunities in their communities. This may include websites that summarize facilities, services and program offerings, online portals for program registration, synchronization with smartphone applications, opportunities to read about the history of the community within parks and trails as one experiences them, and more. In addition, the pandemic has led to increased demand for virtual programming, with some municipalities piloting initiatives aimed at keeping residents active and engaged. The Town has embraced the use of technology in a number of ways to improve communication with the public. For example, residents can register for programs online, while the Town is presently connected with over 7,000 followers on Facebook and over 3,000 followers on Twitter.



**Leveraging Partnership Opportunities:** Collaborations with private or non-profit organizations are becoming increasingly common in Ontario municipalities. These help to distribute financial costs and benefit from economies of scale and shared expertise. Community access to schools (especially gymnasiums) is also encouraged though reliable and cost-effective access is frequently cited as barriers.

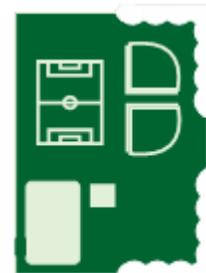


### Facility Provision and Design Trends

**Aging Infrastructure:** Many municipalities in Ontario are faced with aging infrastructure (e.g., arenas, pools, courts, halls, etc.) and are pursuing renewal and reinvestment projects often using non-traditional funding approaches. These projects also provide opportunities to rethink provision and consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities. The Town undertakes building condition assessments to assist with asset management planning. Huntsville’s capital budget identifies projects to improve or replace its aging infrastructure, such as investing in new rail equipment at the Muskoka Heritage Place or the renewal of Centennial Pool.



**Multi-Use and Multi-Generational Facilities:** Modern recreation and culture facilities provide a convenient “one-stop shop” experience. The community hub model has been applied to indoor facilities as well as parks designed to engage users of all ages and abilities. The Canada Summit Centre, which provides a twin pad arena, indoor aquatic centre, active living centre, walking track, and several other amenities under one roof is an example of a multi-use facility that serves as a community destination for all residents.



**Multi-Dimensional and Comfortable Spaces:** Best practices in facility design consider safety, comfort, and opportunities for community gathering and socialization. This may include strategic placement of seating areas, proximity to washroom facilities, and open concept design features. Many communities further support convenience in public spaces through the provision of wireless internet access.



**Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities:** To comply with the 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), municipalities have renovated public spaces to meet barrier-free standards, provided AODA-specific customer service training, and are continuously seeking opportunities to offer inclusive programs and services, regardless of ability. Huntsville’s Accessibility Plan demonstrates the Town’s commitment to promoting inclusion and removing accessibility barriers from all public spaces. For example, the Town provided a ramp to improve accessibility at the Muskoka Heritage Place Maw House in addition to installing benches and an automatic door opener for the family change room at the pool in the Canada Summit Centre in 2017 (note: there remain some priority areas that require modification such as within the pool changerooms).

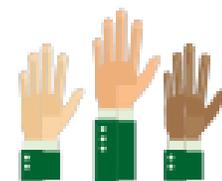


## Arts and Cultural Trends

**Investing in our Residents and Community:** Nurturing local cultural activity can be considered an “investment” that can reap long-term rewards. For example, arts education helps in child-development and has many positive social impacts. While delivery is typically community-based, municipalities are seeking strategic approaches to support local organizations, including funding and subsidy programs. For example, while Huntsville boasts many arts and cultural organizations and opportunities, the 2010 Unity Plan and 2011 Cultural Strategy contain strategies to support and collaborate with others within the sector to build capacity and maximize the use of existing cultural assets.



**Attendance and Participation:** Research on attendance is broad but highlights growing participation and high levels of appreciation for arts and culture across the country. Residents’ value authentic experiences and the unique attributes of communities. People are also experiencing and appreciating arts and culture in less traditional ways and have increasing expectations for programs and events. The Town and its partners offer a variety of special events, including the Huntsville Festival of the Arts activities that draw participants from a wide area.



**Celebrating Local:** Support for cultural activities can be a means of achieving many social goals, beyond simply supporting arts and culture for its own sake. For example, large-scale community events and public engagement opportunities highlight the value of celebrating local experiences and embracing the Town’s rich heritage. Muskoka Heritage Place celebrates local and regional groups in various ways through various historical and cultural information pieces.



**Economic Value of Cultural Industries:** Increased collaboration among groups and local businesses helps to build grassroots and sustainable support for creative industries. It is critical that municipalities help organizations build capacity and establish a sense of place. Huntsville’s Muskoka Heritage Place is one example of how the Town can create a sense of place with this unique historical and cultural space that draws tourists and visitors, creating economic spin-off opportunities.



**Creative/Culture Hubs:** Creative/Cultural spaces give artists the platforms and access to tools they need to succeed creatively. It is about bringing people together – artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and organizations – in spaces that encourage collaboration, innovation, and development. These hubs are key economic drivers to attract skilled labour and innovation to specific places. Hubs can take the form of districts, or individual facilities – such as the Algonquin Theatre, Partners Hall and community halls – that inherently become multi-use spaces. Adaptation of existing spaces allows access for various activities without additional facility development.

**Arts and Culture as Catalysts for Revitalization:** Several municipalities effectively leverage arts and culture to create and maintain economically and socially prosperous communities. Arts and culture can add to the quality of life of a downtown and Town-wide by attracting people to these places and providing activity and vibrancy. Cultural hubs have the ability to attract talent pools, but also provide economic and social benefits for disadvantaged areas. Additionally, communities have also recently opted for individual-based approaches to revitalization through place-making aspects. Place-making is a community driven process that creates well utilized and enjoyed spaces through capitalizing on local community assets – Huntsville’s Group of Seven Walking Tour is one of several excellent local examples. Partnerships between the Town and organizations such as the Huntsville Festival of the Arts and Huntsville Arts Society have also helped to maximize use of downtown assets such as the Algonquin Theatre and Partners Hall.

**Digital Transformation of Arts and Culture:** Digital technologies have allowed creative individuals to self-publish, produce, market, distribute, and sell their creations, no longer relying on traditional means of production, distribution, and marketing. Digital culture has allowed the creator to engage with audiences directly, and allows for creators to reach mass markets and tailor their products to suit consumers across borders.

**Immersive and Interactive Participatory Experience:** There is a rise in self-organized experiences in arts and culture, where individuals are consuming and interacting with the world around them. This trend influences arts and culture through the ability for participants to become co-creators or contributors rather than spectators, a trend that Huntsville has capitalized on through the ongoing maintenance of its Group of Seven outdoor gallery. These experiences emphasize and require creators to provide meaningful user experiences at events, festivals, shows, and programs.

### **Potential Impacts of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic will affect the long-term demand for and delivery of community services and – although the ultimate scope and scale of change are unknown – the change is likely to be lasting. Long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that community services play in personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.

Recognizing that the situation is evolving, municipalities (including Huntsville) must prepare for a wide range of scenarios. The following are some potential impacts the pandemic may have on the sector in the medium- to longer-term.

- Emphasis on health equity and access to parks, trails, and natural areas;
- Growing interest in unstructured, individual and small group activities;
- Desire for outdoor recreation (including year-round use), placing pressure on trails, parks, natural areas, washrooms, etc.;
- A possible shift in prime-time demand due to flexible work hours;
- Volatility in volunteers and events;
- Substantial changes to operations (e.g., touchless services, cleaning, visitor management, staff training, etc.), possibly with funding and capacity implications;
- Impacts on building design (ventilation, spacing, access/egress, mid-door spaces, etc.);
- Consideration for the significant percentage of women and others who have left the workforce;
- Constant engagement and communication as people demand accurate and real-time information;
- Rethinking (or renegotiation) of some third-party partnerships; and
- Greater use of technology to help support changes (virtual programming, sanitization, enhanced WiFi access, etc.).

### 3. Public and Stakeholder Input

Targeted engagement with residents and stakeholders (e.g., residents, service clubs, sports organizations, Town officials and staff, etc.) offers an understanding of current issues and future opportunities for enhancing community services in Huntsville. For this Master Plan, a comprehensive community engagement strategy was developed to promote public dialogue throughout the process.

Primary engagement tactics to date have included:

- Community survey;
- External stakeholder consultation;
- Open public input opportunities; and
- Town Staff and Council consultation.

*Note: It is important to note that the information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered, even in instances where comments may incorrectly reflect the Town's actual policies, practices, or level of provision.*

#### 3.1 Community Engagement Approach

As the Master Plan project was initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic, community engagement focused on digital and remote opportunities for the public to provide feedback. This created new opportunities for the public and stakeholders to become involved in the planning process, leading to broad participation.

Engagement opportunities were promoted through Huntsville's website, media releases, and social media accounts. Online engagement tools were open for a pre-determined window of time. A project website and email address were maintained for the duration of the planning process.

The consultation process for the Master Plan took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented event transformed the way in which we engage the public, stakeholders, staff, and Council. In response to Provincial restrictions on social gatherings, the Consulting Team employed various methods of engaging these groups such as video-conferencing tools and other virtual tools.

#### 3.2 Community Survey

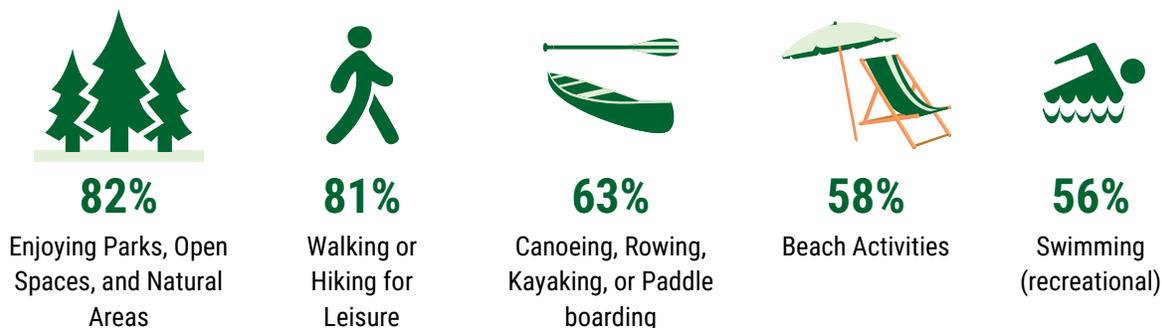
To support the development of this Master Plan, the Town hosted an online community survey that was available over a period of four weeks. The survey was promoted by the Town and was posted on the Town's website. A total of **427 unique responses** were received; being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates varied by question. The purpose of the community survey was to elicit information on the parks, recreation, and culture needs of Huntsville residents.

Specifically, the survey gathered information regarding: participation rates in organized and unorganized activities; barriers to activity; facility use and suggested improvements; support for investment; and opinion/agreement with various statements. Finally, the survey helped to establish a profile of parks, recreation, and culture users in Huntsville by collecting relevant demographic information. Tabulated survey response data has been provided in **Appendix B**.

### Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

The following figure summarizes the five most **popular parks and recreation activities** respondents have participated in since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic) in Huntsville or elsewhere. A common element among the most popular activities – such as enjoying parks, open spaces, and natural areas; walking or hiking for leisure; canoeing, rowing, kayaking, or paddle boarding; beach activities; and swimming (recreational) – is that they are unstructured and can generally be self-scheduled, which is consistent with participation trends observed across Ontario. The survey also found that proximity is a factor in participation – especially for trails, neighbourhood parks, sports fields, and indoor/outdoor walking tracks.

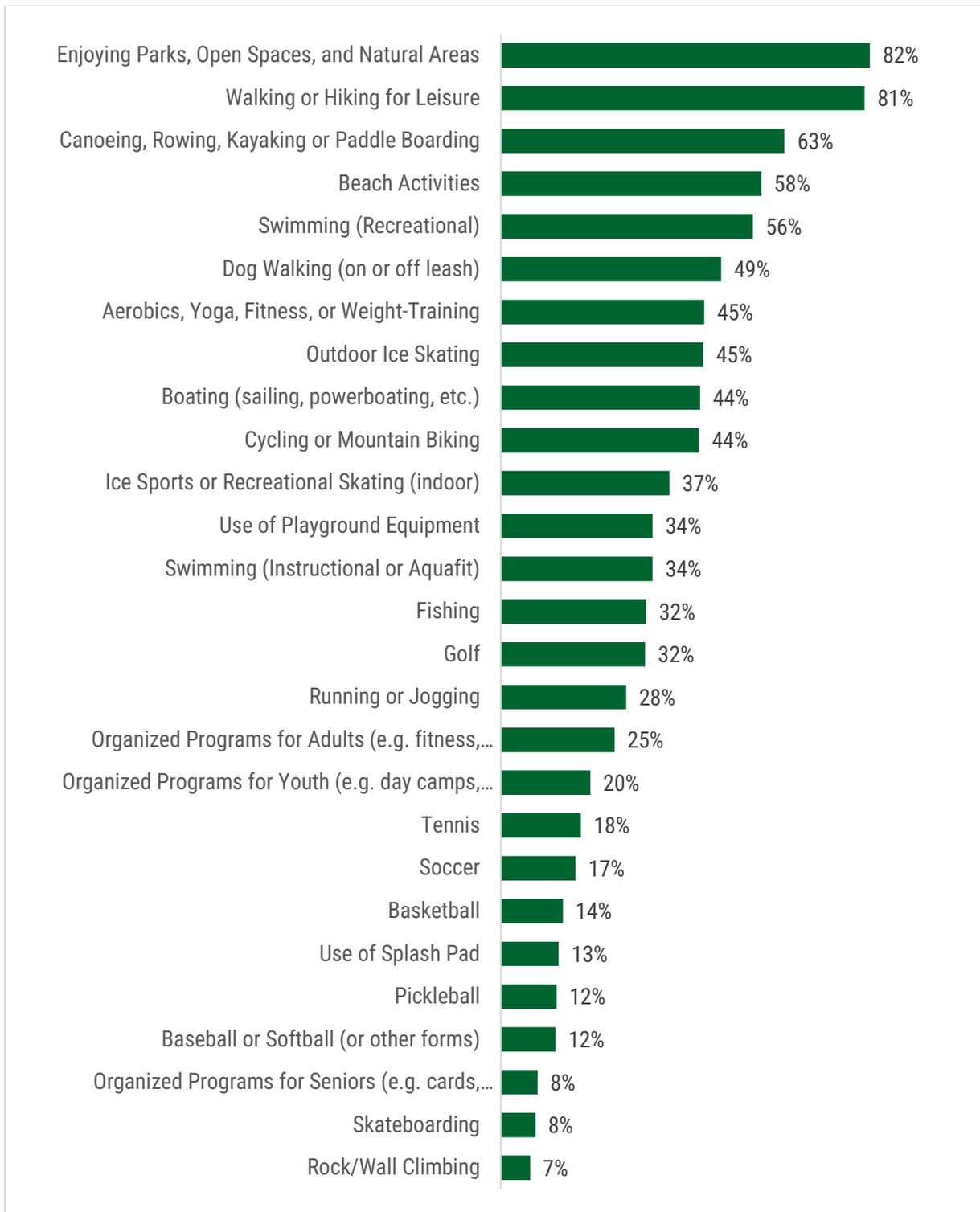
**Figure 8: Most Popular Parks and Recreation Activities**



The full list of parks and recreation activities and their respective participation levels are shown on the following chart.

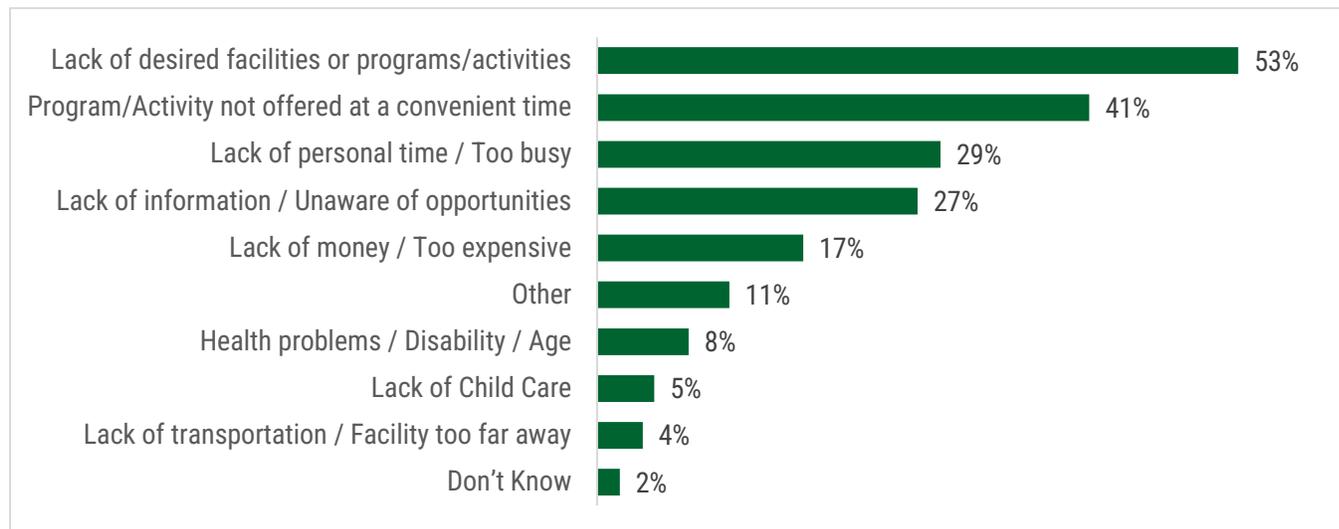


**Figure 9: Households Participating in Parks and Recreation Activities (before and during the COVID-19 pandemic)**



Three-quarters of respondents were able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like – this is a significant percentage that illustrates good access to the activities people want. However, over one-fifth (22%) of respondents were unable to participate as often as they would like. The following figure illustrates the **most common barriers** to participating in parks and recreation activities (excluding the COVID-19 pandemic) identified by respondents.

**Figure 10: Participation Barriers to Parks and Recreation Activities (sub-sample)**



The lack of desired facilities or programs/activities was the number one participation barrier (53%), suggesting that the provision of opportunities could be improved. Programs/activities not being offered at convenient times was another common barrier (41%).

*“The Town needs an indoor space for multi-use groups – soccer, baseball, golf, tennis, pickleball, etc. A heated facility that all user groups can access as needed and provide year-round activity/programming for all ages.”*

Survey respondent comments

Further analysis indicates that those that are unable to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like were more likely to indicate that the Town’s parks and recreation programs are not affordable to their household suggesting that cost is a barrier to many. Additionally, adults and older adults (ages 19 – 69) identified lower levels of satisfaction with parks and recreation opportunities, suggesting that improvements may lead to greater participation. Furthermore, respondents from households with three or more persons were more likely to have noted barriers to participation, including cost and time pressures, suggesting that many families have challenges in this area.

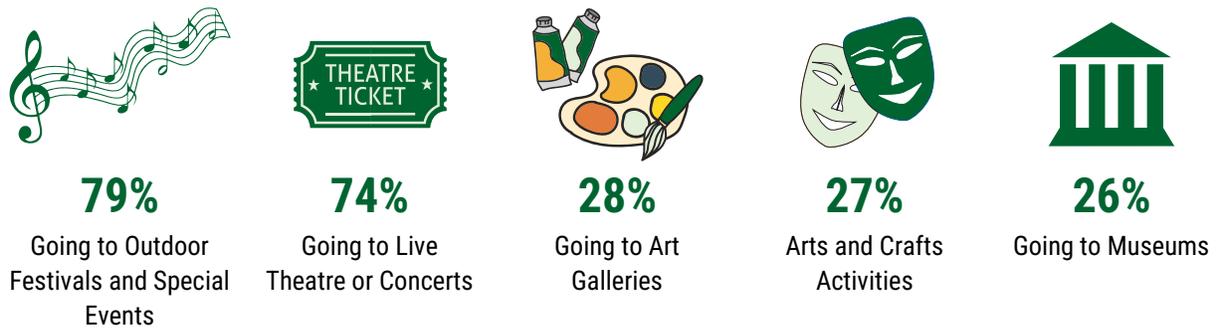
A broad range of suggestions were offered when respondents were asked what **additional parks and recreation opportunities** they would like to see offered in Huntsville. Top suggestions included:

- outdoor pickleball courts
- outdoor skating
- splash pads
- indoor pickleball courts
- bike infrastructure (e.g., improved bike lanes, paths, trails)
- more walking trails
- disc golf
- rock climbing
- yoga
- canoeing/kayaking

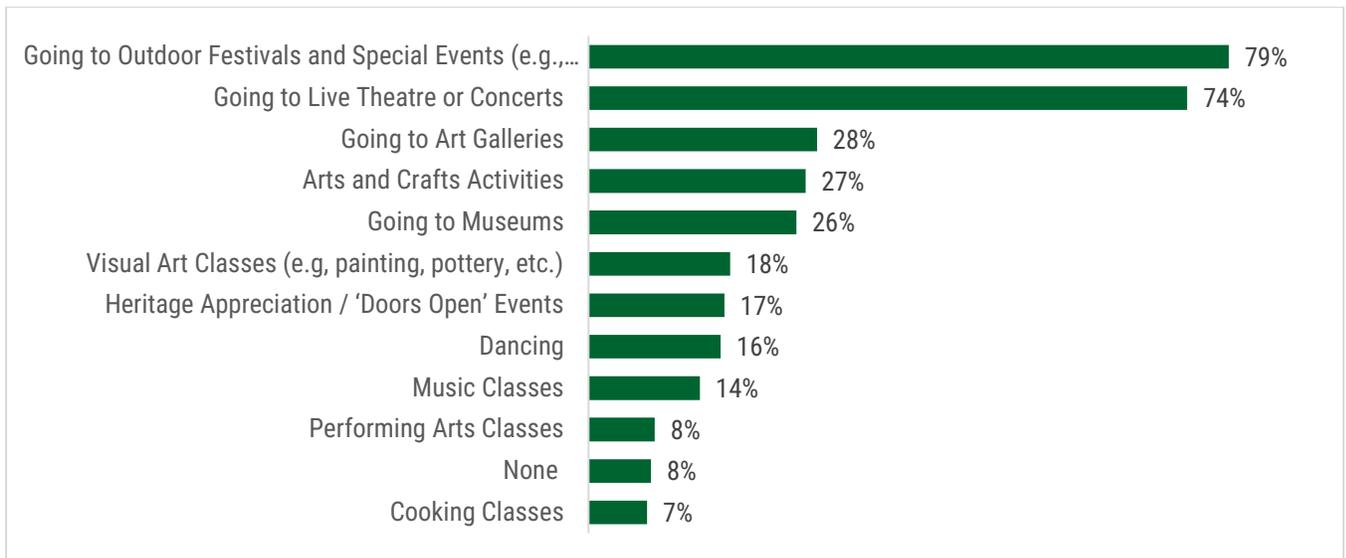
### Participation in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Activities

The following figure summarizes the five most **popular arts and culture activities** respondents have participated in since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic) in Huntsville or elsewhere. This includes going to outdoor festivals/special events and going to live theatre/concerts.

**Figure 11: Participation in Arts, Culture, and Heritage Activities**



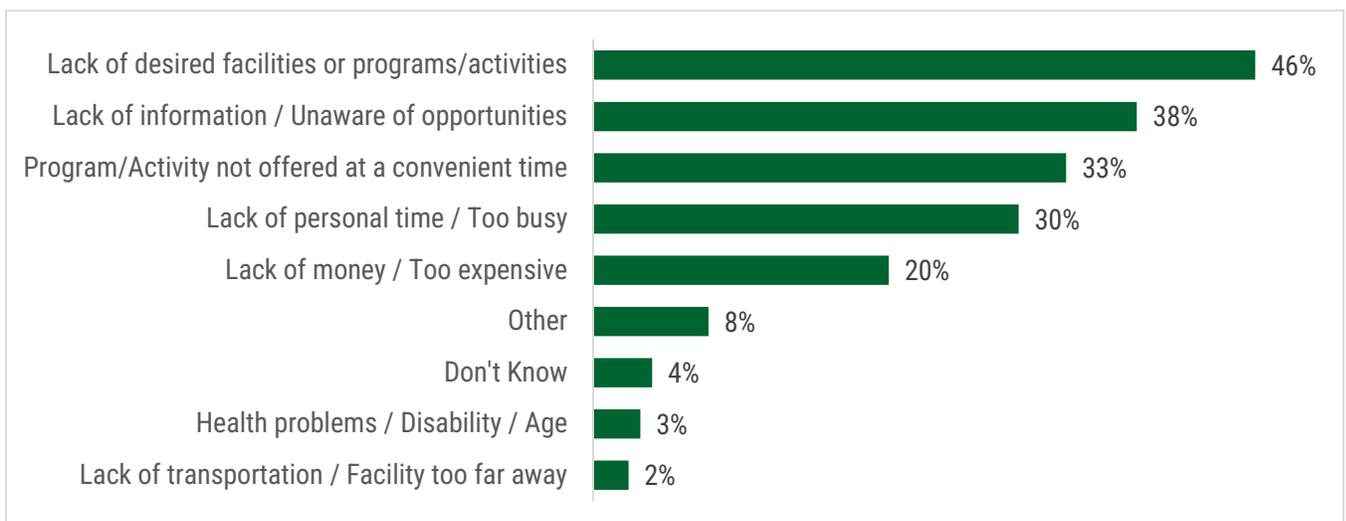
**Figure 12: Participation in Arts and Culture Activities (before and during the COVID-19 pandemic)**



Nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents were able to participate in in arts, culture and heritage activities as often as they would like – this suggests that residents have good access to desired activities. However, nearly one-quarter (23%) of respondents indicated that they were **not** able to participate as often as they would like. The following graph illustrates the most common **barriers to participating in arts, culture, and heritage activities** (excluding the COVID-19 pandemic).

The lack of desired facilities or programs/activities was noted as the primary barrier (53%), suggesting that the provision of opportunities could be improved. Lack of information/unaware of opportunities (38%) was another leading barrier, suggesting that communication of activities and opportunities could be improved.

**Figure 13: Participation Barriers to Arts, Culture, and Heritage Activities (sub-sample)**



A broad range of suggestions were offered when respondents were asked what **additional arts, culture, and heritage opportunities** they would like to see offered in Huntsville. The most common request that was received was for outdoor concerts/live music. Other top suggestions included festivals/events, art galleries/showcases, theatre performances, visual arts classes, and cooking classes. Other common activity requests included music lessons, dance, heritage activities, and ghost walks.

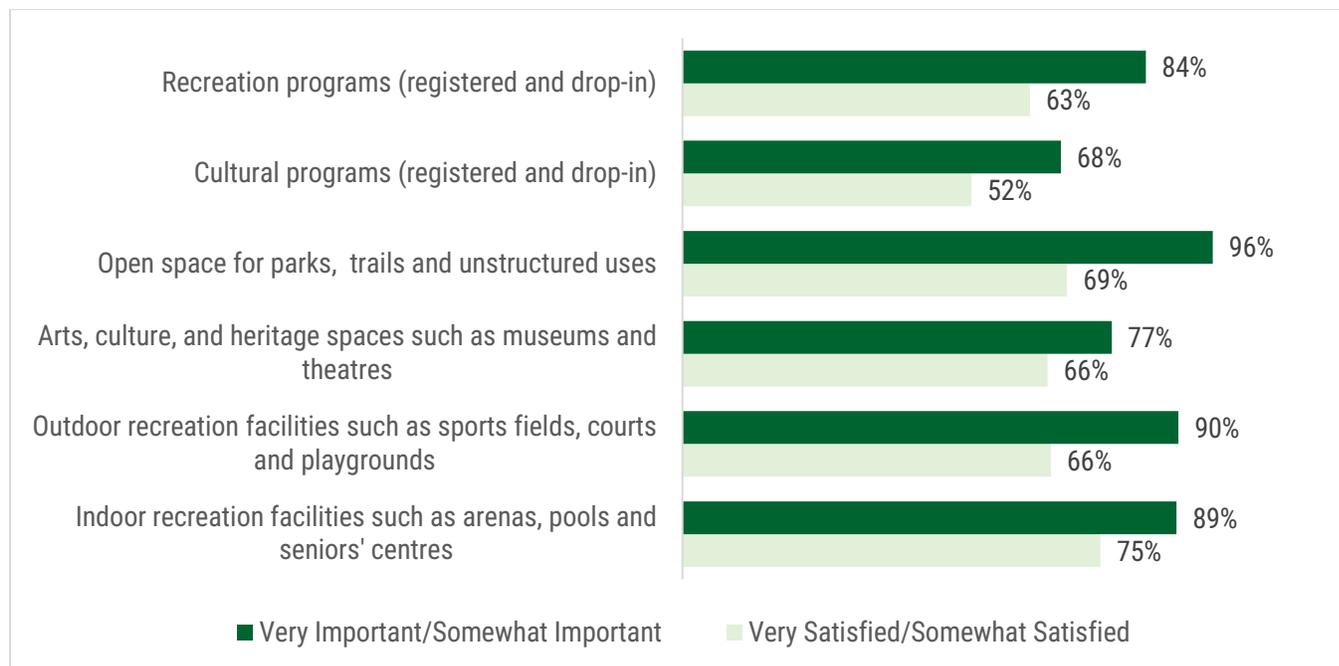
*“More arts, culture, and music. Do not close down the Algonquin Theatre. Consider making it an affordable space for other artists in Town.”*

Survey respondent comment

### Importance and Satisfaction

Levels of importance and satisfaction with respect to various aspects of the Town’s **parks, recreation and culture system** are illustrated below. Generally speaking, higher levels of importance compared to satisfaction typically indicates that expectations are not being met. With this in mind, the biggest gaps where expectations are not being met are “open space for parks, trails, and unstructured uses” and “outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, courts, and playgrounds”.

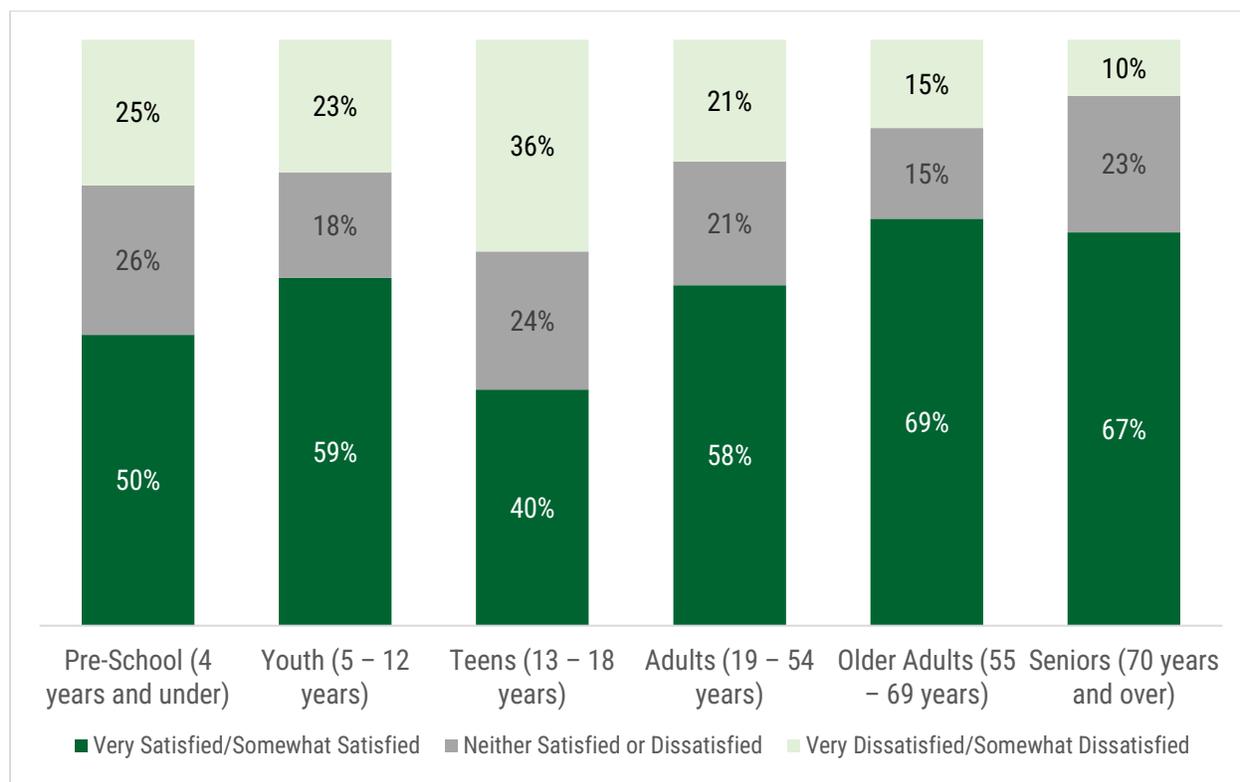
**Figure 14: Importance and Satisfaction of Parks, Recreation and Culture Facilities and Programs in the Town**



Note: 'Don't know' responses are excluded and 'Neutral' responses are not shown

The following figure illustrates levels of satisfaction with parks, recreation, and culture opportunities by **age group**. Adults (age 19 to 54) and older adults (age 55 to 69) were the most satisfied with parks and recreation opportunities in Huntsville although high levels of satisfaction were also expressed for other age groups.

**Figure 15: Satisfaction with Parks, Recreation, and Culture Opportunities by Age Group**

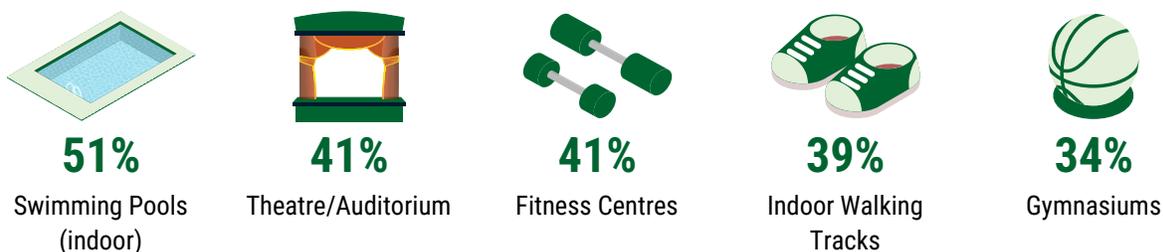


Note: 'Don't know' responses are excluded

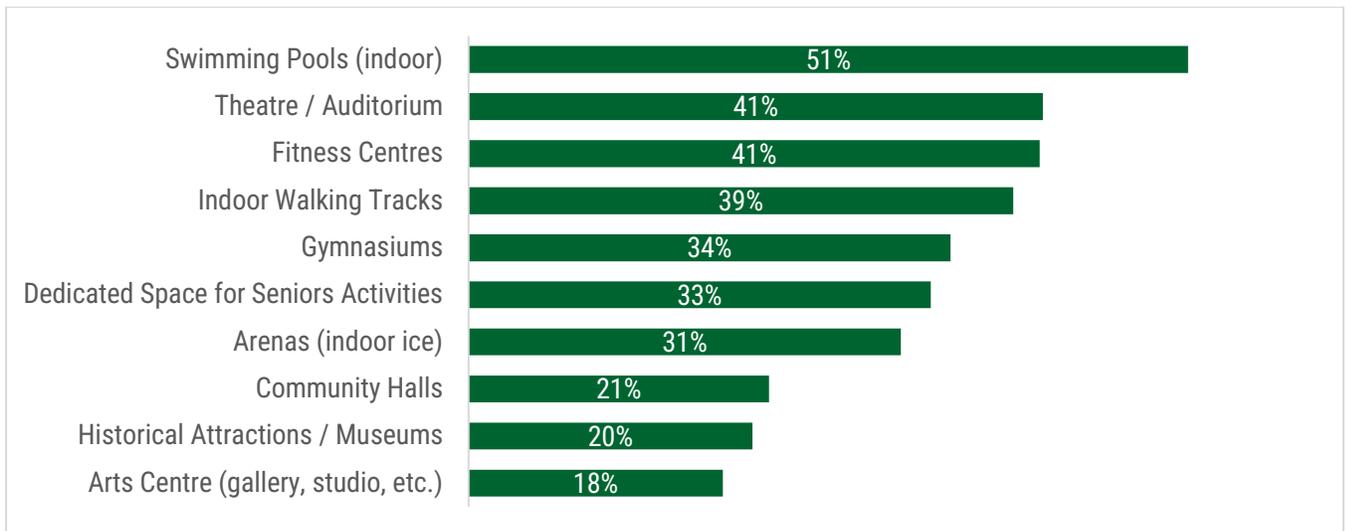
### Priorities

Respondents were asked about their **highest priorities for additional spending on indoor facilities** (either for upgrades or new construction). The Town currently offers most of the priority spaces within their inventory, with the exception of fitness centres (41%) and gymnasiums (34%), which are offered by other sectors in Huntsville.

**Figure 16: Top Priorities for Additional Spending for Indoor Facilities**

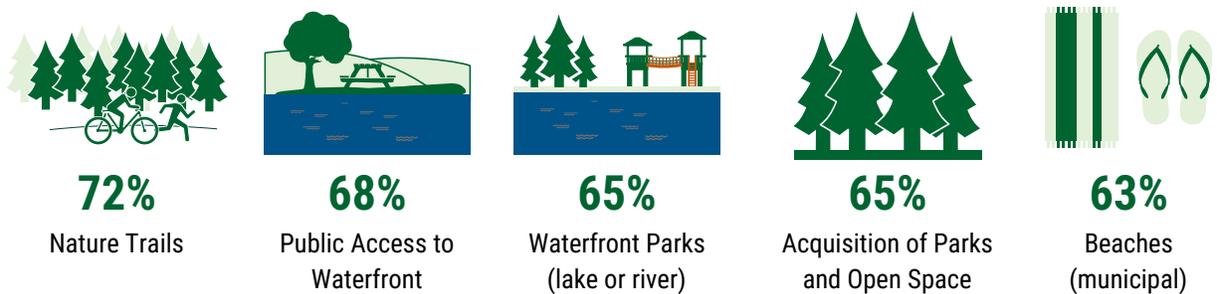


**Figure 17: Support for Spending on Constructing or Improving Indoor Facilities**

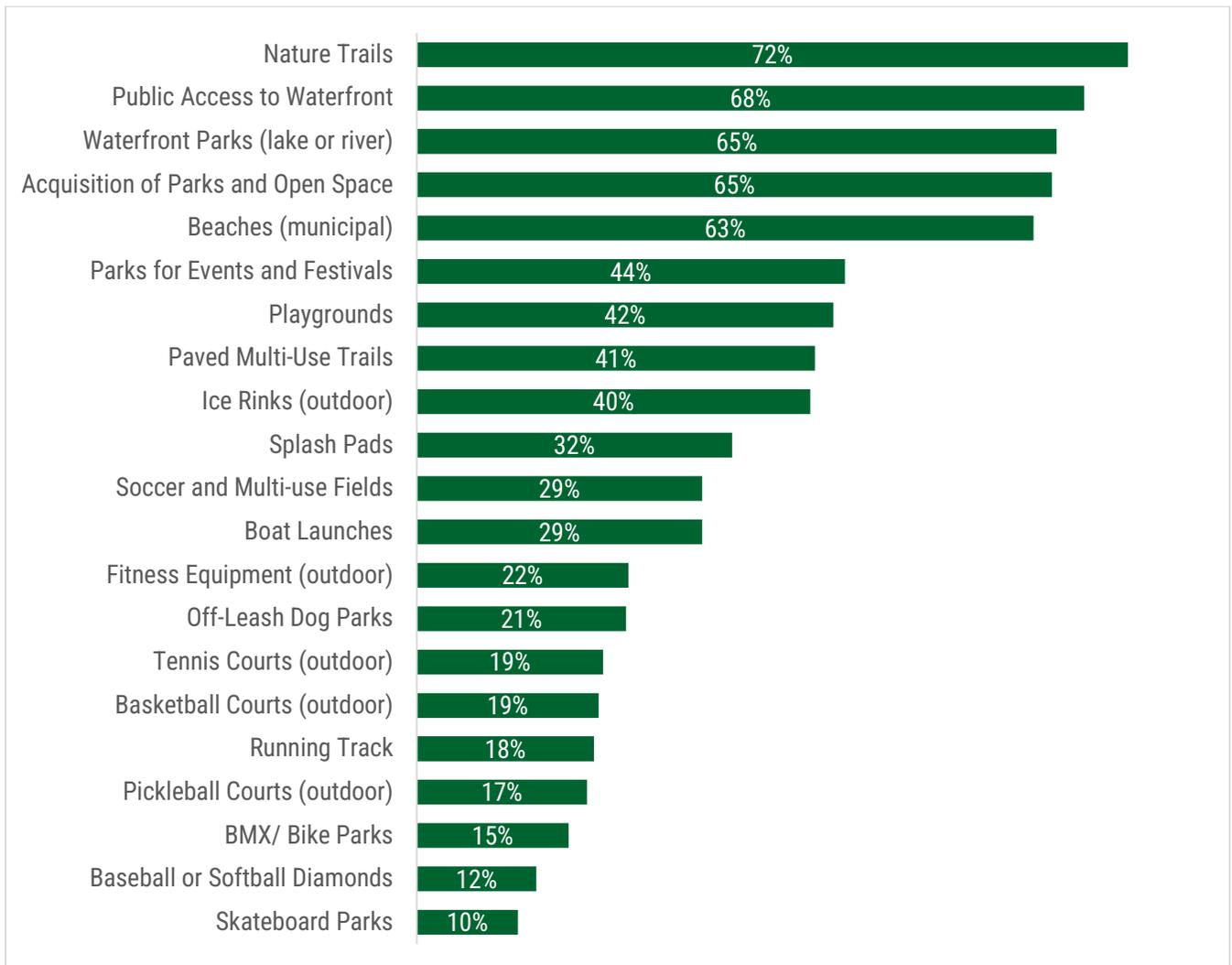


The following figure summarizes the **highest priorities for additional spending on outdoor facilities** (either for upgrades or new construction). Top priorities include nature trails, public access to waterfront, waterfront parks (lake or river), acquisition of parks and open space, and beaches (municipal), which lends support to additional unstructured, self-scheduled opportunities within the public realm.

**Figure 18: Top Priorities for Additional Spending for Outdoor Facilities**



**Figure 19: Support for Spending on Constructing or Improving Outdoor Facilities**



Respondents were asked to identify their **level of support for various statements** with respect to parks, recreation, and culture in the Town of Huntsville. The survey found that:

- 96% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that “parks, recreation, and cultural services should be a high priority for Town Council”;
- 69% agreed/strongly agreed that “the Town’s parks, recreation, and cultural programs are affordable for their household”;
- 66% agreed/strongly agreed “the Town’s parks, recreation, and cultural amenities are well maintained”; and
- 57% agreed/strongly agreed that “they feel well informed about the Town’s parks, facilities, programs, and events”.

## Additional Comments

A variety of open-ended comments were received regarding Huntsville’s parks, recreation, and culture system. The following points summarize **key themes** from the comments:

- Suggestions to preserve park space, walking trails, and waterfront for current and future residents, reflecting recent growth pressures.
- Requests to ensure that everyone can enjoy the waterfront by creating more public access points.
- There is interest for an indoor multi-use space that various groups can use (e.g., soccer, baseball, golf, tennis, pickleball, etc.).
- Equity, diversity, and accessibility should be prioritized when improving and/or constructing indoor and outdoor facilities.
- There is a desire for more arts, music, and culture. Many felt that the Town has so much to offer and that it should be leveraged, possibly through a culture hub.

*“As more green space gets developed, we need to prioritize protecting other living spaces, or the point of living here will be defeated.”*

Survey respondent comment

## Profile of Survey Respondents

Demographic characteristics of the survey sample include:

- Half (51%) of the sample resided closest to urban Huntsville, with 29% living “north of the river” and 22% living “south of the river.” Another 19% live in “other or rural areas”, 11% in Hidden Valley and area, 8% in Port Sydney and area, 6% in Utterson and area, and 2% are residents of Novar and area.
- The vast majority of respondents (91%) are permanent residents of the Town of Huntsville. 5% are seasonal residents and 4% are non-residents.
- The median age of survey respondents was 54 years old, slightly higher than the Census median for Huntsville. The survey was restricted to those age 16 and older, however, respondents were encouraged to respond on behalf of their household.
- The average household size was 2.91 persons.

### 3.3 Stakeholder Consultation

The Town has dozens of community groups that offer services to the community through sports, and other recreation and cultural programs. Some have competing needs for space, staff resources, and funding while desiring to increase their programs and services. 52 organizations were invited to provide feedback through the Master Plan’s stakeholder questionnaire; several attempts were made to solicit their input. A total of 21 organizations participated in this phase of the consultation program.

The following high-level summary synthesizes common themes that emerged from stakeholder feedback, organized by subject area. Little interpretation or fact-checking of statements made by stakeholders has been completed and thus the summary may not represent final themes or directions for the Master Plan.

### **Participation and Trends**

- Most groups expect participation and membership rates to increase or remain the same over the next five years. There was some degree of uncertainty about future participation due to the impact of COVID-19.
- Membership over the past three years has varied for most groups. Several remained the same, or fairly close to the same, whereas a few increased (e.g., Disc Golf, TriMuskoka, Pickleball). The majority of organizations experienced a decline in participation/membership as a result of COVID-19.
- The majority of user groups primarily serve Huntsville residents with the exception of tennis and pickleball participants which had a higher degree of non-residents.

### **Park and Facility Requests**

- Most stakeholders identified their biggest limitation as being a lack of space/availability for what they need and when they need it. Some groups identified a lack of parking as an issue that limits the amount of people that are willing to participate.
- A common theme that emerged was the desire for a new multi-use facility that could house a variety of sports (e.g., pickleball and tennis indoors in the winter months, basketball, soccer, etc.), as well as spectators. A field house attached to the new multi-use facility was requested for baseball, soccer, lacrosse, and other future sports.
- Several groups would like to see the completion of the Conroy Park Track and Field facility (the rubberized high-jump apron, the long jump and triple jump facilities, and spectator seating along the north side of the field). Lights were also requested to be added around the Conroy Park track (lower scale so as not to disturb neighbours).
- Disc Golf indicated that the popularity of disc golf is increasing within the Town of Huntsville and requested a second course to allow for hosting of large-scale tournaments.
- Several groups suggested that connectivity of the trail network could be improved by linking the trails to existing facilities.
- The Huntsville Art Society is seeking a public art gallery and a cultural centre where groups can collaborate and create, as well as an outdoor pavilion to host art markets, workshops, and art shows.
- Improvements to the Port Sydney Hall meeting spaces were requested to make them more multi-use. Additionally, accessibility improvements to the Hall were requested.
- Requests were made by multiple user groups for more indoor and outdoor basketball courts.
- Accessible washrooms were requested at multiple park and new playground equipment should be inclusive and accessible for all.

- The Volleyball Club indicated that they could use high-quality outdoor sand volleyball nets.
- Some groups identified the idea of having outdoor fitness playgrounds and stations for adults to use free of charge.
- The aquatics representative requested accessibility improvements for the Canada Summit Centre (e.g., installing motion door openers to go into the ladies changeroom and to exit to the pool), as well as replacing the pool since it is aging.
- The Tennis Club and Pickleball Club would like dedicated courts for their respective sports so each can be played separately. Both court types would benefit from having lights to extend the hours the sports can be played.
- The Skating Club identified that a permanent covered outdoor facility would be desired as it could accommodate roller-skating in the summer and ice skating in the winter. The group also requested jumping harnesses at both indoor ice pads.

### **Service Delivery Considerations**

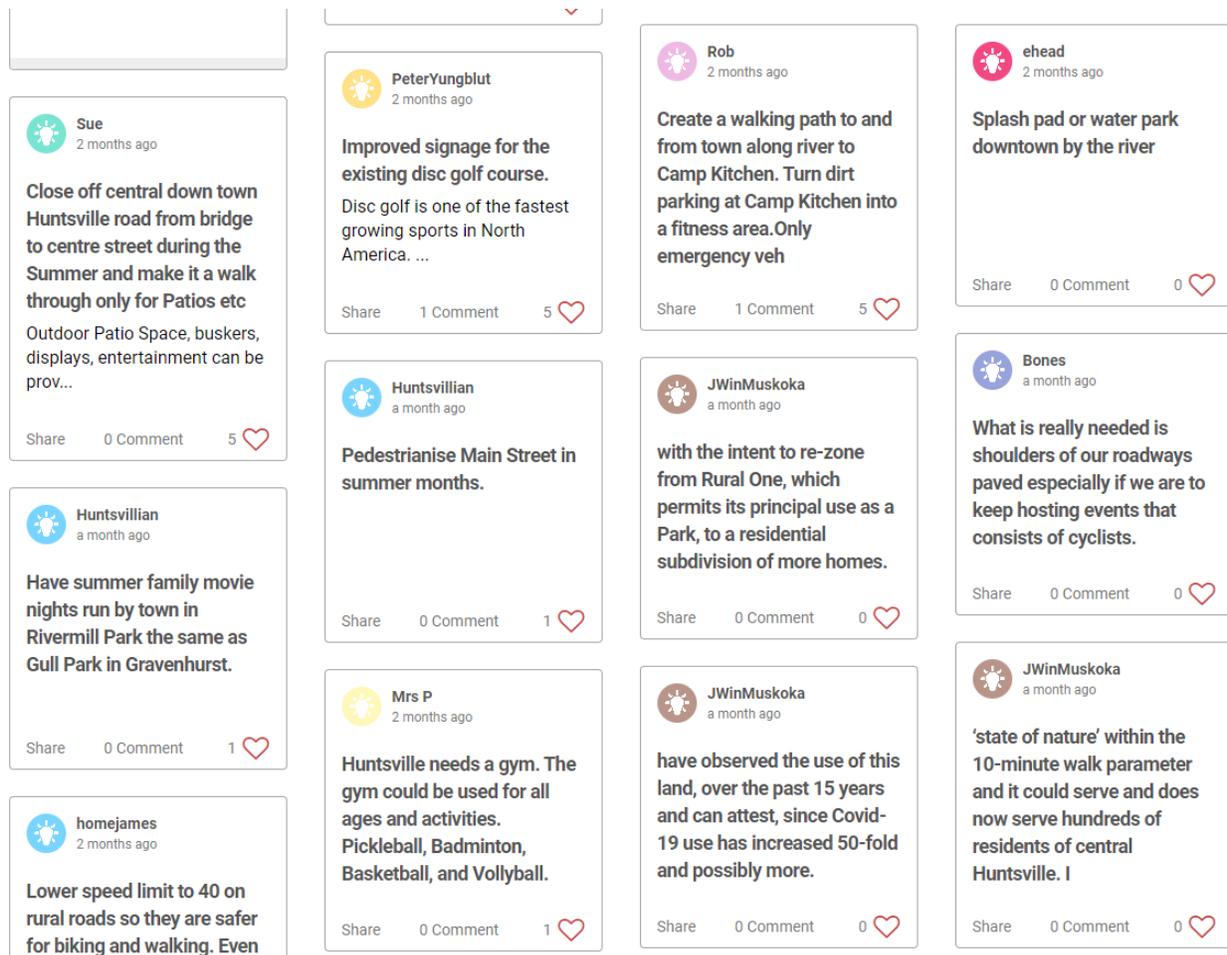
- Cost of programs and facility rentals is a challenge faced by some groups. Some groups suggested that reduced non-profit rates would be helpful to promote greater utilization of the facilities (e.g., allowing some groups to use community rooms free of charge).
- The extension of facility hours was a common topic among the stakeholder submissions (the addition of lights to some outdoor facilities was suggested as one potential opportunity). Furthermore, extension of washroom hours at major parks (e.g., Conroy Park) was requested.
- Another challenge noted by some organizations is volunteer recruitment, retention, and succession. Many groups are finding it difficult to bring in new volunteers to replace older volunteers.
- Groups requested that sport/event tourism be considered when exploring new sport infrastructure since Huntsville is a unique destination and draws people in from all over.
- The Art Society indicated that they would like to have access to Partners Hall on weekends from June until October (with a Town Staff member available) so they can better serve the seasonal visitors. Additionally, they requested that art opening receptions take place during evening hours (they would like to hold 12 three-hour receptions per year).
- Stakeholders identified that various facilities could use more upkeep, such as fixing the leak in the roof at the Jack Bionda Arena, more cleanliness at the Arena and other facilities (especially as a result of COVID-19), and improving the process of securing entries during game days).
- More integrated programming was requested, but having the programming be affordable to all – even some being free. Additionally, some groups suggested that more affordable/free fitness programming for all ages be offered moving forward, especially since COVID-19 has caused many people to adopt more sedentary lifestyles.
- Some user groups identified that they would like to be included in the process of new facilities/redesigning or improving of existing facilities so that they can bring their own knowledge, expertise, and experience to the table and express concerns or ideas they may have on how to better improve or design facilities.

- The Muskoka Hornets (Baseball) expressed that they would like to have one additional night per week to accommodate their house league program due to their anticipated growth.
- The aquatics representative identified that picnic tables at the Port Sydney beach are occasionally moved onto the dock so people can jump/dive off them. It was suggested that some of these picnic tables be anchored so that they cannot be moved.
- Some groups also suggested that signage and awareness could be improved to better advertise programs and sport opportunities such as games for the Junior C hockey team.
- A common suggestion from stakeholders was to explore partnership opportunities between the groups and the Town to better support and promote community participation and organizational capacity.

### 3.4 Other Public Input

Throughout the Master Plan process, the public had opportunities to submit written comments for consideration, including through an idea wall on the project website.

**Figure 20: Sample of Recreation, Culture, and Heritage Ideas Posted on the Project Website**



A summary of written input received as of (August 17, 2021) – accounting for 73 comments – is highlighted below:

- Safer cycling/walking trails and infrastructure (10)
- Preserve natural areas (6)
- Splash pad (5)
- Indoor gymnasium (4)
- Pedestrian only Main St. in Summer (3)
- More playgrounds (2)
- Outdoor rink (2)
- Accessible trails (1)
- Boardwalk (1)
- Lights at Conroy Park (1)
- Summer family movie nights (1)
- Improved disc golf signage (1)
- Public toboggan hills (1)
- Indoor soccer field (1)
- Larger public docks (1)
- More public boat launch ramps (1)
- Outdoor exercise stations (1)

In addition, the Draft Community Services Master Plan was posted on the project webpage and advertised for public comment during the month of March 2022. Comments received on the draft are summarized below:

**Interest in Outdoor Amenities:**

- Community gardens
- Splash pad
- Another off-leash dog park (centrally located)
- Sidewalks

**Expanded programming:**

- Fitness – group and individual
- Drop-in programs
- Multi-generational activities (families, youth, seniors)

**Support for Community Hubs:**

- Use of Algonquin Theatre to support community-focused initiatives
- Continue to establish CSC, ALC, and MHP as multi-use community hubs

**Invest in Community Services:**

- These services are essential and a big part of why people love living and visiting Huntsville
- New ways of marketing and promotions should be explored

### 3.5 Internal Consultation (staff, officials)

Consultation was undertaken with Town Council and staff involved in the management of parks, recreation, and culture facilities and services. Input from these sources was wide-ranging and has been used to inform the Master Plan.



### 3.6 Key Themes Arising from Consultations

Key themes from the initial public engagement phase are summarized below. These findings have been assessed along with community profiles, usage data, and promising practices from other communities to inform the Master Plan's recommendations. They are presented in no particular order.

1. Community Services are **essential services** – there is a need to demonstrate the benefits to the community and individuals in order to support and rationalize service levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how important these services are to community health and wellness.
2. The lack of a Town-wide **Master Plan** has made it difficult to identify and respond to community priorities. There is considerable interest in the directions that emerge from this master planning process, including those that could leverage **community partnerships**.
3. Town has many **excellent and unique facilities** (e.g., Canada Summit Centre, Muskoka Heritage Place, Algonquin Theatre, etc.) that serve both urban and rural residents and visitors.

4. The Town's **waterfront and lakes** are very important features to residents and visitors – a priority should be placed on maintaining and enhancing safe and appropriate public access to these spaces.
5. The Town's programs, events and customer service are high quality, but more should be done to **promote** these offerings and ensure that they remain **affordable**. Many residents do not feel as informed as they should be about what is available to them.
6. Delivery of services is coordinated through several municipal departments (Community Services, Operations and Protective Services, Marketing, etc.) as well as community organizations and volunteers, underscoring the need for **effective communication and mandate alignment**.
7. The Community Services Division has undergone significant staff changes and unique challenges due to COVID-19. An opportunity exists to examine **departmental staffing levels and responsibilities** to ensure that they align with corporate and community priorities.
8. It will take time for many activities and organizations to recover from the **COVID-19 pandemic**, both financially and in terms of participation levels; there will be new costs and challenges arising from the pandemic that will need to be accounted for.
9. Organizations are seeking **improvements to existing facilities**, such as sports fields, the Canada Summit Centre, Muskoka Heritage Place, and more. In addition, some municipal facilities are aging and are not fully barrier-free for persons with disabilities or mobility challenges.
10. There is growing demand for **unstructured, self-scheduled activities** such as outdoor ice skating, pickleball, disc golf, hiking and biking trails, splash pads, etc.
11. There is growing interest in a new **multi-use facility** that could house a variety of sports, such as gymnasium activities.



## 4. Taking Stock – Where we are Today

Before identifying a strategic path forward, it is necessary to undertake an honest examination of the current state. This section summarizes relevant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Town’s Community Services Division. This is followed by an audit that determines how responsive current conditions are to promising practices, with direction from the industry-leading Framework for Recreation in Canada.

### 4.1 SWOT Analysis – Service Delivery, Programs and Events

Based on the research and consultation activities, a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified relating to service delivery, programming and events in the Town of Huntsville. These and other matters are addressed in the sections that follow.

**Table 10: SWOT – Service Delivery and Programming**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong alignment between Community Services and the Corporate Vision</li> <li>- Committed staff team</li> <li>- Varied program offerings</li> <li>- Commitment to customer service and customer experience/satisfaction</li> <li>- Trend leaders in aquatics programming</li> <li>- Strong local arts and culture community</li> <li>- New and versatile software for registration and facility booking</li> <li>- Event hosting (many significant annual and one-time events – significant economic impact); have a Special Event Advisory Team</li> <li>- Affordable Access to Recreation Policy</li> <li>- Partnerships with several local groups</li> <li>- Volunteer associations (e.g., Port Sydney Parks and Recreation Department)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget strain (and COVID-19) has impacted staffing levels</li> <li>- Community does not fully understand subsidy levels</li> <li>- Need to improve messaging around the importance and benefits of community services</li> <li>- Parks maintenance responsibilities within different Division creates concern over mandate alignment</li> <li>- Falling behind in some areas of staff training</li> <li>- Marketing for facility rentals and programs</li> <li>- Limited oversight of some community spaces, such as Club 55 (have two separate seniors’ clubs)</li> <li>- Succession planning lacking in some areas</li> <li>- Lack of year-round programming at Muskoka Heritage Place</li> <li>- Algonquin Theatre lacks strategic plan</li> <li>- Culture Strategy is out of date</li> <li>- Trend tracking and reporting out</li> <li>- Many practices and policies are undocumented</li> <li>- Have been unsuccessful in securing funding to pilot new programs</li> <li>- Lacking a Special Events Policy</li> <li>- Greater focus needed on sponsorships, donations</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing population represents an emerging market (both part-time and full-time residents); population is also aging</li> <li>- Greater focus on recreation-specific marketing – benefits of participation</li> <li>- Renewed interest during pandemic illustrates that parks, recreation and culture are essential services</li> <li>- Growing demand for four-season recreation</li> <li>- Huntsville is a healthy, active community</li> <li>- Leveraging recreation software</li> <li>- Continued growth in attendance at Muskoka Heritage Place, driven by pandemic and local “tourists”</li> <li>- Opportunity to align with Corporate Strategic Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COVID-19 has created uncertainty around demand, operations, budgets, etc.</li> <li>- Fluctuating volunteer commitment (community halls, service clubs, etc.) – many fee waiver requests</li> <li>- Lack of post-secondary schools makes it hard to retain staff at some levels</li> <li>- Increased competition for theatre audiences</li> <li>- Emerging private providers (e.g., specialized camps)</li> </ul>

**4.2 SWOT Analysis – Facilities and Parks**

Based on the research and consultation activities, a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified for the provision of community service facilities in the Town of Huntsville. These and other matters are addressed in the sections that follow.

**Table 10: SWOT – Facilities and Parks**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breadth of recreational amenities, such as the Canada Summit Centre, outdoor artificial turf field</li> <li>- Access to nature, waterfront</li> <li>- Muskoka Heritage Place (green space, heart of town core, strong brand, high customer satisfaction)</li> <li>- Unique arts, culture and heritage portfolio for a small community (theatre, gallery, etc.)</li> <li>- Parks and facilities are well maintained</li> <li>- Community halls offer service to rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aging infrastructure (e.g., Canada Summit Centre, Port Sydney Community Hall, etc.)</li> <li>- Accessibility challenges in some facilities (e.g., pool)</li> <li>- Lack of municipal indoor gymnasium for active programs (rock climbing) and camps</li> <li>- Lack outdoor ice rinks (public requests), outdoor courts, amenities to support existing track, and lighted soccer fields for evening play</li> <li>- Gaps in sidewalk and trail network</li> <li>- Lack of public dock space</li> <li>- Poor WiFi at some locations</li> <li>- Parking challenges at Canada Summit Centre</li> <li>- Lack of storage in all facilities</li> <li>- Track and field complex at Conroy Park cannot support full range of uses/meets</li> <li>- Lack of indoor space at Muskoka Heritage Place</li> <li>- Lacking direction on parkland needs and cash-in-lieu spending</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Senior government grants for infrastructure renewal (pandemic-resilient)</li> <li>- Investments in outdoor infrastructure to support growing needs highlighted by pandemic</li> <li>- Strategic Revitalization Working Group for Muskoka Heritage Place (in place)</li> <li>- Potential opportunity to re-purpose Auditorium</li> <li>- Recently approved Sidewalk/Trails Master Plan</li> <li>- Waterfront Strategy recently developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact of COVID-19 on facility design and capital renewal</li> <li>- Lower demand for indoor recreation in summer</li> <li>- Encroachment of private land-owners on public lands (waterfront)</li> <li>- New multi-use recreation facility being built in Bracebridge</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Alignment with the Framework for Recreation in Canada

Below is the vision for recreation in Canada. The Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) is our pathway to that goal and is a guiding document for public recreation providers in Canada. We now have a common language amongst practitioners and a nationwide vision.

**Vision for Recreation in Canada**

***We envision a Canada where every citizen is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster individual, community and environmental well-being.***

- 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada

The FRC was developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association together with provincial/territorial Parks and Recreation Associations, and Provincial/Territorial Governments. It presents a renewed definition of recreation and supports coordinated policies and practices in recreation and related sectors in Canada.

In order to make this vision a reality – practitioners have built an audit tool to assist organizations in assessing their alignment with the FRC. The tool can be used by any sized municipality or organization whose purpose is to provide/enable recreation for its residents. It guides participants through the goal areas and assesses where their organization stands along a continuum. The aim is not to measure an organization against the FRC but to strengthen an organization’s capacity and determine future actions to support strengthened service delivery.

Nationally, as more organizations use the audit tool, there will be the opportunity to collect data, and seek out where further research and tools might help the practitioner or organization.

On the following pages, the audit tool poses a series of supporting statements and determines how responsive current conditions are to promising practices. The FRC Audit Tool has been modified to meet

the requirements of the Community Services Master Planning process. **Additional analysis can be found in Sections 6 to 11 of this Master Plan.**

**Figure 21: Summary of Framework for Recreation in Canada**



**Table 11: FRC Assessment for Master Plan Goal 1 – Active Living**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. Physical recreation opportunities are available for <b>all ages</b> .			X		There is a good range of choice of physical activities including fitness, trails, swimming, dancing, individual and team sports, and water sports at a minimum.
2. <b>Barriers</b> to full participation have been identified and addressed.		X			Physical and economic barriers have been addressed for persons with disabilities and persons experiencing low income. See “Access and Inclusion” goal.
3. An overall strategy exists to increase the frequency, duration and intensity of <b>physical activity for all residents</b> .	X				Does not exist.
4. Staff work with other <b>allied partners</b> (Health, Education) to increase physical activity levels for all residents.			X		Staff work with allied partners to discuss common areas of interest. A greater focus should be placed on ways and means of increasing physical activity for all residents.
5. The concepts of <b>physical literacy</b> are incorporated into programs for all age groups and included in staff training programs. Staff and volunteer <b>training</b> include approaches to increasing physical activity levels in programs for all ages and camps etc.		X			Physical literacy is addressed in the HIGHFive Principles of Child Development model. A greater emphasis should be placed on physical literacy for all ages.
6. Staff employ the best practices identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) or other evidenced-based <b>interventions to increase physical activity</b> levels of all residents.	X				Staff are well aware of the importance of physical activity and ensure that the infrastructure and programming support this requirement. A simple overall plan would serve to encourage healthier lifestyles.
7. A <b>Service Delivery Model</b> is defined and approved by Council.			X		The Service Delivery Model is generally understood, and Council endorses the blend of direct and community-based service provision.
8. <b>Community Groups are supported</b> to provide sport, recreation, and cultural opportunities for all ages through the provision of space, reduced rates for facilities, promotion of activities, etc.		X			Community groups are provided premium public spaces and receive subsidized fees to access facilities. Opportunities are listed in the Leisure Guide, although production of the guide is on hold.
9. An <b>Annual Grants Program</b> formalizes criteria for grant requests by community groups to Council.				X	The Town’s Small Community Grant program provides support to groups to enable sustainability over time.
10. Allocation of facilities and spaces is based on a formalized <b>Allocation Policy</b> and equitable criteria.			X		The Allocation Policy and practices requires periodic review to ensure that all public spaces are assigned equitably.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
11. Aquatics programs offer a continuum of <b>learn to swim</b> and leadership opportunities as well as <b>water safety and drowning prevention education</b> .				X	The Aquatic learn to swim continuum is in a mature state and accommodates swimmers of all ages and abilities.
12. A balance of learn to swim, drop-in swim/aquafit and rental opportunities are offered in the <b>aquatic program</b> .				X	A balance of aquatic opportunities is provided/enabled to accommodate varied interests and addresses universal access.
13. Special Events are categorized, and municipal supports are delineated in a <b>Special Event Policy</b> .	X				Special events are a valued service in Huntsville. A staff team coordinates logistics. A refined practice model would categorize event types and define the level of municipal supports provided.
14. <b>Special Events</b> are monitored as to attendance, economic impacts, attendee satisfaction and cost recovery.	X				Some elements of event performance and evaluation are completed. A more robust evaluation will provide Council with the quantified value of each event.
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b> 29%	<b>3</b> 21%	<b>4</b> 29%	<b>3</b> 21%	

**Table 12: FRC Assessment for Master Plan Goal 2 – Inclusion and Access**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. There is a <b>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy</b> approved by Council which describes the municipality's role in supporting the inclusion of all residents regardless of their backgrounds and describes how equity will be addressed as services are provided.		X			While elements of inclusion are practiced, an overall Corporate/Divisional Policy is needed to define underrepresented populations in Huntsville along with clear actions that the municipality will take to be inclusive and equitable. This is a priority in the Town's Human Resources Strategic Plan.
2. The Division monitors changes to <b>demographics and community growth</b> as data is available			X		Staff monitor changing demographics and their impact on service delivery.
3. <b>Marginalized and under-represented populations</b> are identified and consulted with about barrier free access to recreation opportunities.			X		Huntsville's policies accommodate persons with disabilities and persons experiencing low income.
4. There is an <b>Access to Affordable Recreation Policy (AARP)</b> in place for persons experiencing low income. The use of the <b>AARP is monitored</b> as a per-centage of the residents living at the Low-Income Measure (statistics Canada).				X	The Access to Affordable Recreation Policy provides swim and skate passes at no cost and a 50% reduction for 2 other opportunities. Annual monitoring /reporting of the policy is required to ensure that use is increased annually to include a greater percentage of persons experiencing low income.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
5. There is a range of no fee, low fee and for fee programs to ensure that there is <b>universal access</b> to programs and casual opportunities.				X	Many of the public swim and skate opportunities are sponsored by local businesses. This is an excellent practice to ensure that there is barrier-free and universal access to recreational activities.
6. Efforts are made to <b>allocate public spaces fairly</b> and represent genders equitably.		X			A periodic review of the Allocation Policy for all public spaces is suggested to ensure fairness in the use of public spaces.
7. All staff are trained, and facilities and programs have been modified to ensure that they are <b>safe spaces</b> for the LGBTQ2S community.		X			This is strongly suggested to ensure compliance with the Human Rights Code in Ontario. This will be part of the Town's upcoming Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy.
8. <b>Persons with Disabilities</b> and organizations that represent them have input into the types of services provided and how to increase participation.		X			Regular sessions with persons with disabilities and organizations that serve them would ensure that programs and services are reflective of current and future needs.
9. The <b>Truth and Reconciliation Report</b> has been reviewed so that staff understand how sport and recreation can strengthen the community's commitment to Indigenous Peoples. There is an understanding and recognition as to the <b>Indigenous history</b> within the community and efforts are made to listen to create a better understanding of the role Community Services can play.		X			Some staff are part of efforts to meet with Indigenous People to best hear and understand their recreation and culture needs within the community. MHP has a new permanent exhibit about Indigenous cultures. The Division has partnered with the public library on an education and awareness initiative.
10. Indigenous communities and residents have <b>input into program development</b> and provision.	X				Efforts are underway to better understand how Community Services can translate the needs identified by Indigenous Peoples into new community opportunities.
11. A <b>Land Recognition</b> is offered at the start of meetings.				X	A Land Recognition Acknowledgement has been developed in collaboration with the Indigenous Community and is offered before Council and Committee meetings.
12. A review of the <b>names of public spaces and monuments</b> has been undertaken as to their appropriateness in reflecting current values.	X				A Naming Policy has not been developed nor has a review of monuments and the names of public spaces been undertaken.
13. Efforts are made to build a staff team and a volunteer base that <b>represent the community that they serve</b> .		X			While volunteerism is important to the delivery of services by the municipality and community groups – efforts to reflect the makeup of the community within the volunteers would be appropriate as the community grows and changes.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
14. A <b>Naming Policy</b> for parks, public spaces and facilities is a best practice to demonstrate the contributions of residents, historical figures etc., that reflects equity and inclusion i.e., gender, BIPOC representation etc.	X				The Town lacks such a policy. A Naming Policy for public spaces would help to reflect equity between genders, interests and what is important to the Town of Huntsville.
15. <b>Participation of girls and women</b> and those who identify as female in recreation and sport is audited to ensure that participation levels reflect the principles of equity and fairness.	X				While staff are conscious that females drop out of sport and recreational activities at adolescence, there is no review and proactive approaches in place to keep girls and women engaged in sport and recreation.
16. <b>Public spaces are observed</b> to determine who are using public spaces and – importantly – who is not.			X		Public spaces are informally observed as to who is using them and most importantly who is not using them. Results should be documented to ensure that public spaces are used appropriately.
17. Specific efforts are made to ensure marginalized residents face no barriers to participation through consultation and a <b>community reference group</b> where possible.		X			Efforts are made to include persons with disabilities and residents experiencing low income within programs and services. More effort is required to focus on including Indigenous Peoples, the LGBTQ2S community, women and girls, and any other identified underrepresented populations.
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b> 24%	<b>7</b> 41%	<b>3</b> 18%	<b>3</b> 18%	

**Table 13: FRC Assessment for Master Plan Goal 3 – Connecting People and Nature**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. Staff collaborate with Conservation Authorities, Ontario Parks and others to ensure the provision of <b>natural spaces and places in or near the municipality</b> .			X		Arrowhead and Algonquin Provincial Parks are located nearby. The Town has partnered with Hidden Valley for public access to mountain biking trails.
2. A <b>Parks Master Plan</b> exists to articulate the standards for the provision of parks and the development and maintenance of open spaces, trails, pathways and parks.				X	The Town's Parks Master Plan was completed in 2005 and is now outdated. An update may be required, recognizing that elements of this plan will be addressed through this CSMP.
3. A <b>Trails and Cycling Master Plan</b> exists to support active transportation development.			X		The Town's 2021 Sidewalk Master Plan partially addresses trails and off-road infrastructure.
4. There is an effort to <b>connect the parks and open space systems</b> to adjacent municipalities.		X			The Town supports the Park to Park Trail (Algonquin to Killbear).
5. Communications are centred around the <b>importance of access to nature</b> to individual and community wellbeing and healthy child development.	X				Limited communications are offered in this regard.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
6. <b>Standards for development</b> exist that respect low impact on the natural environment when designing and building parks and facilities.			X		Led by the Operations & Protective Services Division, Park Design and Development Standards are currently in draft form.
7. Efforts are made to make parks and trails available in the <b>winter for use</b> .		X			Plowing of Lions Lookout Trail loop began in 2020. Demand has been expressed for the provision of outdoor rinks.
8. Efforts are made to provide <b>shade, seating and washrooms</b> within the parks and trails system.			X		These items are addressed in the Park Design and Development Standards.
9. Efforts are made to <b>engage the community and partners</b> to ensure that the parks system meets community needs and supports a delivers range of outdoor spaces.		X			There is no formal mechanism for engagement and matters are dealt with in an ad hoc manner. For example, the Town is currently working to address pickleball needs within its parks system.
10. <b>Capital Plans</b> reflect the longer-range needs of the community with respect to parks development and refurbishment.		X			Capital needs and priorities will be advanced through the Community Services Master Plan.
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b> 10%	<b>4</b> 40%	<b>4</b> 40%	<b>1</b> 10%	

**Table 14: Goal 4 – FRC Assessment for Master Plan Supportive Environments**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. A <b>Facility Master Plan</b> is in place to address under resourced facility types and the need for refurbishment of existing facilities and amenities.		X			This item will be advanced through the Community Services Master Plan.
2. An <b>Asset Management Plan</b> is in place to enable ongoing renewal of infrastructure including condition assessments.				X	The Town's AMP is in place as of 2020.
3. A <b>Climate Action Plan</b> includes the ability of facilities and parks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.			X		Climate and environmental sustainability goals were partially addressed through 2015 Sustainability Report, 2010 Unity Plan, and Strategic Plan.
4. An <b>Energy Management Plan</b> reduces or regenerates the use of utilities.				X	Energy-related goals were addressed through 2015 Sustainability Report, 2010 Unity Plan, and Strategic Plan.
5. <b>Collective actions</b> exist with regional or county governments to address common issues.			X		Informal networks and sharing exist between Town staff and those in nearby communities.
6. There are recreation and cultural facilities, parks, and parks amenities <b>provision standards</b> in place.		X			This item will be advanced through the Community Services Master Plan.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
7. Efforts are made to <b>engage the community and partners</b> to ensure that recreation facilities meet community needs and supports a delivers range of multi-use indoor spaces.		X			There is no formal mechanism for engagement. Efforts needed to make some spaces more multi-use.
8. Ensure that recreation facilities and amenities are provided in <b>under-resourced communities</b> and are accessible to all.			X		The Town provides spaces across various parts of the municipality, including smaller settlement areas (often in partnership with volunteer groups).
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>3</b> 38%	<b>3</b> 38%	<b>2</b> 25%	

**Table 15: FRC Assessment for Master Plan Goal 5 – Recreation Capacity**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statement	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. The Division has developed strong and compelling <b>vision and mission statements</b> .	X				A strategic framework will be proposed through the Community Services Master Plan.
2. The Division staff and volunteers have worked together to articulate a powerful <b>organizational culture and supporting values</b> .	X				While there is an impressive organizational culture in place, it has not been articulated with input from all staff levels and volunteers.
3. The Corporate Strategic Plan includes an <b>assessment of Community Wellbeing</b> (Community Wellness Index).	X				Community Services are well supported in the Corporate Strategic Plan. The Plan does not currently call for an assessment of Community Wellbeing.
4. There is alignment with international, national, and provincial <b>community building initiatives</b> such as Age Friendly Communities, Healthy Cities, Safe Cities, Community Safety and Wellness Plans, etc.			X		An Age Friendly Community Plan was recommended as part of the Corporate Strategic Plan objectives.
5. The Division promotes the <b>importance and benefits</b> of engagement in recreation, culture, sports and parks.	X				Stronger and consistent communications and messaging is required.
6. The Division offers <b>leadership in training courses</b> and provides placement opportunities as applicable.		X			Specific leadership training opportunities would have to be defined and developed in collaboration with the Human Resources Division.
7. A <b>Training and Development Plan</b> strengthens the skills and competencies of staff and volunteers.			X		Training is provided for staff and especially discipline-specific training in aquatics, programs, facilities, sales, volunteers, etc.
8. The <b>Volunteer Policy</b> and opportunities include recruitment, training, supports and recognition.				X	The Town has a Volunteer and Placement Policy. Volunteer opportunities are listed on Huntsville's website and potential volunteers are directed to the specific departments for training and orientation. Volunteers are formally recognized annually.

Supporting Statement	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
9. All operations are compliant with <b>legislative requirements</b> and industry standards. Regularized audits exist.			X		Staff indicate compliance with legislative requirements within their disciplines. A documented review of current requirements and standards would demonstrate if there are any gaps.
10. <b>Communications and marketing</b> efforts to promote opportunities are effective.		X			Communications is a corporate-level responsibility. With the ongoing and emerging communications and marketing requirements of Community Services, an articulation of communications needs and resources is needed.
11. An <b>annual marketing strategy</b> serves to keep residents informed and engaged in recreation and cultural opportunities.				X	The annual marketing plan identifies which services and messages require further marketing, the audience, the frequency of messaging and what marketing methodology is most appropriate.
12. <b>Partnership and sponsorship Policies</b> serve to augment service provision through alternate means and funding.	X				Staff seek out sponsorship funding and partnerships on an as-needed basis, however a policy and framework would serve to identify opportunities, partners and sponsors.
13. The use of <b>technology</b> maximizes efficiencies within the Division.			X		Community Services is utilizing newer technology to register patrons, rent spaces and allocate public spaces. Staff are identifying the full capabilities of the recreation management software.
14. The <b>costs of services</b> are understood and utilized when developing pricing and fee structures and understanding cost recovery levels.	X				Identifying the cost of services and programs is important in identifying further efficiencies and appropriate cost recovery levels.
15. <b>Quality Assurance Models</b> are utilized where possible including but not limited to the Aquatic Safety Management Audits, The Canadian Sport for Life Model, High Five for Healthy Childhood Development, Active Aging, Youth Friendly Communities, etc.			X		The CSMP will indicate which disciplines require quality assurance models which are not currently in place. Staging implementation and understanding staff capacity will be undertaken before recommendations are made.
16. <b>Policies</b> are reflective of best practices and the types of services provided. There is a regularized review cycle for approved policies.		X			Many policies are in place and reflect community values. A review of current policies and policies that require development will be addressed in CSMP.
17. <b>Operations manuals</b> in each discipline exist to provide ongoing and consistent guidance to staff and volunteers.			X		Operations manuals exist in all disciplines and a review would ensure that there is consistent direction and common direction captured.

Supporting Statement	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
18. All efforts are made to obtain <b>government and other funding sources</b> to augment service provision.			X		Staff are aware of grants and funding sources from other levels of government. A Municipal Accommodation Tax has been established to promote and develop tourism within Huntsville, including sports and cultural events. A summary of all sources should be updated annually to ensure staff are maximizing the use of alternate funding sources available.
19. <b>Performance Measures</b> include: Inputs – human, fiscal and physical resources Outputs – participation levels, utilization of programs, events, and facilities Efficiencies – the cost to provide units of service, cost recovery levels etc. Effectiveness – public and user satisfaction levels	X				Staff measure sales, rentals, program registration, etc.  A fulsome performance metric should be developed for the Division to demonstrate improvements in performance and the setting of realistic targets.
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b> 37%	<b>3</b> 16%	<b>7</b> 37%	<b>2</b> 11%	

**Table 16: FRC Assessment for Master Plan Goal 6 – Culture and Heritage**

1 = Not Yet in Place. 2 = In Planning Stages. 3 = Partially Complete/Implemented. 4 = Complete/implemented and in a Mature State.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
1. The Town respects its past and provides opportunities for residents and visitors to connect to and understand this <b>proud history</b> .				X	Reflected in MHP and local programming and art exhibits.
2. The Town supports and influences the <b>cultural life</b> of the community and provides opportunities for individuals to realize their creative potential.			X		Culture and heritage receive strong support from the community.
3. Local cultural and heritage facilities, programs, events, exhibitions and artists are effectively <b>promoted</b> to both residents and tourists.			X		Marketing efforts are shared between the Town and Chamber of Commerce, but gaps exist in coordination.
4. An <b>overall strategy</b> exists to maximize awareness and participate in cultural and heritage events and activities.			X		A Cultural Strategy exists, as well as a strategy for MHP, but a business plan is required for Algonquin Theatre.
5. Staff work with other <b>allied partners</b> to increase uptake of cultural and heritage services for all residents and tourists.				X	Town regularly coordinates with the Huntsville Festival of the Arts, Huntsville Art Society, BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Limberlost Artists, Reel Alternatives, Algonquin Outfitters, and more.

Supporting Statements	1	2	3	4	Selected Observations
6. Local <b>BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) communities</b> are engaged to explore opportunities through which their culture and history can be showcased through public art located within municipal buildings, parks and other civic spaces.			X		MHP showcases indigenous and pioneer cultures.
7. The importance and role of "culture" is represented through the <b>Division's staff structure and resources</b> .			X		Recent changes to job titles reflect this.
8. Parks and facilities are <b>designed</b> in a manner that reflects the strong ties to the natural and built heritage of Huntsville.				X	All major facilities showcase distinct elements of Huntsville's local identity. Public spaces highlight the Group of Seven outdoor art gallery.
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>0</b> 0%	<b>5</b> 63%	<b>3</b> 38%	



## 5. Looking Ahead – Where we Want to be

With consideration of the challenges discussed in the previous section, this section identifies the strategic framework that will guide the Master Plan’s development and implementation. All recommendations identified in the following sections will have consideration to the mission, goals and principles.

### 5.1 Mission and Goals

Based on supporting documents and public input, the following mission statement and goals have been established to guide the development and implementation of this Master Plan. This strategy reflects the values and aspirations articulated by the Town and the community as a whole. Together, the framework describes the core directions that the Town and its partners should strive to achieve over time.

#### The Community Services Division’s Mission

A “mission” directs the Division’s purpose, serving to provide direction and guide decision-making. The mission helps to translate the Town of Huntsville’s vision into everyday action.

The following updated mission statement is proposed for the Community Services Division in Huntsville:

**Huntsville Community Services – everyone can engage in safe, quality, and inspiring active and cultural experiences.**

#### Master Plan Goals

The overarching goals of this Master Plan are modelled after the national Framework for Recreation in Canada, which reflects the challenges and benefits of recreation, and thus provides a basis for evaluation. The priority areas also provide a common language within the sector and help align with City with other agencies and funding opportunities. There is strong alignment between the FRC and other Town of Huntsville plans and strategies, many of which identify community services as important contributors in creating strong neighbourhoods, enhancing accessibility and inclusion, supporting children and youth, designing age-friendly communities, and much more.

The following goals will guide the Town’s approach to decision-making and investment over the next ten years and beyond. Everything the Town does in relation to community services should further the mission and one or more of the goals.

### **Goal One: Active Living**

Foster active living through physical recreation and leisure opportunities for all ages.

### **Goal Two: Inclusion and Access**

Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.

### **Goal Three: Connecting People and Nature**

Help people connect to nature through recreation.

### **Goal Four: Supportive Environments**

Ensure the provision of supportive and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and help to build strong caring communities.

### **Goal Five: Recreation Capacity**

Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

### **Goal Six: Celebrating Arts, Culture and Heritage**

Actively support the provision of a wide range of arts, culture and heritage opportunities available to residents and visitors alike.



## 5.2 Service Delivery Principles

Guiding principles are a set of value statements that the community and staff uphold in all plans and actions. It is understood that these actions will lead to greater participation, with high levels of service satisfaction.

### 1. Measure Participation and Service Effectiveness

We place our community's parks, recreation and culture needs first and will strive to meet expectations through open dialogue and measuring service effectiveness.

### 2. Great Experiences

Our collective aim is to provide experiences that are welcoming and enjoyable for both residents and visitors.

### 3. Increase Participation

All collective efforts are focused on increasing participation in recreation and cultural pursuits because of the benefits accrued to the individual and community.

### 4. The Right Service Mix

A choice of program and service types will be offered through the Town and through community partners to meet a variety of interests

### 5. Intentional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusionary Action

Different approaches are taken to include residents that have diverse needs in accessing and participating in programs and services. Appropriate and different methods will be developed through discussions with those facing barriers.

### 6. Better Together

Working together with like-minded organizations will ensure that services are coordinated and service priorities are addressed effectively.

### 7. Quality Assurance in Services and Experiences

All users of parks, recreation and culture facilities, programs and services will receive the benefit of compliance with legislation, safety, cleanliness, quality assurance, and knowledgeable customer-driven staff and volunteers.

### 8. Outdoor Experiences are Critical to Healthy Outcomes

We will promote use of outdoor spaces and their wealth of natural resources to result in healthier outcomes for residents and visitors.



## 6. Goal One: Active Living

### Foster active living through physical recreation and leisure opportunities for all ages.

Promoting active living in Huntsville ensures that all residents have the opportunity and the ability to participate in the leisure activities of their choosing. “Active living” is a term used to promote, organize, enable, and offer a broad range of safe and enjoyable leisure activities to all age groups and backgrounds. Active opportunities may be provided through either the Town, community organization, or private provider, but the intention is to ensure that more residents can be active more often. Coordination with community partners is critical to ensure that all residents can lead active and healthy lifestyles.

This section provides an overview of what is being done in Huntsville to support active lifestyles for each age group. This entails providing a variety of leisure choices, reducing water accidents through swim lessons, and promoting active lifestyles. This analysis will review the current opportunities and identify gaps. Recommendations are centred on the specific needs of Huntsville residents.

#### 6.1 Increasing Physical Activity Levels

Canada continues to emphasize the health of Canadians through increasing physical activity levels. We have a dismal record – the Physical Activity Report Card for 2020 gave adults varying grades for types of activity and sedentary time from “C” to “F” and children a “D+”. Community Services staff need to continue to work with health promotion, education, and other partners to address this issue of inactivity in Huntsville.

#### Canada’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines

Canada’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines have replaced the Physical Activity Guidelines. The new guidelines were introduced in 2020 and depict the amount of time various age groups should “Sweat, Step, Sleep and Sit” in a 24-hour timeframe. For example, the table below outlines recommendations for children aged 7 and 17 years.

**Table 17: Canada’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children (aged 7-17), 2020**

Activity	Time/Day
Sweat	60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity
Step	Several hours of moderate physical activity
Sleep	9-11 hours for 5 – 13-year-olds 8-10 hours for 14 – 17-year-olds
Sit	Limit sitting for extended periods No more than 2 hours of recreational screen time per day

These new guidelines have been developed for all age cohorts and should be communicated and promoted to the public with programs and opportunities to track progress.

## ParticipACTION Active App

ParticipACTION has developed and released a free app that serves to motivate and incentivize Canadians to be more active. As an initial approach, the Community Services Division could make efforts to promote its use. The app includes daily quick tips, articles, videos, can connect to tracking devices and provides weekly, monthly, and yearly rewards. The app will also remind you to be active at pre-set times and continues to include upgrades.

## The Canadian Community Health Survey

Statistics Canada administers the Canadian Community Health Survey, which is a national survey that collects health data by Health Region. The survey is voluntary and confidential for those who choose to participate. The survey collects information on behaviours related to physical activity, physical and mental health status, chronic health conditions, smoking, alcohol consumption, and fruits and vegetable consumption. Data is also collected on socio-economic backgrounds to decipher behaviours by region, age, and socio-economic status. This is valuable information that can be used to inform physical activity plans and strategies at the local level. It is suggested that staff use this data to better inform plans to increase physical activity levels.

### Recommendations

1. Work with other community partners to promote the **importance of physical activity** and engage more residents in embracing active lifestyles.

## 6.2 Programs and Activities for All

The Community Services Division offers a wide range of drop-in and registered programming throughout the year and also provides public spaces that are used informally or permitted out to community groups to provide their own activities and sports of choice. The role of the Town is to ensure that there is a blend of experiences available to all citizens.

Programs are listed online and – until recently – in a printed Leisure Activity Guide. Registration is available online, in-person, or over the telephone. A fee assistance program is also available (administered by the District of Muskoka).

Most programs occur at the Canada Summit Centre and Active Living Centre due to the variety of spaces and amenities. Sample programs at these locations include:

- Aquatics (lessons, recreational swimming, aquafitness, leadership, etc.);
- Public Skating and Shinny;
- Adult and Adult 55+ Programs (e.g., line dancing, pickleball, ukulele classes, table tennis, games socials, luncheons, yoga, urban poling, karate, healthy eating, oil painting, photography, etc.);
- Youth Programs (e.g., day camps, karate, counsellor-in-training, photography, fitness, etc.); and
- First Aid Programs, Clinics, and Workshops (e.g., babysitting course, first aid, home alone course, etc.).

Other spaces and parks throughout the Town are also used for program delivery, such as (but not limited to):

- Swimming lessons at Port Sydney Beach;
- Tennis and pickleball programs at Conroy and Meadow Parks;
- Men’s slo-pitch at McCulley Robertson Park; and
- Outdoor walking club around the Canada Summit Centre and Camp Kitchen area.

While the program participation numbers in the following table are two and three years old, they depict a full year of service provision before the COVID-19 pandemic’s modified and reduced community service delivery. This information is a target to attain as programs and services are re-introduced. The data demonstrates the full capacity of each program type for various age groups, how many people registered or attended, and fill rates. In a regular year, staff try to meet a 75% participation or fill rate.

**Table 18: Town of Huntsville Recreation Program and Service Profile, 2018 – 2019**

Program Type	2019 Capacity	2019 Participation	2019 Fill Rate	2018 Capacity	2018 Participation	2018 Fill Rate
<b>Children and Youth</b>						
General Programs	64	35	55%	118	43	36%
Break Camps	145	123	85%	205	162	80%
PA Day Camps	164	151	92%	115	105	91%
Summer Camps	928	928	100%	928	920	99%
Parent & Tot Skate	500	150	30%	500	150	30%
Aquatic Programs	2,900	1,580	54%	2,900	1,560	54%
<b>Sub-Total Children</b>	<b>4,701</b>	<b>2,967</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>4,766</b>	<b>2,940</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Adults</b>						
Yoga, shinny, ukulele, wellbeing classes, maker/speaker series, urban poling, etc.	1,456	484	33%	1,272	610	48%
Adult Aquatics	378	318	84%	378	325	86%
<b>Sub-Total Adults</b>	<b>1,834</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Older Adults and Seniors</b>						
Shinny & Senior Skate	3,500	2,499	71%	3,500	2,343	67%
Line Dancing	150	146	97%	90	59	66%
Drop-In cards, Jam sessions, table tennis, travel talk, wood carvers	4,000	2,934	73%	4,000	2,047	51%
Pickleball	2,000	875	44%	1,500	671	45%
Other (NIA, Diners Club, O/D Tennis)	1,228	767	62%	936	659	70%
<b>Sub-Total Older Adults &amp; Seniors</b>	<b>10,878</b>	<b>7,221</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>10,026</b>	<b>5,779</b>	<b>58%</b>
Aqua fitness Classes*	18,100	13,900	77%	18,100	13,800	76%
<b>Total Direct Programs</b>	<b>35,513</b>	<b>24,890</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>34,542</b>	<b>23,454</b>	<b>68%</b>

\*Aqua fitness classes can be attended by youth, adults and older adults and are listed separately.

**Table 19: Town of Huntsville Profile of Drop-in Opportunities, 2018 – 2019**

Opportunity	2019 Capacity	2019 Participation	2019 Fill Rate	2018 Capacity	2018 Participation	2018 Fill Rate
<b>Shinny</b>	1,000	235	24%	1,000	414	41%
<b>Public Skate</b>	6,337	2,749	43%	7,176	2,700	38%
<b>Open Swims</b>	33,700	15,105	45%	33,700	14,350	43%
<b>Total Drop-in</b>	<b>41,037</b>	<b>19,089</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>41,876</b>	<b>17,464</b>	<b>42%</b>

Selected observations from this participation data are offered below, with consideration to current trends, social issues, and predominant themes captured from community and staff consultation.

### **Community Service Programs are Important to Huntsville Residents**

The community survey to support the development of this Community Services Master Plan indicates residents' thoughts on both the importance and satisfaction levels of each program/service type (recreation, culture, parks, etc.). These questions are asked to determine if there are any appreciable gaps between importance and satisfaction – one would like to see high levels of both importance and satisfaction, which would be an indicator of successful programs and delivery. Gaps would be identified at over 20 percentage points – meaning that the service is important but there are lower satisfaction levels. A common target would be to see over 80% in levels of importance and satisfaction with a particular program or service. There is a 21% gap between importance and satisfaction levels in recreation programs (importance was rated at 83% while satisfaction levels are at 63%). As they have done in the past, staff will need to continue ask participants how they can increase satisfaction levels in programs and respond accordingly to meet these targets.

### **Some Growth can be Accommodated within the Current Program Offerings**

Huntsville develops program opportunities to offer a range of choices that appeal to different age cohorts, interests, trends, and developmental abilities. As of 2019, the combined capacity of all programs was 35,500 registered opportunities and 41,000 drop-in opportunities per year. The combined take up or registrations within these opportunities equalled 24,900 registrations for a fill rate of 70%. While certain programs have higher participation, in theory there is an overall ability to accommodate 10,600 spaces per year. As such, there is capacity within the offerings to accommodate increased participation as the community grows or as promotional efforts garner increased participation. This is not to say that there is capacity in all program areas as some fill up faster than others or that additional spaces are not needed to accommodate pent up demands. Staff should prepare this data annually to prepare the slate of programs and services for the following year. Interest in some programs may wane and new programs will need to be offered.

### **Drop-In Opportunities Continue to be Popular**

There is an overall trend nationwide to move from registered program offerings toward casual drop-in type recreational opportunities. Huntsville is slightly unique in that both drop-in opportunities and directly offered programs experienced increased participation from 2018 to 2019 by 1,625 and 1,436 participants respectively. Many communities have witnessed a decrease in participation in registered programs and an increase in drop-in or more casual opportunities.

### **Reporting on the Number of Individual Registrants**

The role of the Community Services Division is to ensure that there continue to be ample and varied opportunities. Further work is required to determine the number of unique clients (number of residents participating). For example, what percentage of each age cohort is participating and what percentage is not? Determining an approximate penetration rate and addressing where the majority of registrants are

coming from by postal code or other metric (using the registration system) would be helpful to staff for further analysis. The identification of gaps is critical in focussing on barriers or specific interests and will assist in increasing participation.

### **Determining the Recreation and Sport System Capacity**

Research should be undertaken every three years to determine the full capacity of both directly offered programs and drop-in opportunities and those offered by community groups. The objective is to ensure that there are ample opportunities to accommodate a growing community and that spaces and activities are allocated equitably. Working collectively with community groups to address identified gaps, gender equity, participation by marginalized populations, and participation by neighbourhood or geography at a minimum is recommended.

### **Being Nimble and Responding to Trends and New Interests**

A successful program model is nimble enough to respond to new trends and interests within each age group. Having the ability to try new programs and free up space to do so is a sign of an innovative and responsive staff team. Currently in Huntsville, there is little to no leeway in enabling staff to fund new programs and experiences without proposing these as part of the annual budget process. It is suggested that a small amount be placed in the budget to try new programs and services. An annual allotment of \$5,000 would allow staff to introduce approximately 5 to 10 new programs per year.

### **Continuing to Support Youth in Huntsville**

Efforts are taken currently to keep youth engaged within the community and recreation, parks, and cultural pursuits to be a community that supports their voice and self-governing endeavours. Youth engagement and empowerment requires continued attention to provide friendly and safe environments where youth can decide what leisure opportunities interest them. The Division must remain nimble and responsive to the needs of this age cohort.

### **The Playworks Partnership**

Ontario's Playworks Partnership for Active and Engaged Youth is comprised of a group of youth-serving organizations. This community has researched, defined and promoted a well-recognized quality assurance framework that articulates what must exist in a community to demonstrate support for youth. Youth Friendly Communities work to increase the commitment and interest in increasing leisure services for youth. Communities work with partners to address ten criteria within the community to establish and validate a real commitment toward youth. Communities are awarded Youth Friendly status at varying levels by demonstrating their provision of services and youth engagement efforts. Using these criteria in Huntsville will ensure quality experiences for youth. The criteria include:

1. Youth have options for play;
2. Youth are formally connected community wide;
3. It is easy for youth to find information about activities in the community;
4. The community recognizes and celebrates youth;

5. The community formally commits funding for youth play;
6. The community supports positive youth development;
7. Youth feel valued by their community; and
8. Schools and school boards support the youth friendly application;
9. Play is accessible to youth; and
10. Play is socially inclusive.

### **Anticipated Community Growth by Age Group**

Staff develop programs and services considering the makeup of the community by age cohort in the initial steps. Further work considers gender, interests, infrastructure and includes residents facing barriers. In the long-term, staff and community groups need to consider which age groupings will increase and how that growth may affect service delivery and infrastructure.

The permanent and seasonal population of Huntsville is projected to increase by 2,900 people (11%) within the next decade. This data is important to determine if the capacity of the current service levels can accommodate greater participation. The age cohort forecasts for the District contained in Section 2 of this Master Plan suggest that:

- the number of children and youth aged **0 to 19 years** (and young adults aged 20 to 34 years) will remain very stable;
- the number of residents aged **34 to 54 years** will increase in step with the overall population;
- the number of residents aged **55 to 69 years** will decline slightly by 2031; and
- the number of residents aged **70 years** or more will increase significantly.

### **The Number of Older Adults and Seniors are Growing**

In 2016, older adults and seniors (those over 55 years) comprised 39% of the population in Huntsville and as the community grows and ages over the next ten years, this is projected to increase to 46%. This is a significant portion of the community, and every effort must be taken to engage and empower older adults in program development and provision. There will be interest in additional opportunities for this expansive age group.

For example, there is a trend for older adults to join adult programs and services and for elders to self-organize their own social, creative, and physical activities. Ensuring that there are adequate opportunities for this growing population will require working in partnership with older adult serving organizations. Older adults do exemplary work to self-organize and the municipality should only look to provide and enable programs and services where there are gaps, and the community is unable to respond through volunteerism. A full range of social, physical, outdoor, cultural, and general interest opportunities should be offered.

Additional discussion of dedicated space for older adults is contained in Section 9.5.

## **The Principles of Healthy Aging Parks and Recreation Ontario**

Parks and Recreation Ontario has developed a quality assurance program in the offering of recreation programs and services to older adults and seniors. The course offers staff an insight into the unique requirements of service delivery and engagement with the older population. It builds on the Principles of Healthy Child development for children and strengthens staff's ability to plan programs, respect what elders face with ageism, physical literacy, social connectedness, and overall enhancements to the quality of life for older adults. The Division has several staff that have completed this training and are seeking to be trainers of the program in the future. This should remain a requirement for any full or part-time staff working with older adults and seniors.

## **Age-Friendly Communities**

Many communities including the Town of Huntsville are working to become Age-Friendly Communities to respond to an aging population. The World Health Organization Global Network has developed common criteria which would result in active and healthy community environments. The key domains in working toward Age-Friendly Community status include:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings;
- Transportation;
- Housing;
- Social participation;
- Respect and social inclusion;
- Civic participation and employment;
- Communication and information; and
- Health services and community support.

Community Services are primarily involved in the built environment, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, and community support initiatives through the Age Friendly focus.

## **Aquatics**

Swimming is a popular activity in Huntsville. Recreational swimming and beach activities and are within the top five leisure activities that residents enjoy the most. Centennial Pool is well utilized for swim lessons, aquafit classes and drop-in activities. Over 2,000 swim lessons are offered annually, and 2,900 users come to open swims and aquafit classes each year.

The role of the municipality in providing aquatic experiences is primarily to ensure that residents can be safe in and around water. Drowning prevention is a key goal in offering learn to swim lessons and water survival. The National Drowning Report produced by the Lifesaving Society of Canada indicates that 1.2 people in every 100,000 population drown in Ontario annually. Knowledge and swimming skills can assist in drowning prevention and overall water safety.

### **Swim to Survive Program**

The Swim to Survive Program is offered through the Lifesaving Society – Ontario Branch. The program responds to a drowning and water incident statistics that “the majority of drownings happen within 15 minutes of safety”. As well, the program addresses the fact that newcomers to Canada are less likely to know how to swim. The program teaches Grade 3 students the skills needed to help them survive an unexpected fall into deep water. The three skills that are taught include rolling into deep water, treading water for one minute and swimming for 50 metres. The Lifesaving Society does provide a grant program to cover the costs of instructors and the administration of the program. Over one million students have benefited from this program in Ontario to date. There are two other similar programs which have been introduced in recent years, one is geared towards Grade 7 students and the other is geared towards teaching families how to learn to survive in and around water. Once the recovery of the impacts of COVID-19 on leisure participation is near resolve, staff should reach out the Boards of Education to resume this program.

### **Aquatic Safety Management Program**

The Lifesaving Society – Ontario Branch has developed an Aquatic Safety Management Program to ensure that pool operators and aquatic service providers can comply with legislative requirements and industry standards. This is critical from a liability standpoint and the possibility of water incidents. The Society offers an audit service to review all aspects of safety in and around water at pools and waterfronts. An Aquatic Safety Accreditation Program shows recognition for compliance. It is commendable that current aquatic staff are accredited inspectors and apply these standards currently, The Huntsville pool and waterfronts are not accredited at this time and it is an important preventative safety measure to do so.

Additional opportunities for the waterfront are discussed in Section 9.16.

### **Special Events**

The Town of Huntsville invests resources to both host and support special events throughout the year. These events benefit the community in terms of strengthening pride and cohesion, offering a return to local businesses, and supporting tourism efforts. Four-fifths (79%) of survey respondents indicated that they attend outdoor festivals and special events.

As the need and requests for special events increases, the Town should be prepared to allocate staff and resources to the events with the highest community benefit. A Special Events Policy is required to categorize events, identify suitable park locations, determine service levels, and provide an equitable level of funding based on whether the event is sponsored by the Town of Huntsville, a community group or is a commercial venture. Measuring the return on the investment can be done from a financial perspective, such as taking the total municipal costs for the event and dividing it by the number of attendees to arrive at a cost per participant. This can also be achieved by identifying spending patterns per attendee. Quantifying the success of an event would be completed by asking participants their satisfaction levels, monitoring social media activity, and sponsor recognition. Both qualitative and quantitative measures should be examined to ensure the best use of public funding.

## Recommendations

2. Determine unique clients and approximate **participation rates for each age grouping** (pre-school, children, youth, adults, and older adults/seniors) in recreation, parks and cultural activities. Utilize this data as a baseline benchmark to inform stronger outreach efforts within the community. The Town should set participation targets for future years based on current participation patterns (post COVID-19 recovery).
3. Work to implement the success criteria of the **Youth Friendly Communities** through the Playworks Cooperative to demonstrate Huntsville's active commitment to providing a strong voice to youth.
4. Engage and apply the Lifesaving Society Ontario Branch **Aquatic Safety Management Program** in all aquatic settings (pool and beaches) to audit and address safety measures in the operation of aquatic locations. **Lifeguarding services** may be considered at selected beach locations, but must be supported by Aquatic Safety Standards, funding and staff resources.
5. Promote **safety in and around water** to educate all Huntsville residents and visitors about the prevention of water incidents.
6. Continue to implement the criteria promoted through the **Principles of Healthy Aging** through Parks and Recreation Ontario in all programs and services for older adults and seniors.
7. Approve an additional allocation of **\$5,000 per annum** to enable staff to respond to in-year trends and provide new recreation, parks and cultural opportunities for residents to try out.
8. Develop a **Special Events Policy and Event Evaluation Process** to identify various event categories, frequencies, and the respective supports that the Town of Huntsville will provide. Further develop an evaluation framework for events that includes (but is not limited to) attendee satisfaction, cost per participant, impacts on the community and local businesses, etc. Review the service levels associated with special event support through the development of the Special Events Policy.



## 7. Goal Two: Inclusion and Access

### Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.

This section places emphasis on refining approaches to include all members of the community by taking specific actions to increase participation by marginalized residents. The process to identify and include under-represented populations involves many intentional actions. The process is outlined to offer guidance to staff regarding the following:

- Developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy to identify the Town’s commitment to inclusion and what actions will be taken.
- Enhancing communications and ongoing discussions with populations that may be marginalized within the community.
- Taking intentional actions to improve access to increase participation among marginalized and under-represented populations, such as persons experiencing low income, persons with disabilities, girls and women, the LGBTQI2S+ community, Indigenous Peoples, and persons of colour.
- Developing and/or adhering to legislation, policies and promising practices that speak to including marginalized residents within services.
- Forming partnerships with groups representing under-represented populations in providing leisure programs and services.
- Ensuring that staff are trained to reach out and welcome marginalized/underrepresented populations.
- Creating a sense of belonging and to create safe and welcoming community spaces.
- Working to ensure that staff and volunteers reflect the makeup of the community.

#### 7.1 The Role of the Community Services Division in Providing “Access for All”

Municipalities in Ontario are unique and different from each other, and the provision of community services must respect and celebrate these differences. Recreation, parks, and cultural programs and services become more meaningful by knowing the make up of the community and by engaging residents in determining their needs and addressing barriers. Governments and businesses have embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion to a greater extent to expand their reach and respect that everyone has a right to service provision. Formerly, municipalities made accommodations for persons with disabilities and residents experiencing low-income and that was the extent of reducing barriers for underrepresented populations. Human Rights legislation ensures that services are open to everyone.

The Town of Huntsville as a public institution, is clear about its role is to include all residents. Specific and intentional approaches must be taken to welcome residents who may have differing needs and/or face barriers to participation. No longer can municipalities offer generalized programs and services in the hope that marginalized residents will participate – any barriers should be addressed before hand or in the

evaluation phase. Staff need to identify who might face barriers within Huntsville and become more intentional about including diverse and underrepresented populations by better understanding their needs. This can only be done by connecting and listening to diverse and underrepresented populations.

Both staff and volunteers need to be trained in being competent in inclusion strategies and in creating welcoming and safe environments. The makeup of staff and volunteers should represent the population that they serve. Ongoing discussions should be facilitated to continue to work together to reflect the community within programs, services, staff, and volunteers.

Recent work on inclusion throughout Canada has identified the notion that people have many backgrounds and identify in multiple ways. For example, a person may identify as non-binary, Indigenous with a disability while another may identify as Asian, experiencing low-income and female. The perception that people have a singular identity and therefore face only one barrier is often not the case. Staff’s role is to understand various obstacles to participate, create welcoming environments, and work to reduce barriers to participation.

The following table demonstrates the diversity and those that may face barriers to participation in Canada and within Huntsville (where data exists).

**Table 20: Canada and Huntsville, Diverse Population Profile**

Percentage of Residents that Identify as...	Canadian Population	Huntsville Population (where known)
<b>Female</b>	50%	51%
<b>Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC)</b>	22%	2%
<b>LGBTQI2S</b>	13%	n/a
<b>Persons with Disabilities (15 years and older)</b>	22%	n/a
<b>Persons with Disabilities (over 75 years)</b>	47%	n/a
<b>Persons Experiencing Low-income</b>	12%	12%
<b>Indigenous</b>	5%	3%

Source: Statistics Canada – Census Data 2016

Recommendations

9. Develop an **Inclusion and Access Policy** to identify what actions the Town of Huntsville is committed to in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
10. Provide staff **training and professional development** opportunities for staff and volunteers with respect to equity and inclusion in the delivery of service.
11. Organize and meet with a **panel of diverse organizations and individuals** advocating for underrepresented populations in recreation, parks and culture to determine what the Town is doing well and what could be done to be more intentionally inclusive of all residents facing barriers.

12. Complete **visual audits of facilities and public spaces** to ensure that usage reflects the full citizenry of Huntsville. Identify the people who are not regularly utilizing public spaces and engage them to understand any barriers.

## 7.2 Persons Experiencing Low-income

Huntsville understands that 12% of its population are experiencing low-income (2016 Census) and staff work to include as many as possible. The Town has an Affordable Access to Recreation Policy which offers free passes and reduced fees for those experiencing low-income. Residents are approved through means testing. The Town seeks out funding partners and receives funding through the District of Muskoka to offer various programs and camps. These initiatives reflect best practices within the industry. Leading edge work in this area measures participation rates and targets participation to be at the same rate as the general population. Further, universally free programming is offered to all residents to reduce any stigmas attached to participation and low-cost programming is offered in the mix of programming. Huntsville also seeks out sponsorships for public swim and skate opportunities to offer universal opportunities.

### Recommendations

13. Identify the percentage of the **population experiencing low income** who participate in recreation, parks and cultural programs. Work to include the same or greater percentage as the general population in programs as a baseline target.

## 7.3 Persons with Disabilities

Huntsville staff work with the Accessibility Committee to ensure that physical access and customer service meets the legislative requirements. Caregivers are welcomed to assist participants in accessing programs and drop-in opportunities. Some adjustments to facilities such as Centennial Pool may be required to address access for persons with disabilities. Continued discussions with support groups will assist with addressing further modifications to programs and services.

### Recommendations

14. Regularly meet with groups representing **persons with disabilities** to develop programs and approaches to include more persons with disabilities into recreation, parks and cultural programs.

## 7.4 Safe Spaces/Positive Spaces – Including the LGBTQI2S+ Community

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Questioning, Intersexed and Two-Spirited (LGBTQI2S+) community often experience exclusionary behaviours. With the recognition that 13% of the Canadian population identifies as LGBTQI2S+, more intentional efforts are needed to provide welcoming community environments. The introduction of “Safe Spaces’ is one way of welcoming this community to public places. This initiative was developed by Safe Spaces Canada whereby signage on the front door of a community space indicates that staff have been trained in reducing homophobic and transphobic gestures and slurs and in creating welcoming environments.

In addition, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants has also developed a Positive Spaces Initiative through Citizen and Immigration Canada to denote public spaces that are safe for and welcoming to the LGBTQI2S+ community. Signage including the Pride flag in the graphic denotes that the space is positive for the LGBTQI2S+ population. Training of staff public spaces is recommended.

#### Recommendations

15. Ensure that all public spaces and facilities are safe and welcoming spaces for the **LGBTQI2S+ community**.

## 7.5 Indigenous Peoples

All communities have a role to play in recognizing the land that Indigenous Peoples lived on before land settlements and development and in being inclusive of this population. Huntsville is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, specifically the Chippewas, Ojibwa and Potawatomi peoples. According to Statistics Canada 2016 data, there are over 525 residents who identify as having North American Aboriginal origins and/or identify as Indigenous within Huntsville.

Staff are making efforts to meet with Indigenous Peoples and groups to best represent them within the provision of recreation, parks and cultural services.

The Truth and Reconciliation Report (2015) and the Parks for All Report (2017) speak to the role that Canadians have in reconciling with Indigenous Peoples over past history. The following excerpt from the Truth and Reconciliation Report articulates the call to action through sport.

*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (2015) – Sports and Reconciliation (all levels of government):*

*87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.*

*88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.*

Huntsville offers a Land Recognition to Indigenous People that inhabited the land in and around the municipality. Communities and especially recreation, parks, and culture organizations are emphasizing the role of Indigenous Peoples through education, arts, sports, parks amenities and interpretation. With greater awareness being raised regarding Indigenous Peoples and the Federal government's focus towards Truth and Reconciliation, municipalities are showcasing Indigenous history through public art in community centres and parks along with exploring programs reflective of First Nations sports and culture. An Indigenous peoples' component was added to Muskoka Heritage Place in 2002.

#### Recommendations

16. Continue to engage with the **Indigenous community** to best understand how they would like to be better included and represented in sport, recreation, parks and cultural spaces.

## 7.6 Girls, Women and Gender Diverse People

Participation in sport and recreation by girls and women is on a downward trend in Canada. In June 2020, Canadian Women in Sport in collaboration with the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities released a national study<sup>2</sup> that found that girls' participation in sport is much lower than boys' participation. Further, the study identified that girls experience a significant drop-out rate by late adolescence – one in three girls leave sport as compared to one in ten boys. Among the barriers cited, girls stated low levels of confidence, low body image, lack of skills and feeling unwelcomed in a sport environment. In 1992, over half of females over 15 participated in sport. By 2019, 28% of females participate in sport while 62% do not. Current studies are demonstrating that 1 in 4 girls are not committed to returning to sport after the pandemic. This declining participation rate is alarming, and the Federal government has declared that we will achieve gender equity in sport by 2035 in Canada.

The Canadian Women in Sport (CWS) supports and enables girls, women and gender diverse people in pursuing sport and active lifestyles, and keeps women actively engaged in building community capacity. CWS' priority and focus is to develop and support sustainable models where women are trained to lead and promote active opportunities along with community partners such as municipalities, universities, and not-for-profit organizations. They have many resources that are readily available to audit policies and practices and build capacity within the organization. Female participation in community-driven sport and recreation has not been prioritized specifically in Huntsville. This is a national priority and Huntsville should utilize tools provided by CWS and audit which interventions and inclusionary efforts are required.

Huntsville enjoys a diverse population and has employed varying methods to better include all residents. The approach with the most promising results is the building and strengthening of relationships with the diverse and underrepresented groups that are active in the community. Initial discussions centre on understanding Community Service needs, how to provide access, and navigating municipal government. Program-related initiatives include the introduction of traditional Canadian sports and activities and introducing all residents to diverse activities and leisure pursuits.

### Recommendations

17. Complete an analysis of the number of females and those identifying as females participating in recreation and sport pursuits by age group. Initiate community discussions and work with other organizations supporting female participation to **increase female participation** in active and sport pursuits.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/COVID\\_Alert\\_-\\_Pandemic\\_Impact\\_on\\_Girls\\_in\\_Sport.pdf?v=1626296417](https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/COVID_Alert_-_Pandemic_Impact_on_Girls_in_Sport.pdf?v=1626296417)

## 8. Goal Three: Connecting People and Nature

Help people connect to nature through recreation.

This section examines the Town’s parks and open space system, with broad direction for future parkland policies, acquisition, design, and programming.

*Note: In Huntsville, responsibility for parks and trails planning, design, maintenance, and permitting is shared amongst several municipal division, including the Development Services Division (planning), Operations & Protective Services Division (maintenance), and the Community Services Division (permitting).*

Public parks and outdoor recreation amenities offer numerous community benefits. A well-designed parks system provides safe space to build a sense of community and social belonging, while inspiring creativity and energizing individuals. They provide spaces for sports and physical activity, support habitats for wildlife, sustain healthy ecosystems and watersheds, and build resiliency to climate change. These spaces also support outdoor eco-tourism and special events, offering spin-offs that benefit the local economy.

Open space is one of Huntsville’s defining characteristics and the ability to connect with nature is a big part of the town’s appeal. Town parks are just one part of a larger system that includes extensive Crown Lands, nearby Provincial Parks, water access points, historic and cultural sites, greenspace, trail networks, and private lands.

Research suggests that there is a growing segment of the population experiencing nature deficit disorder that is impacting personal health and wellbeing. This societal issue has become more apparent as communities across the world have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, Huntsville has experienced a surge in the use of parks and trails, which re-enforces the high value residents place on these amenities.

Connecting people and nature supports policy 1.5.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) that promotes:

- “planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open spaces areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources”; and,
- “providing opportunities for public access to shorelines”.

## 8.1 Park Animation and Outdoor Programming

Parks and open spaces enhance the vibrancy of our communities and keep individuals connected and engaged. Their impact on personal wellness is significant, including the many mental health and healing benefits associated with connections to nature.

“People need a reason to come to the park and stay there in order to benefit from its social environment. Park quality, amenities like playgrounds, and, critically, events and activities help create the conditions that draw people out to meet each other... Community-led initiatives that improve the physical and social environments of parks are crucial.”

- Park People. Sparking Change. 2017.

The Town of Huntsville has many of the attributes that tourists are looking for and its location in the Muskoka region makes it a popular location for visitors. While most may not travel to the Town for its parks and trails, these public spaces and associated programs/events can enrich the experience. The recommendations in the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief (2021) support greater year-round use of the shoreline parks, beaches and trails through updated design features, water-based activities, and connections.

Traditional park uses include organized activities (such as sports and events) and unorganized pursuits (such as walking, picnicking and informal play). Increasingly, communities are animating their park spaces through programming and new forms of community engagement. Some examples include (but are not limited to) fitness in the park, food trucks, new approaches to challenging and immersive play, equipment-lending and rental, and cultural events such as music, concerts, and theatre. There may also be opportunities to improve the connection between community centres and halls and their outdoor spaces.

Viewing parks as “outdoor living rooms” helps to expand the scope of use and engages a broader range of residents and visitors, leading to experiential learning, participation, and community mobilization. This also helps to promote outdoor play, which is critical to children’s development – they need outdoor and unstructured play to master new skills, be active, learn and find wonder in their natural environment.

Interest in public festivals and events continues to grow in Huntsville and, on balance, the community impacts are quite positive. Many of these initiatives are coordinated by the Town’s Community Services Division in cooperation with the Operations & Protective Services Division. Large-scale events require substantial coordination (the Town has a Special Event Advisory Team) and require staff to be reallocated from other assigned duties, impacting workflows and completion of other projects. As noted in Section 6, the Town requires a Special Events Policy to provide direction on the locations and frequency of events (as well as service levels) so as to minimize service disruptions and ensure that parks are not being overburdened.

Community engagement can also extend to programs that involve residents in the beautification of their parks system. For example, many municipalities have programs for commemorative features, such as

benches and trees. Installation and/or adoption of these features offers an opportunity to honour the memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special event. The gift is a legacy that benefits the community as a whole by enhancing parks, open spaces and trails. Such installations are typically provided at cost to the individual, in accordance with regulations established by the municipality. The Town should review its current commemoration program offerings to ensure that they are effective and well promoted in the community.

Collaboration with community agencies and volunteer organizations is important to the success of the parks system. At present, the Town benefits from its partnerships with event organizers, as well as service clubs that have fundraised for some of the assets within area parks. These and other partnerships should be fostered. Enhanced public access to existing sites and facilities – such as schools, provincial parks and others – will help to increase participation for residents and visitors. There may even be opportunities to work collaboratively on capital initiatives or educational programs and natural/cultural heritage appreciation.

### Recommendations

18. Support **expanded year-round park and trail use** through outdoor education, challenging play opportunities, municipal programming, equipment-lending, and community development activities.
19. Leverage the parks system to **promote the importance of access to nature** to individual and community wellbeing and healthy child development. Consider programs that use recreation to help people connect with nature and be stewards of the natural environment.
20. Review the Town’s current **commemoration program offerings** to ensure that they are effective and well promoted in the community.
21. Enhance community education and nature appreciation by providing **interpretive signage** that highlights the significance of natural features within Huntsville’s parks and trails systems.

## 8.2 Parkland Policy and Design

There are many elements to park policy, relating to planning, acquisition, design, development, and use.

### Park Use

The use of parks and the potential range of features is guided by the classification system established in the Town’s Development Standards (2021). This hierarchy includes the following; for more detail, reference should be made to the source document:

- Town-wide Parks
- Community Parks – to be provided at a rate of 1.2 hectares per 1000 residents
- Neighbourhood Parks– to be provided at a rate of 1.0 hectares per 1000 residents, typically through the 5% parkland dedication amount
- Open Space Linkages – not to be accepted as part of the statutory parkland dedication requirement

## Recommendations

22. Consider updating the 2005 **Parks Master Plan** to guide future parkland needs and policies. The scope of the plan may be expanded to include off-road trails and connectivity.
23. Ensure that the Community Services Division is circulated as a **commenting agency** on development applications involving the potential acquisition of parkland.

## Planning and Acquisition

Most municipal parkland is acquired through the development approval process (e.g., plans of subdivision, land division, redevelopment, etc.). These lands are generally intended to provide localized parkland opportunities and may need to be supplemented by other acquisition tools when larger parkland blocks are required.

There are several regulations, policies and guidelines governing the acquisition and location of parkland. This begins with the Ontario Planning Act, which establishes a framework for parkland dedication and possible alternatives for the dedication of land for park and recreation purposes. The Town's Official Plan complies with the Planning Act and sets out objectives for parks and open spaces, along with policies for parkland dedication and development. The Town's Development Standards (2021) also identify protocols for acceptable parkland conveyance, amongst other items.

The Town's current Official Plan policies (Section 4) allow for the 5% residential, 2% commercial/industrial and cash-in-lieu allowances for parkland dedication on plans of subdivision and condominium. The Official Plan does not allow for the alternative parkland rate (1ha:300 units if land or 1ha:500 units if cash), which is advantageous for residential proposals exceeding 15 units per hectare. This policy may be considered more fully under the Town's next Official Plan Review.<sup>3</sup>

With a growing population, it is important that the Town regularly review and assess its parkland requirements in order to inform development approvals and future capital projects. Due to its age, an update to the 2005 Parks Master Plan may be considered, using this Community Services Master Plan and the Town's Park Development Standards (2021) as a starting point. The updated plan may consider items such as park policy, classifications, parkland distribution gaps and needs, water access, trail and greenspace connectivity, etc.

Town By-law 2018-100 "Being a By-law to establish a Policy for the Acquisition and Disposition of Land, Leasing and Granting of Licence of Occupation" governs any potential disposition of parkland. Any

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<sup>3</sup> In 2020, the Province of Ontario passed Bill 197 (COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act), which made a number of adjustments to the parkland dedication sections of the Ontario Planning Act, among other changes. If the Town were to enact Official Plan policies supporting the alternative rate, a Parkland Dedication By-law (supported by a Parks Plan) would also be required to further guide the parkland acquisition process (e.g., conditions for acceptance, valuation, collection of parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu, etc.).

proceeds and operational savings from the sale or disposition of parkland should be redirected to other high priority projects within the parks system.

## Design and Development

The Town's Development Standards (2021) contain guidelines for the design of parks, such as those relating to sustainability, accessibility, safety, construction of park features (e.g., sports fields, courts, playgrounds, supporting amenities, etc.) and more. This document also contains protocols for parkland development. In addition, the Town has a Public Art Policy to guide the installation of art within its parks system.

Designing parks requires a strong understanding of community needs, contemporary design practices, operational requirements, and programmatic considerations. From our observations, the Town's parks system is well maintained, but some older parks contain aging equipment, lack variety in activities, are unable to support environmental management practices and climate change mitigation initiatives, and/or do not have updated comfort amenities (e.g., seating, washrooms, signage, etc.). Park renewal projects and new park development provide opportunities to address these issues.

### Recommendations

24. Maintain a commitment to **universal accessibility, safety and comfort** within the Town's parks system. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) Regularly consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.
  - b) Undertaking and incorporating accessibility audits into the Town's asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance.
  - c) Engaging local police services to undertake a review of all parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to identify safety concerns relative to access and sightlines (surveillance).
25. Emphasize the provision of amenities such as **benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and washrooms** in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.
26. Provide a variety of active and passive spaces within the parks system to support **all-season usage**, including recreation and sports, casual use and unstructured play, special events and cultural activities. Opportunities to provide **winterized washroom facilities** in high-use parks and trails – such as at Lions Lookout – should be considered in recognition of growing year-round parks use.
27. Establish consistent and high-quality **signage at all municipal parks and trails** to enhance branding and wayfinding, as guided by the Town's Wayfinding Strategy. Signage should direct inquiries to the Community Services Division's Sales and Customer Service Team.

## 8.3 Parks and Open Space Provision

### Current Parkland Inventory

Parks provide the land base for many amenities and activities that are overseen by the Community Services Division, including sports fields, sports courts, etc. The following table and maps provide a summary of existing parks and beaches (**44 sites totalling 123 hectares**) that are owned and/or maintained by the Town.

**Table 21: Town of Huntsville Parkland Summary**

Park Name	Type	Size (ha)
Avery Beach Park	Park	2.36
Brunel Locks Park	Park	1.11
Buck Lake Beach	Beach	0.22
Camp Kitchen	Park	0.67
Centennial Park	Park	0.5
Clarke Crescent Park	Park	1.47
Conroy Park	Park	4.09
Creekside Park	Park	0.53
Deer Lake Beach	Beach	0.25
Flag Park	Park	0.21
Glenwood Park	Park	0.4
Golden Pheasant Park	Park	0.46
Goodwin Park	Park	0.33
Harp Lake Beach	Beach	0.62
Hoodstown Park	Park	1.69
Hutcheson Beach	Beach	2.2
Indian Landing	Park	0.28
Ilfracombe Park	Park	0.11
Irene St. Park	Park	0.31
Kent Park	Park	0.06
Lake Waseosa	Dock	0.15
Lakewood Park	Park	0.13
Lions Lookout	Park	4.88
Longs Lake Beach	Beach	0.08
Longs Lake Dock	Dock	0.06
Meadow Park	Park	0.62
Memorial Park	Park	32.43
McCulley Robertson Recreation Park	Park	24.82
North Mary Lake	Lake	0.02
Orchard Park	Park	0.91
Pitmans Bay	Lake	33.68
Port Sydney Beach	Beach	0.33
Port Sydney Community Centre Park	Park	1.16
River Mill Park	Park	0.45
Riverlea Park	Park	0.32

Park Name	Type	Size (ha)
Riverside Park	Park	0.18
Riverview Estates	Park	1.33
Selkirk Drive Park	Park	0.12
Skeleton Lake	Lake	0.13
South Portage Park	Park	0.37
Town Dock Park	Park	0.15
Tyland Park	Park	0.18
Utterson Community Park	Park	2.73
West Point Sands	Lake	0.14
<b>Total Parkland</b>		<b>123.24 ha</b>
<b>Level of Provision Per 1,000 Residents (permanent and seasonal)</b>		<b>4.5 ha/1000</b>

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

Current provision based on 2021 population estimate of 27,400 persons, including both permanent and seasonal residents (District of Muskoka Official Plan, 2019).

Notes: Totals may not add due to rounding. Some sites include lands containing indoor recreation facilities. Trails are excluded.



River Mill Park



Meadow Park



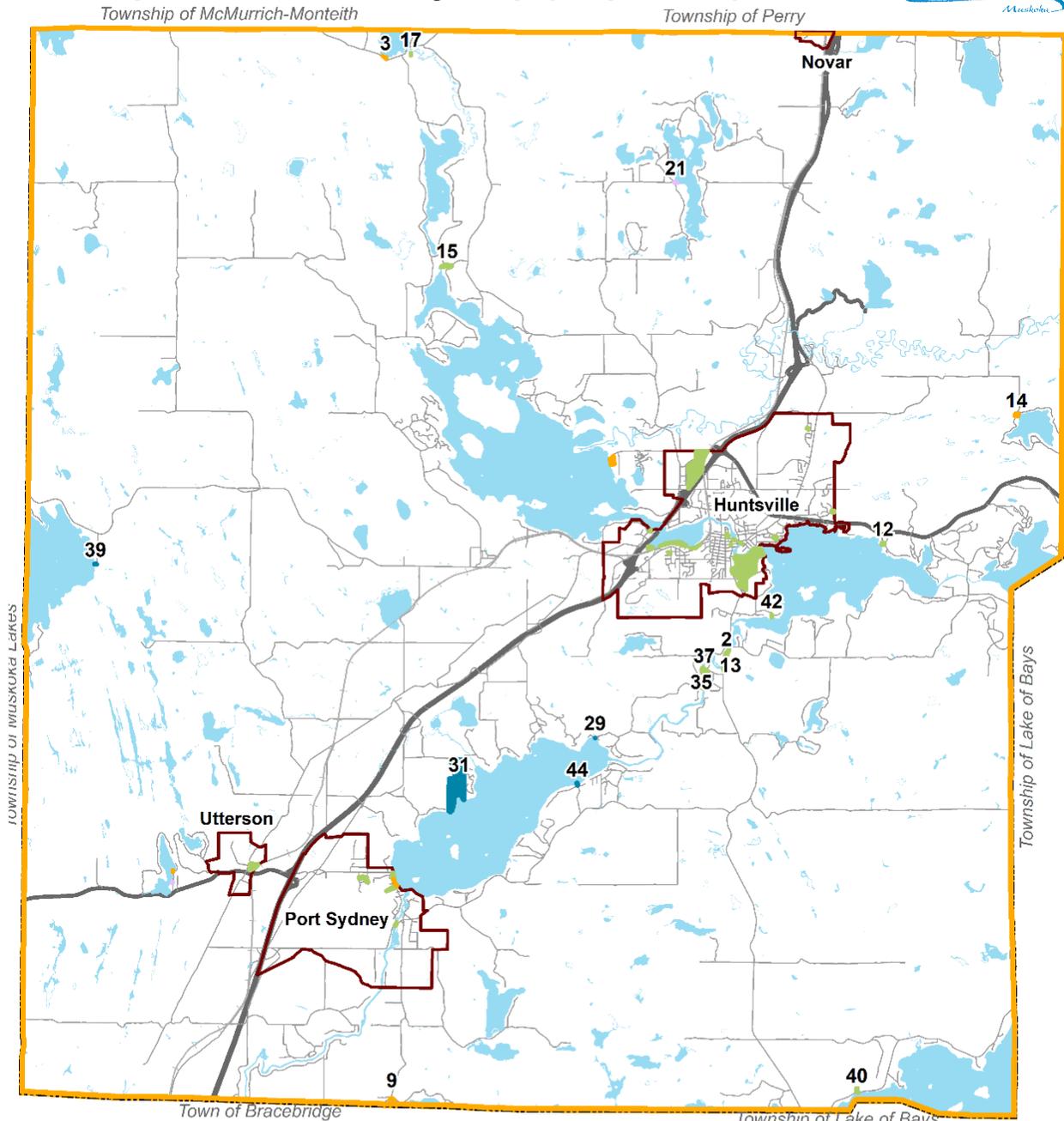
Orchard Park



Stephenson Park

Figure 22

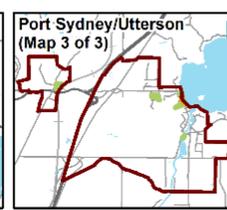
# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Parkland – Key Map (Map 1 of 3)



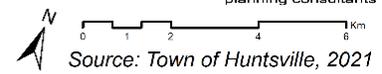
### Legend

#### Park Type

- Beach
- Dock
- Lake
- Park



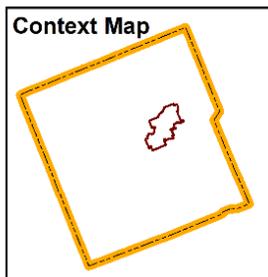
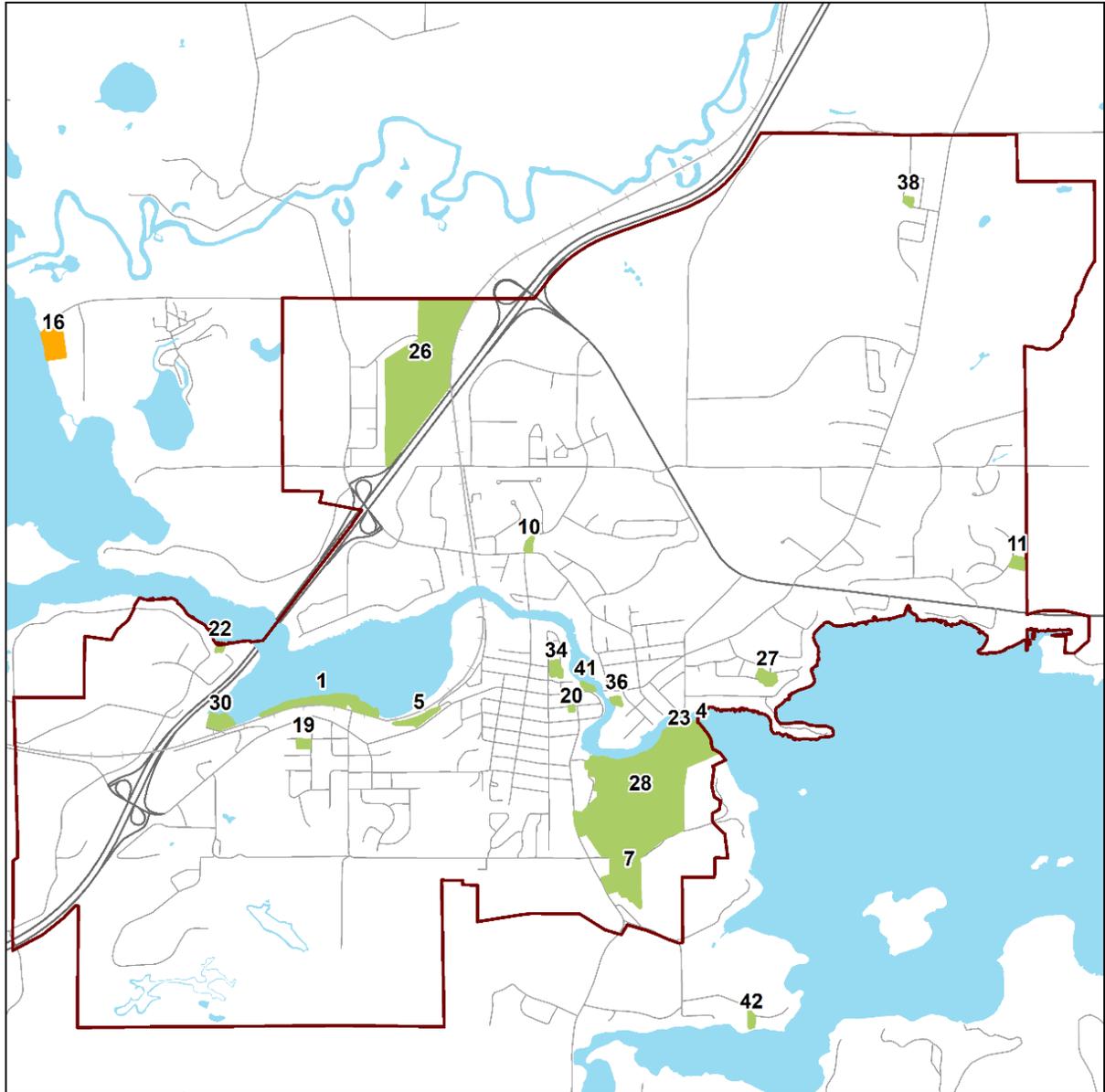
- 2. Brunel Locks Park
- 3. Buck Lake Beach
- 9. Deer Lake Beach
- 12. Golden Pheasant Park
- 13. Goodwin Park
- 14. Harp Lake Beach
- 15. Hoodstown Park
- 17. Ilfracombe Park
- 21. Lake Waseosa Park
- 29. Mary Lake Beach
- 31. Pitman Bay Park
- 35. Riverlea Park
- 37. Riverview Estates
- 39. Skeleton Lake Park
- 40. South Portage Park
- 42. Tyland Park
- 44. West Point Sands Park



Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

Figure 23

# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Parkland – Huntsville (Map 2 of 3)



### Legend

#### Park Type

- Beach
- Dam
- Dock
- Lake
- Park

- |                         |                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Avery Beach Park     | 23. Lookout Park                 |
| 4. Camp Kitchen Beach   | 26. McCulley Robertson Ball Park |
| 5. Centennial Park      | 27. Meadow Park                  |
| 7. Conroy Park          | 28. Memorial Park and MHP        |
| 10. Flag Park           | 30. Orchard Park                 |
| 11. Glenwood Park       | 34. River Mill Park              |
| 16. Hutcheson Beach     | 36. Riverside Park               |
| 19. Irene St Park       | 38. Selkirk Drive Park           |
| 20. Kent Park           | 41. Town Dock Park               |
| 22. Lakewood Park Beach | 42. Tyland Park                  |

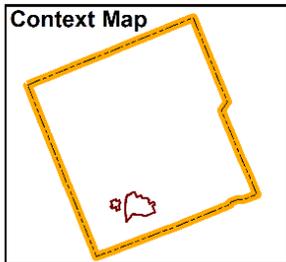
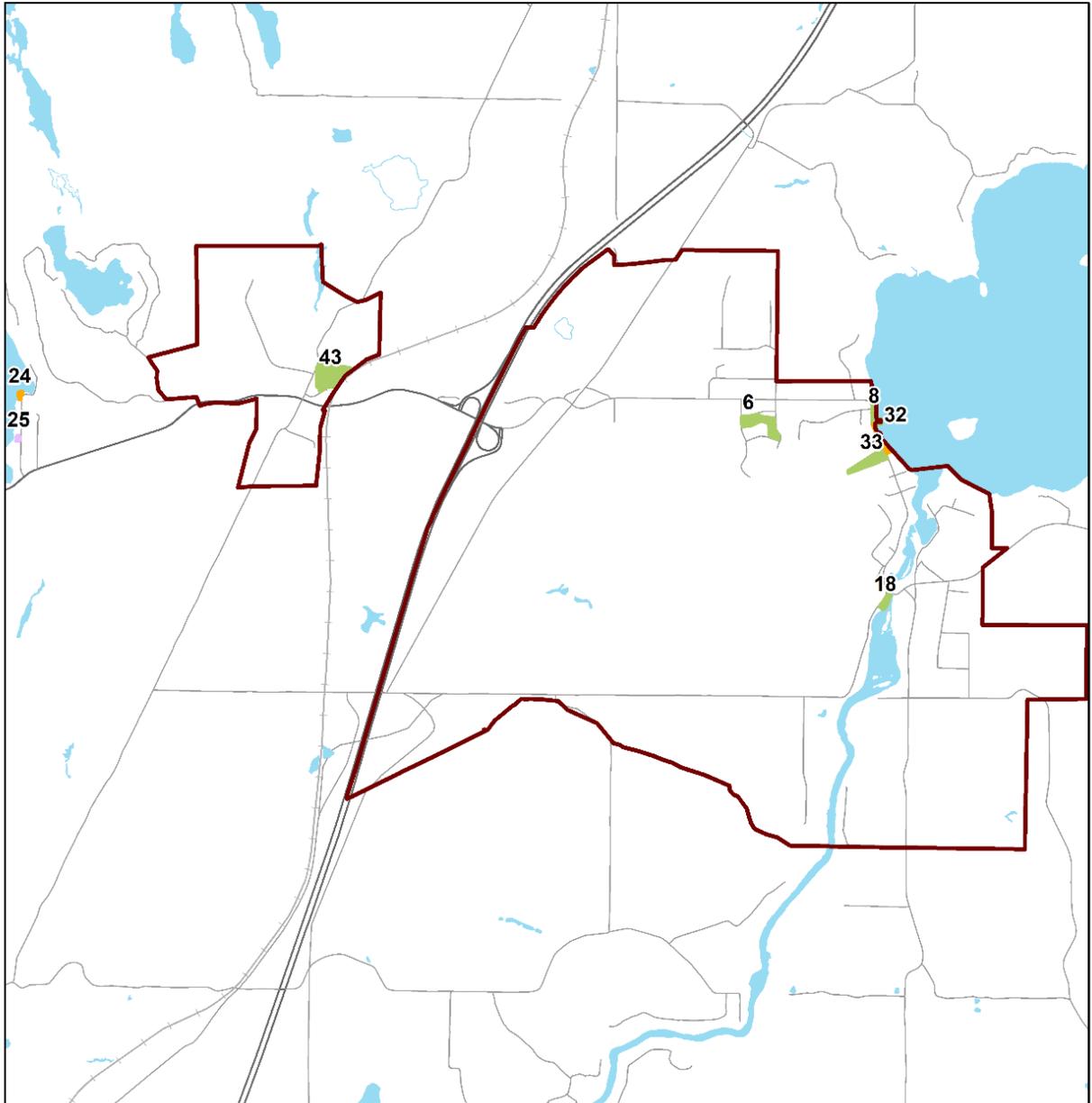


0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 km  
Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021



Figure 24

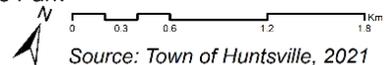
# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Parkland – Port Sydney/Utterson (Map 3 of 3)



**Legend  
Park Type**

- Beach
- Dock
- Lake
- Park

- 6. Clarke Crescent Park
- 8. Creekside Park
- 18. Indian Landing Park
- 24. Longs Lake Beach
- 25. Longs Lake Dock
- 32. Port Sydney Beach
- 33. Port Sydney Community Centre Park
- 43. Utterson Community Park



Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

## Future Parkland Needs

Park demand is influenced by several factors, such as distribution and proximity to residential areas, non-municipal providers, urban density, population composition, amenity needs, existing park types, community objectives, and public input. Community input indicates that the parks system is highly valued by residents and efforts should be made to ensure that provision levels remain appropriate – 65% of survey respondents agreed that the Town should place a priority on the acquisition of parks and open space.

Most municipalities use population-based targets to calculate and plan parkland supply. The Town's current parkland provision rate is **4.5 hectares per 1,000 residents**, although this is likely exaggerated as it includes some open space parcels and portions of larger parks that cannot be used for active recreation.

Comparable urban/rural municipalities typically strive to achieve provision rates of up to 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents to meet their active recreational needs associated with sports fields, playgrounds, courts and more. As noted above, future needs and parkland acquisition strategies should be explored further through an updated Parks Master Plan.

Huntsville's current parkland inventory appears to be generally meeting community needs. There are no immediate requirements for additional sports fields and the current sites can accommodate the desired amenities.

In order to maintain the current provision level, the Town will need to secure additional lands outside of the land development process as the parkland dedication requirements through the Planning Act will be insufficient on their own. Fortunately, the Town has made several strategic moves to secure waterfront lands for parks and should be commended for this foresight. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Infra Pipe Solutions (Uponor) – The Town recently purchased this property and are currently leasing the land. Over time, there may be an opportunity to make some of this property available for public recreation use. As noted in the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief, a detailed park design would be required to guide this process.
- Mountview Water Treatment Site – This site offers long-term potential for passive park development.

In addition, the Town anticipates receiving an open space block (3.83 ha) and parkettes (0.17 ha and 0.12 ha) in the Woodstream Subdivision and has several other active development files that may offer opportunities for parkland or cash-in-lieu.

### Recommendations

28. Continue to build the parks system through the maximum application of **parkland dedication tools**. Where land dedication falls short, alternative acquisition tools may need to be considered, such as partnerships (e.g., working with area school boards and other service providers to maximize community access), land purchase or lease, reallocation of surplus municipal lands, etc.

29. Maintain an up-to-date **parks and trails inventory** (including park blocks to be conveyed through the development process) to inform the assessment of future parks and trails needs, use of cash-in-lieu, and capital planning.

### Park Asset Lifecycle Analysis

Capital requirements are increasing as the Town of Huntsville’s parks infrastructure ages and amenities require repair or replacement. As is the case in most communities, Huntsville’s parks infrastructure deferred maintenance items are becoming more commonplace and difficult choices are having to be made regarding park renewal.

“In the end is it not a question of ‘if’ but of ‘when’. We can make smart repairs now or hold off and make increasingly expensive repairs later. Canada needs to accelerate the rate of infrastructure renewal now.”

- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2016

It is a key goal of the 2015 Framework for Recreation in Canada to “enable communities to renew recreational infrastructure as required”. This can be accomplished by dedicating sufficient funding collaborating with others, developing assessment tools, and evidence-based guidelines for investing in aging infrastructure, and adopting innovative renewal strategies that enhance affordable access for all.

Inventories and condition analyses were completed and the general condition of most parks and amenities can be seen in the following tables.

Approximately 57% of parks, and park amenities are in good condition. Condition tends to be strongly aligned with the age of the park. Basketball courts, washrooms, beaches, tennis courts, park buildings, and pavilions/bandshells were amongst the most poorly rated amenities. The Town’s parks with the most poorly rated conditions include:

- Clarke Crescent Park, Kent Park, and Irene Street Park (note: revitalization projects for these sites were initiated in 2021);
- Lions Lookout; and
- Utterson Community Park.

Due to the age of Huntsville’s older parks, some amenities are reaching the end of their functional lifespan and planning is required to ensure their timely replacement and/or revitalization. Pressure for park renewal and redevelopment can also be driven by safety considerations, legislative requirements, as well as changes in leisure preferences and socio-demographic composition. Well maintained parks are more appealing to users, better utilized, and aligned with Town objectives. As costs rise and needs change, the Town of Huntsville needs to establish priorities and capitalize on opportunities for reinvestment in parks infrastructure.

## Recommendations

30. Guided by the Town’s asset management plan, identify a long-term plan for **park renewal and redevelopment** that address aging infrastructure and capital improvements. Candidates for consideration in the short- to medium-term include **Lions Lookout and Utterson Community Park**. Residents and stakeholders should be engaged when designing new and redeveloped parks and trails.

**Table 22: Condition of Town Park Amenities**

Amenity Type	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Total Assets Evaluated
Ball Diamonds		8%	15%	77%		26
Basketball Courts		50%	50%			2
Beaches	33%	33%	33%			3
Bridges				100%		1
Canada Summit Centre Building			11%	50%	39%	18
Civic Centre Building				100%		3
Community Halls			33%	47%	20%	15
Docks/Water Infrastructure			45%	45%	9%	11
Fencing			20%	60%	20%	5
Irrigation			50%	50%		2
Landscaping	8%	4%	25%	58%	4%	24
Muskoka Heritage Place Building	4%	4%	11%	48%	33%	27
Park Buildings	20%		20%	60%		5
Parking Lots				100%		1
Pavilion/Bandshell	20%		40%	40%		5
Playgrounds		9%	27%	64%		11
Recreation Trails	14%	14%		71%		7
Soccer Fields				100%		2
Tennis Courts	14%	29%		43%	14%	7
Track				100%		1
Washrooms	50%			50%		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>178</b>

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. Excludes non-Town parks and locations.



Table 23: Condition of Town Parks by Location

Park	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Total Assets Evaluated
Aspdin Community Centre				40%	60%	5
Avery Beach			50%	50%		2
Brunel Launch				100%		1
Brunel Locks		33%	33%	33%		3
Canada Summit Centre			18%	50%	32%	22
Cheese Dock			100%			1
Civic Centre				100%		5
Clarke Crescent Park	100%					1
Conroy Park			10%	80%	10%	10
Glenwood Park				100%		1
Goodwin Park			100%			1
Hunter's Bay				100%		1
Indian Landing				100%		2
Irene St Park		50%		50%		2
Kent Park	100%					2
King William St Park			100%			1
Lion's Lookout				100%		1
Longs Lake Launch			100%			1
Lookout Park	50%		50%			2
Main St				100%		1
McCulley Robertson	3%	3%	22%	72%		32
Meadow Park	33%		33%	33%		3
Memorial Park			100%			1
Muskoka Heritage Place	3%	3%	14%	45%	34%	29
Pitmans Bay				100%		1
Port Sydney Beach	33%	17%	17%	33%		6
Port Sydney Community Centre		13%	63%	25%		8
Port Sydney Dam				100%		1
Recreation Trails		13%		88%		8
River Mill Park			15%	69%	15%	13
Riverside Park				100%		1
Stephenson Community Centre			20%	80%		5
Utterson Community Park		60%	20%	20%		5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>178</b>

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. Excludes non-Town parks and locations.

## 8.4 Recreational Trails System

Huntsville has made considerable strides in recent years on the development of a recreational off-road trail system. Key municipal trail segments current include:

- **Hunters Bay Trail** (4.6 km) – a waterfront trail used for walking, running and cycling; trail includes floating dock sections overlooking Hunters Bay and Orchard Park
- **Fairy Vista Trail** (3.4 km) – a paved all-season trail travelling through fields, forests and wetlands
- **Lions Lookout Trail** (1.3 km) – an unpaved trail connecting several key sites, including Lions Lookout, Camp Kitchen and Fairy Lake, and Canada Summit Centre
- **The Great Trail** (52 km) - formerly known as the Trans Canada Trail, this route transects Huntsville through a blend of on and off-road trail sections (including a 10-kilometre off-road trail in north Huntsville and connections to the Hunters Bay Trail) and connects the town to regional, provincial and national networks

Continued development of Huntsville's trails is an important component of the Town's strategic vision and is strongly supported by the public. The Master Plan survey found that nature trails garnered the highest degree of broad-based support – 72% of respondents felt that they should be a priority for improvement.

In addition, the trails at Arrowhead and Algonquin Parks are renowned and other trails are available as part of resort properties (e.g., Deerhurst) and Crown lands (access restrictions may apply). The Town recently partnered with a mountain biking group to create bike trails on private lands in Hidden Valley. Trails for snowmobiling also traverse the municipality, often on private lands.

Active transportation infrastructure such as recreation trails tend to be one of the most highly desirable amenities in any municipality. They facilitate low-cost outdoor physical activity opportunities and can be used by residents of all ages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the municipality experienced a strong uptake in trail usage, highlighting the importance of providing a connected trail network that connect residents within the community.

It is an objective of the Town to provide walkway linkages and trail systems for pedestrian and bicycle use connecting parkland with other open space greenways wherever practicable and compatible with environmental conditions. The Town has several reports and studies that speak to the importance of trails and active transportation routes, including the Official Plan and related background studies (e.g., 2012 Active Transportation Strategy). The detailed policies of the Official Plan should be referred to for additional direction related to active transportation, particularly on-road routes and utilitarian uses.

Further, the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief (2021) – which focuses on the shoreline areas between Hunter's Bay and Lion's Lookout – outlines strategies to ensure pedestrian connections in this area,

including improved signage, trail connections, and activity stations (e.g., fitness, fishing, public art) along the trails.

Gaps exist in the Town’s trail network. For example, the Town has a goal of connecting the Hidden Valley Recreational Lifestyle and Resort Area and the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area with recreational trails. Other gaps within the urban area also exist and improved wayfinding is required. Development of a connected off-road trails system takes time, appropriate policy, funding and concerted effort. Many new subdivisions are being planned with linear open space and trail connections in mind and this needs to continue.

The Town’s Sidewalk Master Plan (2021) identifies “multi-use paths” as one form of sidewalk. This Plan addresses some minor missing links (e.g., walking paths) and a future connection to McCulley Robertson Recreation Park, but does not provide a primary focus on Town-wide recreational trails or cycling networks. A separate Trails Master Plan is recommended to provide a more comprehensive response to achieving the Official Plan objectives for active transportation and identifying appropriate design standards for trail construction.

As future residential development occurs, consideration should be given to recreational trail development to support active transportation. While trail development within established urban areas is often a challenge, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that there are walking pathways within parks to provide accessible circulation areas and linkages to internal amenities (e.g., playgrounds). Other design features and comfort amenities should also be considered, such as wayfinding, bike racks and seating.

#### Recommendations

31. Assign high priority to the continued development of a **linked recreational trails system** through the use of secondary plans, the development process, landowner agreements and purchase of lands as they become available.
32. Develop a **Trails Master Plan** to provide a renewed vision and detailed evaluation for trail development opportunities. This plan should identify requirements for multi-use trail design and development, including connections between residential areas and community facilities/destinations scenic lookout areas, and recreational trails in parks. The scope of the plan may also be expanded to include on-road cycling routes and infrastructure.



## 9. Goal Four: Supportive Environments

### Ensure the provision of supportive and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and help to build strong caring communities.

Social infrastructure such as recreation, cultural and parks amenities provide necessary spaces for social participation. They play an important role in the daily life of Huntsville residents by encouraging community and family connectedness and facilitating active living.

This section contains an assessment of the Town’s recreation and parks facilities using a mixed-methods approach that takes into account a range of factors such as existing inventories, non-municipal providers, current provision rates, geographic distribution, usage and participation rates, previous studies, and public and stakeholder input.

*Note: Arts, cultural and heritage assets are examined in Section 11 (Goal Six).*

#### 9.1 Overview of Current Inventory

The following table and map provide a summary of existing indoor and outdoor facilities that are owned and/or maintained by the Town.

**Table 24: Town of Huntsville Recreation Facility Summary**

Facilities	Supply	Location(s)	Current Provision
<b>Arena (Ice Pads)</b>	2	Canada Summit Centre – Don Lough Arena; and Jack Bionda Arena (2)	1 : 13,700
<b>Indoor Pools</b>	1	Canada Summit Centre – Centennial Pool	1 : 27,400
<b>Walking Tracks</b>	1	Canada Summit Centre	1 : 27,400
<b>Community/Banquet Halls</b>	6	Active Living Centre at Canada Summit Centre; Canada Summit Centre (Auditorium); Aspden Community Hall; Pitmans Bay Lodge; Port Sydney Community Hall; Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall	1 : 4,570
<b>Seniors’ Centres</b>	3	Active Living Centre at Canada Summit Centre; Club 55; Utterson Live Wires Seniors Club	1 : 9,135
<b>Cultural Facilities and Museums</b> (discussed in Section 11)	3	Algonquin Theatre and Partners Hall – Theatre; Canada Summit Centre – Exhibit Space; Muskoka Heritage Place – Museum and Grounds	1 : 9,135

Facilities	Supply	Location(s)	Current Provision
<b>Playgrounds (locations)</b>	8	Glenwood Park; Hutcheson Beach; Irene St. Park; Meadow Park; Port Sydney Community Centre Park; River Mill Park; Selkirk Drive Park; Utterson Community Park	1 : 3,425
<b>Soccer Fields</b>	6 (7 unlit equivalents)	Artificial Turf: Conroy Park Full (unlit): McCulley Robertson Recreation Park (2) Intermediate: McCulley Robertson Recreation Park (3)	1 : 3,915 (unlit equivalents)
<b>Ball Diamonds</b>	5 (9 unlit equivalents)	Lit: McCulley Robertson Recreation Park (4) Casual Use: Utterson Community Park	1 : 3,045 (unlit equivalents)
<b>Tennis Courts</b>	7	Clarke Crescent Park (2); Utterson Community Park; Conroy Park (2); Meadow Park (2)	1 : 3,915
<b>Pickleball Courts (shared with tennis)</b>	4	Conroy Park (2); Meadow Park (2)	1 : 6,850
<b>Skateboard Park</b>	1	McCulley Robertson Recreation Park	1 : 27,400
<b>Basketball Courts</b>	1.5	Port Sydney Community Centre Park; Utterson Community Park (0.5)	1 : 18,270
<b>Volleyball Courts</b>	2	Avery Beach Park; Port Sydney Community Centre Park	1 : 13,700
<b>Off-leash Dog Areas</b>	1	McCulley Robertson Recreation Park	1 : 27,400
<b>Disc Golf Courses</b>	1	McCulley Robertson Recreation Park	1 : 27,400
<b>Running Tracks</b>	2	Conroy Park (rubber); Lions Lookout (gravel)	1 : 13,700
<b>Pavilions</b>	8	Avery Beach Park; Golden Pheasant Park; Hutcheson Beach; Indian Landing; Lions Lookout; McCulley Robertson Recreation Park; Port Sydney Beach; River Mill Park	1 : 3,425

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

Notes: To account for extended periods of play for lit facilities, "Unlit Equivalents (ULE)" measure provision levels where every lit soccer field counts as 1.5 unlit fields, every artificial turf field counts as 2.0 fields (3.0 if lit) and every lit ball diamond counts as 2.0 unlit diamonds.

Current provision based on 2021 population estimate of 27,400 persons, including both permanent and seasonal residents (District of Muskoka Official Plan, 2019).

In addition to Town-owned facilities, Huntsville residents also benefit from facilities and amenities owned and/or managed by others (noting that some may not be broadly accessible to the public) such as:

- **Schools:** most elementary and secondary schools include gymnasiums, classrooms, and outdoor recreational facilities (e.g., sports fields and playgrounds);
- **Non-profit providers:** examples include churches and places of worship, service clubs, curling club, youth centres, Agricultural Society, etc.;
- **Government agencies:** such as Ontario Parks and Conservation Authorities;
- **Private providers:** examples include fitness clubs, martial arts, dance studios, golf courses, etc.; and
- **Adjacent municipalities/communities:** arenas, halls, parks and trails are provided in adjacent and nearby municipalities such as Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, etc.



Canada Summit Centre



Muskoka Heritage Place



Pitmans Bay Lodge



Huntsville Civic Centre - Algonquin Theatre



Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall



Club 55



**Conroy Park**



**Freedom Dog Park**



**Muskoka Heritage Place**



**McCulley Robertson Recreation Park**



**Meadow Park**

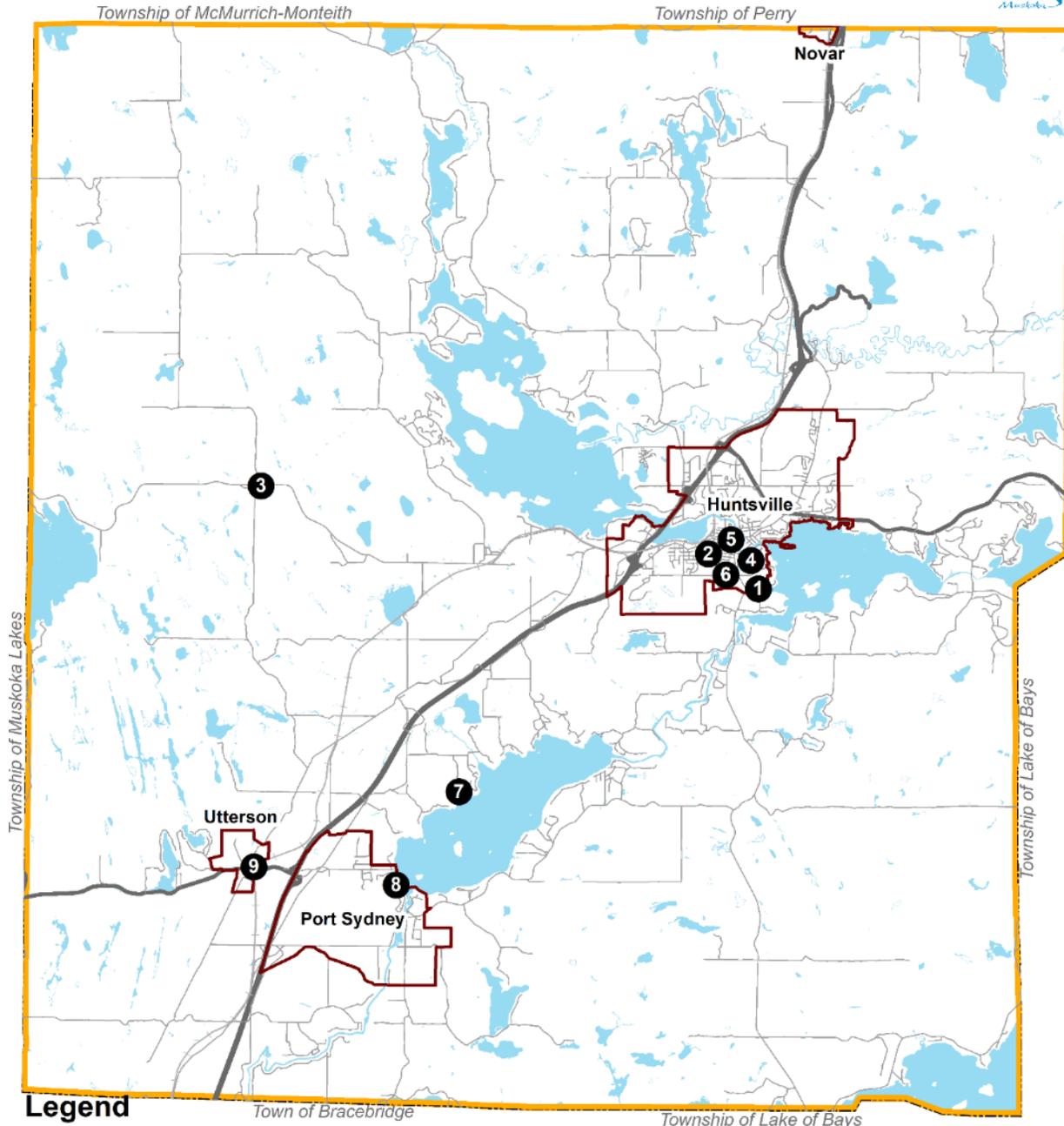


**Port Sydney Beach**

A map illustrating municipal indoor facilities is shown on the following page. A map of park locations is contained in Section 8.

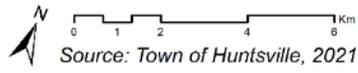
Figure 25

# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Indoor Recreation and Cultural Facilities



## Legend

- Indoor Facilities
- 1. Active Living Centre
- 2. Algonquin Theatre
- 3. Aspdin Community Hall
- 4. Canada Summit Centre
- 5. Club 55
- 6. Muskoka Heritage Place
- 7. Pitman's Bay Lodge
- 8. Port Sydney Community Hall
- 9. Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall



## 9.2 Indoor Pools

The Town operates the Centennial Pool at the Canada Summit Centre. This indoor aquatic centre consists of a 6 lane, 25-metre pool that has a separate small teaching pool and hot tub. The pool is one of the older components at the Canada Summit Centre.

Centennial Pool serves a wide range of needs, as well as users from outside the town. The pool is used for a variety of activities such as lessons, public swims, aquafit, swim club, and more. A Pool Allocation Policy is in place to guide scheduling and priority amongst competing uses.

Not all communities Huntsville's size have indoor pools. This level of service is valued by residents and there is strong support for maintaining the pool into the future. The community survey found that more than one-half (56%) of Huntsville's households participate in recreational swimming (in a pool, lake, etc.). Indoor pools are a vital community service as they provide controlled environments for year-round health, wellness and swim instruction. This is particularly important in terms of water safety given Huntsville's many lakes and rivers; one-third of households reported that they have recently taken swim lessons or aquafit classes.

There is substantial community support for maintaining or enhancing the pool – 51% of survey respondents indicated indoor pools should be a priority, ranking ahead of all other indoor facility types and most outdoor amenities. Centennial Pool is a well used facility that generates good levels of satisfaction within the community.

Looking ahead, unless the number of young children in Huntsville grows, it will be difficult for the Town to attract substantially more registrants to its swim lessons, which represents a core service for the municipality. The facility is capable of meeting Huntsville's long-term needs for indoor aquatic activities; no additional pools are required for the foreseeable future, but the Town should ensure that sufficient funding is made available for the pool's capital renewal.

Moving forward, the Town should continue to focus its efforts on increasing usage at the pool through facility enhancements and efficient operations that support appropriate program and rental rates. For example, many new aquatic facilities are moving away from gender-specific change rooms to universal, gender-neutral change rooms with change stalls. In addition, input from stakeholders, the public and staff identified a need for accessibility upgrades at the pool, specifically relating to the change rooms. With an aging population, it will be important to improve the barrier-free features of this pool in the short-term.

### Recommendations

33. Undertake **barrier-free upgrades at Centennial Pool** (e.g., change rooms) to improve accessibility for all users and ensure that sufficient funding is made available for the pool's **long-term capital renewal**.

## 9.3 Ice Pads

The Town operates 2 ice pads, both at the Canada Summit Centre: Jack Bionda Arena (85ft by 190ft) and Don Lough Arena (100ft by 200ft). The Jack Bionda Arena was built in the 1970s and is older than the Don

Lough Arena, which was built in advance of the 2010 G8 Summit. Both ice pads are supported by a number of amenities, including spectator seating (1,000 at the Jack Bionda Arena and 1,370 at the Don Lough Arena), indoor viewing area (Jack Bionda Arena) and indoor rubberized track (Don Lough Arena).

Both arenas are used for ice sports during the fall and winter seasons – the Canada Summit Centre is a well-known location for tournaments. The Town keeps ice in the Don Lough Arena for much of the spring and summer seasons, while the Jack Bionda Arena floor is well used for lacrosse and indoor pickleball. Total paid rentals totalled more than 3,550 hours on both ice pads in 2019, 54% of which was from the Don Lough Arena. Usage is governed by an Ice Allocation Policy and rental rates are frequently compared to others in the region to maintain competitiveness.

Although indoor ice sports are popular Canadian pastimes, broader trends in sport participation suggest that youth sport registration has been in decline, although somewhat buoyed by growing demand for girls' hockey. In many communities, growing interest in skill development programs and a desire for more practice time has helped to maintain demand for ice rentals. Allocation policies and daytime programs can be effective tools to ensuring that arenas are utilized appropriately and to greatest degree possible.

In Huntsville, greater than one-third (37%) of survey respondents reported that one or more household members participated in indoor ice sports or recreational skating before or during the pandemic, ranking it as the 11<sup>th</sup> most popular leisure activity out of 27 options. Relatively low levels of public support were expressed for spending on indoor arenas, with 31% of survey respondents indicating that they are a priority, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> out of 10 indoor facility types. Residents and user groups are generally satisfied with the provision of arenas in the Town of Huntsville.

A high level review of the Town's weekly arena schedules from 2019 (pre-pandemic) reveals that there is some capacity to accommodate additional usage, particularly for those groups willing to use shoulder and non-prime hours. Ice rentals are strongest during weekday prime time hours (between 5pm and 10:30pm). Open ice time is generally available during the weekends, weekday mornings, and late nights.

To examine local trends, participation data was requested from major user groups through the master plan consultation process, however many groups did not report. Typical market-driven participation targets are in the range of one ice pad per 375 to 425 youth participants (age 19 and under; winter sports only); the Town is encouraged to use these targets when assessing future needs. It is anticipated that the town's provision ratio is generally within this range as the public consultation program did not yield substantial concerns over ice availability. Further, the Town's current service level is one ice pad per 13,700 residents (permanent and seasonal) or one per 10,500 permanent residents, which is within a typical range for communities of Huntsville's size (and below the provincial average of one ice pad per 14,900 residents<sup>4</sup>).

Looking to the future, the pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on team sports in the short-term. In 2021, one of the Town's ice pads was used as a vaccination centre for a time, while both pads have been open under restricted capacity during the ice season. User groups have had to adapt to evolving public health protocols, which has limited their ability to run traditional programming. Concerns over virus

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<sup>4</sup> Statistic Canada. Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey. 2016.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5173>

transmission have also contributed to fewer children, youth and adults playing team sports. As the sport recovers from these challenges, there is concern that the number of active participants may not return to past levels, or will do so at a gradual pace. If realized, this could have a negative impact on municipal revenues. The Town should monitor ice registration and rental levels to understand future trending.

Huntsville is growing, but the number of children and youth – which are primary markets for arenas – are not. No additional arenas will be required within the next ten or more years. With an aging population, it is possible that interest will increase for off-peak use; the Town currently offers daytime shinny programs.

#### Recommendations

34. **Monitor ice registration and rental levels** to understand future trends. Continue to work with arena organizations to support “return to play” approaches and explore options for arena programming and rentals during non-peak hours.

## 9.4 Multi-use Space and Halls

There are several municipally-owned programmable and rentable rooms and halls within Huntsville. These spaces are able to be used for a variety of purposes, such as recreation programming, social activities, community meetings, events, family reunions, and more. The inventory includes:

- Active Living Centre at Canada Summit Centre (various rooms);
- Canada Summit Centre (Auditorium, plus breakout rooms);
- Aspdin Community Hall;
- Pitmans Bay Lodge;
- Port Sydney Community Hall; and
- Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall.

There is heavy involvement of volunteers in some of these facilities. For example, Aspdin Hall is operated by a non-profit organization under agreement with the Town, while the Town has agreements in place with local community groups to access the Port Sydney and Utterson/Stephenson Community Halls. The consultation program yielded suggestions for additional improvements to Port Sydney Community Hall (e.g., accessibility and other modernizations); this facility was recently upgraded to include a new roof and air conditioning. The Town has removed halls in Brunel and Chaffey from its inventory in recent years due to aging infrastructure and under-utilization.

Other spaces – such as Partners Hall and Club 55 – are also available but are categorized as cultural and seniors’ spaces, respectively. Libraries, schools, churches, cultural clubs, etc. may also offer community access to similar spaces.

These spaces all work together to accommodate a broad range of activities. Usage levels ebb and flow throughout the year and there is often capacity for greater use. For example, communities such as Port Sydney and Utterson may not have sufficient demand for regular usage, but benefit from having these facilities in their area. Community interest in adding more halls and similar spaces is relatively low (21% of survey respondents identified this as a priority), suggesting that the current facilities are meeting needs.

With a new recreation management system now in place, the Town is encouraged to track and compare usage of these spaces on a year-to-year basis to determine trending and opportunities for improvement.

**Pitmans Bay Lodge** is different from the other rural halls in that it is a seasonal (summer) building that is operated by the Town (not a community group) on a turnkey basis with no general public access. Located on Mary Lake, Pitmans Bay Lodge is accessed by a non-maintained private road and offers a lodge building, open space and small beach. The property was donated by the Scouts and is used largely for family gatherings, private retreats, scouts/guides, and for Town day camps on a limited basis.

The following table compares usage of Pitmans Bay Lodge to the other rural community halls. Due to its seasonal nature, its usage and revenues are less than half of the other halls.

**Table 25: Rental Data for Rural Halls, 2019**

Hall	Total Hours Used	Paid Rentals (hours)	Approximate Revenues
Pitmans Bay Lodge (summer only)	970	550 (57%)	\$8,200
Port Sydney Community Hall	2,060	915 (44%)	\$20,000
Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall	1,750	1,380 (79%)	\$22,000

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021

The Town’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan identifies the need for a long-term plan for Pitmans Bay Lodge. This Master Plan identifies the following options for Council’s consideration, with a preference for Option 3 (“Reimage the Site with Full Public Access”). If the Town supports Option 3 in principle (Reimagining the Site with Full Public Access), it is recommended that a design strategy be prepared for this site that solicits public input and examines potential improvements, financial and operational requirements, and environmental impacts. Further investigation into the details of any restrictive covenants or long-term agreements should also be undertaken.

**Table 26: Potential Options for Pitmans Bay Park & Lodge**

Options	Description / Potential Improvements	Alignment with Master Plan Goals
<b>1. Status Quo / No Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The lodge and property would continue to be rented to groups and families in keeping with past practices.</li> <li>- No substantial capital expenditures are recommended beyond lifecycle requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presently, this facility does not provide wide public benefits like other halls and multi-use spaces, rather it largely serves as an affordable rental for family gatherings, heavily subsidized by municipal tax dollars.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Sale of the Property</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Town would pursue the sale of the property, with proceeds used to fund other priority improvements within the parks system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The site is not required to meet the Town’s parkland supply targets, nor does it currently serve a broad public benefit.</li> </ul>

Options	Description / Potential Improvements	Alignment with Master Plan Goals
<p><b>3. Reimagine the Site with Full Public Access</b></p> <p><b>PREFERRED OPTION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The site would be available for broad public use, similar to other waterfront parks (e.g., Hutcheson Beach).</li> <li>- This would require road and parking lot improvements, a washroom building (and septic upgrades), signage, etc.</li> <li>- Consider installation of waterfront shade structure, seating areas, beach volleyball court, swim buoys, etc.</li> <li>- Additional staff resources will be required for maintenance and site security. As parking will still be limited, this may require active management by the Town on weekends to avoid overcrowding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By encouraging safe and broad public access, the Town will increase the public benefits of this site.</li> <li>- Many more residents will be able to enjoy the lakefront experience and connect with nature.</li> <li>- There is an opportunity to expand outdoor programming options and conversion of lodge into an accessible indoor program space.</li> </ul>

In 2020, the tenant of the **Auditorium** space at the Canada Summit Centre (Motivations Fitness) did not renew their lease. This space is located on the second level and is approximately 8,000 square feet in size. In 2021, it was used temporarily for day camps, however, a long-term use needs to be determined. The Town has recently sought expressions of interest from community groups and businesses for the lease of this space.

As the Town evaluates the expressions of interest for the Auditorium space, it is important to recognize that some or all of the space may have long-term value to the Community Services Division. Users of the Canada Summit Centre – most notably arena and pool users – have commented on the lack of dryland training at the facility, such as a fitness/stretching room and basic fitness equipment. As a result, staff are frequently charged with removing unauthorized activity from hallways and other public spaces to maintain safety for all visitors. The space (or a portion of the space) would be well suited for use as a warm-up and dryland training area, tournament centre, and program/event space for the Town. By subdividing the space, the Town could address potential gaps in affordable fitness programs (e.g., yoga, aerobics, dance, etc.) and entry-level programming to youth, adults and older adults. This will help the Town build upon its vital role in delivering cost-effective, introductory-level activities that support active living across all age groups. Additional space may also be available for offices or other lease arrangements, such as aligned health and wellness providers.

Active indoor sports (e.g., court sports) use school **gymnasiums** as the Town does not have this type of space within its inventory. These rentals are at the discretion of the school (school use takes priority) and rental rates are typically higher on weekends due to janitorial costs. The Town has inquired in the past and the school board has indicated that the gymnasiums are fully booked. Groups relying on school gymnasiums report inconsistent access week to week and year to year and are seeking consistent and reliable access to space. Underscoring this point, community access to schools has been completely eliminated during the pandemic.

With growing interest in sports such as pickleball and basketball (along with volleyball, badminton, etc.), access to gymnasiums is becoming more important to municipalities. While the Town works to accommodate court sports within existing spaces (e.g., pickleball on arena floors), these are not available year-round and were not designed for these uses in mind. A possible renovation of the Auditorium at the Canada Summit Centre may address a portion of these needs; however, the Town should work to provide reliable community access to a full-size gymnasium. This may mean working with area schools (including Huntsville High School) in the short-term and examining opportunities to develop a municipal gymnasium in the long-term. While there is no room to add such a facility to the Canada Summit Centre, future opportunities to co-locate a gymnasium with a complementary community building should be considered.

#### Recommendations

35. Create **performance metrics for multi-use spaces and halls** and work with user groups to maintain or enhance usage. Tracking of usage levels is required to support this analysis.
36. Support full public access to **Pitmans Bay Lodge and Park** similar to other waterfront parks. Prepare a design strategy for Pitmans Bay that solicits public input and examines potential improvements, financial and operational requirements, and environmental impacts.
37. Identify a preferred use for the **Auditorium at the Canada Summit Centre**. While opportunities for lease arrangements with synergistic service providers (e.g., health and wellness, etc.) should be explored, the Town should also consider converting a portion of the space into multi-use program and activity spaces for dryland training, fitness and warm-ups, Town programming (e.g., affordable entry-level programs such as fitness, youth space, etc.), events, tournament support, etc.
38. Continue to encourage community use of **school gymnasiums** to accommodate demand for court sports, activities/events and municipal programming. In the longer-term, evaluate opportunities to **develop a municipal gymnasium** co-located with a complementary community building.

## 9.5 Dedicated Age-Specific Space (Youth, Seniors)

Some municipalities – often in partnership with other service providers – deliver certain leisure services to youth and older adult populations through dedicated spaces that serve as activity hubs. Increasingly, shared space models are becoming more common as these provide broader community benefits and can take advantage of efficiencies associated with multi-use spaces.

The Town of Huntsville’s approach to youth and seniors’ programming is a mixed model. The Town does not provide dedicated youth space, instead offering programs within its multi-use spaces and parks, which supplement offerings from other service providers. For seniors, the Town maintains three locations that are largely dedicated for seniors’ services: the Active Living Centre at the Canada Summit Centre; the independently-run Club 55 at the Huntsville Civic Centre; and a dedicated space within the Utterson/Stephenson Community Hall for the Utterson Live Wires. An agreement is also in place with the Merry Mary Lakers to use the Port Sydney Community Hall.

The Town receives funding from the Province to operate seniors’ services at the Active Living Centre and provides additional resources to offer a well-rounded suite of programs. The Centre offers a range of affordable Town-facilitated drop-in and registered programming (sometimes in partnership with others), such as dancing, fitness, cards, music, crafts, etc. The Active Living Centre does not use a membership system – programs are open to everyone. The Active Living Centre offers multi-use spaces that are largely programmed for seniors during the daytime, and for broader community use during the evening and weekends.

Club 55 operates as a membership-based seniors’ centre with drop-in programming run by a longstanding volunteer board. Activities at this location – such as darts, shuffleboard, luncheons, cards, etc. – tend to attract a slightly older clientele. Aside from the space being a municipal capital asset, the Town does not oversee any part of Club 55’s operation and does not have a shared access agreement with the organization to maximize use of the space after-hours.

There is a lack of coordination that results in program duplication between the Active Living Centre and Club 55. To effectively serve Huntsville’s growing older adult population, a cohesive service model is required. A model that positions the Active Living Centre as an older adult hub and uses other sites for strategic outreach – while still leveraging volunteer resources – should be explored, provided that program duplication is limited, there is appropriate public access, spaces are maximized, and there is wide range of activities provided for all older adult interests that are open to all. It is recommended that the Town begin dialogue with Club 55 about potential opportunities to come together to improve older adult services in Huntsville; these conversations should be structured to bring clarity to facility needs, program delivery, use of volunteers, affordability, and quality assurance. The potential to repurpose the current Club 55 space should not be considered until the operating arrangements are reframed.

Community consultation found that the majority of survey respondents are satisfied with current parks, recreation and culture opportunities for older adults and seniors (69% and 67% satisfaction levels, respectively), but that improvements are desired for teens (40% satisfaction). One suggestion was to create a municipal youth centre (possibly at the Canada Summit Centre, given its proximity to the high school) that offers a safe, welcoming, inclusive space for teens to hangout, learn, practice, socialize, etc. This would

require additional funding and staffing, but could be considered as part of the redesign of the Auditorium space.

### Recommendations

39. Through dialogue with **Club 55**, explore the potential for an older adult service model that positions the **Active Living Centre** as an older adult hub and uses other sites for strategic outreach. The service model should seek to leverage volunteer resources, limit program duplication, ensure appropriate public access, maximize spaces, maintain quality assurance, and provide a wide range of activities for all older adult interests that are open to all. The potential to repurpose the current Club 55 space should not be considered until the operating arrangements are reframed.
40. Consider opportunities to establish a **youth-friendly space** that offers drop-in activities and a safe hangout space within the redesigned auditorium at the Canada Summit Centre.

## 9.6 Splash Pads

The Town does not currently operate any splash pads. With a variety of interactive water spray features, splash pads provide users with a refreshing way to cool off on a hot day. They facilitate opportunities for unstructured, spontaneous play, and are an ideal way to activate public spaces. Enhancing access to low-cost, family-friendly features such as splash pads increases opportunities for affordable and self-scheduled activities.

Some public interest has been expressed for a splash pad in Huntsville. One-third (32%) of respondents to the community survey identified splash pads as a priority, ranking 10<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park features. In addition, there were several requests for splash pads on the idea wall of the project website.

Splash pads have been considered in the past by Town Council and formed part of the original 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. However, concerns have been expressed over the cost of installation and operation. While splash pad design and size can vary, high-level cost estimates for a modestly-sized facility would be in the range of \$350,000 to \$400,000 with annual costs of \$30,000 to \$40,000 (mostly water costs).

Splash pad provision is common in communities the size of Huntsville and many that are smaller in population, including several with public access to lakes. In 2016, the average level of provision in Ontario was one splash pad per 17,720 residents<sup>5</sup> and it is likely that overall provision has increased since this time as splash pads become more widespread. Many communities also offer wading pools and outdoor pools to supplement their outdoor aquatic offerings, although provision of these amenities is waning.

These findings suggest that, while not a high priority, the Town should continue to consider the development of a splash pad in its long-term park development strategy. Splash pads are best located in Town-wide or Community Parks with supporting infrastructure. The development of a splash pad should be

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<sup>5</sup> Statistic Canada. Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey. 2016.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5173>

considered through the design process for the parks slated for the Infra Pipe Solutions property (Uponor), Mountview Water Treatment Site, or a future park site. The Waterfront Strategy Design Brief (2021) was silent on the possibility of constructing a splash pad along the downtown waterfront.

#### Recommendations

41. Consider installing a **splash pad** through future major park development in the long-term.

## 9.7 Playgrounds

The Town has 8 playgrounds that vary in size, design and play opportunities in parks throughout Huntsville. Most school sites also offer playgrounds that can be accessed outside of school hours and playgrounds may also be available through private amenity spaces in resort and condominium developments.

Climbing structures, swings and various interactive features generally make up the type of play equipment at each municipal playground, although features are dependent upon the size and type of park in which they are located. Several of the Town's newest playgrounds have accessible features for children with disabilities. Safe playground surfacing is also an important consideration and the Town has recently converted most of its sites over to engineered wood fibre.

Playgrounds offer a variety of benefits to healthy child development (cognitive, social, physical, etc.) and are free to use. The design of playgrounds has evolved over time; for example, many communities are installing more naturalized, unique environments that encourage users to use their imagination more than traditional play structures (e.g., slides, swings, etc.) would. Section 4.4.6 of the Town of Huntsville Official Plan encourages the Town to consider the development of natural playgrounds when designing new parks.

One-third (34%) of survey respondents indicated that their household uses playground equipment. Two-fifths (42%) of survey respondents support additional spending on playgrounds, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park features. The consultation program also yielded suggestions for additional playgrounds, washroom facilities at playgrounds/parks, and new playground equipment that is inclusive and accessible for all users (including paved pathways leading to playgrounds). The Town's Development Standards for playgrounds establish the range of barrier-free accessibility by park type.

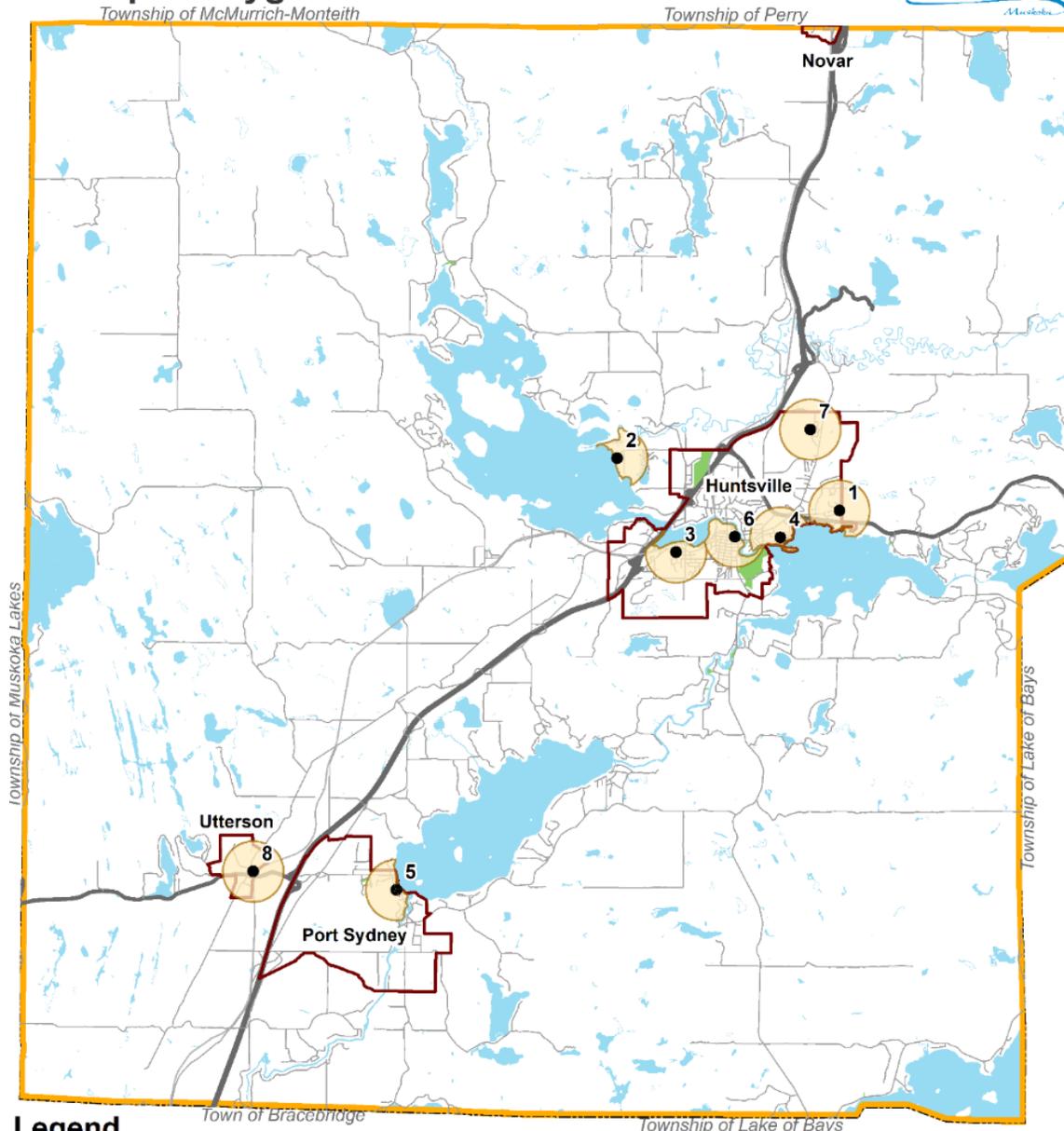
To encourage active play, playgrounds should be available within walking distance of all urbanized residential areas. A common catchment threshold for playgrounds is 400 to 800-metres, which amounts to a five to ten-minute walking distance without having to cross major pedestrian barriers such as highways, railways, and watercourses). Although not specific to playgrounds, Section 3.3.13h of the Town's Official Plan recommends that parks be located within 400 metres of residential areas. As shown on the following maps, the current distribution of municipal playgrounds does not achieve this 400-metre target.

An analysis of the current playground distribution finds gaps in some established areas, including on the north side of the Muskoka River; this gap may be partially addressed through playground installation in future park development within the Eagle Ridge subdivision. Other future subdivision development should have regard to the 400-metre playground service area, including Huntsville Highlands at the southern edge

of the Huntsville urban area. In addition, a playground should be considered at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park to complement the sports fields and other park amenities.

**Figure 26: Town of Huntsville, Town-wide Playground Distribution**

# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Playground Locations



**Legend**

- Playgrounds
- 800m Service Area
- Town Parks

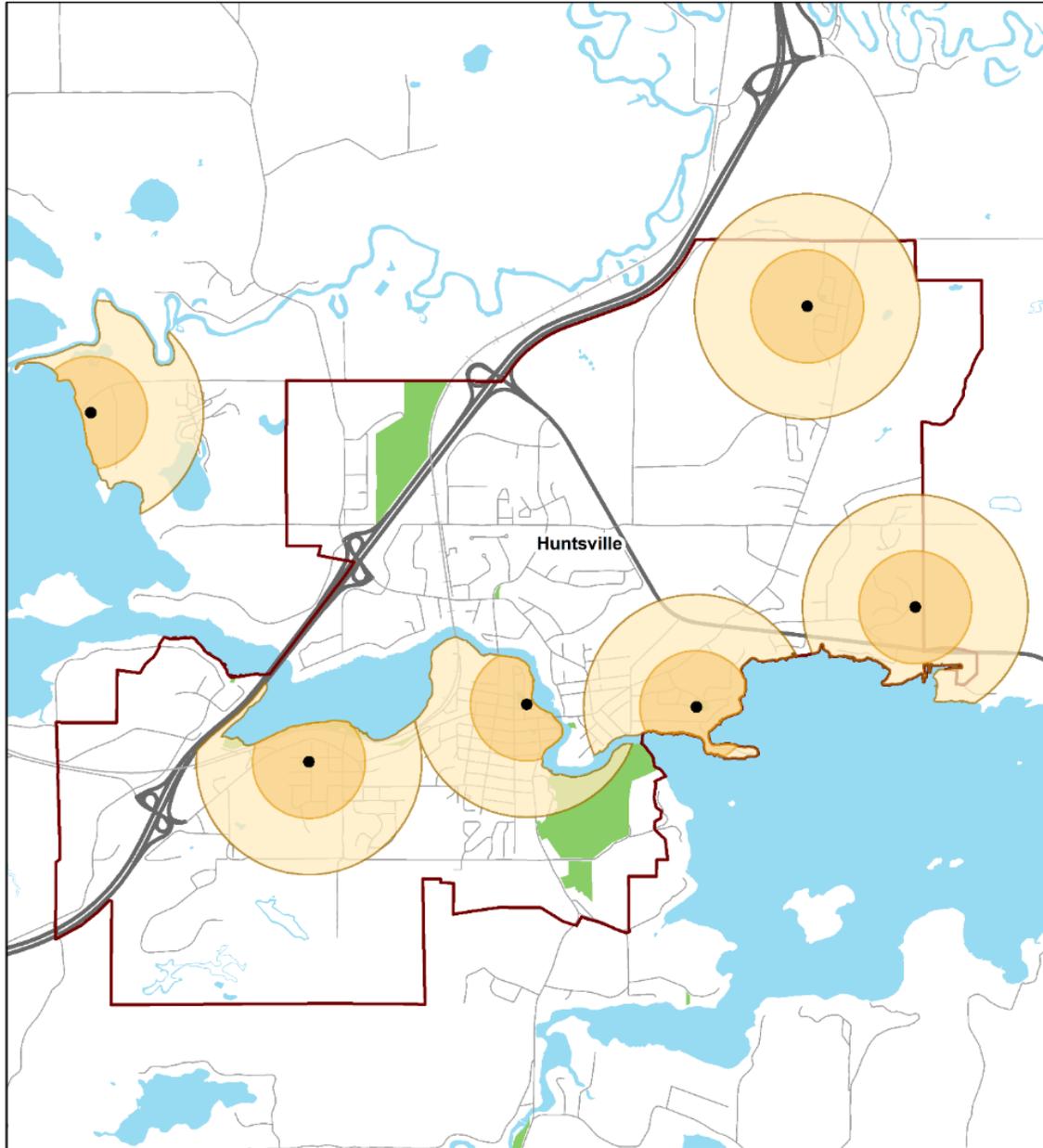
- |                    |                                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Glenwood Park   | 5. Port Sydney Community Centre Park |
| 2. Hutcheson Beach | 6. River Mill Park                   |
| 3. Irene St Park   | 7. Selkirk Drive Park                |
| 4. Meadow Park     | 8. Utterson Community Park           |

Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021



Figure 27: Town of Huntsville, Huntsville Urban Area Playground Distribution

# Community Services Master Plan Municipal Playground Locations



### Legend

- Playgrounds
- 400m Service Area
- 800m Service Area
- Town Parks



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 Km  
Source: Town of Huntsville, 2021



Further, the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief (2021) proposes the installation of playgrounds along several waterfront sites:

- Avery Beach Park (adventure playground) – this would improve distribution and enhance activity within this park
- Camp Kitchen Park (small adventure play structure) – this would enhance activity within this park
- Mountview Treatment Plan – this would be a good complement to this future park
- Orchard Park (adventure playground) – this would enhance activity within this park

Similar to playgrounds, many municipalities are beginning to install **outdoor fitness equipment** within parks. These pieces of equipment provide low-impact, bodyweight activities that focus on mobility, flexibility and strength training – great exercise options for older adults and seniors. As the population ages, more adults are seeking opportunities to get outside and be physically active.

The Town does not currently have any such features within its parks system; however, requests were received from the public for their consideration. One-fifth (22%) of survey respondents support the provision of outdoor fitness equipment, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park features. This may be a consideration through future park development or along a trail within a high-use area, such as the Infra Pipe Solutions property or Mountview Water Treatment Site.

#### Recommendations

42. Provide **playgrounds in new subdivisions** (e.g., Eagle Ridge, Huntsville Highlands, etc.) based on a measure of **one playground within 400-metres of residential areas**. The service area should account for major pedestrian barriers such as highways, railways, and watercourses.
43. Consider adding a **playground to McCulley Robertson Recreation Park** to complement the sports fields and other park amenities.
44. Through implementation of the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief, install **playgrounds at strategic sites along the urban waterfront**, including Avery Beach Park, Camp Kitchen Park, Mountview Water Treatment Site (future park), and Orchard Park.
45. Consider installing **outdoor fitness equipment** through future major park development, possibly at the Infra Pipe Solutions property (Uponsor) or Mountview Water Treatment Site.

## 9.8 Soccer and Multi-use Fields

The Town currently maintains six (6) soccer fields – one artificial turf field at Conroy Park and two full-size fields and three intermediate fields at the McCulley Robertson Recreation Park (equating to 7 unlit equivalents due to the expanded capacity afforded by the turf field). Lions Lookout also has a large open space that has been used periodically for soccer in the past, but is not in regular use.

Although soccer is one of the most popular sports in Ontario due to it having a broad appeal and minimal barriers to participation, it is among activities with lower participation within the Town with only 17% of responding households indicating they had participated in since 2019 – ranking it 20<sup>th</sup> out of 27 activities.

Soccer and multi-use fields are in the middle of what respondents believe the Town should prioritize for additional spending (supported by 29% of responses) as it was the 12<sup>th</sup> highest outdoor facility type out of the 21 listed outdoor facilities. Additionally, other notable field activities such as lacrosse ranked very low in terms of participation with 4 survey respondents indicating they had played since 2019. A common theme that emerged through additional consultation was the desire for a new multi-use facility that could be used by a variety of sport groups such as soccer and other field users. An attached field house to the multi-use facility was also requested for soccer and lacrosse, amongst other sports.

The McCulley Robertson fields are predominantly used by local soccer groups. In 2019, the three intermediate field were used for 310 hours each, while the two full-size fields were used for approximately 250 and 115 hours each. Usage levels around 300 hours annually are indicative of well used and well maintained fields. There is some capacity for additional use on the full-size fields at this park.

The Conroy Park turf field is unlit and encircled by an 8-lane rubberized track. Huntsville High School has access to the site from 8 am to 6 pm on school days. This field is primarily used for soccer but is also lined for lacrosse. In 2019, the field was in use from May 1 to September 30 and accounted for 185 hours of paid rentals – an average of 9 hours per week (plus school use) – which is low by most standards of use. The lack of lighting may contribute to its low usage rate as late evening use is not possible, particularly in shoulder seasons.

The Conroy Park field is an under-utilized asset that could sustain substantially more use – there is no need for field rest periods and usage could extend further into the spring and fall, weather permitting. Adding lights – as previously proposed by the Huntsville Soccer Club – would expand capacity without having to build additional fields, but should not be a priority until demand is demonstrated. User groups have also requested the installation of a scoreboard and bleachers.

As noted, there is capacity for greater use of current fields. Current population forecasts indicate that Huntsville is growing, but that its child and youth population will remain stable or decline slightly. With youth being the primary user of sports fields, there is no immediate requirement for additional fields. The Town is encouraged to collect registration data to assist in tracking field demand and apply market-driven targets to assess future needs. Typical soccer field provision rates range from one field (unlit equivalents) per 80 to 100 regular participants.

No additional soccer fields are recommended.

## **9.9 Tracks**

The Town provides an 8-lane rubberized track at Conroy Park that is used by local schools, track clubs, events and casual users. Lions Lookout Field is also encircled by a gravel track; the Town has maintained a winter trail in this area since 2020. In addition, an indoor track is available at no cost around the Don Lough Arena.

In relation to the Conroy Park track, several stakeholders indicated that the track requires additional improvements to fully unlock its potential as a multi-use track and field destination. Specific requests include the addition of a high jump apron, steeple chase water hazards, pole vault launch pad, long jump

and triple jump features, bleachers, and more storage. There are many stakeholders involved in the operation and use of this site – including the High School, Town of Huntsville, track community and other user groups – and all need to work together toward a capital improvement strategy.

#### Recommendations

46. Work with key stakeholders to establish a **capital improvement strategy for Conroy Park**, including the identification of high priority projects and a cost-sharing agreement.

## 9.10 Ball Diamonds

The Town provides five (5) ball diamonds, including four lit ball diamonds (one hardball and three softball) at the McCulley Robertson Recreation Park and one casual use unlit diamond at the Utterson Community Park. To account for extended periods of play offered by lit diamonds, this inventory is equivalent to nine (9) unlit diamonds.

Baseball (in its various forms) has experienced increased popularity over the past several years as a result of a larger focus on programming for children and youth early on in addition to the popularity and success of the Toronto Blue Jays. The sport is often played by youth and adults in near equal amounts.

Locally, only 12% of survey respondents have household members that have participated in ball since 2019, ranking it 24<sup>th</sup> of 27 listed activities. Subsequently, ball diamonds ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park options with 12% of responding households indicating this should be a priority for the Town. This may partially be a reflection of recent investment in the McCulley Robertson diamonds, which saw lights replaced at three diamonds along with upgraded infields and fencing.

The Muskoka Hornets are the largest user of the McCulley Robertson diamonds; their youth house league and rep program has approximately 270 players (local and regional) and was on the rise prior to the pandemic. The Hornets are seeking additional improvements to the park, including new lighting on Diamond F (hardball) and completion of the batting cage.

Each diamond at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park was rented for approximately 250 to 400 hours in 2019 (pre-pandemic; note: diamonds were closed in September for construction). Unlike soccer, there is no requirement for fields to rest, thus ball diamonds can be used more frequently (but are still affected by inclement weather). Usage of up to 500 hours per diamond can be achieved in communities with strong youth and adult leagues and tournaments. These diamonds are well used, but there is capacity to accommodate future demand, particularly with no anticipated growth in the number of Huntsville children and youth. Typical ball diamond provision rates range from one diamond (unlit equivalents) per 80 to 100 regular participants.

#### Recommendations

47. Work with user groups to address priority diamond improvements at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park, including **replacement lighting on Diamond F**.

## 9.11 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

Huntsville maintains a total of seven (7) tennis courts and four (4) pickleball courts (shared with the tennis courts) with four being in urban Huntsville (Conroy Park and Meadow Park) and three in Port Sydney/Utterson Area (Crescent Park and Utterson Community Park). The shared courts have dedicated times for each sport and there is anecdotal evidence that courts are especially well used during the pickleball times.

### Tennis Courts

All of the Town's tennis courts are available for public use; the Conroy Park courts are used exclusively by tennis and pickleball clubs during specified times. None of the courts have lights for evening play.

The Master Plan survey found that 18% of households have played tennis and 19% felt that improvements to courts should be a high priority. These percentages are relatively low compared to many other pursuits, suggesting that needs are largely being met. Further, the current distribution of tennis courts is reasonable, with courts in each primary community (North Huntsville, South Huntsville, Port Sydney, and Utterson).

The Huntsville Racqueteaders Tennis Club are seeking additional court time (ideally on courts with lights and without pickleball lines), as well as access to an indoor venue for year-round play. The development of new pickleball courts elsewhere (discussed below) should allow for greater access and an improved experience for tennis at Conroy Park. To avoid future conflicts, the removal of pickleball lines from the tennis courts at Conroy Park should be evaluated when the new courts are available at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park. Tennis court lights are not a municipal level of service, but could be considered through a cost-sharing agreement.

With seven (7) tennis courts at present, the Town's provision rate is one per 3,915 residents (permanent and seasonal). The redevelopment of Clarke Crescent Park may reduce this by one court, changing the rate to 1:4,565. This is still below the average level of provision in Ontario, which was one outdoor tennis court per 5,520 residents in 2016<sup>6</sup>. The supply of 6 to 7 tennis courts is forecasted to meet needs for the next ten years.

### Pickleball Courts

Demand for pickleball has been rising for several years and community interest increased further during the pandemic as people sought safe outdoor activities. The aging of the population has contributed to growing demand for pickleball, a sport that supports active aging, which is a key objective of this Master Plan.

In 2021, Town Council made several moves to address this need, including:

- authorizing the construction of four (4) dedicated pickleball courts at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park in 2021/22;

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<sup>6</sup> Statistic Canada. [Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5173). 2016.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5173>

- directing staff to include an item in the 2022 budget to consider the renovation and rebuild of hard surface courts in Clarke Crescent Park in Port Sydney, possibly with one tennis court, two dedicated pickleball courts and an open area with basketball nets; and
- negotiating with the developer of the Huntsville Haven subdivision (near Muskoka Road 3) to include multi-use courts for tennis, pickleball, and basketball (anticipated for 2023).

Because pickleball is still a relatively new sport, there are no widely accepted per capita provision targets. Municipal provision strategies vary widely and make use of a mix of courts shared with tennis and dedicated courts. Most organized users are seeking multi-court complexes (dedicated use) that can host leagues and tournaments.

The Master Plan survey found that 12% of households have played pickleball and 17% felt that improvements to courts should be a high priority. Relative to other activities and facilities that have broader appeal, these figures are at the lower end of the spectrum; however, the fact that participation is strongest amongst older adults may also play a role in these figures. Additional consultation in support of this Master Plan generated requests for improved pickleball opportunities.

Recent municipal initiatives will substantially increase the opportunity for outdoor pickleball and likely address any latent demand for courts in Huntsville. The 4-court complex at McCulley Robertson will facilitate organized league play, while other existing and planned neighbourhood sites will improve distribution and accommodate more casual use. The Town should monitor use of these sites and work with local clubs to ensure efficient court management (similar to the approach with the Racqueteaders).

#### Recommendations

48. Evaluate the potential of **removing the pickleball lines from the tennis courts at Conroy Park** when the new courts are available at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park.
49. Implement planned improvements to **outdoor tennis, pickleball and multi-use courts** at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park, Clarke Crescent Park, and Huntsville Haven.

## 9.12 Basketball Courts

The Town currently provides outdoor basketball courts at two sites: Port Sydney Community Centre Park (1 full court); and Utterson Community Park (1 half court). The courts are predominantly used for basketball; however, they may be used for other activities such as ball hockey.

There are presently no municipal outdoor basketball courts in the urban area of Huntsville; schools may provide hoops for public use outside of school hours. A future park in the Huntsville Haven subdivision is expected to include multi-use courts with basketball hoops, while the Clarke Crescent Park (Port Sydney) redevelopment may also include basketball nets.

The Master Plan survey found that 14% of households have participated in basketball since 2019; this is lower than the percentage typically seen in other municipalities and may be reflective of the town's older population. One-fifth (19%) of survey respondents felt outdoor basketball courts should be a priority for

future investment. A small number of requests were received for outdoor courts within parks, while stakeholders expressed an interest in an indoor multi-use facility with gymnasiums capable of accommodating basketball and other sports.

Basketball courts are most popular among youth as they provide unstructured, unscheduled, affordable outdoor recreation. Anecdotally, interest in basketball has been growing for several years and the success of the Toronto Raptors has helped in this regard. Many municipalities apply a target of one full court per 750 youth (aged 10-19 years). With a current supply of 1.5 outdoor courts and approximately 2,100 youth (2016 Census), local demand is close to 3 courts, suggesting that additional facilities are warranted.

To improve spatial distribution of these facilities, the Town may consider development of additional hard-surface multi-use courts in future park development (e.g., Huntsville Haven, etc.). Development should consider co-location with complementary facilities and uses (e.g., sports parks, playgrounds, etc.), walkability (i.e., easily accessed by children and youth), and proximity to neighbouring land uses (i.e., courts can be loud when directly beside neighbouring homes). Multi-use designs facilitate spontaneous opportunities for active play and appeal to a larger user base.

#### Recommendations

50. Consider development of **additional outdoor basketball courts** in future park development within Huntsville's urban area (e.g., Huntsville Haven, etc.), with consideration to multi-use designs.

### 9.13 Skateboard/BMX Parks

Through funding from the Rotary Club, Huntsville provides a large concrete skateboard park at the McCulley Robertson Recreation Park. The park is professionally designed and well-suited for skateboarding and trick bike riding, although other wheeled action sports such as scootering and inline skating also make use of the park.

Skateboarding and other action sports are mainstream pursuits (primarily for youth, but increasingly for adults). Most municipalities are seeking safe and suitable locations to accommodate these sports. Investing in unstructured activities responds to national trends of declining participation in organized sports. For many youth, action sports are an outlet for self-expression and an opportunity to find a sense of belonging that they cannot get elsewhere. By their very nature, action sports build independence and resilience.

The community survey found that 8% of households participated in skateboarding since 2019, with only 10% indicating that skate parks are a priority for future investment (ranking last on the list of potential park features). This indicates that the existing skateboard park is meeting needs, although its location at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park means that most users must drive to the facility to use it. The Rotary Skateboard Park provides a town-wide level of service and no additional facilities are required.

Off-road bike riding is a diverse and creative sport with highly specialized sub-categories (e.g., dirt, park/vert, street, racing, etc.) differentiated by the terrain/surface, types of equipment and technical skills required. To respond to growth of the sport, courses are increasingly being provided by municipalities, often

in partnership with non-profit clubs. The provision of purpose-built BMX facilities is also one strategy to help deter the destruction and damage to environmentally sensitive areas.

BMX pump tracks are generally dirt courses consisting of a variety of jumps or ramps, banked turns and related features, making use of natural terrain and/or various man-made obstacles. The design of each park depends largely on how it is intended to be used – they can be tracks largely intended for casual use (with a wide variety of sizes, designs and features) or courses sanctioned by the governing sport body (with more technical specifications).

Slightly greater interest (15%) was expressed for BMX bike parks in Huntsville through the community survey. The Town is encouraged to further investigate interest in and locations for a BMX pump track and/or mountain biking trails, which ideally would be championed by local community groups that can assist with fundraising, site evaluation, construction and operations.

#### Recommendations

51. To better serve local youth and outdoor enthusiasts, evaluate the potential need and suitable locations for **BMX pump track** in partnership with local groups that can assist with fundraising, site evaluation, construction and operations.

### 9.14 Outdoor Skating

The Town does not currently operate any outdoor skating rinks. Cann Lake (Muskoka Heritage Place) was once a popular place for winter skating and the Stephenson District Lions Club has operated a seasonal outdoor rink in the Port Sydney Beach parking lot in the past. In recent years, there has been substantial local interest in the past in an outdoor skating rink or space being implemented within the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased interest in outdoor skating, an activity that many adults recall fondly in their youth (often on ponds and lakes). Contemporary risk management practices require any recognized outdoor skating venue to be regularly inspected and, with the changing climate, it is becoming more difficult to maintain natural ice rinks (especially on water bodies). In response, many municipalities are moving toward land-based natural and/or artificial rinks.

Outdoor ice skating was one of the more popular activities identified by the community survey as 45% of responding households indicated that they had participated in this activity since 2019. Outdoor ice rinks also ranked as relatively high priorities for improvement, with 40% of households identifying them as a priority for increased public spending (ranking 9<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park options). Several residents and user groups also independently expressed interest in outdoor rinks, including for a covered outdoor facility that could accommodate other activities in the warmer months.

The Town has recognized this and has initiated an outdoor rink project at Lions Lookout Field in 2021/22. This is a one-year pilot project that will be evaluated following the season. If made permanent, there will be a need for capital improvements (e.g., water service, year-round washroom, pavilion/support building, etc.) and a management model supported by staff resources. Council authorized staff to enter into a

Memorandum of Understanding with an established community group should one come forward to maintain Cann Lake as an outdoor rink.

In 2016, the average level of provision in Ontario was one outdoor ice rink court per 19,050 residents<sup>7</sup>. If Huntsville were to adopt this standard, one to two outdoor rinks would be warranted.

While the community may be supportive of developing a “covered” and/or “refrigerated” outdoor ice rink that offers a safe and reliable skating surface for an extended period in the winter, these facilities have higher capital and operating costs, but can also be utilized as sport courts or splash pads in the summer (e.g., Brockville, Kingston, Hamilton, etc.). As a result, they are not suitable for broad provision, but could be considered at an appropriate location that has supporting infrastructure (servicing, parking, washroom, etc.). Should there be demand, the viability of establishing an artificial rink or trail should be evaluated through a business plan.

#### Recommendations

52. Evaluate the viability of creating a **permanent outdoor ice rink (natural ice) at Lions Lookout Field** following the 2021/22 season. Identify costs for permanent infrastructure (e.g., water service, year-round washroom, pavilion/support building, etc.) and an appropriate management model (e.g., staff, volunteers, etc.).
53. Ensure that **community-operated ice rinks** on municipal property are guided by memorandums of understanding with clear responsibilities of all parties.

### 9.15 Off-Leash Dog Areas

The Town operates an off-leash dog area (“Freedom Dog Park”) located at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park. The park is fully fenced with a separate small dog area and a pond for swimming.

With local by-laws regulating the use of leashes, dedicated off-leash areas provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize dogs in a controlled area. Leash-free parks should not be viewed as being facilities strictly for pets, but also a venue for exercise and social interaction for residents with a common interest.

The dog park is well used by locals and their pets; 49% of survey respondents indicated dog walking (on and/or off-leash) as a common activity. One-fifth (21%) of survey respondents identified off-leash dog areas as a priority for further investment, ranking 14<sup>th</sup> out of 21 park options.

The Freedom Dog Park provides a town-wide level of service and no additional facilities are required.

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<sup>7</sup> Statistic Canada. Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey. 2016.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/surveys/5173>

## 9.16 Waterfront Areas, Beaches and Boating

Huntsville is defined by its waterfronts, lakes, rivers and natural areas. The Town plays a significant role in maintaining public access to these resources through the provision of dozens of Town-owned water access locations (some undocumented) including parks, beaches, boat launches and more. Notable locations include the Town Dock (park, dock), Port Sydney Beach (park, dock, boat launch), Hutcheson Beach (park, boat launch), Avery Beach (park, dock, boat launch), Goodwin Park (park, dock, boat launch), Longs Lake (park, dock), Brunel Locks (small boat launch), and several other beach areas. Additionally, there are a number of other informal locations that provide access to waterfront.

The Master Plan community survey indicates that 68% of households paddle (canoeing, rowing, kayaking or paddleboarding), 58% visit beaches, 56% swim recreationally (indoors and/or outdoors), and 44% use powerboats or sailboats. The survey found strong support for continued investment in Huntsville's waterfront areas and water-based recreation:

- 68% indicated the Town should prioritize public access to the waterfront;
- 65% want funding directed to waterfront parks;
- 63% support more spending on beaches; and
- 29% identified boat launches as a priority.

Recognizing the importance of Huntsville's waterfront areas to the Town's environmental, social, and economic sustainability, in 2020 the Town purchased the two significant properties on the south side of Hunters Bay and now has control of the waterfront public land from the Centre Street bridge all the way through to Highway 11. In addition, the planned decommissioning of the Mountview Wastewater Treatment Plant will present opportunities for the development of the waterfront area around this property.

Detailed planning has been completed to guide improvements along the Town's waterfront areas from Hunters Bay to Fairy Lake in 1991 (Waterfront Planning Strategy) and more recently in 2021 (Waterfront Strategy Design Brief). The Design Brief noted that there is increasing demand for public space and access to and along the water's edge. Several recommendations were made relating to potential future enhancements; below is a sample of those recommendations pertaining to recreational activity along the waterfront:

- Avery Beach Park – consider adding a water-based feature (inflatables), demarcating a swimming area with buoys, and adding seasonal washrooms
- River Mill Park – shifting swimming away from the docks and adding permanent washrooms
- Camp Kitchen Park – consider demarcating an area for lap swimming
- In terms of boating, the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief does not support additional boat launches in the Hunter's Bay/Downtown area, but does recommend a town-wide assessment of boat launches and slips to consider local needs within a broader context.

Furthermore, in 2021, the Town began creating a strategy for its waterfront access points, including documenting their features and establishing a classification system to enable this review. In turn, the Town updated its licence of occupation policy to address issues such as unapproved docks on these lands in order to mitigate liability.

In terms of swimming, all water access points are unsupervised and most do not have buoy lines or ring buoys (with the exception of the Port Sydney Beach which has buoy lines and is regularly used by the Town to provide swimming instruction); none of the Town's beaches are guarded. Mobi-mats are available at primary beaches to enhance accessibility to the water for persons with disabilities. Plans have recently been brought forward to provide lifesaving equipment at primary waterfront locations (Port Sydney and Hutcheson Beach); this requires regular staff inspections and represents a new level of service for the Town. Consideration has also been given to providing lifeguarding services at selected locations, which would also be a new level of service that requires additional funding and staff. As noted earlier in this Master Plan, it is recommended that the Town's aquatic operations, including its beaches and water access points, be audited to support any future service level changes.

The Port Sydney Beach Area is a popular summertime destination and attracts a high volume of use. Safety is the most important consideration at sites such as this, with the potential for conflicts between bathers, boats, and vehicles in the parking lot. A comprehensive review of this site is required to consider elements of safety, infrastructure, user comfort, environmental management, and the potential for an expanded beach. The establishment of permanent seasonal washrooms should also be considered at Hutcheson Beach.

#### Recommendations

54. Coordinate the implementation of this Community Services Master Plan with the **Waterfront Strategy Design Brief** as it relates to recreational activities along the shoreline in the Huntsville urban area.
55. Undertake a comprehensive review of the **Port Sydney Beach and Boat Launch** to consider improvements to safety, infrastructure, user comfort, environmental management, and the potential for an expanded beach.
56. Examine options for establishing a permanent seasonal washroom at **Hutcheson Beach**.

### 9.17 Other Facilities not Listed

Addressed above are the primary facility types commonly provided in the Town of Huntsville. However, there may be other recreational facilities that are desired by the community which are not considered to be core services of the Town (indoor fieldhouse, disc golf course, etc.). Some may be addressed by other sectors, such as curling and fitness clubs, while others might support emerging leisure interests.

It is common for municipalities to receive requests for new and/or non-traditional parks and recreation facilities. Often these requests deal with emerging activities or facilities that are not part of the Town's core service mandate. The Town should be prepared to consider these requests on a case-by-case basis and may consider low-risk participation in unsolicited proposals if supported by additional research, appropriate sources of funding and the goals of this Master Plan. The Master Plan should be used as a resource in determining if a proposal serves a clearly identified community need.

The Town's response to unsolicited proposals will depend on its capacity to participate in such projects, the focus on community-wide benefits (versus individual benefits) and the specific aspects of the proposal. If the Town were approached by a community partner for the development of a facility, the organization should provide the following (at a minimum) to assist the Town in its evaluation of the proposal:

- justification of needs and business plan;
- statement of the organization's capacity;
- a demonstration of project sustainability;
- evidence of community benefits; and
- risk analysis.

#### Recommendations

57. Use this Master Plan as a resource when evaluating **unsolicited requests for facilities** that are not part of the Town's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to Huntsville and its residents, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).



## 10. Goal Five: Recreation Capacity

### Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

Administering the Community Services Division is a complex operation – there are specific policies, training, legislative and quality assurance requirements for each of four disciplines (Recreation, Culture, Heritage, Facilities), as well as the specific services that fall within each discipline such as aquatics, camps, theatre, visual arts, etc. Building capacity in Community Services focuses on continued improvement around internal supports, such as policy development, training, volunteerism, developing partnerships and other administrative tasks that help the Division provide exemplary recreation, parks and cultural services to the public.

#### 10.1 Service Delivery Model

The Town of Huntsville Community Services Division has a clear aim to engage as many residents and visitors in meaningful leisure pursuits as possible. Increasing participation year over year is the key to successful engagement with the community and providing the right infrastructure and program and event mix.

Communities respond well when there is a blend of safe and enjoyable opportunities including active, creative, general interest and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics). Providing a full range of programs allows residents and visitors to expand their knowledge, gain skill mastery and have a choice. Engagement in these pursuits is the way to ensure that individuals, families, and the community is achieving a positive state of health and wellness.

The evidence is strong – an active and engaged community is healthier overall, is cohesive and demonstrates community pride. Active individuals and families have better life outcomes. All efforts of Council, the community and staff must be directed at providing and enabling quality recreation, parks and cultural pursuits.

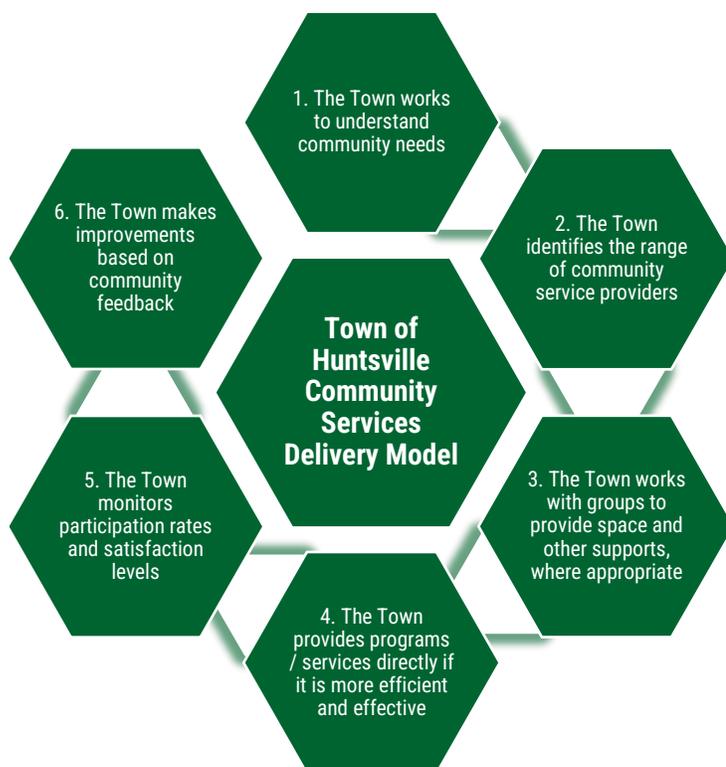
The Community Services Division utilizes a few methodologies in providing and enabling programs and services. The goal is to provide and assist in a range of choices for all ages and abilities and to include all residents and visitors regardless of their background. The four main methods of providing and enabling services include: (1) direct provision by the municipality; (2) community development practices in supporting community-based groups; (3) promoting other providers both not-for-profit and for-profit services; (4) and contracting third party providers. This takes a holistic approach and the key driver is to provide services efficiently and effectively. Consideration is given to ensure all age groups are included, to engage and hear the citizens voices and include underrepresented residents.

Staff tend to provide opportunities directly in aquatics; programs; summer, March, holiday breaks and PA Day camps and generally where there are not other local providers.

A community development approach is taken to support local community groups who provide sport, recreation, and cultural experiences by providing spaces and often reduced rates for rental of facilities.

The following illustration depicts the process that staff follow in providing/enabling programs and services. Staff first identify needs and the most likely provider. If the program or service is already provided locally, discussions would centre on what supports the Town could provide. A partnership is formed whereby the Town may provide space or promotion and other support. If there is not a community-based provider, the Town will look to provide the program or service directly. In all cases, staff will promote all opportunities, monitor participation, the quality of the service and address any improvements that are needed.

**Figure 28: Town of Huntsville Community Services Division – Service Delivery Model**



Whether programs and services are provided directly or through community agencies and groups; a set of common guiding principles must be embraced by all providers to ensure the best quality experiences are top of mind. These are identified in Section 5.3.

The provision of Community Services also relies on other Town of Huntsville departments. Understanding of the mandate and consistent approaches to customer response within each department is critical to a high level of public and user satisfaction.

#### Recommendations

58. Confirm that the **mandate** of the Community Service Division is to ensure a wide range of services for all age groups, either directly or indirectly. It is inherent to the delivery model to look first to the community to provide related programs and services, with the Town providing services where there is a gap or where the cost or complexity of the service requires municipal staff expertise.

59. Implement seamless **inter-departmental Customer Service standards and processes** to ensure timely and appropriate service to residents, organization, and visitors.

## 10.2 Legislative Compliance

Reviewing adherence to legislative and industry standards ensures that operations are compliant and embracing the highest standards. Test compliance on an annual basis at a minimum. Each discipline has indicated that they feel that they are compliant for the most part but have not completed an audit to ensure that they are implementing changes to legislation. Legislative compliance is required and must be demonstrated, in operations and the delivery of service.

### Recommendations

60. Complete an **audit of current legislation** affecting the delivery of Community Services and ensure that Huntsville is complaint with these requirements.

## 10.3 Policies

The Division continues to develop new policies that are relevant to their current operations. A Special Events Policy and a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy (discussed in previous sections) are recommended. This section recommends a Sponsorship Policy to look to alternate revenues to fund community services. A periodic review of the Facility Allocation Policy is also required to ensure that facilities and spaces are allocated equitably and according to needs versus past history (which may or may not be defensible). Each policy that is developed should engage the public and relevant stakeholders to understand their priorities and how certain policy statements may impact their ability to operate groups or access services. Staff should develop a system for automatically reviewing policies on a consistent basis.

### Recommendations

61. Develop a **Partnership and Sponsorship Policy** to seek out alternate revenue sources to offset the cost to provide Community Services.
62. Periodically review the **Facility Allocation Policy** to ensure equity in the allocation of space and the ability to accommodate emerging sports and uses.

## 10.4 Volunteerism

Huntsville lists all municipal volunteer opportunities on its website, with interested volunteers directed to the respective department for training and orientation. The Town's greatest reliance on volunteers relate to the theatre (100+ volunteers that assist with hospitality, back stage, bar service, merchandise, etc.) and aquatics (residents training to become instructors must volunteer to apply the theories learned in a practical setting). Recreation programming also sees volunteers to implement programming, specifically 55+ activities. The Town recognizes volunteers on an annual basis.

Many community stakeholder groups through the Master Plan consultation program indicated that they were having issues with the recruitment and retention of volunteers. It would be prudent to meet with community groups to discuss volunteer promotion, a common and central location to list opportunities, and a streamlined approach to matching volunteers with opportunities. It would be prudent to investigate online volunteer systems that serve to recruit and train volunteers in standard practices. This may save staff many hours of repeated training time. Volunteer Canada’s Code for Volunteer Involvement and other resources can also assist in strengthening volunteerism in Huntsville.

#### Recommendations

63. Work with community stakeholder groups to understand their challenges in obtaining and retaining volunteers. Develop a **Volunteer Plan** as a collective and utilize the resources and standards as provided by Volunteer Canada.
64. Adopt a standard online program to recruit, train, supervise, retain, and recognize **volunteers** supporting Community Services.

## 10.5 Costing of Services in Setting Fair Minded Fees

Huntsville partially offsets the financial costs of providing recreation, parks and cultural services through several revenue streams, most notably user fees, rental fees, taxation and – to a lesser extent – sponsorships, grants, and partnerships. The Division also accepts that there are non-financial and intangible benefits that offset fiscal expenditures by way of increased physical and social health among residents, contributions to community vibrancy and cohesion etc. Therefore, the degree to which quantifiable costs are “recovered” is dictated by Town’s philosophy surrounding the “value” of the service that it provides to residents and the community. Some community groups indicated that they would like to understand how fees are set and how much they are subsidized, with some expressing that fees were too high.

The first step in setting fair minded fees and cost recovery levels is understanding the cost to provide the service. This is a first step and an arduous task and will involve guidance and assistance from the Finance Division (to set corporate guidelines).

Once costs are known to produce an hour of ice for example, the current cost recovery levels can be ascertained by understanding the percentage of the costs that are recovered through the current fee structure. A comparison to the market rate is usually undertaken to determine if fees can be modified. Setting of fees can be developed by determining which age groups or types of programs should receive greater subsidies.

#### Recommendations

65. Apply a consistent methodology to better understand the costs to provide the various services and determine current **cost recovery levels**. Develop a fair-minded and transparent **Pricing Policy** to ensure that fees are equitable and respect the value that they provide to the community.

## 10.6 Marketing and Communications

During the development of the Master Plan, comments from the community centred on strengthening marketing, communications, and social media efforts to ensure that all residents and visitors are aware of community service opportunities. Community Services develops an annual marketing plan that looks at the promotion of each service, program and camp to determine the best marketing vehicle – social media, hard print, newspaper exposure, etc. Marketing and promotion become even more critical as the Division relies on participation and funds to meet their revenue targets. The Master Plan calls for even greater promotion of water safety, youth engagement, and other opportunities. The Division’s services are recovering from COVID-19 impacts and will continue to change with a growing population. Ongoing and consistent communications and marketing efforts are critical to let residents know of changes in real time and to encourage participation in recreation, parks, and culture experiences and programs.

Currently, communications and marketing are both corporate and centralized functions in Huntsville, with tourism-related marketing currently outsourced to the Chamber of Commerce. Community Services staff work collectively within the division to articulate needs, prepare content, and determine the specific timing of announcements, promotions and communications. At the time of the development of the Master Plan, central staff resources are extremely limited due to other corporate priorities and staff shortages. Utilizing social media is becoming a constant expectation in that people want to know what is happening in real time. Dedicated staff time to promote Community Services and their plethora of campaigns, events, activities, and facility and amenity use is an important component to successful service delivery. It is suggested that the Division develop an annual outline of their needs and that resources to deliver on these ongoing requirements – either internally within the corporation or through third-party mechanisms – are identified.

Revenue targets set by Council are tied directly to the effective and quality marketing and promotional efforts of the Corporation. Without the strong support of these efforts and associated resources, it becomes increasingly challenging for the Community Services Division to generate sales and registrations to meet revenue targets.

### Recommendations

66. Continue to identify the annual **marketing and communication resources** needed for Community Services including promotional messaging, identifying the audience, frequency of communications and appropriate communication mechanisms. Quantify the human resources and funding needed to implement effective marketing strategies for the Community Services Division for Council consideration. Establish protocols for communicating consistently across all channels.
67. Re-imagine the **Leisure Guide** using alternative means of marketing and promotion (e.g., online newsletters with links, brochures, push marketing, etc.) to identify aligned and available services and programs. This approach will lessen our environmental impact, reduce costs, and allow for more targeted communication to customers in a timely manner. Supports must still be provided for those who require information through multiple channels.

## 10.7 Community Partnerships and Sponsorships

The Community Services Division works with partners to provide the highest level of service to the public while considering the sharing of resources and opportunities to promote business and partnership advantages. Many public swims and skates as well as special events have received sponsorship funds in the past. The starting point for successful partnerships and sponsorships is to develop a policy that articulates the types of services that will seek both partners and sponsors and define a transparent method of procuring these relationships.

The goal is to maximize the community's assets and increase services at a shared cost or effort. There is a clear commitment to working with community partners and there are numerous arrangements in place. Each existing partnership arrangement has been considered on its own merit.

Each partnership must be considered with the following guiding principles in mind:

- The outcome of the partnership is aligned with the municipal values, mandate, and priorities.
- There is an articulated need for the proposed service in the community.
- The financial and liability risks to the municipality are shared or reduced.
- The partner is equipped and qualified to co-deliver the service through identified efficiencies and the ability to reach an identified segment of the population.
- The quality of the program or service provided through the partnership meets municipal quality assurance and risk management requirements and complies with legislation.
- Unsolicited for-profit partnership proposals are dealt with transparently and through a competitive process as identified in the Town of Huntsville's procurement process.
- Accountabilities and responsibilities can be clearly defined and complied with.
- Annual reporting requirements capture participation numbers, expenditure reduction or revenue enhancement, and are clearly aligned with the division's objectives.

In all partnership arrangements, specifications and requirements must ensure that the partner respects and aligns with the Division's key goals and objectives. The value in seeking out and formalizing partnerships provides a net benefit to both organizations and essentially reduce costs to the municipality.

The Town has a "Small Community Grant Policy" that provides selected applicants with a monetary grant of \$100 to \$1000 to support direct programs/events, services, community projects, or the waiving of fees. This policy helps to strengthen community capacity and maintain affordability for all. It is recommended that the funding levels of this program be expanded to allow for larger grants (e.g., up to \$5,000) per year and that groups may be eligible to submit on an annual basis (rather than once every three-years). This change will allow for community organizations to undertake more significant multi-year projects that are aligned with the priorities of the Town.

### Recommendations

68. Develop a **standardized partnership and/or sponsorship agreement** to apply to various partnership types and to standardize municipal and partner expectations.

69. Review the **Small Community Grant Program** and consider extending funding levels to allow community organizations to undertake more significant multi-year projects.

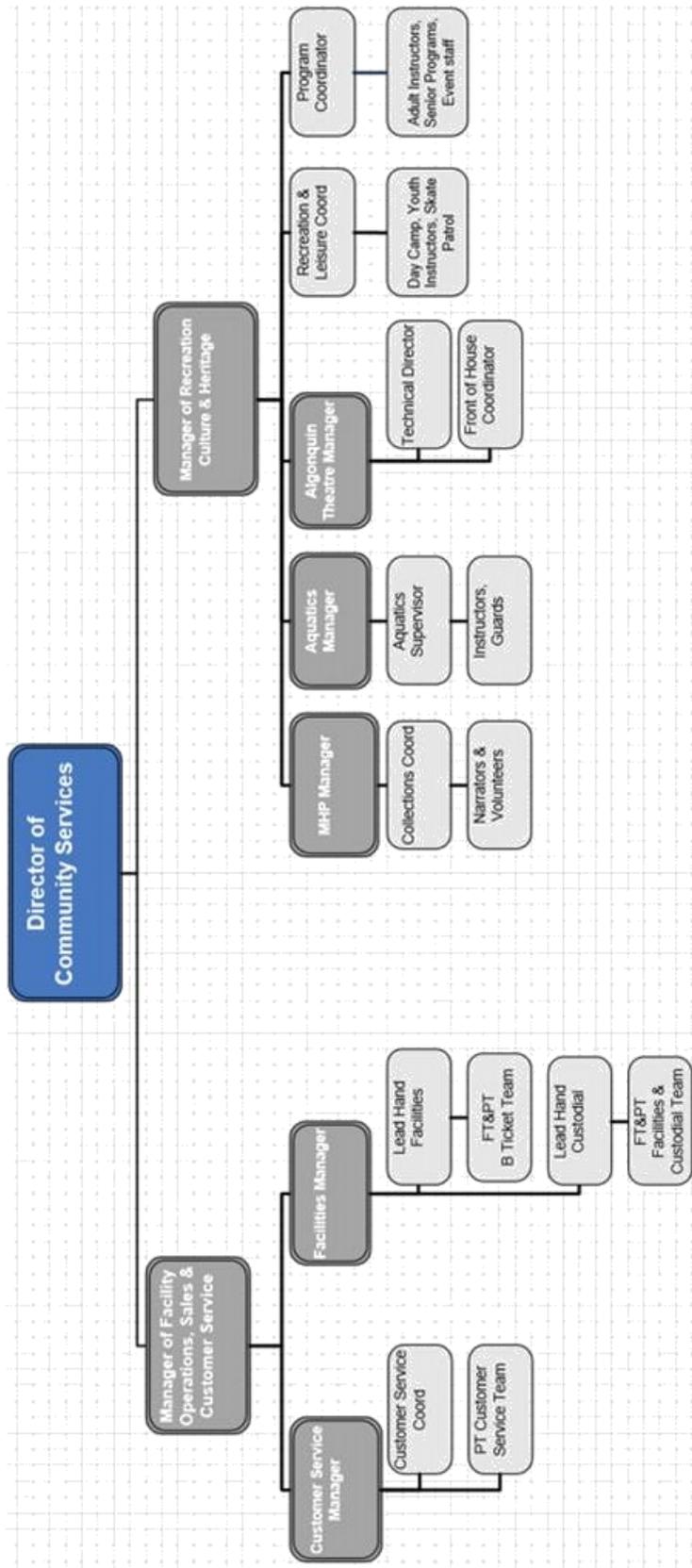


## 10.8 Organizational Effectiveness and Structural Considerations

There is strong employee engagement and satisfaction levels within the Community Services work team. The leadership team has worked to empower staff to readily suggest improvements for their respective disciplines and there is a sense of dedication and belief in the value of their services to strengthening the health of the community. This common vision has served to engage staff and create a strong departmental culture. The culture, values, and respective behaviours are evident but not captured in writing and agreed to by departmental staff. This would be a worthwhile undertaking in the near future to create a charter of engagement for current staff and volunteers.

In 2021 Community Services changed the organizational structure to address greater effectiveness in service delivery. Staff changes allowed the Division to rethink the allocation of staff and place like functions together. The current organizational chart (as of November 2021) is shown on the following page.

Figure 29: Organizational Chart, Community Services Division (November 2021)



A set of organizational design principles was utilized as the newly designed organizational structure for Community Services was developed. The organizational structure follows these principles and should lead to a more streamlined and effective department. It is assumed that the Human Resources Division would refine these principles as changes in technology, equipment, service provision or streamlined processes affect organization design within the corporation.

**Principle 1 – There should be no more than 6 layers of staff between the Chief Administrative Officer and the public.**

Depending on the service delivery methodology, there are no more than 6 layers of staff between the Chief Administrative Officer and the public. This provides for a flatter organization.

**Principle 2 – Divisions and units will be centred on common customers and/or common functions.**

Staff units are designed around common customers such as older adults/youth etc. and functions such as aquatics, sales, and facility allocation. There are synergies between and amongst units and joint planning and communications systems that keep efforts aligned and efficient.

**Principle 3 – Divisions and units will focus on common strategic goals which are aligned with corporate priorities.**

Recreation, parks and culture efforts are engaged in ensuring that residents are appreciative of history, visual and performing arts and active and healthy lifestyles – all aligning with the corporate and community goals.

**Principle 4 – There will be an equitable distribution of workload where possible in terms of span of control (functions, staff, outputs etc.).**

Staff should review work distribution annually (as the budget is prepared) to deliver on strategic priorities. Staffing levels should be developed as part of confirming the levels of service for each discipline. This endeavour serves to identify and quantify the work effort needed to provide the varying services and serves to defend the allocation of staff.

The retirement of the Manager of MHP leaves a particular challenge in terms of the replacing the depth of knowledge and specialized skill sets. Specific efforts to train and provide redundancy for all positions – especially unique and seasonal assets – is critical to continuity of operations.

**Principle 5 – Each management position will have a range of 3 to 7 direct reports (unless a strategic priority requires focus and singular contributors).**

This standard of 3 to 7 direct reports per management position serves to ensure equitable distribution of work and maximize the principles of empowerment and accountability.

**Principle 6 – One-on-one reporting relationships should be amalgamated with other like functions.**

There should be no one-on-one reporting relationships within a corporation or department unless there is a critical need for a sole contributor.

#### Recommendations

70. Work as a staff team to define the **organizational culture** and respective values and behaviours. Develop a **Charter of Engagement** whereby staff commit to these values and behaviours.
71. Develop a **Training and Succession Plan** in collaboration with Human Resources to ensure that staff are well trained and positioned to apply for higher level positions as they become available. The Plan should also support the continued and seamless operation of unique assets (e.g., steam/diesel train, etc.) through some degree of cross-training across all positions.

## 10.9 Measuring Performance in Community Services Strengthens Accountability

Performance measures hold staff accountable for their work and provide valuable information in comparing performance against intended service targets. This information provides baseline data on which to refine year over year. This approach to enhance service delivery provides a vehicle to analyze what is important and allows staff to change course if changes are warranted. The objective is to align measures with the goals and objectives of the Division. For example, if the goal is to increase participation and utilize facilities to their maximum with high levels of satisfaction, then measures will centre around increasing participation from the previous year, communicating the capacity and utilization of public facilities, and testing public satisfaction levels. Measures need not be complex – they just need to tell a story and influence future actions.

Measuring performance allows an organization to quantify various elements of service delivery and to demonstrate if progress is being made toward intended targets and assist in the setting of specific targets. For example, if public satisfaction rests at 70% in camps hypothetically in year one – the target for the next year would be set potentially at 75% with a long-term target of 90% or more. Staff would test satisfaction levels and address participant concerns toward improving service delivery. This data provides the information needed to complete an annual or program end analysis and to ensure that program decisions are knowledge-based. This data must also be utilized to compare participation and utilization levels year-to-year, allowing the ability to develop initiatives to demonstrate continued improvement.

A framework for measuring performance is suggested to be implemented in each discipline. Data is most likely being collected currently. Annual reporting should also be a simple illustration that staff and the public can glean and determine if targets are being met or have been exceeded.

A typical performance measurement framework for Community Services includes capturing the inputs (resources approved to deliver service), outputs (what was achieved within the approved resources, such as number of participants, pool attendance, square metres of facilities tended, etc.), efficiencies (the unit costs to deliver each service) and effectiveness (public and user satisfaction levels).

**Table 27: Town of Huntsville Performance Measuring Framework**

Performance Measure Type	Answers These Questions	Suggested Measures
<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resources are allotted to Community Services (staff, financial and physical spaces)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full-time equivalents (FTEs) in staff</li> <li>FTEs per service area</li> <li>Budget for key service areas</li> <li>Asset inventory</li> <li>Volunteerism</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What did the Division achieve with the resources provided?</li> <li>Were there increases/decreases in certain areas?</li> <li>How did these outputs compare to previous years and program related targets?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Levels of service achieved</li> <li>Performance against targets</li> <li>Participation in programs and drop-in opportunities</li> <li>Results compared to the previous year or the average of the previous three years</li> <li>Pent-up demands</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the high-level unit costs and have any been reduced by increased participation/productivity?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on unit costs (increased participation might result in a reduction of unit costs over all)</li> <li>Efficiencies achieved</li> <li>Cost savings realized through partnerships and grants or alternate revenue streams</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do users and public rate services?</li> <li>Have there been satisfaction level improvements in targeted areas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall public satisfaction levels</li> <li>Number of complaints</li> <li>Comparison to previous year ratings as compared to the average of the last three years</li> </ul>

### Recommendations

72. Develop a meaningful set of **performance measures** in Community Services that describe the inputs, outputs, efficiencies, and effectiveness measures employed in each discipline.



## 11. Goal Six: Celebrating Arts, Culture and Heritage

### Actively support the provision of a wide range of arts, culture and heritage opportunities available to residents and visitors alike.

Huntsville’s arts, culture and heritage system embodies the cherished stories and spaces that define its history, people, landscapes, and community spirit. The area’s unique aspects and experiences are to be celebrated and honored, including Muskoka Heritage Place, Algonquin Theatre, River Mill Park Rotary bandshell, local arts scene, and more.

Huntsville’s arts and cultural community benefits the town in several ways, such as:

- Developing a creative economy that attracts labour through the creative class (artists, designers, performers, etc.);
- Sharing a willingness to form a collective, incubate talent and create; and
- Generating tourism/cultural experiences using local creative individuals, assets and events.

“Culture shapes and profoundly enriches our lives and communities. Engagement in cultural activities strengthens empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and sense of community.”

- Ontario Culture Strategy: Telling Our Stories, Growing Our Economy Discussion Paper

### 11.1 Arts, Culture and Heritage Services

The Master Plan survey found support for investing in the cultural realm. Two-thirds (68%) indicate that cultural programs are important to their household; however, 52% are satisfied with current offerings – this was the lowest satisfaction level reported for a series of program and facility types. Suggestions for additional arts, culture, and heritage opportunities included outdoor concerts/live music, festivals/events, art galleries/showcases, theatre performances, visual arts classes, cooking classes, music lessons, dance, heritage activities, and ghost walks.

By comparison, 77% indicate that arts, culture and heritage spaces are important to their household and 66% are satisfied with current facilities. In addition, two-fifths (41%) of survey respondents identified the theatre/auditorium as a priority for future spending and support.

#### Cultural Strategy

Recognizing local interest in arts, culture and heritage, in 2011, the Town completed a Cultural Strategy that established the following mission statement:

*The Town of Huntsville ensures the provision of a wide range of arts, culture and heritage opportunities available to residents and visitors alike by working actively in partnership with community organizations and enterprises. These efforts will result in Huntsville being recognized as a leading creative community in Ontario.*

This Strategy set a bold vision for arts, culture and heritage in Huntsville. An update to Council in 2016 noted that 25 of the 27 recommendations (93%) had been completed at that time, suggesting that the plan has been successfully implemented<sup>8</sup>. Since the Strategy was developed, the Town has continued to maintain and evolve offerings at key sites, developed new tools (e.g., inventories, public art policy, etc.) and worked with groups such as the Huntsville Festival of the Arts and Huntsville Arts Society to support local creative industries. Much has changed in Huntsville's cultural landscape since this Strategy was developed and consideration should be given to updating it with a post-pandemic perspective. The subject requires focused attention to consult and engage the community, stakeholders, and then to develop practical strategic goals that are aligned with Council's strategic priorities.

### **Programming and Events**

The provision of arts, cultural and heritage programs and events is important for people of all ages, but it is particularly critical for younger children and older adults. Involvement in the arts facilitates self-expression, which can build confidence and self-worth for children and youth. Introduction to the arts at an early age can lead to life-long participation which has been found to prevent cognitive deterioration, dementia and minimize social isolation. In the current day and age, more people are tapping into their creativity using technology available through their smartphones and tablets (e.g., writing/blogging, photography, music and video creation, etc.). This heightened exposure to creative outlets can lead to increased participation in arts and culture activities.

Traditional forms of cultural and artistic expression such as dance, theatre, art and music remain vital components of programming. Newer forms of expression such as digital media and group participation push the boundaries for programming. Participants are seeking value-added, high-quality and unique cultural opportunities that can fit into busy lifestyles and offer meaningful social experiences. The Community Services Division must continue to embrace this shift and introduce new programs and events which change seasonally and annually.

Locally-based and affordable provision is important to ensuring accessibility. Emerging opportunities made possible through facilities such as Muskoka Heritage Place may further engage residents who are not currently participating in these types of programs to become involved. The Town should use the practices and tools referenced in Section 6 to formally evaluate, evolve and expand upon cultural program offerings.

### **Working as a Collective**

Given the broad scope and impact of arts, culture and heritage in the town, it is recognized that there are many key stakeholders responsible – directly or indirectly – for its care. This includes community groups,

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<sup>8</sup> Incomplete recommendations from Cultural Strategy (as of 2016) included: assessing the feasibility of new Public Art Gallery / Public Library; and more aggressive marketing of arts, culture and heritage assets, including seed funding.

learning institutions such as schools and libraries, the many volunteers that organize local activities and events, the hospitality industry that serves and accommodates locals and visitors, the Town and Provincial Parks that host many of these activities within their parks and facilities, the regional tourism agency, and many more.

The Town should continue to build relationships with local partners – such as the Huntsville Festival of the Arts, Huntsville Art Society, Limberlost Artists, Reel Alternatives, etc. – to support unique arts, cultural and heritage programming and event options. Working closely with community partners allows residents and visitors to explore and gain an appreciation of their local roots. To assist in this regard, a review of the Small Community Grant Program has been recommended in this Master Plan.

The Town may also assist community groups with grant applications to help support the financial costs associated with provision of these programs and services. This may require additional training or recruitment to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about emerging interests and opportunities. Integrated planning within Community Services and other municipal departments will be critical to ensure success.

### **Marketing**

A cohesive and coordinated approach to arts, cultural and heritage tourism, events, programs, and promotion is vital to leveraging existing resources and maximizing benefit for all. To support these efforts, the Division creates an annual integrated marketing plan that addresses arts, culture, heritage, tourism, sport and more. As noted in Section 10, additional staff resources are required to fully implement the Division's marketing initiatives.

### **Economic Impact**

Culture is recognized as an economic driver, especially for tourism, which historically has been a significant economic sector in the local Huntsville economy. Investments in arts, culture and heritage support the creative economy. Huntsville is home to a wide array of skilled artists, historians, vendors and performers seeking to promote themselves and their craft. A thriving creative industry helps to bring employment, resources and opportunities to the town and should be monitored over time. In the longer-term, the Community Services Division should work with others to adopt tools to gauge the economic impact and influence of culture on Huntsville's social and economic viability. This is a longer-term recommendation that cannot be completed until the industry recovers from the current period of pandemic restrictions.

### **Policy**

Lastly, the Town has a public art policy that guides the installation of public art in civic spaces. Public art (e.g., sculptures, murals, walkways, fountains, street furniture and other works, both permanent and temporary) is a means for beautifying and celebrating the area's rich heritage, promoting creativity, and enhancing community identity and pride. Through Official Plan policy, the Town may also consider the requirement for development proposals meeting key criteria to contribute to the public art program.

## Recommendations

73. Update the 2011 **Cultural Strategy** to establish tactical goals to achieve the vision for local arts, culture and heritage services and resources. Opportunities for enhanced marketing and communications should be considered as part of the Strategy.
74. Continue to encourage **community partnerships** that support arts and cultural programs and events offering inclusive opportunities for participants of all ages, interests and abilities.
75. Work with stakeholders to estimate the **economic impact** and influence of arts and culture on Huntsville’s social and economic viability (post-pandemic).
76. Continue to seek and apply for **external funding** to support investment in arts, culture and heritage through higher levels of government, private funds, or non-profit and charitable organizations.

### 11.2 Arts, Culture and Heritage Assets

The Community Services Division is responsible for operating Muskoka Heritage Place, Algonquin Theatre, Rotary Bandshell in River Mill Park, along with the art exhibit at the Canada Summit Centre. These venues work together as a system of complementary spaces, with community partners playing a role in delivering events.

The arts and cultural sector has been hard hit by the pandemic, particularly large-scale events and indoor gatherings. Huntsville’s Algonquin Theatre was closed for approximately 18 months and has only since returned to a small number of events. Conversely, a return to close-to-home recreation – coupled with new and robust programming and events – has contributed to increased visits at MHP.

#### Muskoka Heritage Place

Originally established as the Muskoka Museum and subsequently moved to its current site as the Muskoka Pioneer Village, Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP) has been operated by the Town of Huntsville since 1980. The site offers dozens of buildings and hundreds of artifacts and exhibits celebrating the settlement and development of the area, including Indigenous cultures. MHP offers self-guided tours, school programs, seasonal community programs and special events. The venue has a limited staff complement and relies heavily on volunteers, including those involved with the popular Portage Flyer steam train. Finding staff and volunteers to support the diesel train has been an ongoing challenge due to the specialized and part-time nature of the work.

MHP visitation has been steadily growing since G8 construction in 2009. In 2020, it received the “Best Small Museum in Ontario” award as voted by consumers through Attractions Ontario and 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the pioneer village. Its mission statement is

*To collect, care for, interpret and preserve a viable collection of historical artifacts, documents, photographs, archives and other materials particular to Muskoka; and to provide a uniquely historic*

*attraction which imparts accurate, educational, historical information in a spirited and entertaining manner pertinent to the Muskoka Experience.*

To establish future directions, MHP underwent a strategic review in 2017 (prepared by Lord Cultural Resources). This report recommended an action plan for the future of MHP, underpinned by modest investment (building an outdoor covered pavilion), enhanced volunteer and private support, improved marketing, operational improvements, and more diverse programming. The Lord Report was not formally approved by Council, but its research informs future planning.

A goal of the Town's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan is to complete a long-term strategy for the future of Muskoka Heritage Place, with the goal of strengthening the site as a community hub. The Town is working towards this goal with the help of a Strategic Revitalization Working Group tasked with identifying additional activities and capital improvements at MHP, while protecting its authenticity and upholding the visitor experience. With the pending retirement of the current MHP Manager, there is also a pressing need to address his replacement.

Grants have recently been sought for a greenhouse project that would provide a classroom and programming area for MHP, addressing the need for a year-round indoor space. Additional funding opportunities will be needed to address other capital projects that may emerge from MHP's long-term strategy, such as additional collections space and a new or upgraded museum/gallery. The Waterfront Strategy Design Brief (2021) supports MHP as a possible location for relocating the community garden from River Mill Park (a good complement to the proposed greenhouse), as well as seeking opportunities to expand the use of the grounds for broad community events, programming, rentals, education, recreation, day camps, trail connections, workshops, etc. It is recognized that the impact of COVID-19 on volunteers and school-based education programs may have an impact on MHP and its operations for several years.

### **Algonquin Theatre**

Algonquin Theatre opened in 2005 as part of the Huntsville Civic Centre in the heart of downtown Huntsville. The theatre has hosted hundreds of concerts, theatrical events, school plays, community meetings, and corporate functions. It is a key venue for the Huntsville Festival of the Arts, Huntsville High School, BIA, Chamber of Commerce, and various production and local companies.

The theatre offers 408-seats, dressing rooms, ticketing and box office services, and a licensed bar within the adjacent Partners Hall (120-person capacity, with art exhibits from the Huntsville Art Society). The Theatre staff team reports to the Manager of Recreation, Culture and Heritage and is supported by an active volunteer base.

The theatre serves both a local and regional market. In terms of other providers, Deerhurst Resort's Legacy Hall is a large venue that well used for music concerts and special events, and there are several smaller private venues in the vicinity. Most municipal sector theatres try to avoid direct competition with the private sector, but look for strategic partnerships that can support the broader creative industries. Similarly-sized theatres also exist in nearby communities, such as Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Parry Sound and Orillia. Given that all of these venues serve more or less the same market, it is important that local theatre operators work together to determine ways to complement each other, such as themed multi-day events.

A goal of the Town's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan is to prepare and implement a five-year business plan for the Algonquin Theatre. Staff have undertaken research in association with this goal; however, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed its completion. It is understood that options for operating models will be presented to Council shortly.

Those interviewed for this Master Plan expressed a need for greater clarity and direction around the intended market for the Theatre, specifically the balance between serving community needs and professional touring acts. Some also believe that the theatre is under-utilized; while attendance has declined over the past decade (prior to the pandemic), revenues have been steady or increasing, though costs are rising.

Theatres are challenging spaces to operate due to competition in the marketplace, evolving audience interests, and various fixed cost factors. They are constantly impacted by external factors and marketing/operational strategies must evolve accordingly. As Algonquin Theatre re-opens from the pandemic, the Town is encouraged to pursue new ideas and initiatives to broaden the offerings (including programs, rentals and school usage), improve digital and online marketing, work with community partners, and seek out sponsorship opportunities. Specific suggestions from the consultation program indicated a desire for greater usage by schools (though busing and funding are challenges) and more diverse events for younger adults. Unfortunately, the Master Plan community survey did not yield many suggestions for additional events at the theatre; this is an item that would benefit from additional market research.

It is unlikely that the Theatre will ever exclusively serve local users or professional acts as neither focus would be able to sustain its operations. However, given the proximity to Deerhurst Resort and its focus on professional acts, there is concern that touring artists will be less inclined to book Algonquin Theatre. Consistent with the mandate of the Community Services Division, additional focus should be placed on fostering and supporting local users at the Theatre. The goal should be to increase usage of the theatre, despite the possible reduction in revenue.

Any future business plan should more closely examine current and potential future markets and involve consultation with key partners. Market research into audience demographics is an important task, which may inform potential gaps and marketing strategies. Expectations may be muted for the next few years as the industry recovers from the pandemic – this presents an excellent opportunity to reflect on what the theatre does well and can do better. It is likely that revenue generation targets will need to be assessed.

Algonquin Theatre is a vital part of the town's cultural fabric and its continued success is important to Huntsville's overall quality of life. As community services, theatres are typically subsidized by municipalities due to the broad range of community benefits. A well-used facility will improve the town's chances of maintaining a sustainable operation and attracting future investment.

### **Arts Centre/Hub Proposal**

Community interest in a public art gallery and cultural centre has been expressed for several years. This initiative was identified in the 2011 Cultural Strategy and continues to be championed by the Huntsville Art Society, which is seeking an indoor/outdoor space where groups can collaborate, create, and showcase their talents. At present, this role is filled by a variety of spaces, such as the Rotary Bandshell at River Mill

Park, art exhibits at the Canada Summit Centre and Partners Hall, and multi-use spaces at various municipal facilities.

A stand-alone arts centre would represent a new level of service for the Town of Huntsville and would require additional funding and potentially staff resources. Depending on the operating approach, such a facility may not align with the Town's model of maintaining and maximizing multi-use spaces that serve a wide range of community needs. To date, the need for an arts centre has not been adequately demonstrated. Going forward, the arts community is encouraged to expand their programming within the community and seek partners to provide sustainable financial support. In lieu of establishing a stand-alone arts centre, the potential to bolster the role of Muskoka Heritage Place as a community arts, culture and heritage hub should be explored.

#### Recommendations

77. Continue to explore and support opportunities to **create additional activities, events, and spaces at Muskoka Heritage Place** that are consistent with its mission statement. This includes (but is not limited to) pursuit of the greenhouse initiative, community gardens, community arts hub, revitalization of existing assets (train station, buildings, etc.), etc. The ongoing development of a long-term strategy for MHP should assist in providing direction on service levels and long-term financial requirements.
78. Explore opportunities to **work as a collective with other theatres and entertainment venues** in the area (e.g., Deerhurst, Bracebridge, etc.) to strengthen the region's performing arts attractions and creative industries.
79. Create a **multi-year business plan for Algonquin Theatre**, with the goal of defining its market, strategic advantages, and opportunities for increased use by the local community, including financial targets and performance measures. This business plan is supported by the Town's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.



## 12. Implementation Strategy

Activation of the Community Services Master Plan is vital to its success. This requires coordinated efforts and a commitment from Council, staff, stakeholders, and the public, as well as a variety of funding options to implement the Plan. This section provides guidance on the Master Plan's implementation and high-level financial considerations.

### 12.1 Financial Considerations

This Master Plan calls for continued financial investment and outlines a series of planning priorities for the provision of community infrastructure. The timing of the projects listed in the Master Plan recognize a need for phased implementation. Proposed timing is based on the anticipated need, which relies on projected population growth and alignment with associated initiatives, if applicable. Should growth be slowed or accelerated, the timing of implementation may require adjustment.

#### Key Assumptions

To assist the Town in establishing a financial strategy for the Master Plan, several assumptions have been identified. These assumptions provide direction about the types of opportunities and constraints that must be considered when budgeting for Master Plan implementation.

In the future, it is expected that:

- Increases in costs to develop, revitalize and maintain parks, recreation and cultural facilities will be greater than the rate of inflation because of rising land costs, increasingly complex projects, the general public's heightened quality expectations, legislated building and accessibility standards, etc.
- The Town will be expected to adhere to fiscally-responsible revenue generation policies and practices, along with the allocation of sufficient capital and operating resources to fund core priorities.
- The magnitude of investments required to achieve and maintain facilities in acceptable condition will grow in proportion to an expanding volume of assets and the increasingly aged stock of facilities.
- The range of new types of parks and recreation infrastructure will continue to expand, which will increase the funding requirements to address a growing inventory.
- The need for sufficient, stable and predictable infrastructure funding streams will be increasingly important to support sound and proactive facility planning.
- The need for creative infrastructure funding solutions will be greatest in periods of low-growth and where aging facilities need to be revitalized or replaced.
- Working collaboratively with the community, developers and other partners will be important to successfully keeping pace with escalating needs for more and better parks and recreation amenities.

## Potential Funding Sources

To assist with implementation, several potential funding opportunities for capital investment – in addition to direct taxation – have been identified below.

An investment in Community Services is an investment in our community's economic, social, and personal wellbeing. As providers, facilitators and promoters of parks, recreation, special events, meetings, attractions, theatre and sports, our municipality embraces the initiatives that support healthy communities.

### Development Charges

Development charges (DC) are fees that are collected through the building process in order to address the growth-related infrastructure needs of a community, such as new or enhanced parks and recreation facilities (but not parkland acquisition). Through recent changes to the Development Charges Act, eligible capital projects may be fully funded through development charges (this amount was previously 90%). Funding limitations include replacement portions of facilities, historical service level deficiencies, or excess capacity as a result of the pre-employment of facilities. Some of the items identified in this Master Plan are partially or fully growth-related, thus will be eligible for Development Charge funding. The Town currently discounts its residential rate by 42.5% to incentivize growth. In our opinion, this discount should be reconsidered as it creates a financial burden on the Town and its tax base, particularly given Huntsville's recent and forecasted growth rate.

### Parkland Cash-in-Lieu

The Planning Act establishes a framework for the dedication of parkland and possible alternatives, with implementation policies identified through official plans. One such alternative to land dedication is the conveyance of cash-in-lieu of parkland generated by development or redevelopment. At the Town's discretion, cash-in-lieu may be used to purchase parkland, to acquire associated machinery or equipment and/or for parkland development. Recent changes to the Planning Act allow municipalities alternative options to collect funds for parkland through a community benefits charge, applicable to certain type of development and supported by local studies and by-laws.

### Municipal Reserves

On occasion, municipalities may decide to set aside monies accrued from tax dollars or other revenue sources for special projects, such as the development or expansion of a specific community facility or park. In addition, annual lifecycle reserves that are earmarked to fund the maintenance and state-of-good-repair of existing facilities are becoming more common. Industry standards suggest that 2% of the capital value of assets be put into a reserve annually. An asset management plan serves to identify all capital assets, their current condition, and when the asset or components should be refurbished or replaced.

### Special Levies (Municipal Accommodation Tax)

In 2018, the Town instituted a municipal accommodation tax. Revenues are to be shared between a Tourism Board (70%) and the Town (30%). The Town's proceeds will be used for projects and initiatives that promote and support tourism and economic development efforts that benefit residents and visitors (e.g., outdoor ice rink at Lions Lookout Field). Some of the projects recommended in this Master Plan may be eligible for this funding.

### Fundraising, Donations, Sponsorships and Naming Rights

The capital and ongoing operational costs of constructing community facilities are substantial and could place pressure on municipal budgets. Seeking assistance from the community to contribute resources towards the construction and/or operation of facilities and park amenities can be an effective way to provide services and spaces that are truly desired by residents. In the past, many local user groups and service clubs have collected donations and/or participated in fundraising for new facilities and this practice is expected to continue.

Increasingly, municipalities are exploring opportunities for sponsorship and naming rights of major facilities to offset a portion of costs. This type of funding provides the private sector access to asset branding with parks, recreation facilities, meeting spaces, etc. and is often driven by corporate-level strategies and resourcing.

### User Fees and Surcharges

User and rental fees for community services and facilities vary widely depending on their target market and direct costs. Fees are lowest for those items that promote physical activity, social interaction and community benefits (e.g., parks, playgrounds, etc.), and highest for those that allow dedicated access and provide benefits to distinct individuals (e.g., ice rentals, memberships, etc.). In certain cases, increases in user fees – such as through a project-specific surcharge – can be used to offset the costs associated with capital upgrades.

### Debenture Financing

In cases where alternate sources of funding are unavailable, some municipalities have shown a willingness to finance a portion of major capital expenditures. For example, the Town financed part of the improvements to the Canada Summit Centre and Algonquin Theatre. Depending on the municipality's credit rating, this can be a more expensive funding alternative and can impact the Town's fiscal capacity to borrow for other priority projects.

### Ongoing Government Programs

One example of an ongoing government program is the Federal Gas Tax Fund, which provides municipalities with a long-term funding stream that can be used for the construction and rehabilitation of core public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, and leisure facilities (e.g., trails, bike lanes, etc.).

## One-Time Grants

Municipalities often seek financial support from senior levels of government for major municipal capital projects. Recently, the Federal budget made commitments towards infrastructure investments through the “Investing in Canada” Plan and – in partnership with the Provincial Government – the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure funding stream opened in 2019. The presence of an approved Master Plan is often a requirement for securing grant funding.

## Partnerships

To maximize benefits to the community, the Town may consider engaging in collaborations or partnerships with the private sector, non-profit sector, or other levels of government to develop and/or operate various facilities and services. The Town has had success working in partnership with others in the past and relies on in-kind services from several volunteer associations.

### Recommendations

80. Use this **Master Plan as a resource** in developing the Town’s annual budget documents, Development Charges, secondary plans and related studies.
81. Consider **removing the residential rate discount within future Development Charges By-laws** to improve the ability of growth to pay for growth and reduce the financial burden on the Town and its tax base.
82. Undertake research and market-sounding to assess the revenue potential for **naming rights and sponsorships** within community services. This may require the use of consultants or other corporate resources.
83. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider **alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches** such as (but not limited to) surcharges, capital reserve contributions, fundraising, grants, sponsorships, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.
84. Assess and ensure that **operating budget implications** are appropriately resourced prior to approving major capital projects
85. Evaluate the Town’s **capital reserve** to ensure that it is sufficient to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure.

## **12.2 Monitoring and Updating the Plan**

The Town should regularly review and assess, and periodically revise the recommendations of the Community Services Master Plan to ensure that they remain reflective of local conditions and responsive to the changing needs of the community. This will require monitoring of activity patterns, tracking user satisfaction levels, regular dialogue with community organizations, annual reporting on implementation and short-term work plans, and undertaking a detailed ten-year update to the Plan. Through these mechanisms

– or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustment of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Plan may be required.

Reviewing the Plan requires a commitment from all staff involved in the delivery of community services, Council and the public. An appropriate time for this is prior to the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an **annual review** of the Master Plan:

- Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.);
- Issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, political pressures, etc.);
- Review of the Plan for direction regarding its recommendations;
- Preparation of a staff report to indicate prioritization of short-term projects and which projects should be implemented in the coming year based upon criteria established by staff (e.g., financial limitations, community input, partnership/funding potential, etc.);
- Communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects and projects to be implemented in the coming year; and
- Budget requests/revisions as necessary.

#### Recommendations

86. Post the Master Plan on the **Town's website** as a resource for the community, Council and staff.
87. Develop and implement a system for the **regular monitoring and reporting** on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation/registration data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.
88. Work with the **Community Services Working Group** to develop annual work plans for the Master Plan, with key priorities confirmed on a year-to-year basis.
89. Conduct **feasibility studies and business plans** (with input from the public) prior to developing or expanding major park sites and recreation facilities to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capacities.
90. Undertake a full **update** of the Community Services Master Plan in five to ten years (2027-2032).

### 12.3 Summary of Recommendations – Priority and Timing

Throughout the body of this Master Plan, recommendations have been identified at the end of each subsection or topic area. By approving this Plan, the Town is not bound to implementing every recommendation or providing facilities/services in the order, amount or timing indicated; rather, this Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting the needs as they are presently defined.

The timing of the actions proposed in this Master Plan recognizes the need for phased implementation and/or outside funding sources as some recommendations are based upon what is needed and not necessarily what may be financially achievable by the Town at the present time. As part of the annual budget process, this Plan will be reviewed to identify areas where the availability of resources may affect the timing of implementation. Analysis of implementation options and budget implications should be undertaken prior to approving major projects.

The Town has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires; this is one of the primary reasons for undertaking a Master Plan in the first place. Although Huntsville may find challenges in securing the necessary financial and human resources to implement the Master Plan's recommendations, the Town should make every reasonable effort to implement these strategies through appropriate and acceptable means. The full implementation of this Plan will require the use of development charges, grants, fundraising and collaboration with community partners.

Determining priorities is an exercise that should be revisited each year prior to the Town's budget development exercise. **It is expected that the Town will make decisions on individual projects and funding sources annually through the budget process.**

In addition to funding availability, factors that might change priorities year to year may include:

- capital lifecycle and considerations of safety;
- legislation and mandated requirements;
- changes to service standards;
- public input and community interests;
- emerging trends and changes in participation rates;
- availability of alternate providers; and
- socio-demographic changes and growth forecasts.

Priority is often synonymous with timing – the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. Priority has been determined based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the planning process (including public engagement, trend and demographic analysis, assessments of amenities and services, etc.). Generally, municipalities seek to address the widest range of needs and achieve maximum community benefit through the efficient use of resources.

Within the tables that follow, the priority and timing of the recommendations are organized into the following categories:

#### Priority

- **High Priority:** Immediate attention is strongly suggested during the timeframe recommended.
- **Medium Priority:** Attention is required when high priority actions have been initiated or completed, or when suitable partners have been identified for funding.
- **Lower Priority:** Attention is required when high and medium priority actions have been initiated/completed.

## Timing

- **Short-term:** 2022 to 2024
- **Medium-term:** 2025 to 2027
- **Longer-term:** 2028 and beyond
- **Ongoing:** Guidelines/practices to be followed on a continual basis

## Considerations

(implementation factors, potential cost impacts, etc.; note: all cost estimates to be confirmed through future study)

- **Minor (\$):** estimated at \$50,000 or less
- **Moderate (\$\$):** estimated to be between \$50,000 and \$500,000
- **Major (\$\$\$):** estimated at \$500,000 or more



**Table 28: Goal One: Active Living (Section 6)– Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
1. Work with other community partners to promote the <b>importance of physical activity</b> and engage more residents in embracing active lifestyles.	High	Ongoing	
2. Determine unique clients and approximate <b>participation rates for each age grouping</b> (pre-school, children, youth, adults, and older adults/seniors) in recreation, parks and cultural activities. Utilize this data as a baseline benchmark to inform stronger outreach efforts within the community. The Town should set participation targets for future years based on current participation patterns (post COVID-19 recovery).	High	Ongoing	
3. Work to implement the success criteria of the <b>Youth Friendly Communities</b> through the Playworks Cooperative to demonstrate Huntsville’s active commitment to providing a strong voice to youth.	Medium	Ongoing	
4. Engage and apply the Lifesaving Society Ontario Branch <b>Aquatic Safety Management Program</b> in all aquatic settings (pool and beaches) to audit and address safety measures in the operation of aquatic locations. <b>Lifeguarding services</b> may be considered at selected beach locations, but must be supported by Aquatic Safety Standards, funding and staff resources.	High	Short-term	
5. Promote <b>safety in and around water</b> to educate all Huntsville residents and visors about the prevention of water incidents.	High	Ongoing	
6. Continue to implement the criteria promoted through the <b>Principles of Healthy Aging</b> through Parks and Recreation Ontario in all programs and services for older adults and seniors.	High	Ongoing	
7. Approve an additional allocation of <b>\$5,000 per annum</b> to enable staff to respond to in-year trends and provide new recreation, parks and cultural opportunities for residents to try out.	Medium	Short-term	Minor (\$)

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
8. Develop a <b>Special Events Policy and Event Evaluation Process</b> to identify various event categories, frequencies, and the respective supports that the Town of Huntsville will provide. Further develop an evaluation framework for events that includes (but is not limited to) attendee satisfaction, cost per participant, impacts on the community and local businesses, etc. Review the service levels associated with special event support through the development of the Special Events Policy.	High	Short-term	Coordinate with involved parties

**Table 29: Goal Two: Inclusion and Access (Section 7) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
9. Develop an <b>Inclusion and Access Policy</b> to identify what actions the Town of Huntsville is committed to in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.	High	Short-term	
10. Provide staff <b>training and professional development</b> opportunities for staff and volunteers with respect to equity and inclusion in the delivery of service.	High	Ongoing	
11. Organize and meet with a <b>panel of diverse organizations and individuals</b> advocating for underrepresented populations in recreation, parks and culture to determine what the Town is doing well and what could be done to be more intentionally inclusive of all residents facing barriers.	Medium	Medium-term	
12. Complete <b>visual audits of facilities and public spaces</b> to ensure that usage reflects the full citizenry of Huntsville. Identify the people who are not regularly utilizing public spaces and engage them to understand any barriers.	Medium	Medium-term	
13. Identify the percentage of the <b>population experiencing low income</b> who participate in recreation, parks and cultural programs. Work to include the same or greater percentage as the general population in programs as a baseline target.	Medium	Ongoing	

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
14. Regularly meet with groups representing <b>persons with disabilities</b> to develop programs and approaches to include more persons with disabilities into recreation, parks and cultural programs.	High	Ongoing	
15. Ensure that all public spaces and facilities are safe and welcoming spaces for the <b>LGBTQI2S+ community</b> .	High	Ongoing	
16. Continue to engage with the <b>Indigenous community</b> to best understand how they would like to be better included and represented in sport, recreation, parks and cultural spaces.	High	Ongoing	
17. Complete an analysis of the number of females and those identifying as females participating in recreation and sport pursuits by age group. Initiate community discussions and work with other organizations supporting female participation to <b>increase female participation</b> in active and sport pursuits.	Medium	Short-term	

**Table 30: Goal Three: Connecting People and Nature (Section 8) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
18. Support <b>expanded year-round park and trail use</b> through outdoor education, challenging play opportunities, municipal programming, equipment-lending, and community development activities.	High	Ongoing	
19. Leverage the parks system to <b>promote the importance of access to nature</b> to individual and community wellbeing and healthy child development. Consider programs that use recreation to help people connect with nature and be stewards of the natural environment.	Medium	Ongoing	
20. Review the Town’s current <b>commemoration program offerings</b> to ensure that they are effective and well promoted in the community.	Lower	Medium-term	Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
21. Enhance community education and nature appreciation by providing <b>interpretive signage</b> that highlights the significance of natural features within Huntsville’s parks and trails systems.	Medium	Medium-term	Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division
22. Consider updating the 2005 <b>Parks Master Plan</b> to guide future parkland needs and policies. The scope of the plan may be expanded to include off-road trails and connectivity.	Medium	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division See Recommendation 32
23. Ensure that the Community Services Division is circulated as a <b>commenting agency</b> on development applications involving the potential acquisition of parkland.	High	Ongoing	Coordinate with Development Services Division
24. Maintain a commitment to <b>universal accessibility, safety and comfort</b> within the Town’s parks system. This includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Regularly consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), recognizing that some parks may include areas of natural terrain that are more difficult to access.</li> <li>b. Undertaking and incorporating accessibility audits into the Town’s asset management planning to identify a multi-year strategy for addressing barrier-free compliance.</li> <li>c. Engaging local police services to undertake a review of all parks using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to identify safety concerns relative to access and sightlines (surveillance).</li> </ul>	High	Ongoing	Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division
25. Emphasize the provision of amenities such as <b>benches/seating areas, bike racks, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), and washrooms</b> in appropriate park types to address the needs of all age groups.	High	Ongoing	Costs tbd (site-specific) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
26. Provide a variety of active and passive spaces within the parks system to support <b>all-season usage</b> , including recreation and sports, casual use and unstructured play, special events and cultural activities. Opportunities to provide <b>winterized washroom facilities</b> in high-use parks and trails – such as at Lions Lookout – should be considered in recognition of growing year-round parks use.	High	Ongoing	Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division See recommendation 52
27. Establish consistent and high-quality <b>signage at all municipal parks and trails</b> to enhance branding and wayfinding, as guided by the Town’s Wayfinding Strategy. Signage should direct inquiries to the Community Services Division’s Sales and Customer Service Team.	High	Ongoing	Costs tbd (site-specific) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division
28. Continue to build the parks system through the maximum application of <b>parkland dedication tools</b> . Where land dedication falls short, alternative acquisition tools may need to be considered, such as partnerships (e.g., working with area school boards and other service providers to maximize community access), land purchase or lease, reallocation of surplus municipal lands, etc.	High	Ongoing	Coordinate with Development Services Division
29. Maintain an up-to-date <b>parks and trails inventory</b> (including park blocks to be conveyed through the development process) to inform the assessment of future parks and trails needs, use of cash-in-lieu, and capital planning.	Medium	Ongoing	Coordinate with Development Services Division
30. Guided by the Town’s asset management plan, identify a long-term plan for <b>park renewal and redevelopment</b> that address aging infrastructure and capital improvements. Candidates for consideration in the short- to medium-term include <b>Lions Lookout and Utterson Community Park</b> . Residents and stakeholders should be engaged when designing new and redeveloped parks and trails.	High	Short- to Longer-term	Major (\$\$\$) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division
31. Assign high priority to the continued development of a <b>linked recreational trails system</b> through the use of secondary plans, the development process, landowner agreements and purchase of lands as they become available.	High	Ongoing	Costs tbd (site-specific) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
32. Develop a <b>Trails Master Plan</b> to provide a renewed vision and detailed evaluation for trail development opportunities. This plan should identify requirements for multi-use trail design and development, including connections between residential areas and community facilities/destinations scenic lookout areas, and recreational trails in parks. The scope of the plan may also be expanded to include on-road cycling routes and infrastructure.	Medium	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$) Coordinate with Operations & Protective Services Division See recommendation 22

**Table 31: Goal Four: Supportive Environments (Section 9) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
33. Undertake <b>barrier-free upgrades at Centennial Pool</b> (e.g., change rooms) to improve accessibility for all users and ensure that sufficient funding is made available for the pool's <b>long-term capital renewal</b> .	High	Short-term to Longer-term	Moderate (\$\$) to Major (\$\$\$)
34. <b>Monitor ice registration and rental levels</b> to understand future trends. Continue to work with arena organizations to support “return to play” approaches and explore options for arena programming and rentals during non-peak hours.	Medium	Ongoing	
35. Create <b>performance metrics for multi-use spaces and halls</b> and work with user groups to maintain or enhance usage. Tracking of usage levels is required to support this analysis.	High	Ongoing	
36. Support full public access to <b>Pitmans Bay Lodge and Park</b> similar to other waterfront parks. Prepare a design strategy for Pitmans Bay that solicits public input and examines potential improvements, financial and operational requirements, and environmental impacts.	High	Short-term	Costs tbd through future study
37. Identify a preferred use for the <b>Auditorium at the Canada Summit Centre</b> . While opportunities for lease arrangements with synergistic service providers (e.g., health and wellness, etc.) should be explored, the Town should also consider converting a portion of the space into multi-use program and activity spaces for dryland training, fitness and warm-ups, Town programming (e.g., affordable entry-level programs such as fitness, youth space, etc.), events, tournament support, etc.	High	Short-term	Moderate (\$\$)

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
38. Continue to encourage community use of <b>school gymnasiums</b> to accommodate demand for court sports, activities/events and municipal programming. In the longer-term, evaluate opportunities to <b>develop a municipal gymnasium</b> co-located with a complementary community building.	Medium	Longer-term	Major (\$\$\$)
39. Through dialogue with <b>Club 55</b> , explore the potential for an older adult service model that positions the <b>Active Living Centre</b> as an older adult hub and uses other sites for strategic outreach. The service model should seek to leverage volunteer resources, limit program duplication, ensure appropriate public access, maximize spaces, maintain quality assurance, and provide a wide range of activities for all older adult interests that are open to all. The potential to repurpose the current Club 55 space should not be considered until the operating arrangements are reframed.	High	Short-term	
40. Consider opportunities to establish a <b>youth-friendly space</b> that offers drop-in activities and a safe hangout space within the redesigned auditorium at the Canada Summit Centre.	Medium	Short-term	
41. Consider installing a <b>splash pad</b> through future major park development in the long-term.	Lower	Longer-term	Moderate (\$\$)
42. Provide <b>playgrounds in new subdivisions</b> (e.g., Eagle Ridge, Huntsville Highlands, etc.) based on a measure of <b>one playground within 400-metres of residential areas</b> . The service area should account for major pedestrian barriers such as highways, railways, and watercourses.	High	Ongoing	Costs tbd (site-specific)
43. Consider adding a <b>playground to McCulley Robertson Recreation Park</b> to complement the sports fields and other park amenities.	Lower	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$)
44. Through implementation of the Waterfront Strategy Design Brief, install <b>playgrounds at strategic sites along the urban waterfront</b> , including Avery Beach Park, Camp Kitchen Park, Mountview Water Treatment Site (future park), and Orchard Park.	Medium	Short- to Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$)
45. Consider installing <b>outdoor fitness equipment</b> through future major park development, possibly at the Infra Pipe Solutions property (Uponor) or Mountview Water Treatment Site.	Lower	Medium- to Longer-term	Moderate (\$\$)

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
46. Work with key stakeholders to establish a <b>capital improvement strategy for Conroy Park</b> , including the identification of high priority projects and a cost-sharing agreement.	High	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$) Potential for cost-sharing
47. Work with user groups to address priority diamond improvements at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park, including <b>replacement lighting on Diamond F</b> .	Medium	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$)
48. Evaluate the potential of <b>removing the pickleball lines from the tennis courts at Conroy Park</b> when the new courts are available at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park.	Lower	Short-term	
49. Implement planned improvements to <b>outdoor tennis, pickleball and multi-use courts</b> at McCulley Robertson Recreation Park, Clarke Crescent Park, and Huntsville Haven.	High	Short-term	Moderate (\$\$)
50. Consider development of <b>additional outdoor basketball courts</b> in future park development within Huntsville’s urban area (e.g., Huntsville Haven, etc.), with consideration to multi-use designs.	Medium	Ongoing	Minor (\$) to Moderate (\$\$)
51. To better serve local youth and outdoor enthusiasts, evaluate the potential need and suitable locations for <b>BMX pump track</b> in partnership with local groups that can assist with fundraising, site evaluation, construction and operations.	Lower	Medium-term	Costs tbd
52. Evaluate the viability of creating a <b>permanent outdoor ice rink (natural ice) at Lions Lookout Field</b> following the 2021/22 season. Identify costs for permanent infrastructure (e.g., water service, year-round washroom, pavilion/support building, etc.) and an appropriate management model (e.g., staff, volunteers, etc.).	High	Short-term	Moderate (\$\$) See Recommendation 26
53. Ensure that <b>community-operated ice rinks</b> on municipal property are guided by memorandums of understanding with clear responsibilities of all parties.	High	Ongoing	
54. Coordinate the implementation of this Community Services Master Plan with the <b>Waterfront Strategy Design Brief</b> as it relates to recreational activities along the shoreline in the Huntsville urban area.	High	Ongoing	

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
55. Undertake a comprehensive review of the <b>Port Sydney Beach and Boat Launch</b> to consider improvements to safety, infrastructure, user comfort, environmental management, and the potential for an expanded beach.	Medium	Short-term	Costs tbd through future study
56. Examine options for establishing a permanent seasonal washroom at <b>Hutcheson Beach</b> .	Medium	Short-term	Moderate (\$\$)
57. Use this Master Plan as a resource when evaluating <b>unsolicited requests for facilities</b> that are not part of the Town's core mandate. Proponent-led business plans should be developed to determine demand, alignment with Master Plan goals, the net benefit to Huntsville and its residents, and the degree of municipal involvement (if any).	High	Ongoing	

**Table 32: Goal Five: Recreation Capacity (Section 10) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
58. Confirm that the <b>mandate</b> of the Community Service Division is to ensure a wide range of services for all age groups, either directly or indirectly. It is inherent to the delivery model to look first to the community to provide related programs and services, with the Town providing services where there is a gap or where the cost or complexity of the service requires municipal staff expertise.	High	Short-term	
59. Implement seamless <b>inter-departmental Customer Service standards and processes</b> to ensure timely and appropriate service to residents, organizations and visitors.	High	Short-term	
60. Complete an <b>audit of current legislation</b> affecting the delivery of Community Services and ensure that Huntsville is compliant with these requirements.	High	Short-term	
61. Develop a <b>Partnership and Sponsorship Policy</b> to seek out alternate revenue sources to offset the cost to provide Community Services.	High	Short-term	See recommendations 68 and 83
62. Periodically review the <b>Facility Allocation Policy</b> to ensure equity in the allocation of space and the ability to accommodate emerging sports and uses.	Medium	Medium-term	

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
63. Work with community stakeholder groups to understand their challenges in obtaining and retaining volunteers. Develop a <b>Volunteer Plan</b> as a collective and utilize the resources and standards as provided by Volunteer Canada.	Medium	Medium-term	
64. Adopt a standard online program to recruit, train, supervise, retain, and recognize <b>volunteers</b> supporting Community Services.	Medium	Medium-term	
65. Apply a consistent methodology to better understand the costs to provide the various services and determine current <b>cost recovery levels</b> . Develop a fair-minded and transparent <b>Pricing Policy</b> to ensure that fees are equitable and respect the value that they provide to the community.	High	Short-term	
66. Continue to identify the annual <b>marketing and communication resources</b> needed for Community Services including promotional messaging, identifying the audience, frequency of communications and appropriate communication mechanisms. Quantify the human resources and funding needed to implement effective marketing strategies for the Community Services Division for Council consideration. Establish protocols for communicating consistently across all channels.	High	Short-term	Resources tbd See Recommendation 67
67. Re-imagine the <b>Leisure Guide</b> using alternative means of marketing and promotion (e.g., online newsletters with links, brochures, push marketing, etc.) to identify aligned and available services and programs. This approach will lessen our environmental impact, reduce costs, and allow for more targeted communication to customers in a timely manner. Supports must still be provided for those who require information through multiple channels.	High	Short-term	See Recommendation 66
68. Develop a <b>standardized partnership and/or sponsorship agreement</b> to apply to various partnership types and to standardize municipal and partner expectations.	Medium	Medium-term	See Recommendation 61
69. Review the <b>Small Community Grant Program</b> and consider extending funding levels to allow community organizations to undertake more significant multi-year projects.	High	Short-term	Minor (\$) – annual cost

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
70. Work as a staff team to define the <b>organizational culture</b> and respective values and behaviours. Develop a <b>Charter of Engagement</b> whereby staff commit to these values and behaviours.	High	Short-term	
71. Develop a <b>Training and Succession Plan</b> in collaboration with Human Resources to ensure that staff are well trained and positioned to apply for higher level positions as they become available. The Plan should also support the continued and seamless operation of unique assets (e.g., steam/diesel train, etc.) through some degree of cross-training across all positions.	High	Short-term	
72. Develop a meaningful set of <b>performance measures</b> in Community Services that describe the inputs, outputs, efficiencies, and effectiveness measures employed in each discipline.	High	Short-term	

**Table 33: Goal Six: Celebrating Arts, Culture and Heritage (Section 11) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
73. Update the 2011 <b>Cultural Strategy</b> to establish tactical goals to achieve the vision for local arts, culture and heritage services and resources. Opportunities for enhanced marketing and communications should be considered as part of the Strategy.	Medium	Medium-term	Moderate (\$\$)
74. Continue to encourage <b>community partnerships</b> that support arts and cultural programs and events offering inclusive opportunities for participants of all ages, interests and abilities.	High	Ongoing	
75. Work with stakeholders to estimate the <b>economic impact</b> and influence of arts and culture on Huntsville’s social and economic viability (post-pandemic).	Lower	Medium-term	
76. Continue to seek and apply for <b>external funding</b> to support investment in arts, culture and heritage through higher levels of government, private funds, or non-profit and charitable organizations.	High	Ongoing	

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
77. Continue to explore and support opportunities to <b>create additional activities and events at Muskoka Heritage Place</b> that are consistent with its mission statement. This includes (but is not limited to) pursuit of the greenhouse initiative, community gardens, community arts hub, revitalization of existing assets (train station, buildings, etc.), etc. The ongoing development of a long-term strategy for MHP should assist in providing direction on service levels and long-term financial requirements.	High	Ongoing	Costs tbd (project-specific)
78. Explore opportunities to <b>work as a collective with other theatres and entertainment venues</b> in the area (e.g., Deerhurst, Bracebridge, etc.) to strengthen the region’s performing arts attractions and creative industries.	Medium	Short-term	
79. Create a <b>multi-year business plan for Algonquin Theatre</b> , with the goal of defining its market, strategic advantages, and opportunities for increased use by the local community, including financial targets and performance measures. This business plan is supported by the Town’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.	High	Short-term	Minor (\$)

**Table 34: Implementation and Financial Strategy (Section 12) – Implementation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
80. Use this <b>Master Plan as a resource</b> in developing the Town’s annual budget documents, Development Charges, secondary plans and related studies.	High	Ongoing	
81. Consider <b>removing the residential rate discount within future Development Charges By-laws</b> to improve the ability of growth to pay for growth and reduce the financial burden on the Town and its tax base.	Medium	Short-term	Coordinate with Finance Division
82. Undertake research and market-sounding to assess the revenue potential for <b>naming rights and sponsorships</b> within community services. This may require the use of consultants or other corporate resources.	Medium	Medium-term	Minor (\$) See recommendation 61

Recommendation	Priority	Timing	Considerations
83. Where appropriate and consistent with municipal policies and priorities, consider <b>alternative funding and cost-sharing approaches</b> such as (but not limited to) surcharges, capital reserve contributions, fundraising, grants, sponsorships, and various forms of collaboration to provide the best value to residents.	High	Ongoing	
84. Assess and ensure that <b>operating budget implications</b> are appropriately resourced prior to approving major capital projects.	High	Ongoing	
85. Evaluate the Town's <b>capital reserve</b> to ensure that it is sufficient to fund the repair and replacement of major capital infrastructure.	High	Short-term	Coordinate with Finance Division
86. Post the Master Plan on the <b>Town's website</b> as a resource for the community, Council and staff.	High	Short-term	
87. Develop and implement a system for the <b>regular monitoring and reporting</b> on the progress of the Master Plan, such as the collection of participation/registration data and annual reports to Council and/or the community.	High	Short-term	
88. Work with the <b>Community Services Working Group</b> to develop annual work plans for the Master Plan, with key priorities confirmed on a year-to-year basis.	High	Ongoing	Moderate (\$\$)
89. Conduct <b>feasibility studies and business plans</b> (with input from the public) prior to developing or expanding major park sites and recreation facilities to ensure that projects are aligned with community needs, partnership opportunities and financial capacities.	High	Ongoing	
90. Undertake a full <b>update</b> of the Community Services Master Plan in five to ten years (2027-2032).	High	Longer-term	

## Appendix A: Summary of Supporting Studies, Reports and Policies

Section 2.2 of the Master Plan summarizes key directional municipal studies, including the Official Plan, Strategic Plan, Unity Plan and Sustainability Report. The following municipal studies, reports, and policies provide additional direction to specific areas of interested and are summarized below:

- Cultural Strategy (2011)
- Muskoka Heritage Place – Operations/Business Plan and Projections (2017)
- Land Development Standards – Draft (2021)
- Sidewalk Master Plan (2021)
- Asset Management Plan (2020)
- Consolidated Budgets (2021)
- Development Charges Background Study (2019)
- Waterfront Development Strategy Design Brief (ongoing)
- Downtown Community Improvement Plan (2010)
- Wayfinding Strategy – Draft (2021)
- Public Infrastructure Division Operational Review (2013)
- Active Transportation Workshop Report (2011)
- Muskoka Active Transportation Strategy (2010)
- Accessibility Plan (2018 – 2022) and Achievements (2020)
- Affordable Access to Recreation Policy (2018)
- Facility Allocation Policy (2018)

### Cultural Strategy (2011)

The Town of Huntsville’s Cultural Strategy is spearheaded by creativity and built upon the term ‘culture’ which encompasses all of the following meanings in this context:

- The formalized expression of visual, performing, literary, and media arts activity in the community, as expressed in places such as art galleries, theatres, libraries, and museums;
- The customs, history, and heritage (including built heritage) of a community, particularly when represented by a critical mass from a certain cultural tradition or background; and
- The energy and ‘buzz’ created through nightlife, festivals, events, and creative industries in downtowns and other focal points in the community.

The Strategy is guided by the Vision established in the Huntsville Unity Plan, as well as the Cultural Mission Statement for the Town (below):

*The Town of Huntsville ensures the provision of a wide range of arts, culture and heritage opportunities available to residents and visitors alike by working actively in partnership with community organizations and enterprises. These efforts will result in Huntsville being recognized as a leading creative community in Ontario.*

Seven underlying municipal culture principles are identified to emphasize and build upon the culture of the Town:

1. Everyone has the potential to be a creative individual;
2. Municipalities (as well as other levels of government) have a responsibility to develop cultural amenities for their residents;
3. Investment in culture is an economic development strategy;
4. Now is the time to invest in culture;
5. The dual nature of the leadership role of the municipality;
6. The community creates its own culture; and
7. Accountability is critical.

The Cultural Strategy goes hand in hand with several of the other municipal plans/strategies/documents, but is tied most closely to the Unity Plan due to the Strategy's alignment with the Unity Plan's Vision for the Future, but more specifically the recommendations provided in the Strategy serve the Unity Plan's Goal #10 for arts, culture, and heritage.

The Culture Strategy emphasizes the potential that Huntsville's arts, culture, and heritage sector (ACH sector) has and how it aligns with the Town's objectives for sustainability. The Strategy identifies areas in which the ACH sector can contribute to the overall economic development of the Town and narrows down several policies, strategies, and practices that could result in a bigger contribution towards the overall economy. One of the strategies highlighted is for the Town to continue to support the Muskoka Heritage Place.

Additionally, the Strategy also highlights several key opportunities that the Town is faced with in regards to culture and community services. A new public art gallery was identified as having potential to be a large opportunity, as well as greater utilization of the Canada Summit Centre, a new library, offering more multi-cultural activities, a larger focus on First Nations culture and heritage, the creation of a public market, etc.

## **Muskoka Heritage Place – Operations/Business Plan and Projections (2017)**

The Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP) Study prepared by Lord Cultural Resources highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the MHP operations at the time. It recommended a sustainable action plan for the future of MHP and then formulated projections of attendance, operative revenues, and expenses.

The Study determined that declining attendance at MHP was consistent with an overall decline at heritage sites throughout North America over the previous two decades. The town was determined to have the most

appeal of MHP shown through attendance data and survey results, however, the general consensus surrounding the train was that the experience was too short and there was not enough to do at the end of the trip.

Overall, the Study determined that major capital reinvestment in MHP was not ideal because of the limitations of its market, size, and potential earned income, but rather only a modest capital reinvestment was necessary. Additionally, the Study recommended that a major increase in staffing and operating budget should not be considered, however a modest increase should be. Furthermore, rebuilding volunteer support is essential for the future of MHP.

Finally, the Study outlined various recommendations to assist MHP ranging from subject areas such as: outdoor improvements (e.g., building a covered pavilion); diversifying programming (i.e., having more special events and tying into existing Town events); operational improvements (e.g., lowering admission charges); improving marketing (e.g., creating a new brand identity and logo for the adoption of renaming the facility to “Muskoka Heritage Park”); and for private support (i.e., exploring sponsorship opportunities).

## **Land Development Standards – Draft (2021)**

The Land Development Standards establish criteria for the various types of parks within the town (e.g., Town-wide Parkland, Community Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, etc.), among other forms of infrastructure. The Development Standards are used for parkland dedication when land is being developed so that the Town can ensure sufficient park space for active recreational pursuits. Having dedicated parkland allows for valuable physical and visual linkages to the open spaces that exist in the Town as well as natural heritage systems.

The Development Standards necessitate that parkland will be linked directly to open space (including stormwater management facilities) and preserve environmental areas in ways that are environmentally responsible and reflects the surrounding natural landscapes. A core goal of the Development Standards is that linkages will be used for walking and cycling and will be accessible by the street network to provide for improved accesses. The Town encourages developers to use stormwater ponds for the purposes of green space continuity and to potentially provide pedestrian linkages to adjoining open space systems.

## **Sidewalk Master Plan (2021)**

The Town of Huntsville identified a need to improve the pedestrian network through certain goals that were developed from the Strategic Plan (e.g., prepare a multi-year sidewalk capital plan and improve pedestrian linkages throughout the Town). At the time of the Sidewalk Master Plan there were roughly 34 kilometres of sidewalk within the Town that varied in width and conditions. The Plan focuses on three different types of sidewalks – major (primary) sidewalks, minor (secondary) sidewalks, and multi-use paths.

The goals of the Sidewalk Master Plan are as follows:

- Enhance the sidewalk network by adding new sidewalks, connecting existing/disjointed sidewalks, removing abandoned sidewalks, future removal of non-warranted sidewalks, connecting to trails, and upgrading sidewalks that are undersized;

- Plan and establish a network of major sidewalks throughout the Town to facilitate the development of future sidewalks in and among neighbourhoods;
- Improve walkability and safety for pedestrians;
- Expand connectivity to community facilities;
- Improve community walkability and disabled persons' accessibility to the sidewalk network (AODA compliant);
- Improve existing intersection crossings (AODA compliant);
- Integrate crosswalks, where required (AODA compliant);
- Create a framework for implementing sidewalk construction and project prioritization;
- Reduce maintenance costs; and
- To coordinate sidewalk planning with the Downtown Master Plan and Capital Improvement Plan.

The Sidewalk Master Plan is accompanied by a map illustrating current and proposed routes. It is intended to be a working document that will be updated periodically, as maintenance issues arise and when additional major routes are developed and should be revisited every five to ten years.

### **Parks Master Plan (2005)**

Huntsville's Parks Master Plan builds off the Strategic Economic Development Plan (2002) and the Official Plan (at the time) and provides more specific policies that are geared to assist Council and committees with their decision-making process as it applies to municipal parkland issues as they arise. It is a land use plan used as a guide for the ongoing acquisition, development, use, disposition, and maintenance of municipal parkland.

The Plan recognizes the demographic trend that people, in general, are beginning to live longer. As a result, there is a larger emphasis on having recreation and parks designed to accommodate older populations. Furthermore, the Plan acknowledges that people are leading healthier lifestyles as they are more in-tune with their own health.

The establishment and implementation of this Plan provided the Town of Huntsville a framework for planning parks and recreation for residents that want to lead healthier lifestyles and for Town Staff and/or Town Council to have a policy benchmark idea for planning processes revolving around parks moving forward.

### **Asset Management Plan (2020)**

Municipal infrastructure provides the foundation for economic, social, and environmental health, including parks, recreation, and culture growth. The Asset Management Plan (AMP) guides infrastructure planning in the Town of Huntsville by identifying practices and strategies to manage public infrastructure and identifying recommendations where they can be improved upon. Through the implementation of the AMP

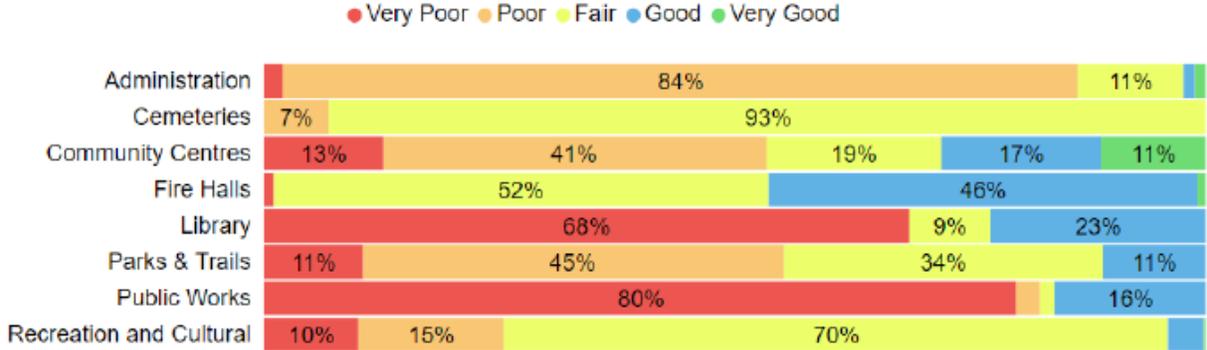
and appropriate asset management strategies, Huntsville can ensure public infrastructure will be able to support the sustainable delivery of services.

The AMP looks at the current average condition of Town assets. Huntsville’s parks and trails were found on average to be in ‘Fair’ condition (average condition rating of 46%) as were recreation and cultural assets (52% average condition rating).

Basketball courts, washrooms, beaches, tennis courts, park buildings, and pavilions/bandshells were amongst the most poorly rated amenities. The Town’s parks with the most poorly rated conditions include:

- Clarke Crescent Park (note: a revitalization project was initiated in 2021);
- Kent Park (note: a revitalization project was initiated in 2021);
- Lions Lookout;
- Utterson Community Park; and
- Irene St. Park.

**Town-owned Facilities Life Condition**



Furthermore, the AMP outlines an estimated useful life for facilities assets, which is based off a combination of established industry standards and Town staff knowledge. Huntsville’s parks and trails were estimated to have approximately 12.3 years of average service life remaining, whereas recreation and cultural facilities were estimated to have approximately 12.8 years of average service life remaining. The average service life remaining for recreation equipment is estimated to be approximately 11.9 years.

**Consolidated Budgets (2021)**

Utilizing the Strategic Plan’s outlined priority areas, the Town’s Consolidated Budget addresses each area within a 4-year time period through the creation of business plans to guide the work.

With regard to Community Services, and in being faced with considerable uncertainty as a result of COVID-19, the 2021 budget directs focus to Muskoka Heritage Place, facilities, and recreation and leisure services, among other areas of interest. A brief overview is as follows:

*General Operating Budget Impacts:*

- Anticipated reduction in revenues and cost recoveries due to facility closures, most notably Algonquin Theatre
- Utility reductions and other reduced costs due to facility closures
- Increased costs for COVID-related personal protective equipment and custodial supplies
- Reduction in grant revenues

*Capital Budget Highlights:*

- Train station roof project (\$20,000) includes replacement from asphalt shingles to metal roof
- Canada Summit Centre projects carried forward from 2020 (e.g., Jack Bionda scoreboard, Engine “A” Air Handling Unit)
- Stephenson Hall roof project carried forward from 2020

## **Development Charges Background Study (2019)**

The Development Charges Background Study supports the approval of a new Development Charges By-law in compliance with the Development Charges Act, 1997. Development Charges are intended to pay for the initial round of capital costs required to service development over an identified planning period.

The development-related capital program that is proposed within this Study provides an overview of what can be expected in terms of net capital for each of the services over the 10-year (2019 – 2028) period and the longer-term period (2019 – 2031). Of the total development-related net capital costs (\$11.96 million), \$5.92 million (approximately 49%) is related to the provision of indoor recreation in which it is intended to fund a portion of debt incurred to finance the Canada Summit Centre debt and the cost of a proposed parking centre at the Centre. Additionally, outdoor recreation makes up \$870,000 (approximately 7%) of total net costs.

It bears noting that cultural facilities (apart from libraries) are ineligible for growth-related funding under the Development Charges Act.

## **Waterfront Development Strategy Design Brief (ongoing)**

In 2020 the Town of Huntsville purchased the two remaining parcels of a privately-owned property on the south side of Hunters Bay. This resulted in the Town having full control of the waterfront public land from the Centre Street bridge all the way to Highway 11. Largely due to this and also due to the existing Waterfront Planning Strategy being outdated (1991) the Town of Huntsville is working towards a new Waterfront Development Strategy.

The purpose of the updated Waterfront Strategy is to guide detailed planning and design along Huntsville’s waterfront based on an assessment of public input, current conditions, policy context, and opportunities and challenges. Draft recommendations were presented to Town Council on November 24, 2021 and the plan is expected to be finalized in early 2022.

## **Downtown Community Improvement Plan (2010)**

The Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was created to help guide the long-term vision of Huntsville’s downtown area. The community identified that parking and affordable housing are areas where attention should be directed moving forward. Furthermore, the Plan sets out the design framework that locates green spaces and other urban open spaces, enhanced streetscapes, pedestrian connections, building edges, landmark and corner sites, and gateways while also providing recommendations for streetscape improvements, design strategies, general façade guidelines, and urban design guidelines.

The Downtown CIP identifies a number of priority actions, but specifically pertaining to parks, recreation, and culture the plan prioritizes to:

- Continue to evolve River Mill Park by upgrading the parking lot as a multi-use parking plaza and initiating detailed design of the Market Square Arcade; and
- Initiate detailed design to close the north segment of River Street to create the River Walk promenade.

Furthermore, the CIP identifies the importance of sustainable green spaces within the Downtown Core and highlights that Huntsville has a number of publicly accessible green spaces associated with parks and public uses (e.g., churches, schools, etc.). Green spaces go hand-in-hand with streetscapes and hardscape plazas to create a network of public open spaces and amenities, and that green spaces are intended to provide both passive and active spaces for leisure, recreation, and community gatherings.

## **Wayfinding Strategy – Draft (2021)**

The Wayfinding Strategy focuses on the process of organizing information in order to assist users in finding their way throughout the Town. The Strategy reinforces sense of place, identity and interconnectedness while also improving “entry, orientation, and identification” within Huntsville. Key wayfinding priorities include public washrooms, parks and conservation areas, heritage sites, trails, and parking areas.

The Strategy examines several components including:

- Destination nodes and routes;
- Sign inventories;
- Sign concepts; and
- A phased implementation strategy and budget.

## **Public Infrastructure Division Operational Review (2013)**

This review looked at existing infrastructure and provided an evaluation of the operational structure and levels of service provided for each asset. Benchmarking and comparative best practices were used to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Town’s infrastructure assets.

The scope of the study focused upon four key areas: 1) a historical review of the Town’s overall financial performance; 2) an environmental scan; 3) the creation of service level baselines in comparison to service

level standards as well as benchmarked municipalities; and 4) an evaluation of the Town's current service delivery model and solutions to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

The review identified 21 potential opportunities that could be used to improve operating efficiency and effectiveness as well as reduce overall costs, including:

- Consider contracting in of certain parks and cemetery functions currently performed by external contractors; and
- Use of various building system technologies at the Canada Summit Centre.

The Review determined that the Town's recreational facilities are on the lower-end of the benchmarking with municipal comparators with respect to cost per household and cost per square metre of indoor recreational space; however, Huntsville's parks have higher costs in comparison to the benchmarked municipalities – the higher costs for parks are attributed to the Town's costs for service levels, in particular the number and types of outdoor facilities being maintained.

### **Active Transportation Workshop Report (2011)**

An Active Transportation Workshop was held for staff, council members, and interested members of the public in March 2011. Active transportation is a form of recreation and routes often utilize parks and trail corridors. Having suitable active transportation infrastructure in place is crucial in order to encourage residents make active travel choices.

The workshop highlighted six key actions to encourage and promote active transportation among residents and to target various "hotspots". From a recreation perspective, the main action was to implement more bicycle racks throughout needed areas (e.g., Downtown and Commerce Court). Additionally, three 'dream' actions were determined:

1. Walking bridges to and from the district "Mountview" park;
2. Fully connected, signed, and looped inter-municipal active transportation network; and
3. Highway 11 underpass (pedestrian walkway).

### **Muskoka Active Transportation Strategy (2010)**

The District of Muskoka Active Transportation Strategy identifies many of the benefits of active transportation (e.g., a better sense of community, tourism appeal, decreased traffic, etc.) and potential new partnerships (i.e., when a trail is to be constructed or needs maintenance often governmental partners, interest groups, schools, or other members of the public step in). The Study emphasizes the need for regional cycling network that uses district roads, but also includes scenic routes, routes that link communities and other destinations, particularly tourism and recreational destinations such as resorts, beaches, and off-road trails and routes that have amenities along them.

In order to evaluate and prioritize routes within the overall network, three types of routes were identified: Loops; Connection Routes; and Near-Community Routes. The three types of routes help to balance the need to address recreational transportation needs and purposeful transportation needs across the municipality.

In addition, various types of infrastructure are needed such as cyclist-friendly catch basins, wayfinding signage, and bicycle storage options or racks at various facilities (recreation, commercial, institutional, etc.), among others.

From a parks, recreation, and culture perspective the purpose of the Active Transportation Strategy is to develop a network (for walkers, runners, cyclists, or other active transportation users) that links residents to cultural/recreational facilities – whether that be the Canada Summit Centre, playgrounds, Muskoka Heritage Place, or beachfront trails.

## **Accessibility Plan (2018 – 2022) and Achievements (2020)**

The Town's Accessibility Plan seeks to create a completely accessible environment for all residents within the Town, while the Achievements Report looks at various barriers that have been overcome from an accessibility standpoint during the time period of the Plan. The Accessibility Plan seeks to promote accessible public spaces by:

- Supporting the concept of playability for accessible play spaces;
- Providing input, in regard to accessibility, on the Town's Leisure Guides and accessible features of all municipal buildings;
- Working with Town Staff to assess whether there is a need to provide alternative recreation programming for persons with disabilities;
- Working with Town Staff to ensure that all existing and any new programs are assessed for inclusiveness; and
- Supporting the initiative for subsidized recreational programs being considered by all Muskoka municipalities and ensuring that all programs factor in the needs of persons with disabilities and those living in poverty.

The Town has recently addressed several barriers to accessibility, including (but not limited to):

- Barrier-free and accessible washrooms at several locations;
- Accessibility improvements to some year-round community halls and several aspects of MHP;
- Addressing information barriers through new large-print booklets and visual manuals at MHP;
- Requiring that all new and existing playgrounds will be accessible (e.g., River Mill Playground);
- Wheelchair ramp accesses into both the large and small tanks at the Centennial Pool; and
- Installation of an accessibility ramp/mat at Port Sydney Beach.

## **Affordable Access to Recreation Policy (2018)**

The Town of Huntsville created an Affordable Access to Recreation Policy in order to recognize and promote the full participation of all residents in recreational programs and services regardless of their financial circumstances. The Town is committed to enhancing the quality of life for the community by ensuring age-friendly, accessible, and inclusive recreation and leisure opportunities for all residents.

The policy supports several programs as a mechanism to encourage greater participation rates among residents and households experiencing low incomes. This includes the following programs and activities per eligible person per calendar year:

- Children and Youth (up to 17 years-old):
  - Annual public swim/skate pass; and
  - 50% off up to two youth registered programs
- Adult (18+ years-old):
  - Annual public swim/skate pass; or
  - 50 drop-ins per year to adult/55+ drop-in programs (Pool Drop-ins/Active Living Centre Drop-ins); or
  - 50% off up to two registered programs

### **Facility Allocation Policy (2018)**

The Facility Allocation Policy was established to clarify the Town's responsibility for allocating and administrating facility use, most notably arena and sports field rentals.

On a yearly basis Town Staff review, define, and confirm the Town's ice, floor, field seasons, hours of operation, facility uses and restrictions, facility closures, holiday operation hours, prime, and non-prime hours. This enables the Town to update relevant areas of its Standard Operational Procedures. Town Staff use the previous year's facility allocation and registration numbers to form the basis for the upcoming year. Facility use is granted in a prioritized order based on the category of the user/use – weekly hours given to any group/organization will be solely based on justified need. This means that registration data must be supplied by the groups annually.

## Appendix B: Community & Stakeholder Survey Results

The following organizations completed the **stakeholder questionnaire** in support of this Community Services Master Plan.

1. Aquatics
2. Community Living Huntsville
3. Former 55+ Winter Games
4. Huntsville Art Society
5. Huntsville Disc Golf Club/Evergreen Fields Disc Golf
6. Huntsville High School Phys-Ed Department and Athletic Director (2)
7. Huntsville Hurricanes Basketball Club (2)
8. Huntsville Jr. Otters
9. Huntsville Junior Hawks Lacrosse
10. Huntsville Lakes Wood Carvers
11. Huntsville Pickleball
12. Huntsville Skating Club
13. Huntsville Ukulele Group
14. Muskoka Hornets
15. Muskoka Mayhem Volleyball Club
16. Muskoka Seniors
17. Port Sydney Senior Badminton Club
18. Racqueteers (Huntsville Tennis Club)
19. Sport Huntsville (2)
20. Stephenson District Lions Club
21. TriMuskoka

See the following pages for detailed data tables from the **community survey**.

1. Since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic), which of the following parks and recreation activities did you or anyone in your household participate in, in Huntsville or elsewhere? By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participate (which does not include attending an event or watching others), either at home or in public. (select all that may apply)

	#	%
Aerobics, Yoga, Fitness, or Weight-Training	193	45%
Baseball or Softball (or other forms)	52	12%
Basketball	59	14%
Beach Activities	247	58%
Boating (sailing, powerboating, etc.)	189	44%
Canoeing, Rowing, Kayaking or Paddle Boarding	269	63%
Cycling or Mountain Biking	188	44%
Dog Walking (on or off leash)	209	49%
Enjoying Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas	350	82%
Fishing	138	32%
Golf	137	32%
Ice Sports or Recreational Skating (indoor)	160	37%
Organized Programs for Adults (e.g. fitness, special interest class, etc.)	108	25%
Organized Programs for Seniors (e.g. cards, luncheons, special interest classes, etc.)	35	8%
Organized Programs for Youth (e.g. day camps, youth club, etc.)	85	20%
Outdoor Ice Skating	192	45%
Pickleball	53	12%
Rock/Wall Climbing	28	7%
Running or Jogging	119	28%
Skateboarding	33	8%
Soccer	71	17%
Swimming (Instructional or Aquafit)	144	34%
Swimming (Recreational)	239	56%
Tennis	76	18%
Use of Playground Equipment	144	34%
Use of Splash Pad	55	13%
Walking or Hiking for Leisure	345	81%
answered question	427	
skipped question	0	

Other notable activities:

Disc Golf	11	3%
Downhill Skiing	8	2%
Curting	6	1%
Snowshoeing	5	1%
Cross Country Skiing	4	0.9%
Lacrosse	4	0.9%
Badminton	3	0.7%
Track and Field	2	0.5%

2. Since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic), please identify if your household has used any of the following municipal parks and recreation facilities, by selecting the frequency of use.

	1		2		3		4		5		Skipped Question		Average	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Centennial Pool at Canada Summit Centre	135	34%	97	25%	28	7%	31	8%	3	1%	392	100%	35	2.47
Active Living Centre at Canada Summit Centre	137	37%	122	33%	31	8%	14	4%	13	4%	366	100%	61	2.10
Arenas at Canada Summit Centre	128	36%	107	30%	12	3%	24	7%	4	1%	357	100%	70	2.34
Indoor Walking Track at Canada Summit Centre	131	35%	99	26%	37	10%	34	9%	1	0%	377	100%	50	2.42
Outdoor Walking Track at Lion's Lookout	132	37%	117	33%	34	10%	45	13%	4	1%	354	100%	73	2.17
Sports Fields	142	43%	78	24%	26	8%	21	6%	5	2%	328	100%	99	2.18
Outdoor Sports Courts (tennis, basketball, pickleball)	160	46%	66	19%	30	9%	34	10%	6	2%	348	100%	79	2.22
Neighbourhood Parks	39	11%	100	28%	56	16%	53	15%	4	1%	357	100%	70	3.09
Town of Huntsville Trails	26	7%	98	25%	84	22%	70	18%	3	1%	388	100%	39	3.25

3a. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, were you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like (e.g., sports, fitness, outdoor play, etc.)?

	#	%
Yes	322	75%
No	92	22%
Don't Know	13	3%
answered question	427	100%
skipped question	0	

3b. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, why are you and members of your household not able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

	#	% of subsample	% of sample
Health problems / Disability / Age	8	8%	2%
Lack of Child Care	5	5%	1%
Lack of desired facilities or programs/activities	56	53%	13%
Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	28	27%	7%
Lack of money / Too expensive	18	17%	4%
Lack of personal time / Too busy	30	29%	7%
Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	4	4%	1%
Program/Activity not offered at a convenient time	43	41%	10%
Don't know	2	2%	0%
answered question	104		
skipped question	323		

Other Reasons	#	%
Overcrowding	3	3%
Closed	2	2%
No indoor multi-use facility	2	2%
Single mentions - various		

4. Would you like to list up to two (2) parks and recreation programs/activities that you or members of your household would like to see provided in Huntsville that were not available prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

	#	%
Yes	203	48%
No Thanks	216	51%
Answered question	419	
Skipped question	8	
Open-ended Responses (top 10):		
Pickleball	24	6%
Outdoor Skating	22	5%
Splash Pad	22	5%
Pickleball (indoor)	15	4%
Bike Infrastructure	14	3%
Trails	12	3%
Disc Golf	9	2%
Rock Climbing	8	2%
Yoga	8	2%
Canoeing/Kayaking	7	2%

5. Since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic), which of the following arts, culture, and heritage activities did you or anyone in your household participate in, in Huntsville or elsewhere?

	#	%
Dancing	70	16%
Going to Live Theatre or Concerts	317	74%
Going to Outdoor Festivals and Special Events (e.g., Canada Day, music, arts, etc.)	339	79%
Cooking Classes	31	7%
Arts and Crafts Activities	115	27%
Going to Art Galleries	121	28%
Going to Museums	110	26%
Music Classes	59	14%
Heritage Appreciation / 'Doors Open' Events	72	17%
Visual Art Classes (e.g. painting, pottery, etc.)	75	18%
Performing Arts Classes	35	8%
None	33	8%
answered question	426	
Skipped question	1	

Other notable activities:	#	%
Choir	2	0.5%
Hiking	2	0.5%
Single mentions - various		

6. Since 2019 (the period both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic), please identify if your household has used any of the following municipal arts, culture, and heritage facilities, by selecting the frequency of use.

	1	2	3	4	5	Skipped Question	Average									
	Never	A Few Times a Year	Monthly	Weekly	Almost Daily	Don't Know										
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#									
Muskoka Heritage Place	171	43%	187	47%	11	3%	7	2%	1	0%	19	5%	396	100%	31	1.62
Algonquin Theatre and Partners Hall	72	17%	270	64%	58	14%	14	3%	2	0%	6	1%	422	100%	5	2.05

7. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, were you and members of your household able to participate in arts, culture, and heritage activities as often as you would like (e.g., arts, dance, music, etc.)?

	#	% of subsample	% of sample
Yes	305	71%	71%
No	98	23%	23%
Don't Know	24	6%	6%
Answered question	427		
Skipped question	0		

7b. Prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, why are you and members of your household not able to participate in arts, culture, and heritage activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

	#	% of subsample	% of sample
Lack of desired facilities or programs/activities	56	46%	13%
Lack of personal time / Too busy	36	30%	8%
Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	46	38%	11%
Program/Activity not offered at a convenient time	40	33%	9%
Lack of money / Too expensive	25	20%	6%
Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	3	2%	1%
Health problems / Disability / Age	4	3%	1%
Don't Know	5	4%	1%
Other reasons			
Children too young	2	2%	2%
No interest	2	2%	2%
Single mentions - Various			

8. Would you like to list up to two (2) arts, culture, and heritage activities programs/activities that you or members of your household would like to see provided in Huntsville that were not available prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

	#	% of subsample	% of sample
Yes	75	18%	18%
No Thanks	337	82%	79%
Answered question	412		
Skipped question	15		

Open-ended responses (top 10):	#	%
Outdoor Concerts/Live Music	25	6%
Festivals/Events	17	4%
Art Galleries/Showcase	15	4%
Theatre	9	2%
Visual Art Classes	6	1%
Cooking Classes	4	1%
Music Lessons	4	1%
Dance	3	1%
Heritage Activities	3	1%
Ghost Walks	2	0.5%

9. What is your level of satisfaction with the following parks, recreation and cultural services in Huntsville?

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know / Not Applicable	Answered Question	Skipped Question	Average
	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	#	#	Question	
Indoor recreation facilities such as arenas, pools and seniors' centres	13	29	57	165	139	23	426	1	3.96
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, courts and playgrounds	17	56	60	180	84	28	425	2	3.65
Arts, culture, and heritage spaces such as museums and theatres	4	29	100	161	96	32	422	5	3.81
Open space for parks, trails and unstructured uses	29	53	45	179	109	9	424	3	3.69
Cultural programs (registered and drop-in)	7	22	118	119	41	111	418	9	3.54
Recreation programs (registered and drop-in)	15	32	88	165	62	58	420	7	3.63

10. In general, how important are the following items to your household?

	1		2		3		4		5		Skipped Question	Average				
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%						
Indoor recreation facilities such as arenas, pools and seniors' centres	9	2%	12	3%	24	6%	109	28%	281	61%	10	2%	425	100%	2	4.45
Outdoor recreation facilities such as sports fields, courts and playgrounds	7	2%	7	2%	29	7%	90	21%	277	66%	11	3%	421	100%	6	4.52
Arts, culture, and heritage spaces such as museums and theatres	12	3%	14	3%	68	16%	156	37%	167	40%	5	1%	422	100%	5	4.08
Open space for parks, trails and unstructured uses	1	0%	2	0%	15	4%	71	17%	331	78%	3	1%	423	100%	4	4.74
Cultural programs (registered and drop-in)	12	3%	21	5%	91	22%	154	37%	113	27%	30	7%	421	100%	6	3.86
Recreation programs (registered and drop-in)	6	1%	9	2%	52	12%	151	36%	191	45%	16	4%	425	100%	2	4.25

11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

	1		2		3		4		5		Skipped Question	Average				
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%						
Parks, recreation and cultural services should be a high priority for Town Council	2	0%	2	0%	11	3%	92	22%	316	75%	1	0%	424	100%	3	4.70
You feel well informed about the Town's parks, facilities, programs and events	17	4%	65	15%	99	23%	185	44%	55	13%	3	1%	424	100%	3	3.47
The Town's parks, recreation and cultural programs are affordable for your household	6	1%	31	7%	83	20%	210	49%	82	19%	13	3%	425	100%	2	3.80
The Town's parks, recreation and cultural amenities are well maintained	8	2%	40	10%	90	22%	195	47%	79	19%	6	1%	418	100%	9	3.72

12. What is your level of satisfaction with parks, recreation and culture opportunities in Huntsville for the following age groups as it applies to your household?

	1		2		3		4		5		Skipped Question	Average				
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%						
Pre-School (4 years and under)	8	2%	25	6%	34	9%	50	13%	16	4%	263	66%	396	100%	31	3.31
Youth (5 – 12 years)	13	3%	22	6%	28	7%	70	18%	22	6%	235	60%	390	100%	37	3.43
Teens (13 – 18 years)	20	5%	32	8%	34	9%	47	12%	11	3%	240	63%	384	100%	43	2.88
Adults (19 – 54 years)	14	4%	45	11%	60	15%	122	31%	43	11%	110	28%	394	100%	33	3.48
Older Adults (55 – 69 years)	9	2%	27	7%	37	9%	112	28%	54	13%	162	40%	401	100%	26	3.73
Seniors (70 years and over)	8	2%	6	2%	34	9%	56	15%	42	11%	230	61%	376	100%	51	3.81

13. To assist the Town in prioritizing spending, please indicate the level of priority that you feel should be placed on improving or developing each of the following indoor facility types.

	1		2		3		4		5		Skipped Question	Average		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%				
Arenas (indoor ice)	55	13%	73	17%	137	32%	131	31%	31	7%	427	100%	0	2.87
Arts Centre (gallery, studio, etc.)	45	11%	118	28%	170	40%	77	18%	17	4%	427	100%	0	2.68
Community Halls	33	8%	88	21%	193	45%	91	21%	22	5%	427	100%	0	2.84
Dedicated Space for Seniors Activities	25	6%	52	12%	172	40%	140	33%	38	9%	427	100%	0	3.10
Fitness Centres	28	7%	69	16%	137	32%	173	41%	20	5%	427	100%	0	3.12
Gymnasiums	21	5%	69	16%	166	39%	146	34%	25	6%	427	100%	0	3.09
Historical Attractions / Museums	32	7%	108	25%	186	44%	86	20%	15	4%	427	100%	0	2.79
Indoor Walking Tracks	24	6%	87	20%	131	31%	165	39%	20	5%	427	100%	0	3.07
Swimming Pools (indoor)	17	4%	42	10%	139	33%	218	51%	11	3%	427	100%	0	3.34
Theatre / Auditorium	19	4%	74	17%	152	36%	174	41%	8	2%	427	100%	0	3.15
Other Indoor Facility Priorities (top 10):	#	%										#	%	Average
Multi-Use Facility	23	5%										7	2%	
Pickleball	13	3%										5	1%	
Rock Climbing Wall	11	3%										5	1%	
Curling	10	2%										4	1%	
Pickleball (indoors)	9	2%										3	1%	
Gymnasium													7	2%
More Programming													5	1%
Swimming Pool													5	1%
Gymnastics													4	1%
Affordability													3	1%

14. To assist the Town in prioritizing spending, please indicate the level of priority that you feel should be placed on improving or developing each of the following outdoor facility types.

	1		2		3		4		Don't Know/Don't Use		Answered Question		Skipped Question		Average
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Acquisition of Parks and Open Space	12	3%	33	8%	99	23%	276	65%	7	2%	427	100%	0	0	3.52
Baseball or Softball Diamonds	49	11%	107	25%	167	39%	52	12%	52	12%	427	100%	0	0	2.59
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	24	6%	97	23%	172	40%	79	19%	55	13%	427	100%	0	0	2.82
Beaches (municipal)	9	2%	23	5%	110	26%	268	63%	17	4%	427	100%	0	0	3.55
BMX/Bike Parks	33	8%	113	26%	154	36%	66	15%	61	14%	427	100%	0	0	2.69
Boat Launches	30	7%	87	20%	140	33%	124	29%	46	11%	427	100%	0	0	2.94
Fitness Equipment (outdoor)	44	10%	106	25%	142	33%	92	22%	43	10%	427	100%	0	0	2.73
Ice Rinks (outdoor)	15	4%	53	12%	159	37%	171	40%	29	7%	427	100%	0	0	3.22
Nature Trails	2	0%	21	5%	93	22%	309	72%	2	0%	427	100%	0	0	3.67
Off-Leash Dog Parks	60	14%	92	22%	115	27%	91	21%	69	16%	427	100%	0	0	2.66
Parks for Events and Festivals	15	4%	59	14%	160	37%	186	44%	7	2%	427	100%	0	0	3.23
Paved Multi-Use Trails	28	7%	69	16%	143	33%	173	41%	14	3%	427	100%	0	0	3.12
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	81	19%	89	21%	108	25%	74	17%	75	18%	427	100%	0	0	2.50
Playgrounds	11	3%	40	9%	160	37%	181	42%	35	8%	427	100%	0	0	3.30
Public Access to Waterfront	10	2%	16	4%	98	23%	290	68%	13	3%	427	100%	0	0	3.61
Running Track	51	12%	95	22%	162	38%	77	18%	42	10%	427	100%	0	0	2.69
Skateboard Parks	63	15%	97	23%	147	34%	44	10%	76	18%	427	100%	0	0	2.49
Soccer and Multi-use Fields	31	7%	66	15%	151	35%	124	29%	55	13%	427	100%	0	0	2.99
Splash Pads	47	11%	67	16%	115	27%	137	32%	61	14%	427	100%	0	0	2.93
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	45	11%	101	24%	144	34%	81	19%	56	13%	427	100%	0	0	2.70
Waterfront Parks (lake or river)	11	3%	35	8%	92	22%	278	65%	11	3%	427	100%	0	0	3.53

Other Outdoor Facility Priorities (top 10):

	#	%
Trails	16	4%
Safe Biking	13	3%
Disc Golf	11	3%
Pickleball	11	3%
Outdoor Skating	8	2%
Public Waterfront Accesses/Beaches	8	2%
Basketball Courts	6	1%
Connectivity	5	1%
Public Washrooms	5	1%
Splash Pad	5	1%

15. Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding parks, recreation and culture in the Town of Huntsville.

answered question	162
skipped question	265
<i>Primary Themes</i>	
Preserve the natural environment	
Indoor multi-use space	
Increase public access to waterfronts	
Increase number of greenspaces	
Desire for more arts, music, and culture	

16. How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

	#	%	# of persons in sample
1	34	8%	34
2	182	43%	364
3	62	15%	186
4	90	21%	360
5	37	9%	185
6	9	2%	54
7	4	1%	28
8	0	0%	0
9	1	0%	9
Answered question	419		
Skipped question	8		
Total persons in sample			1,220
Persons per household			2.91

**17. In what year were you born? (response translated to age; approximated)**

Age	#	%
25 years or younger	5	1%
26-35 years	58	14%
36-45 years	71	18%
46-55 years	72	18%
56-65 years	95	24%
66-75 years	86	21%
76 years or older	17	4%
answered question	404	100%
skipped question	23	
Median Age	54	

**18a. Are you a resident of the Town of Huntsville?**

	#	%
Yes - permanent resident	387	91%
Yes - seasonal/part-time resident	23	5%
No	16	4%
Unsure	1	0%
answered question	427	
Skipped question	0	

**18b. Where do you live within the Town of Huntsville?**

	#	%
Hidden Valley and area	46	11%
Huntsville Urban Area - North of River	120	29%
Huntsville Urban Area - South of River	91	22%
Port Sydney and area	32	8%
Utterson and area	26	6%
Novar and area	10	2%
Other/Rural area	79	19%
Unsure	6	1%
answered question	410	
Skipped question	17	

If living elsewhere	#	%
Lake of Bays	7	44%
Bracebridge	3	19%
Perry Township	2	13%
Kearney	2	13%
Gravenhurst	1	6%
Ryerson Township	1	6%
answered question	16	100%

## Appendix C: Service Level Comparison

Understanding how Huntsville compares to other communities in regards to funding parks, recreation, and culture is helpful in establishing a broader context. The Province of Ontario, through Financial Information Returns submitted annually by municipalities, tracks and publishes data on municipal spending, revenue, and resources. This data can be used to illustrate the level of financial support provided to parks, recreation, and culture services/facilities amongst comparable municipalities.

Prior to examining cost, revenue, and staffing levels, it is important to consider general levels of service. At a high-level, these can be illustrated by the existence of major facilities and capital assets, as venues such as arenas and pools are substantial cost centres with more significant staffing obligations. Amongst the comparator group, the Town of Huntsville would appear to operate a similar range of major facilities. The Town's per capita value of tangible capital assets is slightly below the comparator average (\$1,321 versus \$1,499).

**Table 35: Tangible Parks, Recreation, and Culture Capital Assets - Comparator Municipalities**

Municipality	Major Facilities	Net Book Value of Tangible Capital Assets (2019)	Capital Asset Value Per Capita
Bracebridge	Multi-use recreational complex (indoor pool, fitness centre, indoor courts, theatre, etc.), single pad arena	\$20,071,121	\$1,254
Collingwood	Two single pad arenas, indoor pool	\$35,367,056	\$1,487
Gravenhurst	Opera house, single pad arena, Muskoka Discovery Centre	\$17,119,973	\$1,391
Leamington	Multi-use recreational complex (twin pad arena, indoor pool, fitness centre, gymnasium), marina	\$34,512,547	\$1,251
Midland	Multi-use recreational complex (twin pad arena, gymnasium, tenant space)	\$21,929,923	\$1,298
North Bay	Event arenas, twin pad arena, single pad arenas, beach areas	\$68,040,802	\$1,320
Orillia	Twin pad arena, single pad arena, curling facility, marina; opera house; note: new recreation centre (fitness centre, gymnasium, indoor pool) to open post-pandemic	\$71,814,415	\$2,304
Parry Sound	Multi-use arena (single pad arena, event space), performing arts centre	\$20,801,971	\$3,246
Wasaga Beach	Single pad arena, Recplex (indoor pool and gymnasium – partnership with YMCA), youth centre, seniors' centre, beach areas	\$19,840,307	\$960
<b>Group Average</b>		<b>\$34,388,679</b>	<b>\$1,499</b>
<b>Huntsville</b>	Multi-use recreation complex (indoor pool, twin pad arena, active living centre), theatre, Muskoka Heritage Place, seniors' centre	<b>\$26,176,835</b>	<b>\$1,321</b>

Schedule 51, Financial Information Returns (2019)

Major Facilities sourced from municipal websites

Per Capita Values calculated using the 2019 municipal population estimates and/or 2016 Census Profile, Statistics Canada contained in Table 2

As shown in the following table, the Town of Huntsville’s average municipal tax amount (for all services) per residential household in 2019 was 46% lower than the average of the comparator group (\$1,209 versus \$2,224). This suggests that the Town values the efficient and effective delivery of services and that residents expect value for their tax dollars.

**Table 36: Municipal Population and Tax Comparison – Comparator Municipalities**

Municipality	Population (2019)	Households (2019)	Average Municipal Taxes per Household (2019)*
Bracebridge	16,010	9,067	\$1,475
Collingwood	23,789	11,854	\$2,291
Gravenhurst	12,311**	8,654	\$1,694
Leamington	27,595**	11,058	\$1,761
Midland	16,894	7,375	\$2,171
North Bay	51,553	22,614	\$2,824
Orillia	31,166**	14,275	\$2,932
Parry Sound	6,408**	3,150**	\$2,442
Wasaga Beach	20,675	13,358	\$1,606
<b>Group Average</b>	<b>23,519</b>	<b>11,166</b>	<b>\$2,224</b>
<b>Huntsville</b>	<b>19,816**</b>	<b>10,958</b>	<b>\$1,209</b>

\* lower-tier/residential only

\*\* 2016 Census population figures used

Schedules 22A, Financial Information Returns (2019)

The Town of Huntsville’s annual per capita spending on parks, recreation, and culture is 14% higher than the average of the comparator group (\$434 versus \$379); however, the per household spending rate is only marginally higher than average. While spending may be slightly higher than the benchmark average, this reflects the strong levels of service within the Town.

**Table 37: Annual Spending on Parks, Recreation, and Culture**

Comparison	Annual Expenses (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
<b>Group Average</b>	<b>\$8,696,683</b>	<b>\$772</b>	<b>\$379</b>
<b>Huntsville</b>	<b>\$8,599,246</b>	<b>\$785</b>	<b>\$434</b>

Schedule 40, Financial Information Returns (2019)

The Town of Huntsville’s annual per capita revenue associated with parks, recreation, and culture is 37% higher than the comparator group average (\$80 versus \$59). This demonstrates a strong commitment to revenue generation and optimization of existing spaces and services.

**Table 38: Annual Revenue (User Fees & Service Charges) Associated with Parks, Recreation, Culture**

Comparison	Annual Revenue (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
<b>Group Average</b>	<b>\$1,346,388</b>	<b>\$119</b>	<b>\$59</b>
<b>Huntsville</b>	<b>\$1,589,612</b>	<b>\$145</b>	<b>\$80</b>

Schedule 12, Financial Information Returns (2019)

Across all comparator communities, expenses outpaced revenues, underscoring the subsidy that is afforded parks, recreation, and culture services. In 2019, the Town of Huntsville recovered 18% of its expenses through revenues, which is higher than the comparator group average (15%).

In terms of staffing levels, the Town of Huntsville’s annual per capita spending on personnel for parks, recreation, and culture is 16% higher than the comparator group average (\$192 versus \$166). The number of employees (full time equivalents, estimated) in Huntsville is also higher than the comparator municipalities average (47 FTE versus 39 FTE). There are a number of factors that likely contribute to this, including the range of facilities, services, and deployment of staff within and between departments.

**Table 39: Salaries, Wages, and Employee Benefits for Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities/Programs (subset of total expenses)**

Comparison	Annual Staffing Expenses (2019)	Per Household	Per Capita
Group Average	\$3,807,704	\$338	\$166
Huntsville	\$3,805,641	\$347	\$192

Schedule 40, Financial Information Returns (2019)

**Table 40: Employees Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Facilities/Programs**

Comparison	Full-Time	Part-Time	Seasonal	FTE (estimate)	Population per Employee
Group Average	22	21	41	39	583
Huntsville	18	52	60	47	425

Schedule 80A, Financial Information Returns (2019)

These findings consistently demonstrate that the Town’s parks, recreation, and culture services compare quite well to other municipalities. High levels of service are evident, as well as a strong commitment to revenue generation and sales. Staffing levels are generally commensurate with the level of service. At a high-level, there would appear to be few significant efficiencies to be gained, suggesting that additional funding would be required should the Town choose to expand its facilities, programs or service levels.