

Public Consultation Feedback

Between January 9, 2023, and January 30, 2023, the Town of Essex conducted a series of general public and stakeholder surveys to obtain community feedback on the existing parks and recreation system with the Town. This included a Public Survey, Stakeholder Survey, Staff and Council Survey, Older Adult Survey, and Youth Survey. All residents and interested parties are encouraged to complete the Public Survey and all individuals representing stakeholder groups, seniors, and youth are also encouraged to complete their respective surveys. The survey was available via the Town of Essex website and focused on questions specific to the accessibility of parks and recreation services, the overall satisfaction with parks and recreation service options for various age groups, and how frequent parks and/or recreation services are used by the survey respondent. The feedback received will be used to inform the review of the Town's existing Parks and Recreation system and will guide recommendations and next steps for the Town's future.

The survey findings provide guidance in terms of responding to the public interest to create a strategic Community Services Master Plan for the Town. The open-ended questions within the survey provide a list of concrete suggestions of items that could be added to parks and recreation services to increase overall enjoyment and use. The themes, outcomes, and recommendations that resulted from the online survey and the various other engagement activities will need to be considered and directly referred to when creating the Community Services Master Plan.

The following sections break down the results, comments and recommendations from respondents who participated in the series of surveys.

1.1 General Public Feedback

The Public Survey was targeted at individuals between the ages of 20 and 54 years old. At the end of the survey period, a total of 282 responses were received. Within the Town, 51% of respondents live in Essex Centre (Ward 1), 19% in Harrow (Ward 4), 16% in Colchester (Ward 3), 11% in McGregor (Ward 2), and 2% in other parts of the Town.

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|---|-----|
|  Harrow (Ward 4) | 45 |
|  Colchester (Ward 3) | 39 |
|  Essex Centre (Ward 1) | 126 |
|  McGregor (Ward 2) | 27 |
|  Other | 6 |



Figure 1: Respondents Distribution

The majority of respondents were between the age of 30 and 54 (94%). **Respondents** under 19 and over 55+ were asked to complete separate surveys.

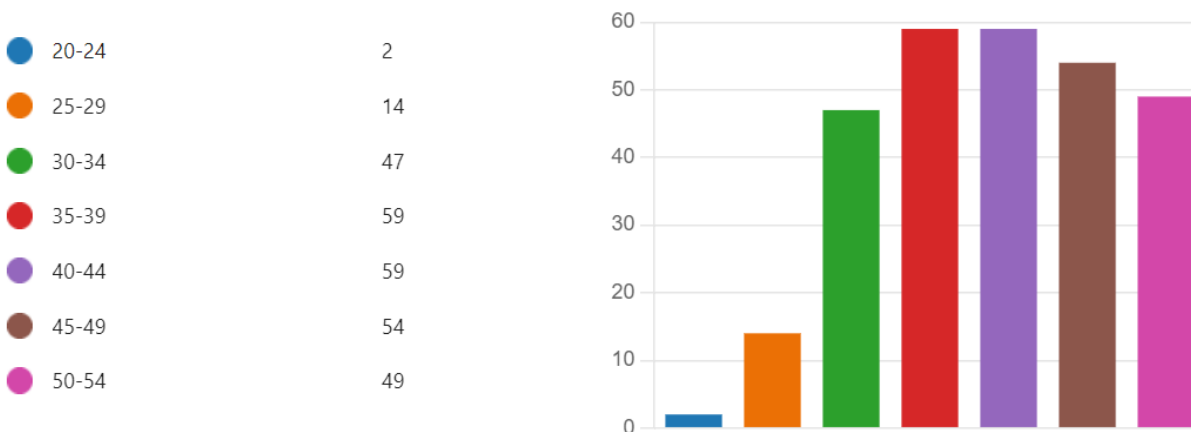


Figure 2: Respondent Age Distribution

The survey illustrated the following:

- 63% of respondents have four or more people in their household.
- 33% of respondents or members of their family/household visit a park or trail once or twice a week, while 30% of respondents or members of their family/household visit a couple times a month.
- The most visited parks, open spaces and trails are Sadler’s Nature Park and Trail (56%), Chrysler Canada Greenway (53%), Essex Sports Park (45%), Colchester Harbour Park (41%), and Harrow Fairgrounds Park (32%).
- The most frequently used facilities include walking paths or trails (80%), playgrounds (47%), and splash pads (38%).
- 74% of respondents are either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the Town’s parks and trails.
- 37% of respondents or members of their family/household visit indoor recreation and cultural facilities once or twice a week.
- The most visited indoor recreation and cultural facilities are Essex Centre Sports Complex (51%), Essex Recreation Complex (43%), Harrow and Colchester South Arena (27%), and Maedel Community Centre (22%).
- The most frequently used indoor recreation and cultural facilities are the ice rink arena (winter) (46%), the pool (43%), the library (25%), and the gymnasium (24%).
- 56% of respondents are somewhat satisfied with the Town’s indoor recreation facilities.

- To encourage respondents or members of their family/household to participate in parks and recreation activities more often, the Town should have more variety in programs (46%), more variety in recreation and play facilities (37%), more affordable (31%), improve the quality of parks and recreation facilities (30%), and better hours of operation (28%).
- Respondents would like to pay for new recreation and cultural facilities through partnership opportunities (38%) and offset by user fees (30%).

The survey also asked, generally, what additional amenities respondents would like to see in the Community Services System. For park systems, respondents would like to see more benches, garbage bins, and dog bags, shaded structures and pavilions more trees and naturalized areas, public washrooms, better maintenance of baseball diamonds, inclusive playground equipment, better utilization of current green space (i.e., creating a community garden), parks or fitness equipment for youth and older adults, dog park (specifically in Harrow/Colchester), lighting, a disc golf course, pickleball courts, accessible ramps into sidewalks, a skateboard / BMX pump track, outdoor water fountains or refill stations, and larger splash pads.

From current trail systems, respondents would like to see trail signages, more connected walking trails, longer trails, more scenic areas, more benches, garbage bins, and dog bags, public washrooms or port-a-potties, consistent maintenance and lighting, both paved and wooded trails, and more weed / poison ivy maintenance.

1.2 Youth Survey Feedback

The Youth Survey was targeted at individuals between the ages of 0 and 19 years old. At the end of the survey period, a total of 59 responses were received. The majority of respondents were between the age of 10 and 14 (71%).

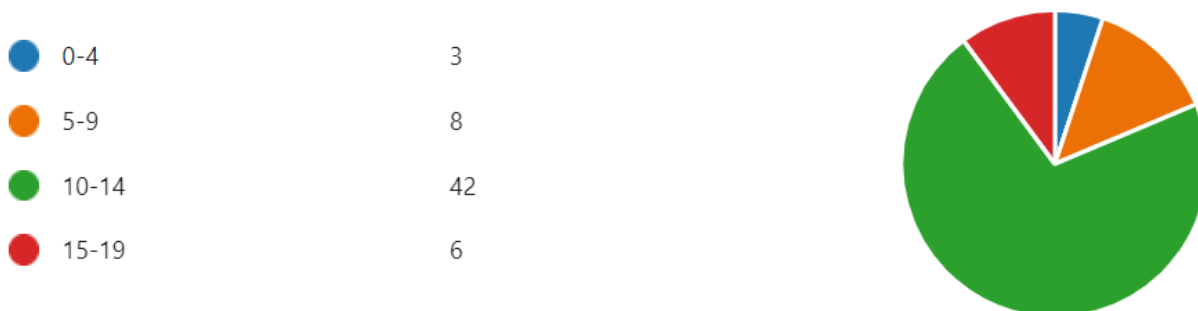


Figure 3: Age of Youth Respondents

The survey illustrated the following:

- 61% of respondents think there are not enough outdoor spaces (i.e., parks and sports field) for their age-group, and 17% of respondents think there are enough outdoor spaces for their age group.

- 39% of respondents think there are not enough outdoor spaces for other youths and 20% of respondents think there are enough outdoor spaces for other youths.
- 47% of respondents think there are not enough indoor spaces (i.e., gymnasiums and arenas) for their age-group, and 20% of respondents think there are enough indoor spaces for their age-group.
- 47% of respondents think there are not indoor spaces for other youths, and 25% of respondents think there are enough indoor spaces for their age-group.
- 34% of respondents think there are not enough outdoor recreation activities (i.e., sports teams and day camps) offered for their age-group, and 13% of respondents think there are enough outdoor recreation activities for their age-group.
- 32% of respondents think there are enough outdoor recreation activities for other age-groups, and 27% of respondents think there are not enough outdoor recreation activities offered for other age-groups.
- 42% of respondents think there are not enough indoor recreation activities (i.e., sports teams, clubs, and day camps) offered for their age-group, and 34% of respondents think there are enough indoor recreation activities for their age-group.
- 39% of respondents think there are not enough indoor recreation activities (i.e., sports teams, clubs, and day camps) offered for their age-group, and 27% of respondents think there are enough indoor recreation activities for their age-group.

Respondents' favourite summer activities to do outdoors include swimming, biking, basketball, soccer, baseball, and playing in the park. Respondents' favourite indoor activities include playing video games, watching TV, swimming, and reading. Respondents' favourite winter outdoor activities include skating, building a snowman, tobogganing/sledding, and hockey. Respondents' favourite winter indoor activities include watching movies/TV, playing video games, making hot chocolate, and swimming at the indoor pool.

Additional outdoor spaces respondents would like to see provided for their children and youth include basketball courts, more playground equipment, a football field, outdoor rink (for ice hockey or roller hockey), badminton courts, mountain biking trails, an outdoor pool with a slide, and larger skate parks. Respondents also suggested more trees or shaded areas, bathrooms, and spaces for older youth to enjoy. The parks and outdoor spaces should also be wheelchair accessible.

Additional indoor spaces respondents would like to see provided for their children and youth include more diverse, multi-use gymnasiums for drop-in or organized sports (basketball, tennis, badminton, volleyball, soccer) and activities, rock climbing wall, an arcade, a trampoline park, indoor batting cage, a paintball facility and indoor skateboard facilities.

Additional programs and activities that should be added for children and youth include cooking or baking classes, music classes, competitive sports teams or clubs, intramurals or leagues, training camps, day

care, drama club, video game club, roller club, dance classes, book club, movie nights, and STEM activities.

Respondents also suggested longer bike lanes, bookstores, a museum, more organized activities for teenagers, more trails, and a better distribution of parks, outdoor and indoor facilities across all wards in the Town of Essex.

1.3 Older Adult Survey Feedback

The Older Adult Survey was targeted at individuals ages 55 and older. At the end of the survey period, a total of 127 responses were received. Majority of respondents were between the age of 55 and 69 (72%).

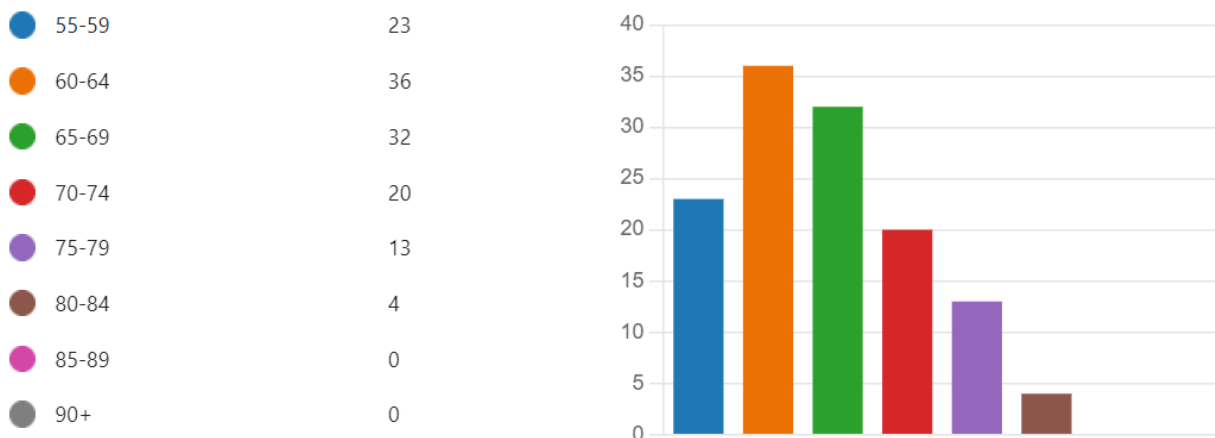


Figure 4: Age of Older Adult Survey respondents

The survey illustrated the following:

- 26% of respondents visit parks or trails weekly, 20% seasonally, and 19% daily.
- 32% of respondents visit indoor recreation facilities weekly, 22% only on special occasions, and 14% seasonally.
- 39% of respondents attend events offered by the Town only on special occasions and 38% seasonally.
- For adults ages 55 and older, majority of respondents think there are not enough outdoor spaces, indoor spaces, outdoor recreational activities and indoor recreation activities.
- 37% of respondents would like to pay for new recreation and culture facilities and/or programs through offset by user fees, and 30% of respondents would like to pay through partnership opportunities.

The most frequently used amenities by respondents when they visit parks and trails include the walking trails, viewing platforms, benches, the playground with their grandchildren, pickleball courts, public washrooms, baseball diamonds, dog parks, community garden, picnic tables, and the harbour. The most frequently used amenities that respondents use when they visit indoor facilities include the pool, arena, community centre, indoor walking pad, ice rink, pickleball courts, and washrooms.

Additional amenities suggested in parks or along trails that respondents suggested, include more organized events and activities, interactive outdoor fitness equipment, paved bike paths, a dog park, more benches, washrooms, more shaded areas and pavilions, preserved green spaces or natural areas, more trails, and water fountains.

Additional amenities for indoor recreation spaces respondents suggested, include additional safety equipment, more social events, aquafit or water aerobics classes, senior fitness classes (such as yoga or tai chi), cards or board game nights, educational classes, more seating areas, and a walking track.

Respondents also suggested better maintenance and cleaning of existing facilities, more gathering spaces to rent, increased accessibility in facilities (i.e., ramps, railings, elevators), making programs more affordable, better advertisement and increased accessibility to information, extending or changing hours of the pool and pickleball courts, more accessible parking spots, diversifying activities for different skill levels and groups of individuals, having better signages in outdoor spaces to increase safety for pedestrians, and creating accessible rest areas for wheelchair users.

1.4 Stakeholder Survey Feedback

At the end of the survey period, a total of 16 responses were received. The following organizations provided feedback: Essex Men's Hockey League, Royal Canadian Legion Br338 Harrow, Essex Kent Girls Interlock Hockey League, Greater Essex County District School Board, Drexler Diving Systems, Essex Minor Baseball, Harrow Colchester Chamber of Commerce, Youth and Adult Soccer, Harrow Senior Men's Hockey League, Essex 73s, Rotary Club of Harrow, Libro Credit Union, Harrow Ladies Slow Pitch League, and Windsor Essex County Health Unit.

Depending on the type of organization and service they provide, the number of participants from the above stakeholders ranges from 16 to 36,700 (students in a school board) in 2022 or were unknown due to the impacts of the pandemic. All respondents expect participant numbers to either stay the same or increase over the next five years.

The survey results provided the following information:

- The most frequently used outdoor recreation facility by respondents is Public Sportsfields. Of the respondents that utilize outdoor recreation facilities, 45% rate the quality of these facilities as very good or excellent.

- The most frequently used indoor facility include the ice rink and meeting rooms/halls for recreation and/or events. Of the respondents that utilize indoor recreation facilities, 73% rate the quality of these facilities as very good or excellent.
- Several respondents noted the need for a multi-use indoor recreational centre that is not just an arena and allows for a larger variety of sports and activities to be played.

Respondents noted that existing outdoor recreation and culture facilities could be improved through better maintenance and drainage of baseball diamonds and fields, upgrading the Colchester Harbour entrance, and ensuring facilities are accessible for all ability levels and age groups. Respondents also indicated a desire for more baseball diamonds and a bandshell.

In terms of indoor recreation and culture facilities, respondents noted that existing facilities could be improved by fixing the showers in dressing rooms to provide hot water, allowing more time for the last booking of the day to exit the facility, eliminating user fees for service clubs, and having the Town operate the snack bar in Harrow and keeping it open during all programming times. When asked what was missing from current indoor facilities, respondents noted the desire for an additional pool in Harrow or Colchester, an ice allocation and scheduling policy, and a multi-purpose indoor facility.


1.5 Staff and Council Survey Feedback

At the end of the survey period, a total of 29 responses were received, with six of them being Councillor responses. The remaining respondents were from a variety of internal departments, including Infrastructure Services, Environmental Services, Planning, Corporate Services, Legal Legislative, and Office of the CAO, with 35% of respondents from the Community Services department.

The survey results provided the following information:

- 59% of respondents rated the quality of parks within the Town as Very Good, while 62% of respondents rated the quality of trails as either Good or Very Good. 65% of respondents rated the quality of sports fields in the Town as Good or Very Good, while 72% of respondents rated the quality of indoor facilities as Good or Very Good.
- 34% of respondents would like to pay for new recreation facilities and/or programs through offsetting them through user fees; 29% selected through partnership opportunities; and 19% selected through increasing taxes.

When asked about what they are hoping to get out of this Master Plan, respondents generally stated that they want a clear roadmap, vision and/or objectives to guide the creation and improvements of recreation facilities and programs, as well as direction for capital projects. Other responses include unifying the goals across Town departments, better Official Plan policies for parks, and utilizing the Town's existing facilities and amenities to their full potential.



When asked about what was missing from parks and trails in the Town, respondents generally noted the need for a broader trail system to connect neighbourhoods, along with improved mapping and signage within parks and trails. Other respondents noted the need for more water recreation at Colchester Beach, additional dog parks, senior exercise equipment, and more shade structures and canopies. In terms of what's missing from current indoor recreation facilities, respondents noted more gymnasium space, larger facilities for indoor sports, upgrading meeting rooms with live streaming capabilities, and adding more fitness or weightlifting rooms.

Generally, respondents prioritized the long-term planning and development of the Town, balancing the increasing population with the available resources for growth and development.