



# BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

*Parks & Recreation Master Plan*

## Key Directions Report

September 2022 | DRAFT



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*Parks & Recreation Master Plan*

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## Parks & Recreation Master Plan

### 1.0 Introduction

#### Developing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation programs and amenities are critical to supporting the health and well-being of a community. As such, the Township has identified the preparation of a Parks & Recreation Master Plan as a key priority for the community. The purpose of a Parks & Recreation Master Plan is to plan for the parks and recreation needs of current and future residents by developing an understanding of what is working, where there might be gaps, and what the priorities are for the future.

The Master Plan will provide a comprehensive framework to manage and sustain parks, recreation and culture programs, and facilities for the next 10 years.

Objectives of the Plan include:

- Promoting active and healthy environments
- Increasing physical activity among all age groups
- Enhancing overall community quality of life
- Increasing volunteer opportunities and participation in parks and recreation

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is currently being completed in two core phases. The first is the identification of needs across the Township, and the second is the development of the strategies and actions to address the identified needs and support parks and recreation decision-making in the future (the Master Plan).





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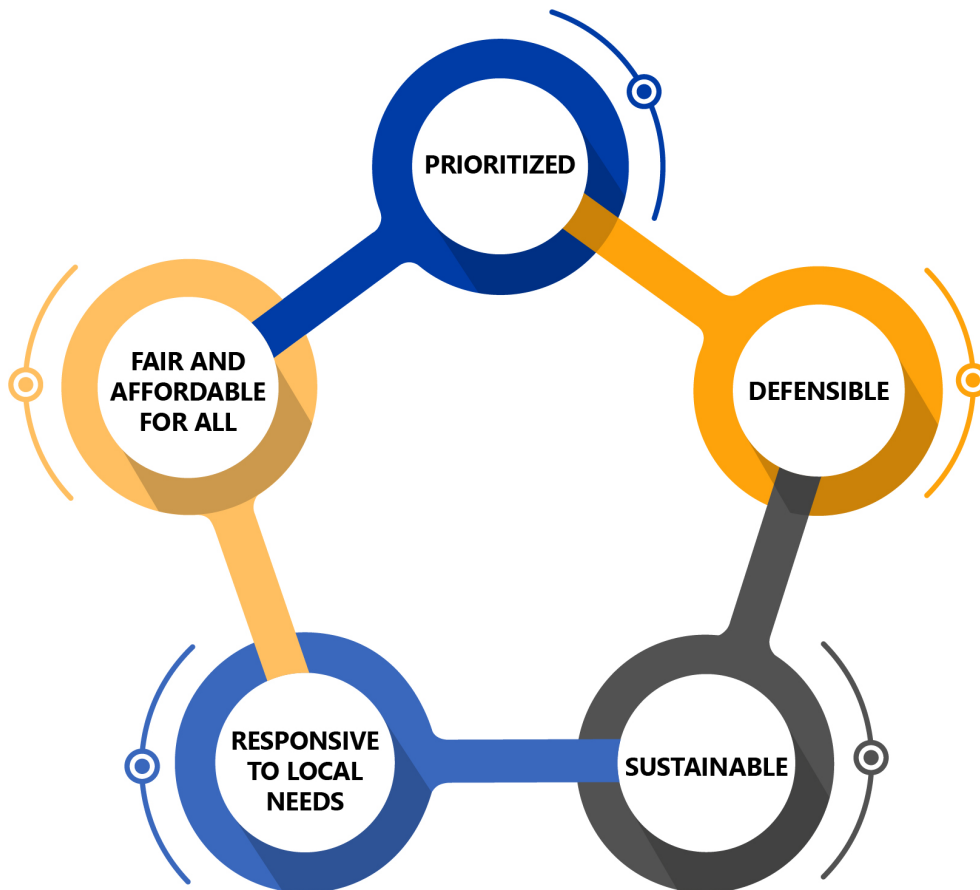
Identifying parks and recreation needs has been completed through a range of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Findings from these activities are provided under separate cover within two background documents:

- **Current State Report**
- **'What We Heard' Consultation Report**

Building on the findings from these two background reports, the purpose of the Key Findings and Directions Report is to provide a preliminary framework for the Master Plan that is built on the trends, feedback from stakeholders and residents, and outcomes from the research. The Key Findings and Directions Report will be reviewed and shared with residents and stakeholders to validate research findings, and to gather feedback on the preliminary direction (vision, principles, and actions) for the Master Plan.

### Summary of Findings and Emerging Themes

Preliminary local and national trends suggest that the parks and recreation master plan should be:





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### NATIONAL TRENDS

From the broader recreation community at the national level, the *Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2015* acts as a guiding document for public recreation providers in Canada. Its mandate is that:

***Every citizen should be engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster individual, community, and environmental well-being.<sup>1</sup>***

The key goals of the *Framework* include:



Adapted from the *Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2015*

### LOCAL TRENDS

From demographic research, the Huron-Kinloss community is the same or similar to provincial profiles for health and activity levels. That said there are some notable indicators which will affect how we participate in recreation.

**Population Profile:** consideration for a range of programming, access, and accessibility of all facilities (indoor and outdoor), social inclusion opportunities (e.g., drop-in space for older adults during the daytime) to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *Pathways to Wellbeing*, 2015



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**Aging Population:** the demand for alternative programming is expected to grow, and consideration of activities, programming, and facilities for an aging population is needed.

**Income Profile:** there is a need to ensure that programs are in place and widely publicized to support residents who may struggle with affordability concerns to enable them in accessing recreational facilities.

**Facilities and Programs:** given that the Township has not seen a lot of diverse immigration into the community to date, it is not expected that the cultural preferences of current residents will shift; however, consideration of these differences is still important to ensure the Township is able to provide culturally safe and supportive facilities and programs.

Key themes to emerge from both the local research and engagement activities include:

- The Township is well serviced for parks and recreation facilities.
- Overall, residents are satisfied with parks, recreation, and programming across the Township.
- There is a need to continue to ensure the accessibility of all public spaces and programs.
- While indoor and outdoor facilities are generally well maintained, there is a continued need to ensure ongoing maintenance and enhancements when needed.
- There is a need to make improvements to trails including overall maintenance, accessibility, and connectivity.
- Improvements are needed to better track facility usage and programming.
- There is a desire to continue to expand and grow facilities and programs to meet growing needs for diversity in program offerings.
  - Ensure there is a range of programming and activities for youth, seniors, and families.
- The volunteer base is shrinking.
- Some challenges with staffing capacity in high season.
- Increasing communication and engagement with community is needed.
- Some residents may be facing affordability challenges.
- There is a need to continue to embrace values of biodiversity and sustainability within planning and decision making.

Interestingly, the national trends noted above have also emerged in the research and local comments to date.



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## 2.0 Vision and Guiding Principles

### Draft Vision

***High quality active lifestyles for the entire community.***

### Draft Principles

**Inclusive** – Parks and recreation opportunities are accessible to people of all ages, gender, religion, culture, abilities, and income.

**Integrated** – Social, economic, and environmental actions and priorities are aligned with parks and recreation planning and support social interactions and promote connections with nature.

**Adaptable** – Planning incorporates current and future needs of residents and growing communities to provide a range of diverse and high-quality recreational opportunities.

**Leadership** – Huron-Kinloss is a leader in building partnerships and promoting community involvement and collaboration.



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### 3.0 Preliminary Strategic Directions

#### Introduction

In post-pandemic 2022 and beyond, people are evaluating why we exercise or pursue an active lifestyle. This will impact what facilities are needed and how we want to engage. While we are returning to some of our past routines, they are not necessarily in the same formats. According to recent information gathered by IBIS World Market Research, we are returning to:

- Include social and wellness themes into why we exercise;
- Modest brick and mortar facilities (versus boutique); and
- A combination of in-person, virtual sessions that can be accessed at home or closer to home.<sup>2</sup>

For municipalities developing planning strategies for parks and recreation, this is good news. These directions are starting to become more prevalent in municipal parks and recreation programming and service delivery.

That said, understanding where recreation fits on the community benefit / core service continuum will be important in developing strategies and investment goals in the delivery of recreation facilities and programs over the life of the plan and beyond.

The preliminary Strategic Directions have been organized by four (4) core areas. Each of the core areas consist of several pillars which build the foundation for the Master Plan. Within each of the pillars, strategic directions or initiatives were developed to respond to the gaps and opportunities identified through research and community feedback.

#### MASTER PLAN CORE AREAS AND PILLARS



##### Facilities

Natural Environment  
Built Form  
Operations  
Trails  
Utilization



##### Programs

Service Delivery Partners  
Outreach  
Bookings  
Program Delivery



##### Governance

Staff  
Facility Management  
Key Performance Indicators



##### Finance

Investment: Operations  
Investment: Capital  
Asset Management  
Rates and Fees  
Sponsorship Programs

<sup>2</sup> CBC Business News Network, August 21, 2022





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### Facilities

The Township is well serviced for recreation and parks facilities. Facilities include opportunities for recreation and leisure pursuits within the natural environment (woodlots, dunes) and built form (formal parks and trails, and buildings). The H-K waterfront, a municipally managed resource, is included as an asset with implications for the master plan.

Indoor and outdoor facilities are well maintained. Indoor and outdoor facilities are provided at comparable levels to the municipal bench-marked group. Based on current planning and development standards for large-scale indoor facilities, such as arenas and indoor pools, the Township is well-serviced. In addition to local facilities, agreements exist with neighbouring municipalities to provide access to facilities and programming for H-K residents.

Best practices show that multi-functional community hubs are the preferred facility type. Advantages of this type of facility include:

- The ability for multiple service providers to operate from one location
- Opportunities to provide targeted programming
- Opportunities to provide a range of activities and programming (e.g., arts and culture)

Over the past two years, demand for outdoor space for a variety of pursuits (sport and recreation, leisure, well-being / spiritual needs) have been documented. This demand for quality and variety for 'closer to home' venues has been reported at the national level in studies by the Canadian Lifestyle and Fitness Institute (2020 & 2021). Additionally, at a local level, ad hoc reports of the increased demand and usage of parks and trails has been reported within Huron-Kinloss and comparator municipalities.

Based on the community profile for participation and growth, the facilities provided will service current and future community needs. That said, the demand for non-sports-based physical activity and recreational opportunities are expected to increase.

### PILLARS OF FACILITIES

- **Natural Environment**
- **Built Form**
- **Trails**
- **Operations**
- **Utilization**



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### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Recreation and leisure opportunities within the natural environment are prevalent in Huron-Kinloss. The natural environment refers to those spaces that occur in nature (e.g., dunes, wooded areas). To preserve and protect their unique characteristics, naturalized areas require specific management practices that may impact public access or are needed to eradicate invasive pests and species.

#### Initiatives

1. Enhance public education of natural area status and use (e.g., beach/ dune, woodlot)
2. Protect and enhance environment / biodiversity
3. Publish and post use of lands plan (e.g., Parks Use Policy)
4. Manage and post initiatives: invasive species, de(re) forestation



### BUILT FORM

Built form refers to any man-made area and includes buildings, and outdoor facilities (parks, trails). Huron-Kinloss is well serviced for both indoor and outdoor built facilities. There is a need to ensure that there is access for all who wish to use programs and facilities. Access should cover the full range of age and abilities. Where the municipality does not directly provide the facility, formalized access partnerships are required.

#### Initiatives

5. Complete AODA audit for outdoor facilities
6. Complete Age-Friendly Action Plan
7. Develop Parks Hierarchy, Standards and Details
8. Build relationships with neighbouring municipalities (similar to Kindardine)



### OPERATIONS

Facility maintenance standards are good for both indoor and outdoor facilities. During the high summer season, there are some staff capacity concerns.

#### Initiatives

9. Develop community partnerships to enhance beautification efforts (e.g., adopt-a-garden/trail/park)



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### TRAILS

Trails refer to all classes of outdoor trails, whether for pedestrian, motorized or shared use. The quality and quantity of the local trails network in Huron-Kinloss is good. The existing trails are intended for local use only, and do not connect to the broader community or neighbouring communities.

#### ■ Initiatives

10. Assess land access needs and feasibility of connecting (local) trail to a larger system
11. Develop an Active Transportation System, based on feasibility (#10 above), that includes a trails hierarchy
12. Develop trails partnerships with users and clubs
13. Actively promote use of trails network

### UTILIZATION

The ability to assess site capacity is reliant on utilization data. Utilization refers to how many hours a facility is booked; however, the information requires a significant amount of staff time to process and is not always available on a timely basis. For sports fields and other halls, data was difficult to trace and requires additional focus in the years to come. For those facilities that are tracked (e.g., arenas) utilization information is available. For arenas, as with neighbouring facilities, capacity exists during off-peak hours.

#### ■ Initiatives

14. Integrate the use of technology into bookings, facility availability, and program registration processes



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### Programs

The programs available are provided by a combination of the municipality, private organizations, and non-profit organizations. Current programming options are offered for all age groups. Based on the community profile, the programming mix is not expected to change.

Accessing programs is currently completed in-person. Booking of facilities and programs is completed manually. It can be time-consuming for staff to maintain a manual booking schedule.

Findings from analyses of the COVID-19 impacts on recreation have identified increased activities in outdoor recreation, increased activities closer to home, increased use of virtual programming, and a renewed level of comfort with indoor activities. The delivery of recreation throughout the community will need to address these trends.

Huron-Kinloss' population is aging. Over the past 10 years, the largest increase has been in the 65- to 84-year-old age range, which increased from 16.5% of the population in 2011 to 22% of the population in 2021. This trend is expected to continue. Assessments of general health, overweight and obesity, and activity levels are not significantly different than provincial averages. There are some segments of the community for whom affordability of programming may be a concern.

The demand for alternative programming for an aging population is expected to grow. The adult population profile suggests that access and accessibility of all facilities as well as social inclusion opportunities will be in demand. In addition, it will be important to maintain policies that support access for all.

That said, addressing how, where and by whom, programs are delivered will be important for program delivery over the next ten years. Establishing alternative methods of service delivery will also be important to mitigate any future service disruptions. These same methods can also be utilized to target groups or individuals who are less active or mobile, and ensure they have access to programming that contributes to a healthier lifestyle.

#### **PILLARS OF PROGRAMS**

- **Service Delivery Partners**
- **Outreach**
- **Bookings**
- **Program Diversity**





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### SERVICE DELIVERY PARTNERS

The minor hockey amalgamation is a best practices approach in the delivery of minor sports. The ability to unite teams under one banner increases the viability of the sports league and reduces duplication of efforts by volunteers. That said, in general, the volunteer base is shrinking throughout the Township.

#### ■ Initiatives

1. Deliver programs that will develop community partners for the delivery of programs (e.g., train-the-trainer)
2. Develop community partnerships with sports, arts, culture program providers
3. Create an environment that supports community-led programming



### OUTREACH

The ability to effectively deliver programming and services is reliant on users' awareness. The municipality currently uses various media platforms to reach the local community; however, the community is not always aware of programs and services. Users and groups also require access to information on a timely basis.

#### ■ Initiatives

4. Increase community engagement and outreach in parks and recreation planning
5. Identify opportunities to increase awareness and promotion of Township programs and services, including programs and services provided by others for the benefit of Township residents



### BOOKINGS

As noted, bookings are currently completed manually and require staff time to process. The ability to track and assess program success and requests is time-consuming.

#### ■ Initiatives

6. Integrate the use of technology into bookings, facility availability, and program registration processes



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### PROGRAM DIVERSITY

Alternative programming refers to non-sport activities. There are many good quality facilities in Huron-Kinloss that can be used for alternative programming. Community feedback has suggested that there is a pent-up demand for a wider range of programming. This desire for a greater variety in programming extends to both indoor and outdoor facilities.

#### ■ Initiatives

7. Develop increased range of programming: active, passive, arts, culture, educational
8. Develop targeted programming: seniors, youth, family



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### Governance

The current community services team is a mix of seasoned and new-to-the-department staff. All have a good understanding of their roles and are enthusiastic in developing the department. There is a need to maintain the drive and level of commitment within the department in the coming years. This includes ensuring that operating procedures and processes are well-documented and in place.

Current governance trends include the development of multi-purpose, shared, 3<sup>rd</sup>-party governed /operated facilities where the facilities are municipally owned. A 3<sup>rd</sup>-party group is defined as anyone who is not part of the Township staff.

3<sup>rd</sup>-party facility governance is becoming the preferred model for day-to-day facility operations and programming. For facilities, a governance model that best suits the Township should include a formalized agreement with any 3<sup>rd</sup>-party user or group. In addition, best practices for this shared model include:

- A commitment by the municipality to support the 3<sup>rd</sup>-party in the development of volunteer capacity (e.g., training, financial reporting / bookkeeping, programming)
- A confirmation that the operational standards are aligned with other municipal buildings.

Good governance also includes the ability to define and set achievable goals. Key performance indicators (KPIs) have become a standardized way of assessing how well we are achieving those goals. To track progress, KPIs are also easily adapted to dashboard-type reporting. This reporting can be shared with Council and the community-at-large.

Within the department there is also a need to ensure that facilities and programs are effectively managed. A formalized framework by which consistent and equitable decisions can be made is needed. Policies that are seen as key to supporting decisions in Parks and Recreation programming, facilities, and fee structure have been identified.

#### **PILLARS OF GOVERNANCE**

- **Staff**
- **Facility Management**
- **Key Performance Indicators**



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### STAFF

There is a good mix of staff and leadership within the Community Services Department. The ability to recruit, train, and ensure this mix continues, needs to be supported. Having a clear path forward includes the development of procedures and guidelines for staff.

#### ■ Initiatives

1. Prioritize the development of standard operating procedures
2. Develop staff roles in conjunction with Service Delivery Review
3. Align staff with (future) core service delivery mandate
4. Consider a succession planning model for senior staff

### FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Both indoor and outdoor facilities are well maintained. During the peak season staff capacity is over-burdened. With differences in staff structure, there is limited opportunity to 'borrow' staff from other departments.

#### ■ Initiatives

5. Explore the potential to use contracted services for non-technical tasks (e.g., open grass cutting)
6. Develop a formalized governance model for community halls

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The ability to understand how well the department is achieving planning goals is required. Uncertainty exists in the use of models / strategic goals for facility and program development. KPIs measure how effectively the goals for facilities, programs and services are being met, over the life of the plan.

#### ■ Initiatives

7. Align operations and services with focus of core service delivery
8. Align programming with core service delivery
9. Develop KPIs that reflect the goals of the plan





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### Finance

The need to invest in parks and recreation departments is centred around community well-being. *Pathways to Recreation* (National Framework) supports the development of strategies to ensure that no family or individual in Canada is denied access to public recreation, due to economic disadvantage. Municipalities are also taking a closer look at their core service investments.

Proven community need and benefit are generally primary considerations for investments in facilities and programming (infrastructure and delivery). Municipalities typically consider community need and benefit core services. Once need and benefit are established, the municipality can assess appropriate investment levels. Future opportunities for funding should be included in highest and best use of all facilities.

The success of a parks and recreation department is also influenced by the quality of its facilities. Asset Management for parks and recreation follows the same principles as existing corporate strategies for asset management.

Existing departmental activities are funded via a combination of taxes, user fees, and sponsorships.

The degree to which municipalities can reduce costs for services are referred to as rates and fees. Rates and fees have many purposes. Two of the most notable are to equitably distribute service costs, and to limit tax increases. Many municipal recreation programs are moving towards a fees system that is based on community benefit.

#### PILLARS OF FINANCE

- **Investment: Operations**
- **Investment: Capital**
- **Asset Management**
- **Rates and Fees**
- **Sponsorship Programs**



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### INVESTMENT: OPERATIONS

Operations include staff and contracted costs for maintenance and general upkeep of all facilities and both indoor and outdoor facilities are included. Operations also includes any costs associated with providing programming. Annual investments in parks and recreation are in line with comparator municipalities.

#### ■ Initiatives

1. Align operations and services with focus of core service delivery
2. Align programming with core service delivery



### INVESTMENT: CAPITAL

Capital investments in parks and recreation are rising. Capital costs are those that are specifically related to the design, construction, or renewal of an asset. Assets include land, buildings, and equipment. Parks and trails are also considered assets.

#### ■ Initiatives

3. Create prioritized replacement, renewal, or re-purposing strategy based on highest and best use for all facilities.
4. Update outdoor capital plan



### ASSET MANAGEMENT

Most park assets are in good condition. Indoor facilities in good condition and well maintained. Asset management requires all sites to be assessed for Remaining Useful Life (RUL). As well, the highest and best use of a facility is also considered. Currently, no structured asset management program exists for parks.

#### ■ Initiatives

5. Develop an outdoor asset inventory
6. Create a prioritized replacement, renewal, or re-purposing strategy



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### RATES AND FEES

The Township wants to ensure that their fee structure is equitable and accessible for all. There are inconsistencies in how rates and fees are collected. There are also pockets where affordability is a concern.

#### ■ Initiatives

7. Develop a core services mandate that includes access and affordability
8. Assess actual cost for facilities and programs
9. Develop a cost recovery strategy that maximizes community benefit

### SPONSORSHIP

Many of the Township's capital infrastructure in parks and recreation are funded by grants or funding from other levels of government; however, this stream of funding tends to be inconsistent.

#### ■ Initiatives

10. Assess market value of assets to maximize sponsorship potential
11. Develop prioritized investment strategy for parks and recreation
12. Develop, publish, and promote sponsorship package
13. Continually access alternative funding programs from suppliers (e.g., free skate, playground funding)