



# Community Services Master Plan

Town of Essex

November 2023



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## Acronyms / Abbreviations

CSMP	Community Services Master Plan
CWATS	County Wide Active Transportation Trail System
Town	Town of Essex
BIA	Business Improvement Area
ERCA	Essex Region Conservation Authority
GECDSB	Greater Essex County District School Board
CSCP	Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence
Stantec	Stantec Consulting Ltd.
Ha	Hectares
NOPI	Notice of Master Plan Initiation
NOPC	Notice of Master Plan Project Completion
KM	Kilometres
m	Metres
OP	Official Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

## Acknowledgements

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

- Management Staff and Members of Town Council
- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
- Essex Centre BIA
- Optimist Club of Essex
- Harrow & Colchester South Chamber of Commerce
- Rotary Club of Essex
- Tourism Essex
- Rotary Club of Harrow
- Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB)
- Harrow Fair Board
- Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB)
- Essex Minor Baseball Association
- Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence (CSCP)
- Essex Optimist Recreational Soccer League
- Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)
- Essex County Soccer League
- County of Essex Planning
- Essex County Ravens Football Club
- County of Essex CWATS
- Essex Youth Centre
- Essex County Library
- Sun County Minor Hockey
- Kinsmen Club of Harrow
- Stantec Consulting Ltd.

We would like to extend special thanks to Jake Morassut Director of Community Services, from the Town of Essex. Finally, thank you to all the community members who graciously participated in the creation of this CSMP.



## Executive Summary

### Purpose of the Plan

Parks and recreation facilities and services are an essential part of any community. Parks, open spaces, sports facilities, and trails, allow residents to spend time being active and enjoying the outdoors. Indoor recreation facilities allow for a wide range of activities throughout the year. Amenities, such as playgrounds, pickleball courts and ice rinks, are important multi-generational places where community members can engage with each other to play and socialize. Recreation programs encourage physical activity, socialization, and expanding interests. Overall, good parks and recreation systems can contribute to a high quality of life. The intention of this Community Services Master Plan is to provide guidance for the Town of Essex, over the coming years, to continue to provide quality parks and recreation services for residents and visitors to enjoy.

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

In developing this Master Plan, a background report was prepared that summarized the existing parks and recreation facilities and needs in the Town of Essex. A comparator analysis was also prepared, which summarized recreation facilities in local municipalities of a similar size and compared to the Town of Essex. From this background report, needs were further explored and refined through stakeholder and public engagement. It is from this background research, analysis, and stakeholder feedback that the direction of parks and recreation for the Town of Essex stems; culminating in this guiding document the Town of Essex Community Services Master Plan.

Engagement

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

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

During Phase 2, a virtual municipal workshop was held to obtain additional feedback from Municipal Staff.

In Phase 3, the project team held an in-person public open house to share ideas and collect feedback from the community on the CSMP strategies and recommendations. Finally, the project team presented the final Master Plan to the Council through a virtual meeting for review, approval, and adoption. Each engagement activity offered another opportunity for the public’s voice to shape the Master Plan. Consolidating all the steps into the final Master Plan for Council consideration was the final step in the plan’s development.

The engagement process can be summarized by the graphic below.

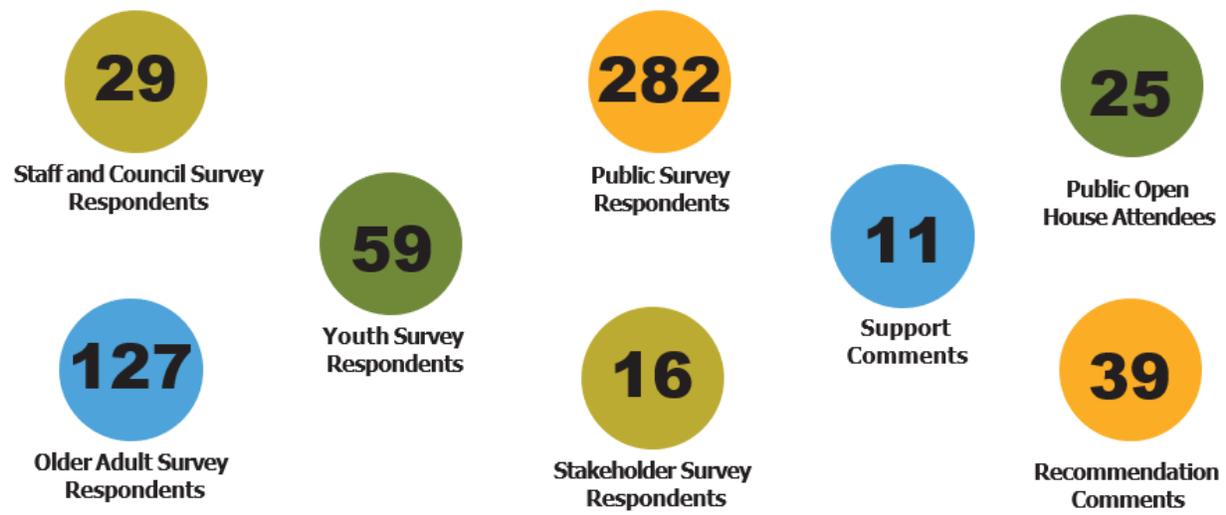


Figure 1: CSMP Engagement Summary

**Vision**

Parks and recreation are essential services to ensure a healthy community and high quality of life for Essex residents. In alignment with the Town of Essex Strategic Plan, the vision for the Community Services Master Plan is as follows:

*Improve every resident’s quality of life by enhancing and expanding access to parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities within the Town through accessible, affordable, and inclusive programming and recreational facilities.*

The following strategic directions have also been identified for the Town of Essex’s Community Services Master Plan:

**Strategic Direction #1** - Develop parks, trails, and open spaces to meet community needs, promote active living, and encourage connections with nature for all ages and abilities.

**Strategic Direction #2** - Improve indoor municipal recreational facilities and services to enrich the lives of all citizens through accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences.

**Strategic Direction #3** - Demonstrate active leadership by supporting cultural spaces and programming to encourage creativity while building a vibrant and inclusive community.

**Strategic Direction #4** - Expand and enhance recreational programs offered by the Town, including improvements to service delivery and program offerings to cater to the changing needs of the community.

**Strategic Direction #5** - Monitor the Town’s assets in a deliberate and structured manner, focusing maintaining a high quality of parks and recreation amenities and services.

### Recommendations for Community Parks and Recreation Services

This Master Plan provides recommendations that are the result of public feedback, background research, parks and recreation trends, and the assessment of needs and gaps in service in the Town of Essex. The 111 recommendations fall into seven categories: Legislation and Policy; Parkland, Trails, and Open Space; Indoor Recreational Facilities; Cultural Facilities, Programs and Services Delivery; Financing, Management and Staff Strategies; and Implementation and Monitoring.

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

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

# 1 Master Plan Overview

Stantec Consulting Ltd. (Stantec) was retained by the Town of Essex (Town) to develop a comprehensive Community Services Master Plan (CSMP). The CSMP will act as a strategic framework that will guide the future development of the Town’s parks, open spaces, recreation, and leisure services to addresses existing needs while exploring and planning for future needs. The CSMP will need to take the diverse needs of each of the Town’s communities into consideration, including Essex Centre, Harrow, McGregor, and Colchester. Considering anticipated future growth, shifting trends in recreation, and changing community expectations, it is now vital to understand existing and future needs for parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces and have a plan in place to meet those needs.



Figure 2: Veterans Memorial Park, Harrow

The CSMP for the Town of Essex was developed using a three (3) phase approach. Figure 3: Master Plan Phasing Overview illustrates the following Master Plan phase structure.

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

The initial phase of the project involved gathering of background information to establish the foundation for the new CSMP. It consisted of creating an inventory of existing facilities and assessing existing conditions of those facilities. This phase also consists of developing a consultation plan. During this phase, an analysis of trends and best practices, along with a needs assessment, gap analysis and comparator analysis, was conducted. Generally, the aim of the first phase was to establish a starting point from which a unique, context-specific Master Plan could be developed along with an inventory of parks spaces and amenities that the Town already owns and operates, and compiling data, statistics, and research on Provincial and National Trends and Best Practices in regard to community services like parks and amenities.

The second phase built off this background research to recognize and highlight current strengths related to the provision and delivery of community services, while simultaneously identifying any noted weaknesses. This phase identified areas for improvement in the Town’s Community Services structure and assessed fees and charges between comparator municipalities, as well as determined strategic directions and recommendations to guide the future development and management of Community Services.

The final phase of the Master Plan project established an action plan for implementation and monitoring of the recommendations, in alignment with the strategic direction(s) developed in the previous phase. The recommendations detailed within this Master Plan document provide the Town with practical and specific direction on future improvements to Community Services. The third phase also included the finalization of this Master Plan document, which incorporates all background information from previous phases and community input and feedback received throughout all phases of the Master Plan process.



Figure 3: Master Plan Phasing Overview

## 1.1 What is a Community Services Master Plan?

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

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

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

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

The CMSP project objectives are as follows:

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

## 1.2 Community Engagement

Community engagement is key in the development of a Community Services Master Plan for the Town. In order to identify and move forward the priorities for community services within the Town of Essex, community engagement activities and tools were used to understand the community needs, values, and aspirations. Over the course of the three-phase CSMP project, various engagement activities were held to better understand the community’s needs, both from a municipal staff and public point of view.

Engagement Activities:

- 1) Dedicated CSMP Website Launched on Town’s Website
- 2) Distribution of Notice of Master Plan Initiation (NOPI)
- 3) User-specific Virtual Engagement Surveys for the Public, Sport & Community Groups, Staff & Council, Youth, and Seniors
- 4) Virtual Municipal Recommendations Workshop
- 5) In-Person Public Draft Strategies and Recommendations Open House
- 6) Virtual Council Presentation and Plan Adoption
- 7) Distribution of Notice of Master Plan Completion (NOPC)

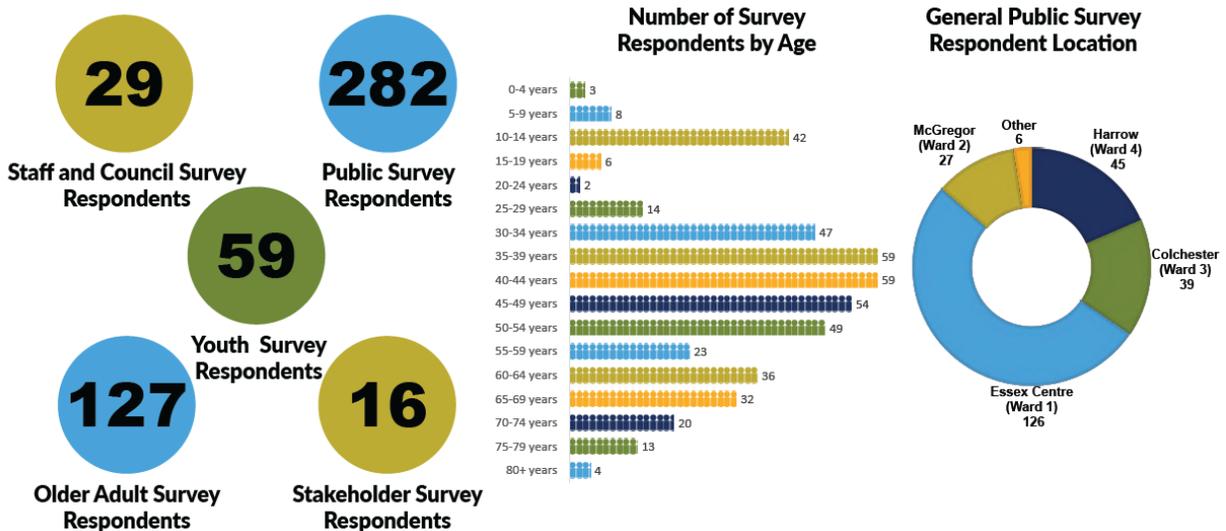


Figure 4: Summary of Engagement

The various engagement events held throughout the Master Plan process assisted in ensuring that the Public's interest was incorporated into the vision, strategic directions, and recommendations for community services over the next 10 years. The engagement findings provided guidance in terms of responding to the public interest to create a strategic Community Services Master Plan for the Town. The themes, outcomes, and recommendations that resulted from the engagement activities directly influences the creation of this Community Services Master Plan.



Figure 5: Public Open House

## 2 Alignment with Existing Legislation, Policies, & Practices

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

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

### PROVINCIAL AND COUNTY PLANS AND LEGISLATION

- Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022
- Planning Act
- The Covid Economic Recovery Act, 2020
- Municipal Act
- Provincial Policy Statement
- County Of Essex Official Plan, 2014
- County Wide Active Transportation System Master Plan, 2012

### TOWN PLANS AND STRATEGIES

- Town Of Essex Official Plan, 2009
- Town Of Essex Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, 2015
- Development Charges By-Law and Background Study, 2019
- Town of Essex Asset Management Plan, 2022
- Town of Essex Climate Adaptation Plan, 2021
- Town of Essex Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2019-2024
- Town of Essex Strategic Plan, 2019-2022
- Downtown Essex Centre Streetscape & Silo District Plan, 2013

- Downtown Harrow Streetscape Guidelines, 2018
- Colchester Centre Landscape Master Plan, 2012
- Harrow Community Strategic Plan, 2011

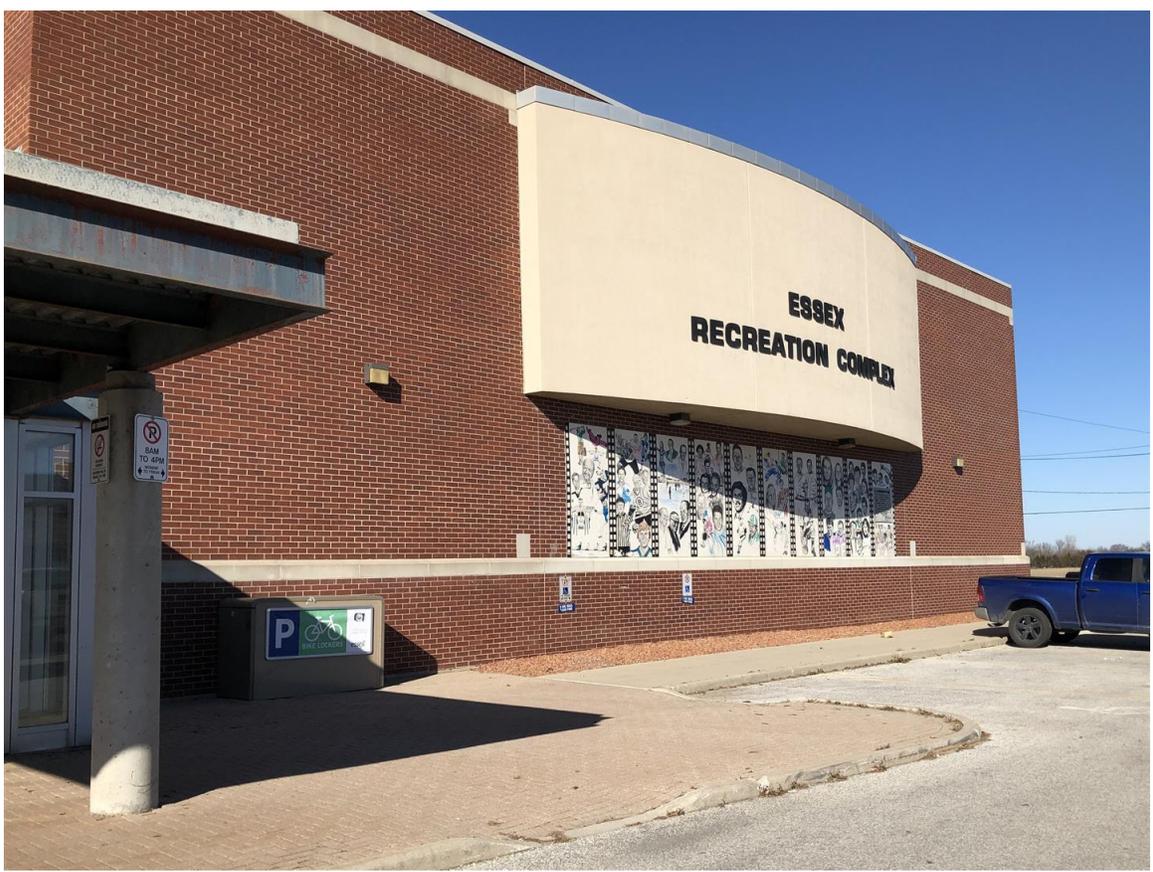


Figure 6: Essex Recreation Complex

## 3 Town of Essex Community Profile

It is important to consider the Town's demographic profile, during development of the CSMP, in order to better understand the current conditions, trends, and potential future demands facing the community. The following provides a high-level review of the Town's demographic profile using the most recent Statistics Canada census data available (2021 data).

The Town of Essex is a lower-tier municipality within a two-tier County government in southwestern Ontario, being part of the County of Essex. The Town of Essex is approximately 28 kilometres southeast of the City of Windsor, with the Town of Amherstburg bordering to the west, the Town of Tecumseh and the Town of Lakeshore bordering in the north, and the Town of Kingsville bordering to the east. The Town has waterfront access onto Lake Erie along the southern edge. Nearby airports include the Windsor International Airport, Leamington Airport, Grosse Ile Airport, and the Coleman A. Young International Airport.

The Town consists of four urban centres: Essex Centre, Harrow, McGregor, and Colchester. Essex Centre, the largest of the four urban areas, is the geographic centre of Essex County and is located along Highway 3. Essex Centre is also approximately 8 km away from the nearest Highway 401 access point. Harrow serves the agricultural community and is home to the Harrow Research and Development Centre, along with the annual Harrow Fair, one of Ontario's oldest country fairs. Colchester is a waterfront community noted for its harbour and public beach as well as its active transportation trails and cycling routes. McGregor is notable for its outdoor sports activities at Co-An Park and the annual McGregor Music Festival.

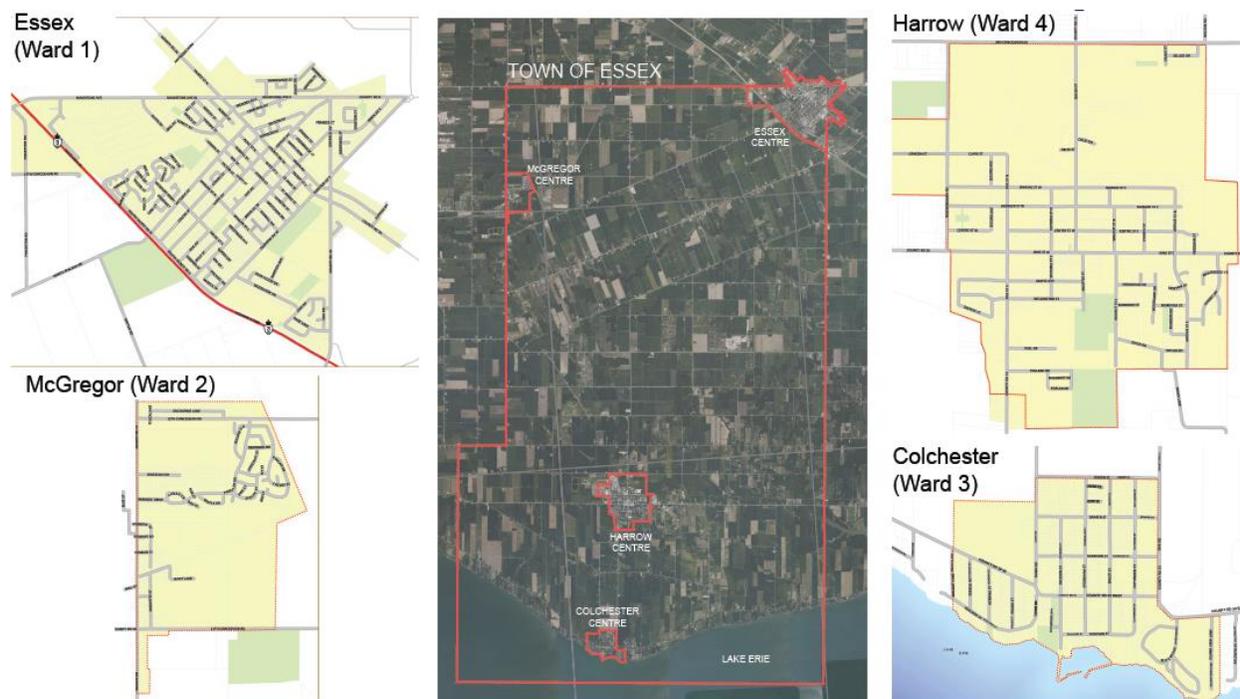


Figure 7: Town of Essex Map

### 3.1 Current and Forecasted Populations

According to the 2021 Census of Population, the Town’s total population was 21,216, which was a 3.9% increase from 2016 census population (789 people).

Currently, the County of Essex is undertaking a comprehensive review of their 2014 Official Plan. Based on the most recent population projections within the 2014 OP, the Town is projected to grow to a population of 22,150 by 2031, which is a further 4% increase (934 people) and would account for 7% of the growth in Essex County.

The Town of Essex has seen a gradual increase in population since 2006. The overall population of the Town is expected to continue increasing by 2031, with the older population expected to grow more significantly in relation to children and youth (ages 0-19) categories. This is illustrated by the increase in median age of residents from 40.8 in 2006 to 46.8 in 2021. Growth for age cohorts 50+ is expected to drive an increasing share of older residents in the Town. This indicates that demand for all parks, recreation and culture types will grow, but demand for programs and facilities catering to seniors and older adults will see the strongest demand for new services.

**Table 1: Essex Population Growth by Age Cohort (2006-2021)**

Age Cohort	2006	2011	2016	2021
0-4	1,045	870	905	980
5-9	1,215	1,095	1,030	1,115
10-14	1,430	1,200	1,160	1,155
15-19	1,465	1,375	1,255	1,175
20-24	1,145	1,085	1,170	1,160
25-29	960	870	975	1,155
30-34	1,185	935	985	1,155
35-39	1,305	1,250	1,060	1,140
40-44	1,730	1,325	1,365	1,135
45-49	1,660	1,730	1,410	1,365
50-54	1,515	1,640	1,775	1,470
55-59	1,410	1,505	1,730	1,850
60-64	1,105	1,425	1,575	1,715
65+	2,870	3,290	4,035	4,650
<b>TOTAL</b>	20,035	19,600	20,427	21,216
<b>Median</b>	40.8	44.2	46.1	46.8
<b>Change</b>		(435)	827	789
<b>Percent Change</b>		(2.2%)	4.2%	3.9%

Share of Total Population				
Age Cohort	2006	2011	2016	2021
0-4	5.22%	4.44%	4.43%	4.62%
5-9	6.06%	0.01%	5.04%	5.26%
10-14	7.14%	6.12%	5.68%	5.44%
15-19	7.31%	7.02%	6.14%	5.54%
20-24	5.71%	5.54%	5.73%	5.47%
25-29	4.79%	4.44%	4.77%	5.44%
30-34	5.91%	4.77%	4.82%	5.44%
35-39	6.51%	6.38%	5.19%	5.37%
40-44	8.63%	6.76%	6.68%	5.35%
45-49	8.29%	8.83%	6.90%	6.43%
50-54	7.56%	8.37%	8.69%	6.93%
55-59	7.04%	7.68%	8.47%	8.72%
60-64	5.52%	7.27%	7.71%	8.08%
65+	14.32%	16.79%	19.75%	21.92%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

### 3.2 Demographics Breakdown

The following section provides a brief summary of some of the Town’s key/notable statistics based on the 2021 and 2016 Census data. These highlights could influence decisions around planning for parks, recreation, and culture in Essex:

- The Town’s population has grown by 1,184 people since 2006, indicating a 5.9% population increase.
- The Town’s population has been aging since 2006, with a median age of 40.8 in 2006 and 46.8 in 2021.
- Based on 2021 Census data, around 90% of the population speak English as their mother tongue; in addition, the top languages spoken at home other than English are Portuguese, German, and Chinese languages.
- Based on 2016 Census data, 13,335 people in the Town have a secondary (high) school diploma or above.
- Around 36% of people in Essex have some type of post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree in 2016, compared to 45% of Ontarians.
- The median 2020 household income is \$87,000 and the average 2020 household income is \$103,600.

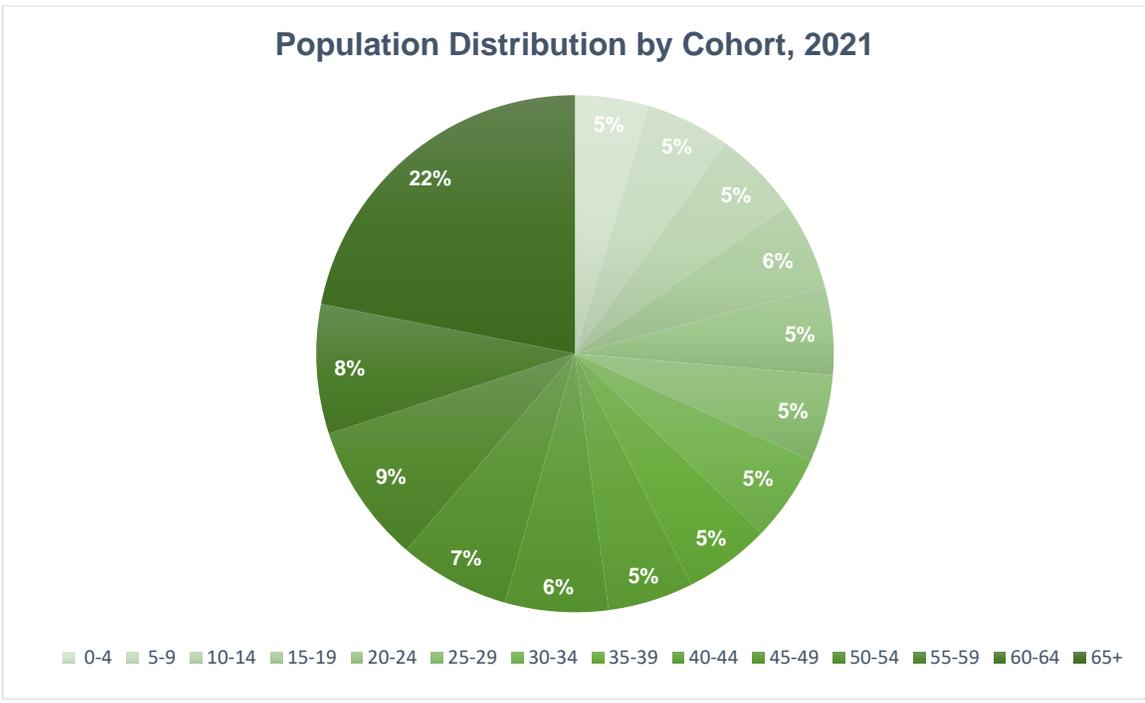


Figure 8: Essex Population Distribution by Cohort in 2021

### 3.3 Demographic Analysis of Needs

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

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

Overall, expected population growth and anticipated demographic structure indicates that a shift in average population age will result in an increased market demand on existing facilities and services, as well as a growing market demand for the development and expansion of new facilities and services across the Town. Research shows that certain demographic groups, like older adults, encounter more barriers accessing resources like parks and recreation services. As a result of the projected increase in population and the estimated higher proportion of seniors, it is recommended that the Town should adjust its delivery of existing services, facilities, and programs to accommodate such growth in older age groups. Details on how these services can be modified will be studied and determined as part of Phases 2 and 3 of this Community Services Master Plan.

### 3.4 Recent and Ongoing Developments

The largest ongoing development in the Town is the Essex Town Centre Subdivision developed by the Valente Development Corporation. The subdivision is anticipated to add 567 residential units to the community, consisting of single-family homes, semi-detached, and townhomes. The first two phases are currently under construction and will add 135 townhomes and 19 single family homes to the area. The completed development is expected to have \$350 million in total value and will create a wide range of direct and indirect jobs.

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



Figure 9: Townsview Park, Essex Centre

### 3.5 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was undertaken to develop a fulsome awareness of all the factors involved in providing existing Community Services to the Town of Essex. This SWOT Analysis was undertaken specifically with Staff in order to obtain an internal perspective of the existing system to compare and contrast the publics feedback collected and assessed as part of Phase 1.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors that create value or destroy value. They can include assets, skills, or resources that an organization has at its disposal, compared to its competitors. They can be measured using internal assessments or external benchmarking. Opportunities and threats on the other hand are external factors that create value or destroy value, emerging from either the competitive dynamics of the industry/market or from demographic, political, economic, social, technical, legal, or cultural factors.

**Table 2: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pool is large asset &amp; highly notable aquatic program</li> <li>• staff training program creates excellent staff</li> <li>• higher-standard playgrounds than other Towns</li> <li>• dedicated council for community services &amp; funding</li> <li>• reputable sports community with large draw</li> <li>• pushing for accessible rubber safety surfacing to be standard for playground</li> <li>• highly notable aquatic facilities</li> <li>• recognition as bike friendly community</li> <li>• beach and waterfront property</li> <li>• multiple wards that share the services across wards</li> <li>• Essex Centre - location is 15 min from anywhere in County - key sport tourism destination</li> <li>• Town invest money in streetscape areas to beautify Downtown cores</li> <li>• sport facilities are staff maintained to a high standard - compliments received on such are not uncommon</li> <li>• staff are very progressive/willing to take on changes</li> <li>• provide active and passive greenspace in all wards - council decision to spread this out. Council puts money into quality of life in all areas of Town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beach and waterfront property - not enough parking to service need</li> <li>• high expectation of quality/quantity of facilities for sport</li> <li>• continue to grow programs, but do not have the leadership / staff in place to implement more programs</li> <li>• with new sports complex, need additional space for storage of sports equipment to maintain quality</li> <li>• often no staff capacity for resource planning, especially when it comes to staff, programming, and expectations</li> <li>• high vandalism, specifically in Heritage Park</li> <li>• have experienced challenges engaging the pre-teen / teen age group with certain programming / services / amenities</li> <li>• More 'wants' that maintenance cannot provide staff for - having to make cuts in certain areas to deal with immediate matters</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large leadership and lifesaving program - award winning - largest per capita, large program for 50k in size when there are only 20k residents in the Town</li> <li>• only ones in area to offer certain unique programs (i.e., cooking, specialized sports)</li> <li>• wide range of program opportunities - creative programming team (6 facilities with programs)</li> <li>• participation levels are high -servicing entire County for aquatics</li> <li>• positive feedback from user groups for how approachable staff are and well-maintained facility</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beach and waterfront property - well utilized, increased use and user enjoyment if additional parking was provided</li> <li>• train staff to increase level of service standards - general community services</li> <li>• midst of implementing new OP - collaborate on policies and expand policies to align this project with OP</li> <li>• partnership opportunities - community groups are willing to donate money and work with the Town on grant funding</li> <li>• opportunity to create specific storage space for equipment in one central location</li> <li>• new high school land</li> <li>• naming right policies on facilities to draw additional funding</li> <li>• potential grant opportunities for community services that have been successful in the past of obtaining</li> <li>• engage pre-teens / teens more through programming/services/amenities provided by Town</li> <li>• security cameras and / or lighting and engage law enforcement on vandalism</li> <li>• murals across opportunity increase tourism</li> <li>• harbour with park / facility potential</li> <li>• increase accessibility in outdoor facilities</li> <li>• expand / upgrade amenities in existing facilities</li> <li>• create additional accessible trail connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for drop in quality of maintenance if staff isn't increased with amount of maintenance required as Town grows</li> <li>• Money for community services vs money infrastructure battle with community benefits charges</li> <li>• government may cut back on grants to curb inflation</li> <li>• increase in minimum wage levels - seem to continually play catch-up and impacts retaining staff</li> <li>• funding - limited with amount of budget that can be allocated</li> <li>• climate change - warmer weather leads to longer sport seasons and the need for a longer maintenance season for outdoor facilities</li> <li>• fighting against vandalism in parks is an ongoing issue</li> <li>• managing public expectations - number of facilities per ward vs per entire Town and what is appropriate</li> <li>• high levels of inflation - cost of materials to build and cost to maintain equipment</li> <li>• more wear and tear on outdoor sports due to longer season - climate change</li> <li>• higher temperatures will lead to increased need/want for indoor sports - leads to more capital expenditures</li> </ul>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• expand activities / amenities for active aging population</li><li>• increase equitability with additional no / low-cost recreation amenities</li><li>• future expand amenities at existing facilities to create wide offering of outdoor and indoor amenities (i.e., recreation complex)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• needing more areas for shade - consider shading in parks to keep people out of sun</li><li>• reduction in parkland dedication fees as a result of Bill 23 and Bill 109 - growth not paying for growth</li></ul> |
|--|---|



Figure 10: Colchester Schoolhouse

## 4 Community Services Benefits and Trends

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



Figure 11: Colchester Schoolhouse Community Garden

### 4.1 Benefits

Community Services have the capacity to bring diverse benefits to the residents, economy, environment, and the community. However, Community Services resources need to be approached with purpose and planning for the benefits to have an optimal impact on the community.

Research-based evidence shows us that there are many health, social, economic, and environmental benefits related to recreation, sports, culture, and parks/open space.



Figure 12: Trend Categories in Park, Recreation and Culture in Canada

According to the National Framework for Recreation, Community Services can address existing challenges with policies and practices that:

- **Enhance mental and physical wellbeing** by providing services that have an important role in enhancing physical activity.
- **Enhance social wellbeing** through clubs, social organizations, team sports, or providing an environment to make new friends for children and adults.
- **Help build strong families and communities** by being a vehicle for promoting family cohesion, adaptability and resilience through community events that keep neighbours in touch with each other.
- **Help people connect with nature.** Enhanced opportunities to connect with nature can result in both environmental and human benefits.
- **Provide economic benefits by investing in recreation.** Recreation is an important contributor to community economic development and cost reductions in other areas (i.e., health care, social services, and justice).
- **Draw tourism.** Recreation, sport, and parks programs and services have been shown to draw tourism and contribute directly and indirectly to local economies through employment opportunities, hospitality-related businesses, and other visitor spending.

It is important to understand what the direct and indirect benefits are when making decisions related to investment in parks and recreation services. This information can inform decision makers, administration, and residents on the importance of investing in these ‘amenities.’ Often, other forms of tangible infrastructure are prioritized over investments in parks and recreation without consideration of what the

impact is on economic development of the community and the quality of life of current and potential residents and visitors.

## 4.2 Trends and Best Practices

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



### Demographics

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



### Behavioural

- Individuals continue to seek park features that support their daily life functions and activities, such as areas for dog walking/off-leash dog areas; growing, cooking, or eating food; and getting exercise along or on multi-use trails (Parks People, 2022).
- There is a need to embrace a shift away from programmed parks and recreation services to more unstructured, spontaneous activities and informal spaces.
- There is an increase in people seeking connection to nature in a naturalized spaces that are close to home – typically within a 10-minute walking radius (Park People, 2022)

- Designing recreational facilities that allow for social distancing and safe gathering spaces i.e., widened trails, seating configuration, etc. to encourage social distancing, and reduced highly touched surfaces.
- Activities that have an experiential nature and offer challenges such as cultural learning and ecotourism are highly valued by users.
- There is a growing awareness of the health benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. This impacts the design of our living spaces and programs to be delivered to communities.
- Obesity rates in children and youth have tripled over the last 15 years with an increasing concern for long-term health implications.
- On average, Canadian cities have a ratio of 4.4 volunteers for every 1,000 residents, compared to 11.6 volunteers per 1,000 residents pre-pandemic (Park People, 2022). With volunteering declining:
  - New ways will need to be found to inspire the next generation of volunteers;
  - Expectations on volunteers will need to be reconsidered;
  - Attention on volunteer recognition will need to be increased; and,
  - High-quality volunteer experiences are more important than ever.
- While volunteering is declining, there is also trends indicating that people do not feel they have a voice or ability to influence decision-making in their local parks. There is an emerging opportunity to improve communication and collaboration in parks planning to expand meaningful avenues for public engagement (Park People, 2022).



## Environmental & Ecological

- A growing sense of stewardship for and learning about water, air quality, and preservation of natural areas.
- There is growing desire for increased access to winter recreation activities in parks.
- Access to winterized public washrooms are essential to year-round comfort and accessibility of park spaces and are reportedly the highest requested amenity by residents across Canadian cities (Park People, 2022).
- Increased use of natural park spaces has also magnified existing challenges with municipalities' ability to maintain biodiversity in natural areas. This increased use has led to municipalities requiring separate and specific biodiversity strategy, and intentional planning, to ensure the preservation of urban biodiversity (Park People, 2022).
- The impacts of climate change are likely to present ongoing challenges for parks planning, due to the damage caused by extreme weather events such as floods, fires, and droughts (Park People, 2022).

- Increased expectations that parks and recreation departments will demonstrate high levels of stewardship and environmental sensitivity.
- Increased public interest in the inclusion of naturalized spaces in parks, especially in neighbourhood parks in particular.
- The role of municipal conservation parks will grow as Canada works to meet biodiversity targets through raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging participation in conservation.
- There is growing interest in incorporating natural features in parks such as native plant gardens, naturalized spaces within parks, and adventure play (including nature playgrounds or loose parts play).
- There is an opportunity to utilize parks for such things as green infrastructure developments (e.g., rain gardens and bioswales).
- There is an opportunity to improve food accessibility through growing, cooking, and selling opportunities (e.g. community gardens, edible orchards, farmers markets, and bake ovens). As mentioned in the 2022 Canadian City Parks Report, an emerging trend in Parks and Recreation is the increased interest in food growing, cooking, and selling opportunities (i.e., urban agriculture)



## Service Delivery

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

neighbourhood-based approach ensures that there is a strong foundation of trust to build from when the time comes for more formal engagement processes (Park People, 2022).

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



## Facilities & Infrastructure

- As our parks and recreation assets near the end of their lifespans we need to identify opportunities to co-locate sustainably designed facilities to attract multiple users to one area creating servicing and operational efficiencies.
- Strong asset management and capital lifecycle planning will become essential as we work to provide access to the quality and diversity of parks and facilities expected by residents.
- Incorporate digital infrastructure to parks, including the implementation of free Wi-Fi and phone charging stations in parks and the creation of park-based apps (Park People, 2022).
- Esports (or organized competitive video gaming) is a growing multi-billion-dollar industry worldwide. Local recreation centers including esports have an opportunity to attract non-traditional users and bring them into facilities for the first time. New recreation design should consider space to accommodate this coming wave of recreational and competitive activity, along with added opportunities to clean and sanitize during and following an event.
- Flexible and accessible multi-purpose spaces which are gender neutral and able to accommodate a variety of activities—are the next big thing. This includes designing recreational buildings so that community amenities are more easily accessible through public transportation or to those with reduced mobility. By doing so, we can reduce sport facility parking requirements and greatly reduces the carbon footprint of the facility.
- Inclusivity (facilities without male or female designated spaces) is coming to sports and recreation design in North America, with Canada leading the way. Building gender neutral facilities usually means increased space requirements and upfront investment for larger washrooms or changing rooms, but often there is an operational savings.

- Synthetic turf is increasing in popularity, particularly because these surfaces have improved dramatically. Artificial turf can offer a safer, more predictable playing surface than natural turf fields and can provide more hours of play to the communities they serve where a high level of play is required.
- Smaller towns are seeing the value in sports and recreation as a cornerstone for development. A local hockey arena, soccer stadium, or recreation center built for competitive teams can help draw crowds, boost development, and promote active lifestyles in local neighborhoods. A multi-function facility can build the critical mass needed for retail, residential, and other development to take root. The result is a synergy between recreation and community that is likely to be an asset for years to come.

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



Figure 13: Harrow & Colchester South Recreation Centre

## 5 Parkland & Open Space Assessment

### 5.1 Overview

The Town of Essex provides opportunities for all residents to experience outdoor active and passive recreation at a local level. The Town recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation areas to be multi-functional, and flexible spaces in order to meet the needs of residents today and in the future.

The Town currently offers a variety of outdoor recreation spaces that include both programmed and unprogrammed amenities, with 21 parks amounting to 59 hectares in total. This equates to 2.78 hectares of parkland for every 1,000 population. The Town's parkland target in their Official Plan is currently 2.5 hectares of parkland for every 1,000 population; while the Town is above their target currently, it is important to maintain that service level as the population increases.

The following section provides an inventory of the existing parkland and open space in the Town, along with the various amenities within each park/open space. A summary of park land distribution and identified gaps can be found in the following sections. A comparator analysis also provides a comparison of the parkland provided between comparator municipalities with similar populations, geographic location, and/or characteristics to assess where the Town falls in terms of parkland provision and whether additional parkland is required to be on par with the comparator municipalities.



Figure 14: Sadler's Nature Park and Trail

## 5.2 Parklands and Open Space Inventory

Although not officially implemented under the Town’s Official Plan, the Town includes two types of parks: Neighbourhood Parks and Community Parks. These classifications are based on the 2015 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan prepared by the Town. The following provides general definitions for these types of open spaces:



**Neighbourhood Parks** are intended to serve as a recreational and social focus of neighbourhoods and may provide a combination of active and passive opportunities. Neighbourhood parks are ideally situated to encourage users to walk or bicycle to a park, intending to serve a radius of 0.5-0.8 kilometres.



**Community Parks** are intended to serve all residents and may also attract people from outside the municipality. Focus is on community-based activities and may include a combination of active and limited passive opportunities and typically includes multiple uses at one location.

Currently, the Town provides 13 Neighbourhood Parks and 8 Community Parks, with a combined supply of 59 hectares. The following table provides a description of each park and open space within the Town. Mapping of parkland for each urban centre is provided in Section 5.3.

Table 3: Parkland Inventory

Facility Name	Description	Amenities
<b>Colchester</b>		
Bell Park (Neighbourhood Park) 	This small passive park offers a scenic view of Lake Erie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benches</li> </ul>
Colchester Park (Community Park) 	This park includes 0.77 hectares (1.9 acres) of parkland with a splashpad and a pirate ship playground structure surrounded by rubberized flooring, monkey bars and swings. The corner of the park includes the Peace Garden, which serves as a gathering place with public art, bike racks and a drinking fountain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Splashpad</li> <li>• Pirate Ship Playgrounds (monkey bars, swings)</li> <li>• Public washrooms</li> <li>• Basketball court</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Peace Garden (public art, bike racks, drinking fountain)</li> </ul>

<p>Colchester Harbour/Beach (Community Park)</p> 	<p>Located on the north shore of Lake Erie, Colchester Harbour is a busy fishing and boating location. Harbour is Fob controlled - every gate requires one to get onto the docks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive parkland</li> <li>• 82 slip locations</li> <li>• Serviced (water and hydro) and non-serviced dockage</li> <li>• Launching ramp and dock attendants to assist</li> <li>• Fuel (price varies on market price)</li> <li>• Sewage pump-out</li> <li>• 24-hour security and camera surveillance during boating season</li> <li>• On-site bait and tackle shop</li> <li>• Concession stand</li> <li>• Public washrooms</li> <li>• Beach volleyball courts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Essex Centre</b></p>		
<p>Sparky's Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Sparky's Park is a partially fenced, half acre park that helps young children learn about fire safety. The park has playground structures, swings and horse springs that look like fire trucks. A small basketball court is located in the rear of the park. Planned upgrades include repaving pathways, replacing the ABC Learning walk signage and adding rubberized playground surfacing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structures (swings, horse springs)</li> <li>• Small basketball court</li> </ul>
<p>Bridlewood Optimist Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Bridlewood Optimist Park is a fenced, 1.29-hectare (3.2 acre) property and includes a large hill that is ideal for sledding. There are also many playground structures including swings, climbing frames, monkey bars, and horse springs. A pavilion is available for public use, organized events, and rentals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sled hill</li> <li>• Playground structure (swings, climbing frames, monkey bars, horse springs)</li> <li>• Pavilion</li> <li>• Small basketball court</li> <li>• Soccer field</li> </ul>
<p>Sadler's Nature Park and Trail (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Sadler's Park is a 4.2-hectare (10.4 acre) nature park including a 1km walking path that extends into the first kilometre of the Chrysler Canada Greenway (ERCA) to Amherstburg. The park includes two ponds,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 ponds</li> <li>• Dock</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Pavilion</li> <li>• Chess tables</li> <li>• Benches</li> </ul>

	a dock, picnic tables and a pavilion for public use, organized events, and rentals.	
<p>Hunter Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Hunter Park is a fenced, 0.65-hectare (1.6 acre) property and includes a playground structure, slides, a swing set, picnic tables, recreational baseball area and recreational soccer field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structure (slides, swing set)</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Baseball area</li> <li>• Soccer field</li> </ul>
<p>Heritage Gardens Park (Community Park)</p> 	<p>A beautiful garden path leads from Talbot Street to the historic Essex Railway Station. This pavilion, sponsored by the Essex BIA, is the perfect spot for a summer-time concert. Kick back and enjoy the beautiful Heritage Gardens Park, the Essex Spitfire, and the nearby historic Essex Train Station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pavilion (with lighting)</li> <li>• Chess tables</li> <li>• Public washrooms recently built</li> </ul>
<p>Lions Optimist Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>This park has four playground structures including climbing frames, slides, monkey bars, and swings. It also contains a basketball court and a recreational baseball area. This 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of parkland is partially fenced. Access is from Stanton Court or Maidstone Avenue East.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 playground structures (climbing frames, monkey bars, swings) – set for redesign 2024</li> <li>• Basketball court</li> <li>• Baseball area</li> </ul>
<p>Townsvie Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Located on Morris Dr, Townsvie Park is a newer park that consists of a playground structure. The park is located beside a gas pump and a dry pond that is maintained by the Town.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structure (slides, swing set)</li> <li>• Rubberized playground surface</li> </ul>
<p>Essex Sports Park Soccer and Baseball Fields (Community Park)</p> 	<p>The Essex Sports Park is located on Fairview Avenue, adjacent to the Essex Centre Sports Complex. This outdoor facility provides baseball diamonds, soccer fields, pavilion, fieldhouse with public washrooms. Privately owned batting cages are located on the property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 baseball diamonds (1 lit)</li> <li>• 4 soccer fields (2 senior and 2 junior)</li> <li>• 1 pavilion</li> <li>• batting cage (privately-owned by Minor baseball)</li> <li>• fieldhouse with public washrooms</li> </ul>

<p>Tot Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Located beside the Essex Centre Splash Pad, the small accessible park was relocated from Town Hall to the Essex Centre Sports Complex in the summer of 2022. The park includes rubberized flooring, swings, a slide, and rocking rides. Picnic tables, park benches and an accessible entrance are included in the design plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubberized flooring</li> <li>• Playground structure (swings, slide, rocking rides)</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Park benches</li> <li>• Accessible entrance</li> </ul>
<p>Tully Meadows Bush and Trail (Passive Parkland)</p>	<p>Tulley Meadows is a unique Carolinian woodland supporting a diversity of trees and wildflowers. A trail connects Woodview Drive to Fairview Avenue West. There is a potential park development on the north lot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalized trail</li> </ul>
<p><b>Harrow</b></p>		
<p>Bramblewood Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>This park is an open concept, 0.53 hectare (1.3 acre) neighbourhood park with children's playground equipment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structure</li> </ul>
<p>Harrow Fairgrounds Park (Community Park)</p> 	<p>Located near the Harrow and Colchester South Community Centre, this park contains playground structures, swings, monkey bars and a splash pad. Any anticipated changes or permanent building development requires permission from the Fair board.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structures (swings, monkey bars)</li> <li>• Splash pad</li> <li>• 3 tennis courts</li> <li>• 1 pavilion</li> <li>• 1 skateboard park</li> </ul>
<p>Harrow Soccer Complex (Community Park)</p> 	<p>Located on Roseborough Road, in the north-west of Harrow. This park includes soccer fields, bleachers, fieldhouse with dressing rooms, referee rooms and public washroom, a 1.2km walking / running track and parking lot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soccer fields (3 senior, 1 intermediate and 3 junior fields)</li> <li>• 4 sets of bleachers</li> <li>• Fieldhouse with 4 dressing rooms, 2 referee rooms, and public washroom</li> <li>• 1.2km walking/running track</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking lot</li> </ul>
<p>Pollard Park and Kinsmen Participark Trail (Community Park)</p> 	<p>Pollard Park contains two baseball diamonds, two recreational soccer fields, and a 1.47km nature trail. The park is 8.5 hectares (21 acres) in size and includes a pavilion that is available for public use, organized events, and rentals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 baseball diamonds (1 lit)</li> <li>• 1 unlined baseball diamond</li> <li>• 2 soccer fields</li> <li>• 1.47km nature trail</li> <li>• 1 pavilion</li> </ul>
<p>Harrow Veterans' Memorial Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>Located in downtown Harrow beside the post office, this park has two gazebos, benches, and a checkerboard table.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 gazebos</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Checkerboard table</li> </ul>
<p>Liberato Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>This park is an open concept neighbourhood park that is almost an acre in size and contains children's playground equipment including: a play structure, slide, swing and climbing feature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structures (swings, slide, climbing feature)</li> </ul>
<p>Tawensentha Park (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>This park can be accessed through Concession Road 3 and Grant Street and consists of a playground structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground structure</li> </ul>
<b>McGregor</b>		
<p>McGregor Parkette (Neighbourhood Park)</p> 	<p>The McGregor Parkette serves as a small gathering space for the community. Located next to the post office, the parkette includes benches, a small gazebo structure and short walking paths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• 1 gazebo</li> <li>• Paved paths</li> </ul>

<p>Co-An Park (Community Park)</p> 	<p>Located in a country setting, this park includes a children's play structure, picnic shelter, covered pavilion (for rent), six baseball diamonds, three soccer fields, tennis courts, washrooms, and a canteen.</p> <p>Co-An Park is located in the heart of the McGregor community and is jointly owned by the Town of Amherstburg and the Town of Essex. This arrangement provides a unique opportunity to share services and costs for the eastern portion of Amherstburg and McGregor.</p> <p>Another attraction in the area is the Essex Steam and Gas Museum, located in the park's northeast quadrant. A Master Plan for the Park is currently being undertaken by Amherstburg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playground structure</li><li>• Picnic shelter</li><li>• Pavilion</li><li>• 6 baseball diamonds (1 lit)</li><li>• 3 soccer fields (2 junior and 1 adult)</li><li>• 2 tennis courts</li><li>• Washroom</li><li>• Canteen</li></ul>
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Figure 15: Essex Memorial Spitfire Monument

## 5.3 Distribution of Parkland

The Town of Essex is unique in that it contains four separate urban centres each with different parks and recreation needs. Figure 14 through Figure 17 illustrate the location and distribution of parkland, as well as a 500m walking radius from existing parkland (i.e., green dashed line). Parks should be located in walking distance of residential areas, in which all residents are within a 500m or 5–10-minute walk of a park. From the parkland gap analysis, generally each urban area is well serviced with parks.

### 5.3.1 ESSEX CENTRE

Distribution of parkland in Essex Centre is illustrated in Figure 14. A potential gap was identified in central Essex Center but is covered, outside of school hours, by the Essex Public School grounds. If parkland be required during school hours in these areas another solution would be needed. In addition, should lands develop in Essex Centre in the future, between South Talbot Road N, Maidstone Avenue W and Allen Avenue, additional parkland in this area would address the small, noted gap in walkability from the private residential lands in Viscount Estates.

### 5.3.2 MCGREGOR

Some small gaps have been identified at the north end of McGregor, where new parkland could be provided through future lands to be developed between 12th Concession Road and Masaccio Drive. Refer to Figure 15.

### 5.3.3 HARROW

Distribution of parkland in Harrow is illustrated in Figure 16. The walkability analysis for Harrow noted good coverage. A small gap in the eastern portion of the urban area, east of Arthur Street and north of County Rd 20, was identified, however, green space provided by the Harrow Public School grounds alleviates this gap outside of school hours. Additionally, a new development is anticipated to be built in the next few years to the east of the public school, in which parkland will be provided to the rear of the school, further alleviating the current green space gap.

### 5.3.4 COLCHESTER

As a waterfront community, parkland in Colchester is understandably focused along the lakeshore. A gap in the walkability analysis was noted for a portion of the residential lands on the north side of Colchester. With consideration for the generous trail connections and the community's current draw to the waterfront for recreation, no additional parkland in this location is considered necessary. In the future, should lands to the north or north-east be developed, the Town could consider the addition of green space to support growth and walkability to recreation. As residential lands develop on the west side of Colchester, south of County Road 50, the Town should consider additional parkland to provide further access and connections along the Waterfront Trail. Refer to Figure 17.

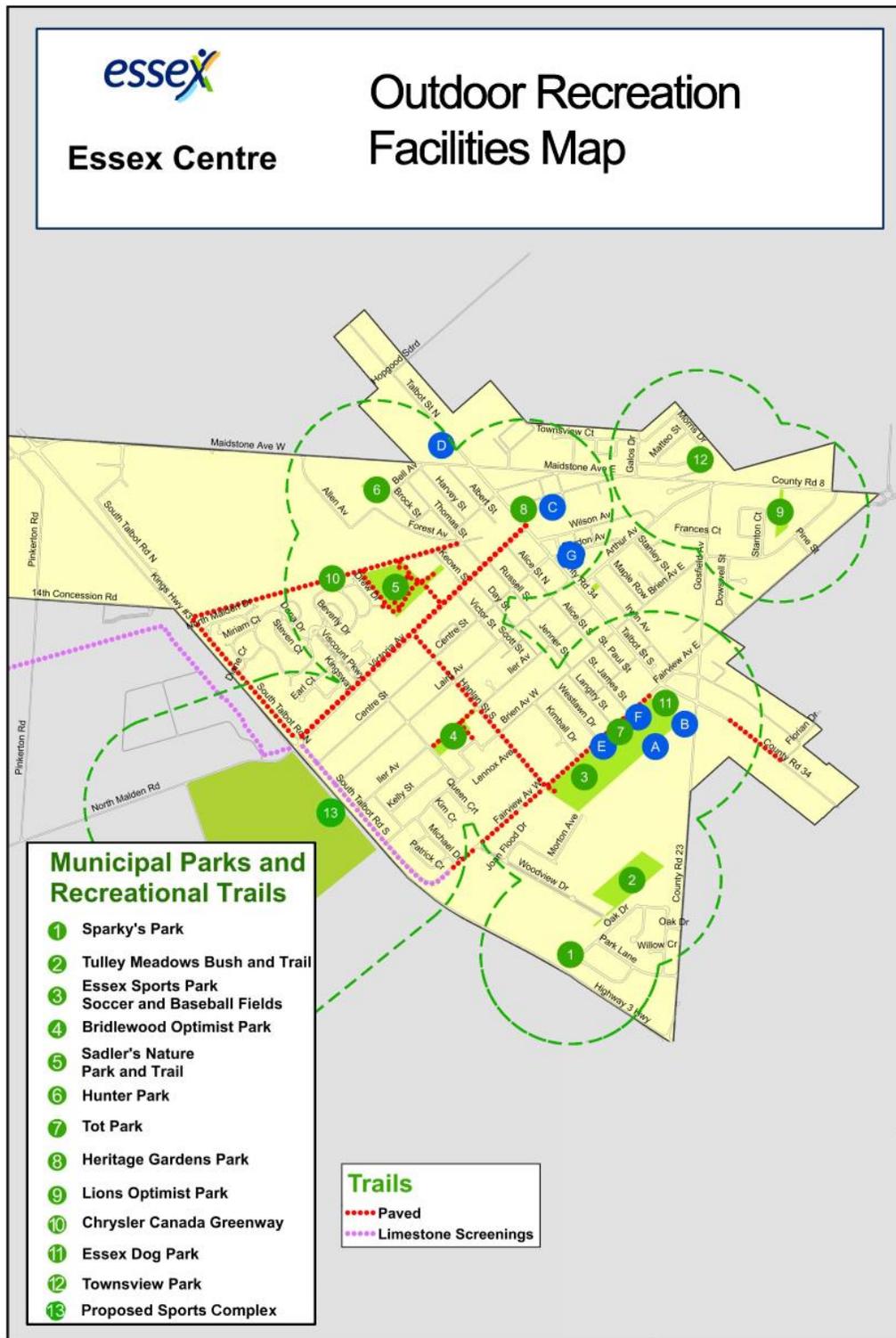


Figure 16: Essex Centre Parkland Distribution



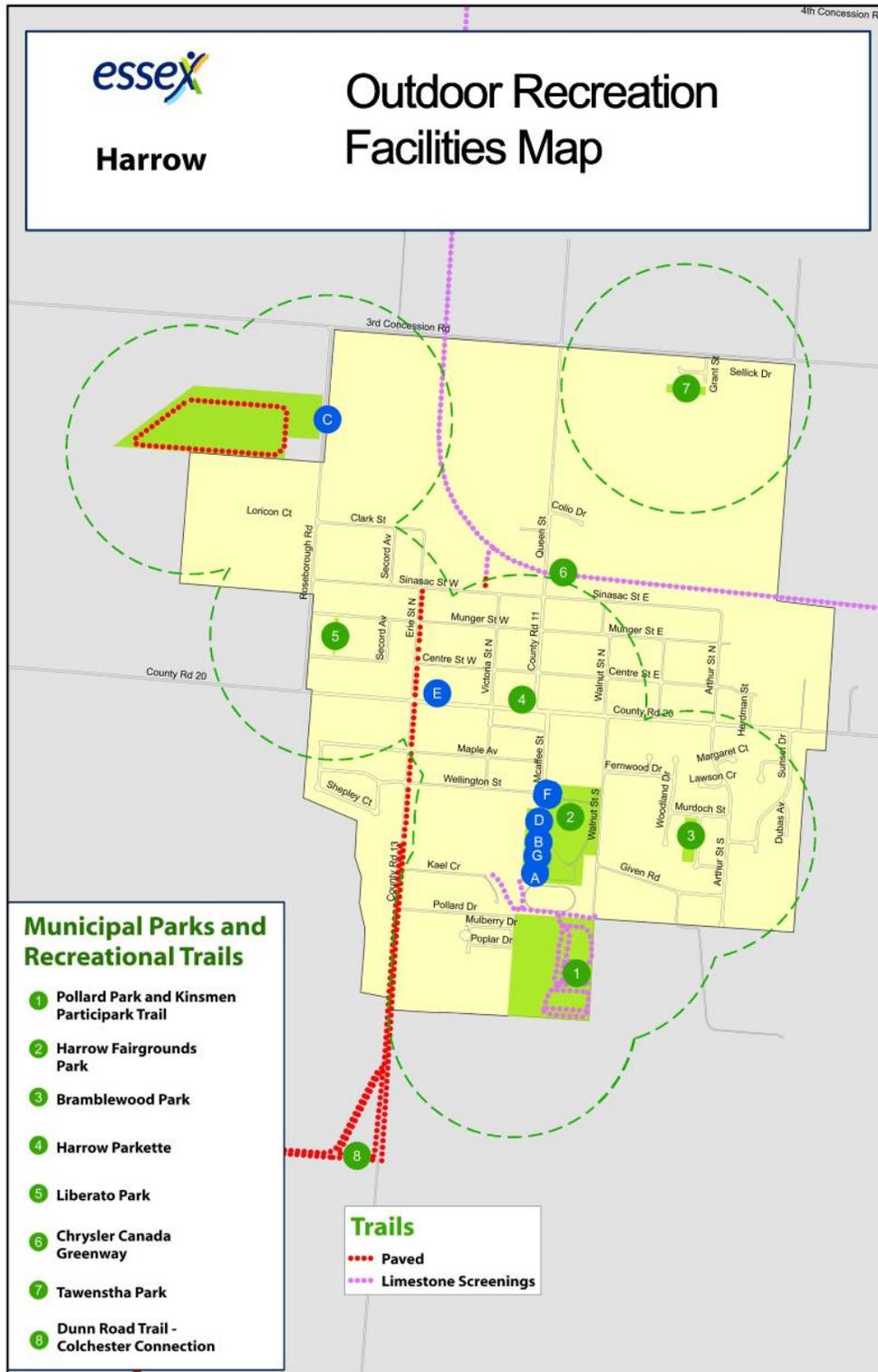


Figure 18: Harrow Parkland Distribution



Figure 19: Colchester Parkland Distribution

### 5.4 Parkland Comparator Analysis

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

**Table 4: Parkland Service Level Comparison**

Municipality	2021 Population	Supply	Total Hectares	Hectares/1,000 population	Target Service Level/1,000 population
Town of Essex	21,216	21	59	2.78	2.50
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	26	112.6	5.1	4.00
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	39	55.5 (excludes open space)	2.38	3.00
Town of Kingsville	22,119	27	55.5	2.51	2.50
Town of Lasalle	32,721	34	153.78	4.70	2.83
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	37	105.20	3.80	2.83
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	11	44.12	5.52	4.00
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>27.86</b>	<b>83.67</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.09</b>

Overall, the Town has one of the lower actual service levels amongst the comparator municipalities in terms of parkland per 1,000 people and is below the average of comparator municipalities. It should be noted that it is common practice amongst other municipalities to include parkland owned by others (conservation authorities, school boards, etc.) in their parkland target calculations as these non-municipal spaces subsidize municipal parkland for members of the public. This Master Plan focused on Municipally-owned land and as such might vary from comparator communities. Based on the Town's Official Plan and noted in the 2015 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, the recommended service level is 2.5 hectares per 1,000 population, which the Town is currently exceeding. In order to maintain the recommended service level target over the 10-year planning horizon of this Master Plan, the Town will need to consider obtaining additional parkland as the population increases.

## 6 Trail Assessment

### 6.1 Overview

Trails are one of the most popular outdoor amenities in many communities across North America. They offer numerous opportunities for informal activities and are well used by people for walking, hiking, running, and cycling. People enjoy trails because they can be used at no cost and at any time, while offering diverse experiences of the natural environment. Trails also help with forming an active transportation network and can provide connections between key locations within a municipality, encouraging a healthier and more active lifestyle overall.



Figure 20: Tully Meadows Bush and Trail – Essex Centre

## 6.2 Current Trails Inventory

There are many trails with the Town of Essex with varying surface materials, widths, and functions. Trails include those providing connections within each of the four (4) urban centres, as well as those that provide connections between urban centres and to adjacent municipalities. Table 4 below summarizes the trails within the Town of Essex.

Table 5: Trail Inventory

Trail Name	Description	Trail Features
 <p>County Wide Active Transportation Trail (CWATS)</p>	<p>The County Wide Active Transportation Trail System (CWATS) is an ever-expanding network of bicycle lanes, multi-purpose pathways, paved shoulders, and shared roadways. The system will eventually include about 800km of active transportation corridors linking the County's seven local municipalities and connecting with trail systems in Windsor and Chatham-Kent. The trails promote healthy, active living and tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved shoulder / in-boulevard</li> </ul>
 <p>Cypher Systems Group Greenway (Essex Centre to McGregor Connection)</p>	<p>A 26km rail trail along a former CN Rail Line, managed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA), stretches from Amherstburg to Essex Centre and intersects with the existing Chrysler Canada Greenway in McGregor. The trail is great for backpacking, birding, cross-country skiing and running. A one km paved and accessible trail connecting to Sadler's Pond Park in Essex Centre was created in 2007 as the most northerly community entrance for the greenway. The Town maintains the trail connection in the winter season.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking areas</li> <li>• Picnic shelter</li> <li>• Limestone trail (with paved section connection to Sadler's Pond Park)</li> </ul>
 <p>Chrysler Canada Greenway (McGregor to Harrow)</p>	<p>This multi-use recreational trail, managed by ERCA, begins in Oldcastle and passes through the Town of Essex at both McGregor and Harrow and ends in Leamington. The Greenway is a 50km multi-use trail that joins 25 otherwise separate natural areas for hiking, biking, running, birding, and cross-country skiing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-road paved limestone trail</li> <li>• Parking areas</li> <li>• Portable washrooms</li> <li>• Picnic areas</li> </ul>
 <p>Waterfront Trail (CWATS) – Colchester</p>	<p>A portion of the CWATS trail called the Waterfront Trail runs along County Road 50, through Colchester, creating a scenic active transportation route along the waterfront.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved shoulder / in-boulevard</li> </ul>

	<p>Dunn Road Trail (CWATS) – (Harrow to Colchester)</p>	<p>This is a paved trail on County Road 13 that connects Harrow to Colchester, managed by the County of Essex. The Dunn Road Trail provides a connection to the Waterfront Trail on County Road 50 and Colchester. The Town of Essex provides a trail connection between the Chrysler Canada Greenway and the Dunn Road Trail along Eric Street N / County Road 13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved in-boulevard and on-road trail</li> </ul>
	<p>Essex Centre Active Transportation Network</p>	<p>The trails within Essex Centre’s active transportation network include in-boulevard trails on Fairview Avenue W., Victoria Avenue, South Talbot Road N., Hanlan St. S., and a small section on County Road 34 at Irwin Ave.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved shoulder / in-boulevard</li> </ul>
	<p>Sadler’s Nature Trail (Essex Centre)</p>	<p>The trail in Sadler’s Nature Park is a 1km walking path that extends into the first kilometre of the Chrysler Canada Greenway (ERCA) to Amherstburg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved multi-use trail</li> </ul>
	<p>Tulley Meadows Bush and Trail (Essex Centre)</p>	<p>Tulley Meadows is a unique Carolinian woodland supporting a diversity of trees and wildflowers. A trail connects Woodview Drive to Fairview Avenue West. There can potentially be a connection to a proposed future park development in the North lot. Challenges arise from the backwash from the pools in the adjacent properties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalized trail</li> </ul>
	<p>Kinsmen Participark Trail (Harrow)</p>	<p>This trail is a 1.47km nature trail within an older forest and recently planted trees. The trail also includes a small hill and raised ridge to one side of the trail with some raised rocks and tree routes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalized trail</li> </ul>
	<p>Harrow Soccer Complex Track</p>	<p>The Harrow Soccer Complex provides a 1.2km paved walking / running track around the soccer fields.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved track</li> </ul>
	<p>Ogden Street Trail (Colchester)</p>	<p>A 500m naturalized limestone screenings trail is provided along Ogden street to provide a connection to the Dunn Road Trail.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naturalized trail</li> </ul>

### **6.3 Distribution of Trails**

Trails are generally evenly distributed throughout the Town of Essex. Figure 19 through Figure 22 illustrate trails within the four (4) urban centres and CWATS connections between. A trail gap analysis was completed to identify potential trail improvements / connections to important locations within the Town and the larger trail systems already in place.

#### **6.3.1 ESSEX CENTRE**

The Essex Centre community would benefit from a trail connection to the north-west part of Essex Centre by expanding the Chrysler Canada Greenway. A trail connection from the Fairview Ave W Trail and the Essex Sports Park, through future developed lands, to Tulley Meadows Bush and Trail has been identified as a beneficial future trail connection that would connect the south-east corner of Essex Centre to the trail system. Additionally, a trail connection to the western corner of Essex Centre may also be needed should lands develop in the future.

#### **6.3.2 MCGREGOR**

McGregor is quite well connected with the larger trail system. The Town could consider the benefit of providing a trail connection between the Chrysler Canada Greenway and / or the Cypher Systems Group Greenway and Co-An Park.

#### **6.3.3 HARROW**

The Harrow community is also well connected with the overall trail system. A small trail linkage on Sinasac St W is needed to complete the connection between the Chrysler Canada Greenway, the Greenlink Trail and the in-boulevard CWATS trail on Erie Street N. This could be in-boulevard or an on-road marked route. The Town could also consider an in-boulevard trail or on-road marked route between Pollard Park and the Kinsmen Participark Trail along Kael Crescent.

#### **6.3.4 COLCHESTER**

No gaps in trail provisions were noted in Colchester.

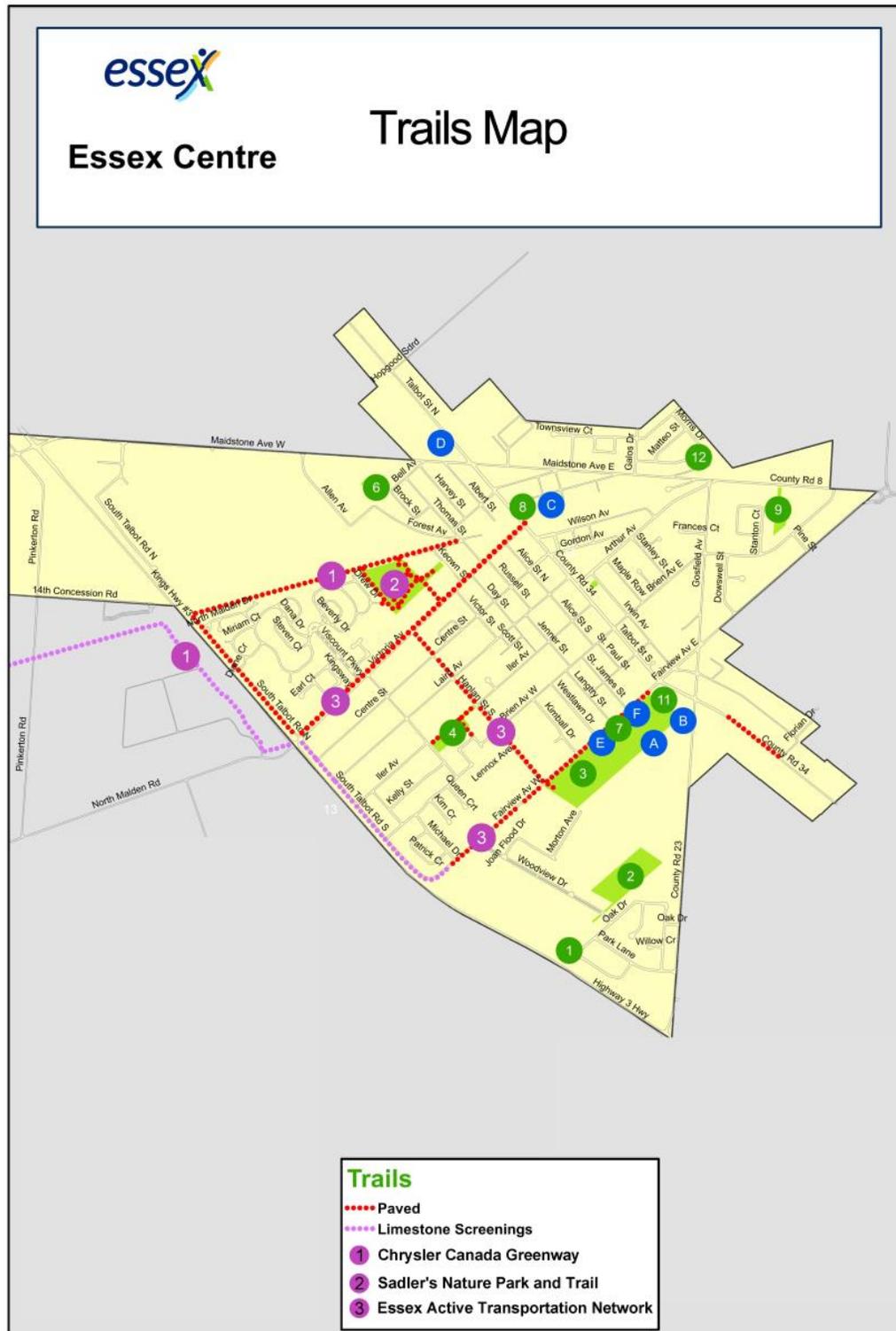


Figure 21: Essex Centre Trail Distribution

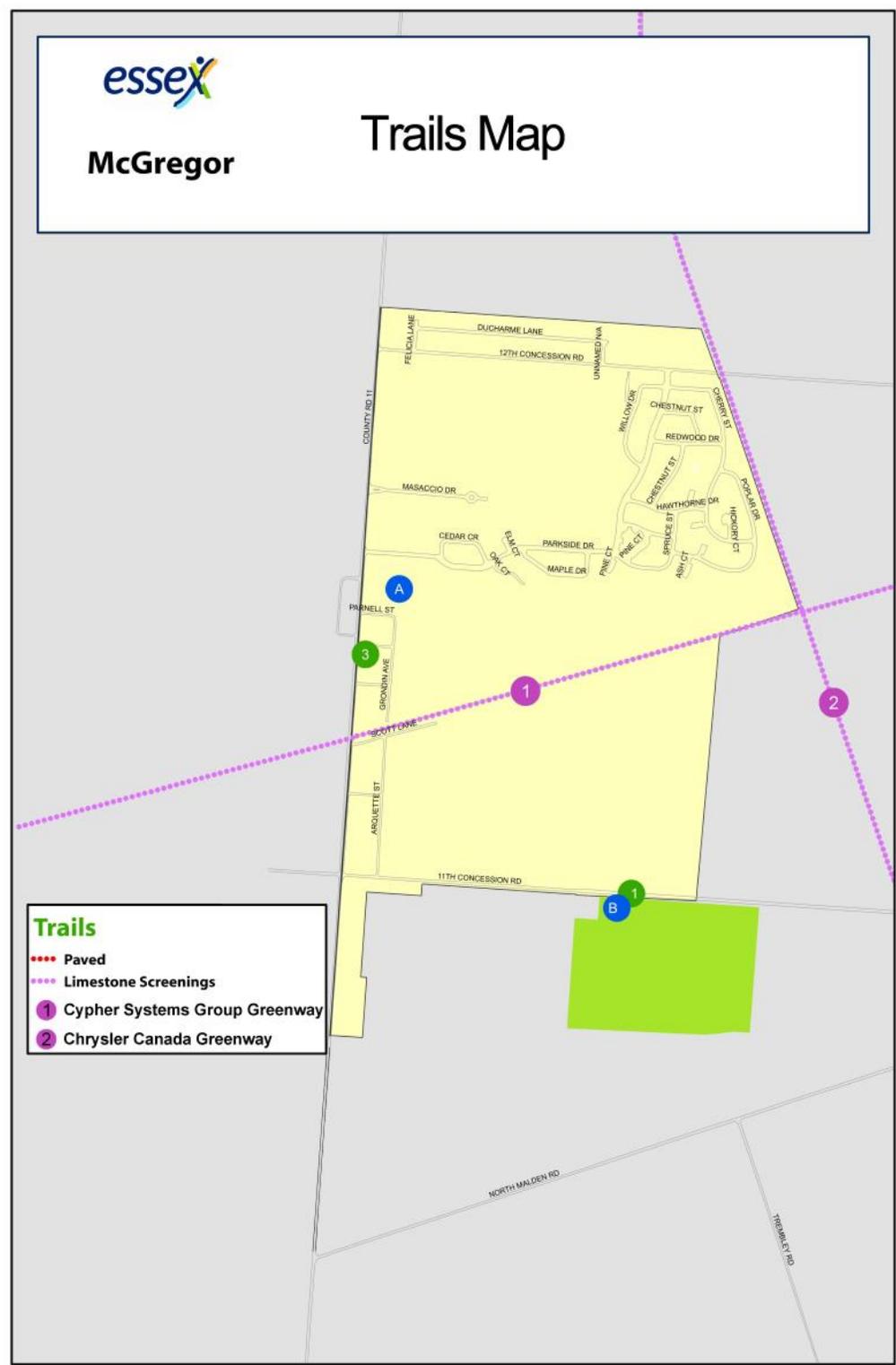


Figure 22: McGregor Trail Distribution

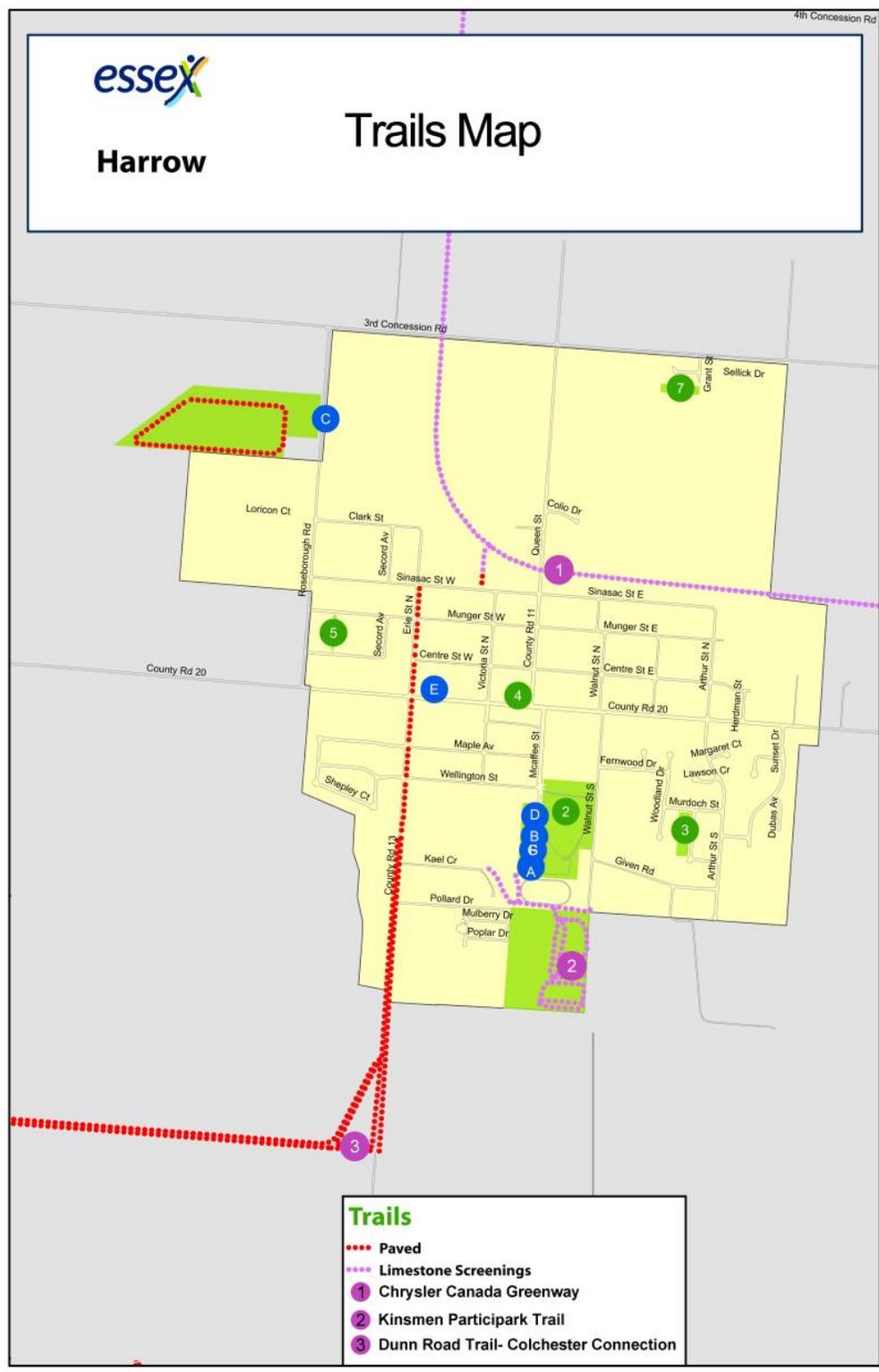


Figure 23: Harrow Trail Distribution



Figure 24: Colchester Trail Distribution

## 7 Outdoor Facilities Assessment

### 7.1 Overview

The table below illustrates outdoor recreation amenities and services provided by the Town, with the total number of municipal and private amenities located within the Town and the service level per 1,000 population for each amenity. Municipal amenities are defined as amenities owned and maintained by the Town, while private amenities are those located within the Town and are available for public use (sometimes for a fee) but are not owned or maintained by the Town. The following summary and does not account for the variety of size, maintenance, or lighting for the following amenities. Detailed analysis of the size, maintenance, and lighting of the following amenities and their equivalents are provided in the subsequent sections.

**Table 6: Service Level of Outdoor Recreation Amenities**

Outdoor Recreation Amenity	Total Municipal & Private	Municipal/Private Per Population Provision
Baseball Diamond	16	1:1,326
Soccer/Multi-Use Field	18	1:1,179
Playground	16	1:1,326
Basketball Court	6	1:3,536
Tennis/Pickleball Court	8	1:2,652
Splashpad	3	1:7,072
Skateboard Park	2	1:10,608
Dog Park	1	1:21,216
Outdoor Event Spaces (Pavilion, Picnic Shelter, Amphitheatre, Bandshell, etc.)	12	1:1,768
Beach Volleyball	2	1: 10,608

## 7.2 Baseball Diamonds

### 7.2.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex has a current supply of 16 diamonds, in which only three of them are lit. There are also a couple of small diamonds only maintained for unorganized, recreational play. In terms of equivalent supply, the Town has the equivalent of 15 diamonds as each lit field counts as 1.5 unlit fields to account for extended evening playing time.

**Table 7: Ball Diamond Supply**

Facility Type	Actual Supply	Effective Supply (unlit equivalents)
Town Owned – Ball Diamonds	16	16
*Lit diamonds are counted as equivalent to 1.5 diamonds due to extending playtime **Diamonds located on property other than Town-owned, but, publicly accessible are counted as equivalent to 0.5 fields due to reduced availability ***Diamonds that are unlined or only maintained for unorganized, recreational purposes are counted as equivalent to 0.25 due to reduction in formal play		

### 7.2.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Baseball diamonds are generally open between April and September. Diamonds are booked to major groups first and gaps are then booked on a first-come first-serve basis. The 2022 usage rate by day for diamonds in the Essex Sports Park are around 42%, with the usage rate being an average of 32% for the diamonds in the Harrow Fairgrounds, and 33% for the diamond located at Essex Public School. It should be noted that the above listed utilization rates include all usable hours, prime and non-prime time. All diamonds are currently 100% utilized during prime-time hours.

### 7.2.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

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

Utilizing the equivalent supply of baseball diamonds, the Town currently provides Ball Diamonds at a service level of 1:1,326 population. Comparators listed in Table 8 provide diamonds at an average service level of 1:1,589, while current trends indicate that population centres over 100,000 generally aim to provide Ball Diamonds at an average of 1:3,000 population ratio target. This comparison analysis does not consider Essex’s unique geographical distribution which includes providing a regionalized approach to several urban centres within the Town.

**Table 8: Service Level Comparison, Baseball Diamonds**

Baseball Diamonds	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	16	1:1,326
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	16	1:1,470
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	16	1:1,456
Town of Kingsville	22,119	12	1:1,843
Town of Lasalle	32,721	23	1:1,423
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	17	1:2,377
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	6	1:1,307
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>15.28</b>	<b>1:1,589</b>

### 7.3 Soccer Multi-use Fields

#### 7.3.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex has a current supply of 18 soccer pitches, consisting of 6 senior pitches, 1 intermediate pitch, and 7 junior pitches that can be rented from the Town, along with 4 informal pitches that are open for casual use. There are no lit soccer fields in Essex. The majority of the Town’s soccer pitches are located within the Essex Sports Park, the Harrow Soccer Complex, and Co-An Park.

**Table 9: Soccer Field/Multi-use Field Supply**

Facility Type	Actual Supply	Effective Supply (unlit equivalents)
Town Owned – Soccer Fields	18	11.25
<p>*Lit fields are counted as equivalent to 1.5 fields due to extending playtime                      **Fields located on property other than Town-owned, but, publicly accessible are counted as equivalent to 0.5 fields due to reduced availability                      ***Fields that are unlined or only maintained for unorganized, recreational purposes are counted as equivalent to 0.25 due to reduction in formal play                      ****Due to the variety of field sizes, the analysis uses the following equivalent supply for fields smaller than adult/regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intermediate – 0.75</li> <li>• Junior – 0.5</li> </ul>		

#### 7.3.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Similar to baseball diamonds, the Town’s soccer pitches are available for rental April to October. The average 2022 usage rate by day for soccer pitches in the Essex Sports Park is 28.6%, 7.2% for the pitches within the Harrow Soccer Complex. The pitches available at Co-An park did not have usage data available for 2022. Pre-pandemic rates in 2019 indicated a higher usage rate of 53% in Essex Sports Park soccer pitches; however, usage rates were much lower in 2019 for pitches at the Harrow Soccer Complex compared to 2022 rates. It should be noted that that the above listed utilization rates include all usable hours, prime and non-prime time.

**7.3.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

Utilizing the equivalent supply, the Town currently provides soccer pitches at a service level of 1:1,885 population. Comparators listed in Table 10 provides soccer pitches at an average service level of 1:1,689.

**Table 10: Service Level Comparison, Soccer Pitches**

Soccer Fields	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	11.25	1:1,885
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	18	1:1,307
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	17	1:1,371
Town of Kingsville	22,119	26	1:851
Town of Lasalle	32,721	35	1:935
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	9	1:4,490
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0 (10 privately owned)	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>17.57</b>	<b>1:1,689</b>

**7.4 Playgrounds**

**7.4.1 SUPPLY**

The Town of Essex has a current supply of 14 playgrounds, with 1 located in Colchester, 6 in Essex Centre, 4 in Harrow, and 3 in McGregor.

**7.4.2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

The Town currently provides playgrounds at a service level of 1:1,515. The average service level of the comparators listed in Table 11 is 1:1,390.

**Table 11: Service Level Comparison, Playgrounds**

Playgrounds	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	14	1:1,515
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	13	1: 1,810
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	23	1:1,013
Town of Kingsville	22,119	15	1:1,475
Town of Lasalle	32,721	23	1:1,423
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	34	1:1,189
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	6	1:1,307
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>18.28</b>	<b>1:1,390</b>



Figure 25: Hunter Park Playground, Essex Centre

## 7.5 Basketball Courts

### 7.5.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex is currently supplying four basketball courts at the following parks: Colchester Park, Sparky’s Park (small basketball court), Bridlewood Optimist Park (small basketball court), and Lions Optimist Park (1 basketball court).

### 7.5.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Basketball court usage is not currently being tracked by the Town as they are open outdoor spaces and not utilized for rental purposes.

### 7.5.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently provides outdoor basketball courts at a service level of 1:5,304. The average service level of comparator municipalities is 1:5,186. As mentioned previously, the comparator analysis below does not differentiate between full courts, half courts, and individual hoops for casual use. This is due to the lack of consistent tracking between comparator municipalities. As such, each of the above amenities are counted as “one” basketball court unless otherwise specified.



Figure 26: Colchester Harbour Park Basketball Court

Table 12: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Basketball Courts

Basketball Courts	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	4	1:5,304
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	6	1:3,921
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	12	1:1,942
Town of Kingsville	22,119	3	1:7,373
Town of Lasalle	32,721	5	1:6,544
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	5	1:8,082
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	2.5	1:3,136
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>5.64</b>	<b>1:5,186</b>

## 7.6 Outdoor Aquatics

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

Current trends in municipal service delivery support a movement towards providing splash pads rather than pools or wading pools as splash pads offer a range of benefits that wading pools and pools do not. These benefits include water efficiency (when they are recirculating systems), improved accessibility,

increased play value, support a potentially younger age range (toddler – 14 years) and splashpads do not require full-time, trained, aquatic supervision.

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

### 7.6.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently has three splashpads, located in Colchester Park, Harrow Fairgrounds Park, and at the Essex Centre Sports Complex. The Town currently does not provide an outdoor pool.

### 7.6.2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently provides splashpads at a service level of 1:7,072 population ratio. The average of the comparators listed in Table 13 provides outdoor pools at an average service level of 1:14,702.

**Table 13: Service Level Comparison, Splashpads**

Splashpads	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	3	1:7,072
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	1	1:23,524
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	2	1:11,650
Town of Kingsville	22,119	2	1:11,060
Town of Lasalle	32,721	0	N/A
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	2	1:20,205
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>1.28</b>	<b>1:14,702</b>

## 7.7 Tennis & Pickleball Courts

Tennis is a fast-growing sport as Town-provided outdoor courts allow for the sport to remain affordable for players. It is a non-gender-biased sport, which means it is played equally across all genders and it is represented by a large range of ages (~4-100). Tennis Canada also notes that it is popular among new Canadians with 23 per cent of tennis players being born outside of Canada.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, pickleball is also a rapidly growing sport and is played both indoors and outdoors. It is currently one of the fastest growing sports in Canada and is currently working toward National Sport Organization status.<sup>2</sup>

### 7.7.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex has a current supply of eight outdoor tennis & pickleball courts, with three lit courts located at the Harrow Fairgrounds Park (evening lights shut off automatically at 11pm), three lit courts at

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tenniscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/01.-Quick-Glance-Brochure.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://pickleballcanada.org/docs/strategic\\_plan\\_2018\\_2020\\_web.pdf](https://pickleballcanada.org/docs/strategic_plan_2018_2020_web.pdf)

the Essex Centre Sports Complex, and two unlit courts at Co-An Park. The Town does not have any separately dedicated outdoor tennis or pickleball courts and as such, has not been included in the comparator analysis below.

**7.7.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE**

The three locations within the Town of Essex are available for community use. Similarly, the courts at Co-An Park are available for use during daylight hours and are open April to October. The Town’s tennis & pickleball courts are available for public use on a first-come first-serve basis. The courts are open outdoor spaces, and the Town does not charge for use unless a guaranteed reservation is required. The courts are used frequently during the warmer months for the majority of daylight hours.

**7.7.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

The Town is currently providing outdoor tennis & pickleball courts at a service level of 1:2,652 population ratio. Comparator municipalities in Table 14 provide outdoor tennis & pickleball courts at an average service level of 1:3,801.

**Table 14: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Tennis Courts**

Tennis & Pickleball Courts	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	8	1:2,652
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	6	1:3,921
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	8	1:2,913
Town of Kingsville	22,119	6	1:3,687
Town of Lasalle	32,721	11 (4 pickleball)	1:2,975
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	7	1:5,773
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>6.29</b>	<b>1:3,801</b>



**Figure 27: Harrow Fairgrounds Park Tennis Courts**

## 7.8 Skateparks

Skateparks provide an informal venue for all levels of skaters, from beginners to advanced levels, and allows people to learn something new in a casual setting. Skateparks can also serve as a hub for youth, building social skills and promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

### 7.8.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently has a supply of two skateparks – one at the Essex Sports Park and one at the Harrow Fairgrounds Park.

### 7.8.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

Generally, skateparks are not a facility that are typically reserved as they function as a more casual and informal recreation space. Usage information is not tracked by the Town as Skateparks are open outdoor spaces and not utilized for rental purposes.

### 7.8.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town is currently providing skateparks at a service level of 1:10,608 population ratio. Comparator municipalities in Table 15 provide skateparks at an average service level of 1:19,951.

**Table 15: Service Level Comparison, Skateparks**

Skateparks	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	2	1:10,608
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	1	1:23,524
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	1	1:23,300
Town of Kingsville	22,119	1	1:22,119
Town of Lasalle	32,721	0	N/A
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	2	1:20,205
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1:19,951</b>

## 7.9 Outdoor Event Spaces

### 7.9.1 SUPPLY

The Town currently supplies seven outdoor event spaces, which include outdoor pavilion spaces that are available for public use, organized events, and rentals. Four pavilions are within Essex Centre, two in Harrow, and one in McGregor. While Colchester does not have a pavilion, Colchester Park does have picnic tables.

**7.9.2 ASSESSMENT OF NEED**

The Town is currently supplying outdoor event spaces at a service level of 1:1,768, while comparator municipalities in Table 16 provide outdoor event spaces at an average service level of 1:3,761 population ratio.

**Table 16: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Event Space**

Outdoor Event Space	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	12	1:1,768
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	5	1:4,705
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	13	1:1,792
Town of Kingsville	22,119	6	1:3,687
Town of Lasalle	32,721	4	1:8,180
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	12	1:3,368
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	5	1:1,568
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>7.43</b>	<b>1:3,761</b>



**Figure 28: Sadler's Nature Park Pavilion, Essex Centre**

## 8 Indoor Facilities Assessment

### 8.1 Overview

The Town currently owns and/or operates 11 indoor recreational facilities. The following table provides a brief description of each of the facilities.

Table 17: Indoor Facility Inventory

Facility Name	Description	Amenities/Features
<b>Colchester</b>		
Colchester Community Centre	<p>The Colchester Community Centre is located at 100 Jackson Street, on the shores of Lake Erie adjacent to Colchester Harbour and Beach.</p> <p>The community room offers a beautiful view of Lake Erie and is a convenient rental space for a variety of functions and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All-purpose room (seating for 72, 110 standing capacity)</li> <li>Fully functioning catering kitchen with gas range, refrigerator, dishwasher, and microwave</li> <li>Audio/visual equipment, projector</li> <li>Fully accessible, wheelchair ramp</li> <li>AED on-site</li> <li>On-site staff support</li> </ul>
Colchester Schoolhouse	<p>Built in 1881, this was the first schoolhouse in the area built under the Public Schools Act. Its architectural style is reminiscent of schoolhouses across rural Canada during this time. The Schoolhouse has achieved a heritage designation.</p> <p>Site currently serves as overflow parking for the Harbour. The existing structure is severely run down and is leased by Heritage Colchester.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community garden</li> <li>Temporary harbour parking</li> </ul>
<b>Essex Centre</b>		
Essex Recreation Complex	<p>The Town of Essex operates the Essex Recreation Complex (ERC) in conjunction with the Greater Essex County District School Board. Built as an addition to Essex District High School, the ERC offers a wide range of aquatic and life-saving programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 gyms (stage, electronic divider, 6 basketball nets, fridge, stove, microwave, freezer)</li> <li>1 indoor pool (4 lanes 25m lap pool, leisure pool, 33m waterslide, training pool, changerooms)</li> <li>1 all purpose room in the basement (50 max. capacity)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor bike locker (max. 2 bikes)</li> <li>• Canteen</li> </ul>
Essex Centre Sports Complex	<p>The Essex Centre Sports Complex is conveniently located just off Talbot Street South in Essex Centre. Officially opened in January 2010, this twin-pad arena facility has been in use since September 2009.</p> <p>The main ice pad, the Libro Credit Union Rink, is an NHL-sized rink with bowl seating for 1,168. The Shaheen Rink is a practice pad with bleacher seating for 222.</p> <p>A 210-metre indoor walking track wraps around the Libro Credit Union Rink and is available for public use at no cost. The walking track is accessible and offers a comfortable and safe walking surface. The complex is equipped with free public Wi-Fi.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 ice pads</li> <li>• 210m indoor walking track</li> <li>• 10 dressing rooms</li> <li>• 2 referee rooms (1 for staff, 1 is the minor hockey office)</li> <li>• 2 meeting rooms (Barnett Board Room – 45 occupancy; Shaheen Community Room – 230 occupancy)</li> <li>• 1 canteen</li> <li>• 1 skate shop</li> <li>• Outdoor tennis court</li> </ul>
Maedel Community Centre	<p>The Maedel Community Centre (MAE, formerly known as the Essex Community Centre) hosts many of our community recreation programs. It is located beside the Essex OPP Satellite Office and the Essex Public Library.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 gymnasium (pickleball court, floor hockey, basketballs, soccer balls, stage)</li> <li>• 3 meeting rooms (Huron Room – suitable for fitness classes; Ontario Room – 30 occupancy; Superior Room – suitable for training programs/workshops)</li> </ul>
Essex Railway Station	<p>Built in 1887, the station and the railway tracks laid across the Talbot Trail established Essex Centre as the shipping hub of Essex Country. Despite nearby explosions in 1907 and 1980, the building has been preserved and restored for ongoing community usage. The building is Town owned and leased to Heritage Essex.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Railway memorabilia and artifacts of historical interest</li> <li>• Self-directed or group tours</li> <li>• Small gift shop</li> <li>• Main room available for rental, 40-50 occupancy</li> </ul>

Carnegie Library	<p>Located in the heart of downtown Essex Centre, the Essex and Community Historical Research Society operates a history and genealogy centre in the historic Carnegie Library building for Essex Centre and the surrounding communities. The library is owned by the Town but leased to the Historical Research Society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local and County history files, records, and books</li> <li>• Family tree collections and DNA tests</li> <li>• Municipal records</li> <li>• Maps, photocopier, scanner</li> <li>• Meeting space with kitchen facilities, available for rental</li> <li>• Class tours for all grades</li> </ul>
<b>Harrow</b>		
Harrow and Colchester South Recreation Centre	<p>The Harrow and Colchester South Community Centre is located on McAfee Street, just past the Harrow Fairgrounds, and offers a variety of recreational and meeting facilities.</p> <p>There is a private school that operates out of the second floor of the Rec Centre and a Community Pantry (maintained by private company) located by the entrance of the facility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 ice pad</li> <li>• 6 dressing rooms</li> <li>• 2 referee rooms</li> <li>• Skate shop</li> <li>• Concession stand</li> <li>• 2 meeting rooms (all-purpose room – 219 occupancy; meeting room – 150 occupancy)</li> <li>• Fitness room</li> <li>• Daycare</li> </ul>
Lions Hall	<p>Facility used as a gym facility and for boy scouts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor Meeting Space</li> <li>• Workout Area</li> </ul>
Harrow Library	<p>This facility is operated by the County.</p> <p>The Essex County Library is a system of 14 libraries that provide quality materials and services, free of charge, to all residents of Essex County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer access</li> <li>• Photocopying and scanning</li> <li>• Wi-Fi access</li> <li>• Children’s programs</li> </ul>
<b>McGregor</b>		
McGregor Community Centre and Library	<p>Located in the heart of McGregor, this community centre offers a variety of recreational and meeting facilities, as well as an outdoor play structure.</p> <p>It also houses the McGregor Public Library, a branch of the Essex County Library system, and the new satellite clinic for the Harrow Health Centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 meeting rooms (all-purpose room; shared program room – 20 occupancy)</li> <li>• McGregor Public Library</li> <li>• Harrow Health Clinic</li> </ul>

The following tables provides a summary of the indoor amenities found in the Town of Essex and their current service level provision.

**Table 18: Indoor Amenity Inventory**

Indoor Recreation Amenity	Total Municipal & Private	Municipal/Private Per Population Provision
Ice Pad	3	1:7,072
Multi-purpose/Meeting Room	11	1:1,929
Gymnasium	3	1:7,072
Indoor Pool	1	1:21,216
Library	3	1:7,072
Fitness Space	2	1:10,608
Indoor Walking Track	1	1:21,216
Theatre	0	N/A

## 8.2 Ice Pads

### 8.2.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently supplies three ice pads:

- The Essex Centre Sports Complex contains two ice pads – the main ice pad, the Libro Credit Union Rink, is an NHL-sized rink with bowl seating for 1,168; the Shaheen Rink is a practice pad with bleacher seating for 222.
- The Harrow and Colchester South Community Centre contains a single-pad arena.

### 8.2.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

In 2022, the Libro Credit Union Rink was reserved 270 days out of the 355 days the rink was available, indicating a 76% reservation rate. Similarly, the Shaheen Rink was reserved 275 days, with a 77.5% reservation rate. The Harrow/Colchester rink was reserved for 246 days out of the 355 available days, with a reservation rate of 69%. These usage rates are similar to pre-pandemic numbers, with the two rinks in Essex Centre averaging an 84.5% reservation rate and the Harrow/Colchester rink with a 65% reservation rate in 2019. This usage analysis considers both prime and non-prime time rental slots. Current usage shows that the Town is near capacity for prime-time hours, however, daytime rental slots are often left open or unused.

### 8.2.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently provides ice pads at the service level of 1:7,072 population ratio. Comparator municipalities currently provide ice pads at an average service level of 1:12,896, as shown in Table 19.

**Table 19: Service Level Comparison, Ice Pads**

Ice Pads	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	3	1:7,072
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	2	1:11,762
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	2	1:11,650
Town of Kingsville	22,119	1	1:22,119
Town of Lasalle	32,721	2	1:16,361
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	3	1:13,470
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	1	1:7,841
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>1:12,896</b>



**Figure 29: Essex Centre Sports Complex**

### 8.3 Gymnasiums

#### 8.3.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently supplies three gymnasiums: two at the Essex Recreation Complex (made up of one double gymnasium space and one at the Maedel Community Centre. The gym at the Essex Recreation Complex also doubles as an auditorium and is rented and utilized for both purposes.

#### 8.3.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

In terms of the Town’s gymnasiums, Gym A at the Essex Recreation Complex had a usage rate by day of 15% in 2022, compared to 43% in 2019. The gym at the Maedel Community Centre had a usage rate by day of 81% in 2022, compared to 80% in 2019. The gyms are used frequently by community groups.

#### 8.3.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently supplies gymnasiums at a service level of 1:7,072 population ratio, while comparator municipalities are providing gymnasiums at an average service level of 1:23,741 population ratio. Most comparator municipalities of similar size, population, and geographic distribution to Essex do not have their own municipal-owned gymnasiums. Essex is unique in its ability to provide 3 gymnasiums to residents and is well exceeding the recommended service level target for this type of amenity space.

**Table 20: Service Level Comparison, Gymnasiums**

Gymnasium	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	3	1:7,072
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	0	N/A
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	0	N/A
Town of Kingsville	22,119	0	N/A
Town of Lasalle	32,721	0	N/A
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	1	1:40,410
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0 (3 school-owned)	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>1:23,741</b>



**Figure 30: Maedel Community Centre Gymnasium, Essex Centre**

## 8.4 Meeting / Multi-Purposed Rooms

### 8.4.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently supplies 13 meeting/multi-purpose rooms, with 1 located at the Colchester Community Centre, 1 at the Essex Recreation Complex, 2 at the Essex Centre Sports Complex, 3 at the Maedel Community Centre, 1 at the Essex Railway Station, 2 at the Harrow and Colchester South Recreation Centre, 1 at the Harrow Lion’s Hall, and 2 at the McGregor Community Centre.

### 8.4.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

The following provides a summary of the reservation rates for all the meeting/multi-purpose rooms in 2022 and 2019:

- Essex Recreation Complex:
  - All Purpose Room: Usage rate by day was around 24% on average for entire room in 2022, compared to around 16% on average in 2019.
- Essex Centre Sports Complex:
  - Barnett Room: Usage rate by day was 40% in 2022, compared to 31.55% in 2019
  - Shaheen Room: Usage rate by day was 59.15% in 2022, compared to 58.59% in 2019.
- Maedel Community Centre:
  - Ontario Room: Usage rate by day was 12% in 2022, compared to 71% in 2019
  - Huron Room: Usage rate by day was 22% in 2022, compared to 46% in 2019
  - Superior Room: Usage rate by day was 45% in 2022, compared to 74% in 2019.
- Harrow and Colchester South Recreation Centre:
  - Meeting Room (150 capacity): Usage rate by day was 2.82% in 2022, compared to 12.39% in 2019.
  - All Purpose Room (219 capacity): Usage rate by day was 29% for the full room and 15% for the half room in 2022, compared to 39% for the full room and 12% for the half room in 2019.
- Harrow Lion’s Hall:
  - Usage rate by day was 51% in 2022, compared to 36% in 2019.

Usage data for the other meeting/multi-purpose rooms was not available.

### 8.4.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently provides meeting/multi-purpose rooms at a service level of 1:1,632 population ratio. The comparator municipalities in Table 21 currently provide meeting/multi-purpose rooms at an average service level of 1:4,522 population ratio.

**Table 21: Service Level Comparison, Meeting / Multi-Purpose Rooms**

Meeting/Multi-Purpose Rooms	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	13	1:1,632
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	Information Not Available	Information Not Available
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	4	1:5,825
Town of Kingsville	22,119	7	1:3,160
Town of Lasalle	32,721	3	1:10,907
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	10	1:4,041
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	5	1:1,568
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>1:4,522</b>

## 8.5 Indoor Aquatics

### 8.5.1 SUPPLY

The Town of Essex currently supplies one four-lane 25-metre lap pool, a leisure pool with a 33-metre waterslide, and a training pool with stretch bars, all hosted at the Essex Recreation Complex. The Essex Recreation Complex is operated by the Town in conjunction with the Greater Essex County District School Board and was built as an addition to the Essex District High School.

### 8.5.2 SUMMARY OF USAGE

In 2022, the usage rate by day for the lap pool was 90%, compared to 98% in 2019. Usage rates for the other accessory pools have similarly high usage rates in the 80%-90% range both in 2022 and 2019. The pool offers a wide range of aquatic and lifesaving programs, as well as free swims and special parties.

### 8.5.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Town currently provide indoor pools at a service level of 1:21,216. The only other comparator municipalities that provide indoor pools are the Town of Lasalle and the Town of Lakeshore. Typically, a larger population is required to support an indoor pool due to the high initial cost and ongoing maintenance costs. Based on those two comparator municipalities, the average service level is 1:31,449 population ratio. Note that only the lap pool is counted in the comparator analysis.

**Table 22: Service Level Comparison, Indoor Pool**

Indoor Pool	2021 Population	Supply	Service Level (1:x)
Town of Essex	21,216	1	1:21,216
Town of Amherstburg	23,524	0	N/A
Town of Tecumseh	23,300	0	N/A
Town of Kingsville	22,119	0	N/A
Town of Lasalle	32,721	1	1:32,721
Town of Lakeshore	40,410	1	1:40,410
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock	7,841	0	N/A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>24,447</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>1:31,449</b>

## 9 Programming & Events

### 9.1 Overview

The Town provides several recreational programs, including various skating programs and indoor pickleball. Independent sports committees, organizations, groups, or teams also run various programs within the Town, utilizing municipal, school board or private facility space. Rental fees are required for all indoor facilities. If a rental fee is required, it is collected by a user group rather than the Town. The Town also provides a Program Proposal Form to allow qualified individuals to offer new programs.

For events, event permits are required for users and the Town has a Special Events Resource Team that oversees events. There are, however, some groups that set up small informal activities or events within Town parks throughout the year without permission or consultation with the Town.

Structured programs can be registered for on the Town’s reservation website, [essexconnect.ca](http://essexconnect.ca), which also allows for the purchasing of memberships and facility rentals. All the available programs will be listed with the dates, location, and costs. Courses may be cancelled five business days before the program start date if registration numbers do not meet the minimums required to run the course. Written notification using an online form is required to withdraw from a program.

### 9.2 Existing Recreation Programs

#### 9.2.1 ICE PROGRAMMING

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

**Table 23: Recreational Skating Programs Offered**

Program/Activity	Description
Parent-Tot Skate	Parents are able to teach their preschool child to skate. Helmets are required for all children and adult accompaniment is mandatory.
Top-Shelf Toddlers	Children 6 years of age and under can have fun developing shooting and stick handling skills with the help of an adult.
Adult Skate	Ages 16 and over only.
Adult Skills Skate	Work on shooting and stick handling skills. Ages 16 and over only, helmets required for all skaters.
Shinny Hockey	Join a game in progress; full equipment required, and no body contact allowed.
Public Skating	All ages welcome. Helmets recommended for children.
Figure Skating Practice	Opportunity for figure skating practice. All figure skaters are welcome.

### 9.2.2 AQUATICS PROGRAMMING

The Town offers aquatics programming at the indoor pool for swimmers of all ages. Programs include adult fitness (length swims, aquafit, swim coaching, triathlon training), lifeguard training and certification, and Learn to Swim programs for preschoolers and youth. The Town also provides drop-in programs on a first-come first-serve basis for those ages 14+. The drop-in schedules are updated every two months. The pool is available for open recreational swim twice a week.

### 9.2.3 OTHER PROGRAMMING

In addition to ice and aquatics programs, the Town also offers several other programs geared towards both the older adult population and youth. While the programs may differ by season, the Town offers a variety of casual sports (badminton, basketball, gymnastics, pickleball, indoor soccer), arts and culture programs (art attack, creative canvases, stories and songs, dance fusion, private piano lessons), and other creative learning programs (babysitter training, little scientists, youth game nights, Magic: The Gathering Draft).



Figure 31: Maedel Community Centre Community Room, Essex Centre

## 10 Vision & Strategic Directions

To guide the establishment of recommendations for the Town of Essex Community Services Master Plan, a Vision, and series of five (5) Strategic Directions were developed. The vision is the core goal or objective; it provides a view of the future for Essex Community Services. The strategic directions provide guidance on how to achieve the vision by breaking down the vision into a manageable approach and it is this approach, or strategy, that will then lead to action. It is this vision and the subsequent strategic directions that focused the final recommendations into implementable and actionable directions to ensure a healthy natural environment and strong sense of belonging for Essex residents. The vision and subsequent strategic directions directly correlate to the information gathered and analyzed as part of the Phase 1 and Phase 2, including public and stakeholder engagement.

### 10.1 Vision

Parks and recreation are essential services to ensure a healthy community and high quality of life for Essex residents. In alignment with the Town of Essex Strategic Plan, the vision for the Community Services Master Plan is as follows:

***Improve every resident’s quality of life by enhancing and expanding access to parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities within the Town through accessible, affordable, and inclusive programming and recreational facilities.***

### 10.2 Strategic Direction #1: Parkland, Trails, and Open Space

***Develop parks, trails, and open spaces to meet community needs, promote active living, and encourage connections with nature for all ages and abilities.***

#### 10.2.1 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE BACKGROUND

A review of existing parkland and open spaces within the Town found that the current provision of parkland in the Town is approximately 2.78 ha per 1,000 population. The current provision of parkland in the Town was then compared to that of similar municipalities to determine if the Town is providing a similar amount based on its counterparts. The comparator assessment determined that an average benchmark for comparator municipalities is 3.83 ha per 1,000 population, indicating that the Town is providing a slightly lower parkland provision in terms of area. As the Town grows, the parkland area should target of 3.5 hectares of open space and parkland for every 1,000 residents and no less than 2.5 hectares per 1,000 residents to keep pace with municipalities of a similar size and provide an adequate ratio of parks and open spaces for its residents.

As the Town's active aging population increases, outdoor spaces that support this group of the population, including unstructured and structured low-intensity recreational uses will become more in demand. This could include dedicated pickleball courts, walking tracks, trails / park loops, and outdoor fitness areas. Providing adequate infrastructure and amenities to support these outdoor recreation facilities is also crucial to a successful service delivery level. Potential upgrades that the Town could consider including are improved accessible seating areas and pathway connections. Consideration should also be given to further engage pre-teens and teens in outdoor activity. Features to consider include enhanced skateboard park(s) to allow for higher skill levels, additional active facilities such as basketball / ball hockey courts, and play equipment geared to pre-teens and teens (i.e., fitness equipment, skills course). To address the needs of both youth and older adults, the Town could consider adding variety to multi-generational unprogrammed facilities, such as a disc golf course, bocce ball, horseshoe pits, and/or outdoor ping pong, which would further engage the community and provide a wider range of outdoor activities. Improvements to existing park facilities to build on the Town's current accessibility and inclusion initiatives would also benefit the community. Improvements could include additional inclusive playground features, accessible pathway connections and seating areas, and additional designated accessible parking spaces.

A review of existing maintenance programs for sports facilities (i.e., baseball, soccer, tennis / pickleball courts) is recommended to determine if there are any additional needs to maintain facilities. The Town could consider adding lighting to certain park features, such as sport courts, to extend use into the evening hours. Adding lighting to certain park features may also deter vandalism, which is noted as a key issue in existing parks. Consideration for further ways to discourage vandalism, such as adding or improving park amenities to increase use or the addition of motion sensor 'safety lights' in areas prone to vandalism, is recommended.

Lastly, there is also need to consider climate change in determining maintenance standards for outdoor facilities (including parks, sports fields, trails, and open spaces). Climate change leads to longer summer sport seasons, which causes excessive wear down of outdoor sports facilities and amenities, along with the need for more shade structures and / or tree canopy coverage and water fountains. Further, looking at facilities that are underutilized during the October-April off-season, such as the Harrow Soccer Complex and the Essex Sports Park Soccer and Baseball Fields and evaluating how these facilities can be better utilized should be assessed.

### 10.2.2 TRAILS BACKGROUND

Trails are one of the most requested and well-used type of recreational facility in southern Ontario and were identified as the most frequently used outdoor amenity in the Town of Essex in the Public Survey. A well-planned trail system is an efficient use of recreation funding as they can connect many areas within a community, enhance access to parks and open space, provide for active transportation, and can be used by a wide range of the population. A good trail system should provide a variety of experiences for users, ranging from singletrack hiking trails in a natural environment to multi-use facilities accommodating joggers, cyclists, and walkers. Additionally, the integration of trail amenities, such as rest areas, and wayfinding signage, as well as designing with accessible slopes and surface materials, removes barriers for trail users.

Currently the Town has four (4) major trail systems that provide connections between the urban centres, including the Chrysler Canada Greenway, the Cypher Systems Group Greenway, the Dunn Road Trail, and the Waterfront Trail. The Chrysler Canada Greenway and the Cypher Systems Group Greenway are off-road multi-use trails managed by the Essex Region Conservation Authority, offering parking, seating areas and wayfinding signage, and provide connections between Essex Centre, Harrow, and McGregor, as well as to municipalities outside of the Town of Essex, including Amherstburg, Kingsville and Windsor. The Dunn Road Trail is a paved shoulder CWATS facility managed by the County of Essex, which provides a trail connection between Harrow and the Waterfront Trail in Colchester. The Waterfront Trail is also a CWATS paved shoulder facility that connects communities along the Lake Erie shoreline. The section of the CWATS trail that runs through Colchester is an in-boulevard multi-use trail.

The Town also provides a variety of trails within existing parks and trails to connect key community facilities to the major trail systems. While respondents from the public surveys generally noted that they were satisfied with the current trail system, additional trail signage, amenities and maintenance were noted as needing improvement by public survey respondents, with respondents indicating the desire to see the trail system expanded and more connected.

Overall, new outdoor recreation facilities or the expansion of existing facilities should be designed to accommodate population growth, increased levels of activity, and look to improve overall community connectivity, accessibility, and inclusion.

### 10.3 Strategic Direction #2: Indoor Recreational Facilities

***Improve indoor municipal recreational facilities and services to enrich the lives of all citizens through accessible, affordable, and inclusive experiences.***

#### 10.3.1 BACKGROUND

Quality municipal indoor recreation facilities are essential for the Town in offering effective and efficient recreation services that meet community expectations and needs. Current trends in recreation encourage the development of multi-use centres that integrate a variety of recreational and community facilities, including direct connections to greenspaces and outdoor amenities. Multi-use centres break down barriers to participation and offer convenient and accessible one-stop locations for the recreational needs of the Town and the surrounding area, while creating many operational efficiencies in terms of staffing and utilities.

The Town currently owns and/or operates seven (7) indoor recreational facilities – one (1) in Colchester, three (3) in Essex Centre, two (2) in Harrow and one (1) in McGregor – with the most visited facilities being the Essex Centre Sports Complex, Essex Recreation Complex, Harrow and Colchester South Arena, and the Maedel Community Centre, based on Phase 1 public survey responses. Generally, respondents to the surveys were satisfied with existing indoor facilities; however, respondents did note the need for better maintenance and cleaning of existing facilities, additional amenities, and increasing accessibility in indoor spaces. When looking at locations for new indoor recreation facilities, the location's accessibility for senior residents and local schools should be considered, along with the proximity to existing and planned trails, parks, and open spaces. Further, ensuring that residents from any of the

urban centres have equal access to the same quality of indoor spaces, particularly outside of Essex Centre, is key to maintaining an equitable distribution (i.e. 15-minute drive) of indoor facilities across the Town. This will also need to be balanced with the demands within each community, as some facilities are continuously underutilized due to have a high number of facilities spread across the urban centres but a lack of demand for certain facilities. It should also be noted that when it comes to indoor facilities, the service radius of such is much larger due to the assumption that these facilities are 'drive to' facilities. As a large percentage of the working population (96%) drives to work, it is expected that this represents the majority of the population in traveling within the community for leisure activities as well. As such, and in alignment with trends, it is expected that residents will continue to drive to such regional-type facilities. A focus on multi-use facilities at key locations should be prioritized. Continuous monitoring of existing facilities is required so that the necessary upgrades and renovations are made to meet the growing demands of the population, including a future expansion in the delivery of recreational services and programs for the community.

As population and demographic shifts occur, there will be a need for the Town's recreational spaces to also shift and accommodate these changes. There is a need to plan for the introduction of new, trending activities, age-friendly sports, and age-specific programming, such as for seniors and teens. While known demand for these spaces was provided through public consultation, future demand can be captured through user fees, databases of visitors, and the current online booking platform among other means to ensure programming evolves as needed.

## 10.4 Strategic Direction #3: Cultural Facilities

***Demonstrate active leadership by supporting cultural spaces and programming to encourage creativity while building a vibrant and inclusive community.***

### 10.4.1 BACKGROUND

In addition to numerous recreational facilities and infrastructure, a large component of the Town's community service success is its cultural facilities, infrastructure, and programming. Essex is a little Town with a big history. Human ingenuity and determination have made Essex a Town of ideas and inventions. From a fiery rebellion to two catastrophic explosions, many triumphs of human ingenuity and perseverance have made Essex the home to many firsts. It is these stories that should be built upon through this Master Plan for Essex's creative and vibrant community.

Cultural production, programming, exhibitions, and performances are organized primarily by the Essex Arts, Culture, and Tourism committee, as well as not-for-profit groups and private providers. This is common in most communities. Expanding cultural opportunities generally requires support from the municipality through the provision of facilities/spaces, learning programs, and assistance in hosting events and programs. It is important that the Town continues to support the provision of spaces that can be rented for events and programs, providing access to facilities, and working with stakeholder groups to identify opportunities to address their specific needs.

## 10.5 Strategic Direction #4: Programs and Services Delivery

***Expand and enhance recreational programs offered by the Town, including improvements to service delivery and program offerings to cater to the changing needs of the community.***

### 10.5.1 BACKGROUND

While physical facilities and infrastructure is a large component of parks and recreation in the Town, the delivery of various programs within these facilities are key to keeping the community happy, active, and engaged. The Town currently provides a number of public skating and swimming programs, along with a variety of programming for individual/unstructured sports and activities, arts and culture, and creative learning. The Town provides a single platform where residents can browse and sign up for programs, as well as make reservations for facilities and sign up for memberships. Utilizing a centralized online platform represents an efficient use of staff resources and allows for residents to easily see what programs and facilities are available. Making sure that each urban centre has access to quality programming should also be a priority.

Through public and municipal consultation, community members and staff noted the desire for more programs geared towards seniors and teenagers, as well as drop-in sessions for all ages. Programs targeted towards teenagers that can engage this age group in a meaningful way should be explored. Examples of programs catered towards children and youth as noted in the youth survey responses include competitive sports teams, intramurals or leagues, training camps, a video game club, movie nights, and STEM-related clubs/classes. Dedicated programs for seniors, especially during the winter months, is necessary to provide the time for that age group to socialize and remain active. The responses from the older adult survey indicate that this age group would like to see more social events, aquafit or aerobics classes, pickleball, senior fitness classes, and cards/board game nights.

Increased promotion and advertisement of Town-run programs on various platforms is crucial to getting community members interested and aware of the events happening in the Town, especially with the high number of new people moving into the community. Better promotion and marketing of what the Town has to offer was a recurring comment from public consultation as many community members are unaware of programs and events in the Town. While no specific recommendations were made on what approaches to better advertising and promoting the programs being offered, the Town can continue providing information on upcoming programming and events through social media outlets, newspaper ads, and mailed newsletters/postcards. Additionally, posting ads at high traffic locations in the Town could also bring further awareness to the Town's recreation programming.

## 10.6 Strategic Direction #5: Financing, Management, and Staff Strategies

***Monitor the Town's assets in a deliberate and structured manner, focusing maintaining a high quality of parks and recreation amenities and services.***

### 10.6.1 BACKGROUND

Good staff management and structure is key to the smooth day-to-day operation of the Community Services Department in the Town. As the Town's population increases, ensuring that the Community Services Department has an adequate number of flexible part-time staff to maintain existing facilities, operate more programming, and plan for growth is key to delivering high quality parks and recreation services. Further, a decline in volunteerism is a trend seen across Ontario municipalities – attracting and maintaining qualified team members throughout the entire year while promoting and incentivizing volunteerism should be a key goal throughout the lifetime of this master plan.

To execute organized sports, there are formal partnerships with some existing organizations and the facility manager(s) and/or municipal staff for the use of specific municipally owned facilities. That said, not all external organizations maintain a formal partnership with the Town, and there is no standardized approach to these ongoing, valuable partnerships. From an asset management perspective, a standardized approach to these agreements is important to ensure there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each party. Customization to reflect specific circumstances can be incorporated into such agreements, as needed. Furthermore, improvements in the standardization of agreements with local parks and recreational service providers would serve as a template for new and diverse types of programming to be introduced, as interested community members would have a clear roadmap for developing and regulating new, needed programming.

Integrating recommendations and insights from the Town's Asset Management Plan as it gets updated can assist with noting which amenities or facilities are reaching the end of their lifecycle and which areas of land improvements need additional attention and upgrades. Keeping an internal list of parks and recreation assets within the Community Services Department can also assist with providing guidance for the planning of new facilities and improvements as needed.

## 11 Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

### 11.1 Overview

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

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

The implementation of said recommendations is accomplished through an implementation strategy. This strategy provides a framework to ensure that the most critical recommendations are dealt with in a timely fashion while the less critical recommendations are implemented over the lifespan of the Master Plan, based on staff and fiscal capacity. Simply, the higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. All recommendations are important and, if properly implemented, will benefit Parkland, Trails, and Open Space; Indoor Recreational Facilities; Cultural Facilities; Programs and Services Delivery; and Financing, Management and Staff Strategies within the Town.

The priority/timing of recommendations in this section are organized into the following three categories:

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

The recommendations are based on what is needed and not what is financially achievable within the Town at the present time. The priority of each recommendation considers current need while also considering budgetary pressures and other factors that may impact implementation. Priorities set as part of this Master Plan should be revisited prior to the preparation and development of key capital and operating budgets. The impacts of provincial policy changes on these recommendations will need to be continually monitored due to its implications associated with parkland and parkland reserve funds among other factors.

**11.2 Legislation and Policy Strategies**

<p><b>1</b> Review and adjust Development Charges rates to provide funding that reflects the needs of the community in terms of parks and recreation services.</p>	
<p><b>2</b> Develop standard minimum parcel criteria within the Town when accepting the conveyance of land as parkland through the development of a Parkland Conveyance By-law. Consultation with Developers and the School Boards should be completed as per s.s51.1 of the Planning Act. Bill 23 may impact how parkland can be identified for conveyance purposes through allowing landowners to select parkland based on provincial criteria. The following provides examples of criteria when assessing land as future parkland:</p> <p>a. Land to be conveyed to the Town must satisfy the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lands are free and clear of all legal and other encumbrances.</li> <li>• Record of site conditions should satisfy a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA).</li> </ul> <p>b. Land is deemed unsuitable when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The land has been or will be conveyed to the Town for stormwater management purposes, highways, roadways, walkways, or other non-parkland purposes.</li> <li>• There is presence of natural hazards, including flood prone lands.</li> <li>• The location, grade and configuration of lands are constrained or undesirable.</li> <li>• The lands have unsuitable or unstable soil conditions.</li> <li>• It includes utility rights-of-way or easements.</li> <li>• There is contamination as determined by an ESA.</li> </ul> <p>c. The applicant must restore the land to be conveyed as parkland to a condition satisfactory to the Town.</p> <p>d. Lands must be a minimum size as determined by the Town.</p>	
<p><b>3</b> The Town should continue to review a range of alternative parkland acquisition strategies and not solely rely on subdivision developments for acquiring new parkland. This recommendation entails developing a Parkland Conveyance By-law to require rental housing developments that surpass a certain number of units to provide parkland conveyance or cash-in-lieu. This ensures that the Town can maintain an adequate parks supply going forward. Impacts from Bill 23 will need to be considered in the feasibility of this recommendation.</p>	
<p><b>4</b> As a part of the community planning process, continue to provide updated mapping for parks, trails, pathways, and facilities. Up-to-date mapping can highlight opportunities and constraints when reviewing development applications and provides a visual consolidation of the Town’s parks and recreation inventory.</p>	

<p>5 Linear pathways / trails and pedestrian connections should be considered in the Town’s review of Draft Plans of Subdivision and other development applications, including infill. Parcel dedication for trails and pedestrian links, in addition to parkland parcels, enhances community connectivity and reduces the disruption of the existing pedestrian network. Additionally, site plan reviews should consider and encourage multi-use spaces and elements that could enhance the pedestrian experience and the connectivity parkland.</p>	
<p>6 Create a formalized application process for community members looking to suggest new Town-owned recreation and/or culture facilities and/or amenities. This process would put the responsibility of conducting the required research and analysis of preparing the required background studies into the justification and feasibility of the project onto the applicant and not the Town. Based on the justification and information provided, the Town would make the final decision on whether the application is approved.</p>	
<p>7 The Town should review the updated population projections provided by the Province and County when available and re-align, as needed, the recommended targets for parks, recreation and culture as projected within the Community Services Master Plan. This review ensures that the service level targets identified within this Master Plan comply with future forecasts completed by the County and/or Town for the duration of this Master Plan.</p>	



Figure 32: Essex Municipal Building

### 11.3 Parkland, Trails, and Open Space Strategies

<p><b>8</b> The Town should consider further formalizing the existing parks classification system so that parkland can be properly assessed and categorized, while ensuring that the different park typologies are equitably distributed and that park amenities are consistent throughout the Town’s parkland system. The following factors are recommended to be considered and included in such a system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A focus on proximity of parkland to residents who will use them.</li> <li>b. The establishment of frequency and diversity in types of parks and open spaces providing interest and variety for the community.</li> <li>c. The development of parks and open space programming that is diverse and reflects the interests of the community who will use them.</li> <li>d. The establishment of size requirements, typical amenities and level of service based on the type of park or open space.</li> <li>e. Consider the suitability of adding the following parkland categories: Parkettes / Urban Parks.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9</b> The Town should implement a formal trail classification system and trail development strategy specific to Essex to shape the future of the trail network and to assist with future Town-wide strategies on trail improvements. The following factors are recommended to be considered for such a system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A focus on connecting residents to parks, amenities, key destinations, and schools.</li> <li>b. A hierarchy of trails that provides opportunities for diverse, multi-modal facilities (consider opportunities for four-season trail usage).</li> <li>c. Establishment of maintenance level and service level of trails based on hierarchy.</li> <li>d. A focus on providing universal and inclusive access and enjoyment, including accessible trail widths / slopes, and trail amenities such as accessible benches and rest stops, bike repair stations, wayfinding / trail markers, trailhead signage, and refuse and recycling bins.</li> <li>e. An emphasis on facility improvements and additional connections to the Chrysler Greenway, Cypher Systems Group Greenway and CWATS trail system as the Town grows.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10</b> Develop minimum criteria for amenities at all park locations which may consist of, but not be limited to: Gazebo / shelter; Picnic tables; Trash receptacles; and Parking.</p>	
<p><b>11</b> Install new gazebo and power connections in Sadler’s Pond to accommodate the number of special events that occur in the park.</p>	

<p><b>12</b> The Town of Essex should adopt a parkland service level target of 3.5 hectares per 1,000 population and should not go below a service level of 2.5 hectares per 1,000 population. Parks should be provided at a 5–10-minute walk (500m radius) to residents to provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities for the entire community.</p>	
<p><b>13</b> The recommended service level for splashpads is set at 1 splashpad for 14,700 of population (1:14,700). The Town of Essex currently has the appropriate number of splashpads. Based on the medium population growth projection by Essex County, the Town does not require any additional splashpads to 2031. Explore opportunities to upgrade or expand existing splashpads within larger community parks through life-cycle renewal initiatives.</p>	
<p><b>14</b> The recommended service level for ball diamonds is set at 1 ball diamond for 1,500 of population (1:1,500). Currently, based solely on number of diamonds, the Town of Essex is meeting this service level target. Medium population growth projection by Essex County indicates that the Town of Essex will be in deficit of 2 ball diamonds if no additional ball diamonds are created by 2031. Considering distribution within the Town, and the Town’s goal for Essex Centre to be a local hub for sport tourism, Essex Centre is in deficit of full and intermediate sized diamonds. Implementation of the proposed Essex Centre Sports Complex will address current and future needs. The Town should continue to work with local baseball organizations to forecast town-wide facility needs.</p>	
<p><b>15</b> The recommended service level for soccer pitches is set at 1 soccer pitch for 1,500 of population (1:1,500). The Town of Essex is currently meeting this service level target. The Town will need 4 additional soccer pitches to meet the target service level within the next 10 years. The Town will be losing 1 senior and 1 junior soccer pitch at the existing Essex Sport Complex due to implementation of a roadway connection to future development lands. Implementation of the proposed Essex Centre Sports Complex to replace the pitches will be needed to meet current soccer demands. The Town should continue to work with local soccer organizations to forecast town-wide facility needs.</p>	
<p><b>16</b> Playgrounds should be geographically located within 500 metres or a 5–10-minute walk of residential areas. The recommended service level for playgrounds is set at 1 playground for 1,400 of population (1:1,400). The Town of Essex is currently in deficit of 1 playground based on this target service level. Based on the Essex County medium population growth projections, the Town will continue to be deficit of 6 playgrounds if no additional playgrounds are created by 2031. All new playgrounds should focus on design for accessibility and inclusion for a range of age groups.</p>	

<p><b>17</b> The recommended service level for outdoor tennis courts and pickleball courts is set at 1 tennis/pickleball court for 4,000 of population (1:4,000). Currently, the Town of Essex is meeting this service level target. Based on the Essex County medium population growth projection, the Town will be in deficit of 1 tennis/pickleball court if no additional courts are created by 2031. As there are currently no dedicated pickleball courts within the Town it is recommended that the Town implement at least 2 dedicated pickleball courts and continue to explore opportunities to provide pickleball as a secondary use within existing court facilities by 2031.</p>	
<p><b>18</b> The recommended service level for basketball courts is set at 1 basketball court for 5,000 of population (1:5,000). The Town of Essex currently has the appropriate quantity of basketball courts based on the 2021 population. Based on the Essex County medium population growth projection, the Town will not require additional basketball courts by 2031 to meet the target service level. This understanding should be reassessed over time based on updated population projections.</p>	
<p><b>19</b> Complete a review of existing playground facilities to determine timelines for replacement of aging infrastructure. Continue to coordinate upgrades to playground facilities with improvements to playground design and amenities for accessible, inclusive, and innovative play spaces, Provide amenities such as accessible pathway connections, seating and picnic areas, water fountains, shade coverage (i.e., trees, shade structures), and refuse bins. Consider opportunities for unique / themed playgrounds, nature-based features, play features for a range of age groups (pre-school and school aged through to pre-teen / teen age groups), and rubber safety surfacing.</p>	
<p><b>20</b> Existing parks, trails and open spaces should continue to be adequately maintained and upgraded as required to support the growing population and evolving needs of the Town, including consideration for the longer sport season due to changes in climate. Specifically, baseball diamonds in the Town have been noted through public feedback to require more attention in terms of maintenance and upgrades. Create parks, trails and outdoor facility maintenance standards set out by the Town of Essex with consideration for applicable provincial / national sport association standards.</p>	
<p><b>21</b> Optimize active infrastructure investment by continuing to work with the County Wide Active Transportation System (CWATS) and Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) to connect the entire Town.</p>	
<p><b>22</b> Explore possible locations for a greenhouse that can be used year-round by the Parks department.</p>	

<p><b>23</b> While each urban area within the Town is generally well serviced with parks, the following is recommended to fill potential gaps in parkland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. New parkland could be provided in MacGregor through future lands to be developed between 12<sup>th</sup> Concession Road and Masaccio Drive.</li> <li>b. Should the lands in the north/north-east area of Colchester be developed, the Town should consider adding green space to support growth and walkability to parks/recreation.</li> <li>c. As residential lands develop on the west side of Colchester south of County Road 50, the Town should consider adding parkland to provide further access and connections along the Waterfront Trail.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>24</b> As walking paths and trails are highly used amenities within the Town, the Town should continue to provide accessible surfacing for trails. Once a formal trail classification system and trail strategy is developed (Recommendation #9), the Town will be able to provide accessible surfacing for trails in alignment with trail hierarchy and maintenance standards.</p>	
<p><b>25</b> Continue to evaluate opportunities to enhance and increase access to the waterfront, with an emphasis on accessible connections along the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.</p>	
<p><b>26</b> Provide more outdoor facilities targeted towards seniors to support Essex’s active aging population, such as spaces for low intensity activities and less structured and/or passive recreation spaces, where feasible. Specific activities can include pickleball and bocce ball courts, lawn bowling, shuffleboard, horseshoe, trails, walking tracks, and outdoor fitness equipment. Fitness equipment should provide a range of exercise options and difficulty levels, with a focus on fixed elements to reduce the number of moving parts.</p>	
<p><b>27</b> The Town should explore opportunities to provide additional outdoor recreation amenities targeted towards pre-teens and teens to further engage this age group and encourage an active lifestyle. It is recommended to locate and distribute youth recreation amenities at a minimum radius of 1,000m. Some features to consider including in parks and outdoor spaces that can encourage more youth and young adults to interact with the space include free outdoor Wi-Fi and charging stations in urban parks and outdoor café areas, interactive lighting and art, outdoor study spaces, outdoor concerts, and events. Sports facilities and amenities that provide for increased physical challenges would be beneficial to this age group, including skate / BMX pump track, basketball / ball hockey multi-use courts, agility / fitness circuit, and beach volleyball. Providing a skateboard park that includes more challenging features should be considered.</p>	

<p><b>28</b> Continue to explore opportunities to work with community members and volunteer organizations to support community-led recreation initiatives such as, community gardens, tree planting, and other community initiatives.</p>	
<p><b>29</b> Continue to explore opportunities to work with volunteer organizations and community partners to enhance culture within the Town’s recreation areas. Examples include murals / public art, interpretive features that highlight cultural / natural heritage, and local events / markets / concerts.</p>	
<p><b>30</b> When planning outdoor spaces, the Town should consider designing these spaces to be low/no-cost to users, intergenerational, and multi-purpose so that all age and income groups can utilize and enjoy the space. This could include incorporating outdoor fitness equipment and / or sport courts for seniors, adults, and teens, with a playground for preschool and school age children, within a park space.</p>	
<p><b>31</b> The Town should work with a community group to develop a dog-friendly outdoor amenity space in Harrow / Colchester (e.g., Dog Park). The following factors are recommended to be considered for such an amenity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Located on underutilized, Town-owned land;</li> <li>b. Located away from existing Residential uses to avoid conflict in uses;</li> </ul> <p>Specific guidelines are put in place regarding amenity use (e.g., hours of operation, etc.).</p>	
<p><b>32</b> Complete a Parking Study for Colchester Harbour and Park to determine needs based on current and future demands, and to develop a plan to alleviate current parking issues.</p>	
<p><b>33</b> Develop two park designs annually that are “shovel-ready” should grants become available.</p>	
<p><b>34</b> When exploring options for new outdoor facilities, aim to create multi-use recreational centres that include a combination of outdoor and indoor amenities in one location, allowing users to have access to a variety of facilities and amenities at one location. Additionally, the Town should consider expanding outdoor recreation amenities at existing Town-owned facilities (i.e., Essex Centre Sports Complex, Harrow Arena and Fairgrounds) to provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities to users and create a central location for indoor and outdoor recreation.</p>	

<p><b>35</b> Consider diverse uses of the Harrow Soccer Complex, beyond soccer, for better utilization of facility (e.g. flag football, Ultimate Frisbee, special events, Australian rules football).</p>	
<p><b>36</b> Reconstruct the three Harrow tennis courts to remediate the drain issue that creates annual cracking in the courts.</p>	
<p><b>37</b> Future sports fields can be developed to be multi-use so that there is designated space that can accommodate a variety of sports, allowing these spaces to be flexible and responsive to parks and recreation trends as they evolve.</p>	
<p><b>38</b> Consider evaluating climate impacts on play with sport user groups, i.e., more play in edge seasons, high daytime temps requiring cooler evening hours of play and more lit fields / pitches.</p>	
<p><b>39</b> Continue phased implementation of the new Essex Centre Sports Fields to create a centralized location for sport within the Town, promote sport tourism, improve quality of sport facilities, and support ease of maintenance.</p>	
<p><b>40</b> Review surplus land to determine if it can be used to meet facility deficits. Sell unsuitable / unused surplus lands to assist in funding recreation improvements. The following criteria should be utilized when determining whether the surplus land is able to meet facility deficit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic distribution within the Town compared to other facility/assets</li> <li>• Land size (e.g. sufficient depth, frontage, contiguous land)</li> <li>• Servicing capabilities by gas, electricity, water, wastewater, roads, etc.</li> <li>• Location of easements/restrictive covenants on the property</li> </ul> <p>Topographic and soil conditions, including water features, flood plains, landforms, or conservation regulated land that could limit use</p>	
<p><b>41</b> Maintain ongoing coordination with developers during the development application review process so that opportunities to incorporate new parkland, outdoor recreation facilities or potential linkages with the trail system are identified and planned for early in the process, including strategies to incorporate new parkland and facilities within the existing system and confirming the ongoing operations and maintenance of the space.</p>	
<p><b>42</b> Continue to partner with other local agencies and municipalities (e.g., CWATS, Town of Amherstburg, County of Essex, Essex Region Conservation Authority, etc.) to bring larger scale park and trail improvements that can serve the broader region.</p>	

<p><b>43</b> Consider adding a trail connection to the north-west part of Essex Centre by expanding the Chrysler Canada Greenway. Additionally, consider providing a trail connection from Fairview Ave W and the Essex Sports Park through future developed lands to Tulley Meadows Bush and Trail and the south-west part of Essex Centre.</p>	
<p><b>44</b> While Harrow is well connected with trails, consider adding a small linkage on Sinasac Street West to complete the connection between the Chrysler Canada Greenway, the Greenlink Trail, and the in-boulevard CWATS trail on Erie Street. Additionally, the Town could also consider a trail connection between Pollard Park and the Kinsmen Participark Trail along Perriera Drive. These connections could be through an in-boulevard or an on-road marked route.</p>	
<p><b>45</b> Look for opportunities to expand the current trail network, particularly within the southern half of the Town or in areas with existing active transportation barriers, so that there is an equitable geographic distribution of paved and accessible trails that provide enhanced pedestrian connectivity between key destinations within the Town, such as providing a trail connection in McGregor between Co-An Park and the Chrysler Greenway.</p>	
<p><b>46</b> Ensure that new and existing trails are accessible for people of all ages and abilities, including those using strollers and those with mobility restrictions. All new trails should be designed with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards, where possible, providing appropriate surfacing and accessible slopes. The Town should identify gaps in paving, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and inadequate signage and lighting in existing trails and make the necessary upgrades so that residents are continually encouraged to choose active transportation modes. Signage should be consistent across parks, trails, and facilities.</p>	
<p><b>47</b> Review parks with ongoing issues of vandalism (i.e., Bridlewood Optimist Park and Hunter Park) from a CPTED lens to determine improvements to deter vandalism and encourage active park usage, i.e., security lights, security cameras and / or additional park features to engage a variety of age groups.</p>	
<p><b>48</b> Create a sports field strategy that focuses on developing future sports fields to be multi-use. The sports field strategy should also focus on creating and maintaining fields to an appropriate service level, based on the recommendation of this Master Plan.</p>	
<p><b>49</b> Explore opportunities to implement naturalized pockets within passive parkland with Town or community native planting initiatives.</p>	

<p><b>50</b> Design and enhance new and/or existing parks, trails, and open spaces with a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approach. The main objectives of CPTED include encouraging the diverse use of outdoor spaces to help establish informal surveillance within public spaces and promoting the presence of people in public spaces in order to avoid isolated areas.</p> <p>There are three main principles when developing outdoor spaces through the lens of CPTED and these principles should be combined together to provide better safety for all users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provide ways to encourage natural surveillance by increasing visual permeability, adding lights in strategic locations, and reducing the presence of walls, opaque/privacy fencing, and overgrown shrubs.</li> <li>b. Provide natural access control of areas where the public is not encouraged to be in, such as maintenance areas, by way of fences, low walls, gates, and landscaping. It should be noted a minimum of two accesses/gates should be provided in a controlled area.</li> <li>c. Provide territorial reinforcement or the “sense of ownership”. The territorial reinforcement is also encouraged in a multi-use space where there is a diversity of activities and uses provided to users.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>51</b> Promote a climate-conscious approach in park, trail, and open space development / redevelopment. A climate-conscious approach to park, trail and open space design includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Considering energy conservation and generation in the planning of new amenities and facilities.</li> <li>b. Reviewing day-to-day operations and the maintenance of parks and open spaces.</li> <li>c. Incorporating more sustainable design features into the development of parks such as bioswales, raingardens and pollinator gardens.</li> <li>d. Promoting a Tree Planting Strategy to encourage the selection and promotion of native plants.</li> <li>e. Developing a Tree Canopy Policy/Tree Management Plan to encourage the planting of a minimum of one tree for every tree removed.</li> <li>f. Utilizing locally sourced and sustainable building materials.</li> <li>g. Assessing the interest in community gardens within parks.</li> <li>h. Promoting naturalized / vegetated waterways. This can include streams, stormwater ponds, and along the waterfront.</li> <li>i. Identifying areas of significant ecological value such as wetlands, creeks, shorelines, and woodlands within the Town boundaries to conserve / enhance biodiversity.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>52</b> Continue to work with ERCA to establish timelines to phase in work for the development of Heritage Park in Essex Centre as per the Essex Streetscape Master Plan.</p>	

### 11.4 Indoor Recreational Facilities Strategies

<p><b>53</b> The recommended service level for ice pads is set at 1 ice pad for 13,000 of population (1:13,000). The Town currently supplies 3 ice pads, which surpasses the comparative service level for the current population size but meets current community needs. Based on the Essex County medium population growth projections, no additional ice pads are required to meet the target service level to 2031. This understanding should be reassessed over time based on updated population projections.</p>	
<p><b>54</b> The recommended service level for multi-purpose spaces and meeting rooms is set at 1 room for 4,500 of population (1:4,500) and the recommended service level for gymnasiums is set at 1 per 10,500 population. Both gymnasiums and multi-purpose spaces play a role in providing spaces for recreational programming in the Town. While the combined existing number of multi-purpose spaces, meeting rooms, and gymnasiums in Essex exceeds population need on a service level basis, the quality and usability of these spaces for active recreation purposes is lacking. Based on observed need, the Town should focus on adding multi-purposes spaces/gymnasium space that can accommodate recreational programming through partnerships, acquisitions, refurbishment, or construction.</p>	
<p><b>55</b> Identify potential for refurbishment of aging facilities so that they can continue to properly service the growing community and review which facilities and spaces should be prioritized above others. Focus should be on facilities that present opportunities for multi-use, centralized locations (where possible) and asset management be considered when determining future of aging facilities.</p>	
<p><b>56</b> When developing new indoor recreation facilities or expanding existing facilities, focus should be on creating a multi-use centre where residents can access a variety of recreation options and programming at one location. This can include one large community centre that houses indoor aquatics, arenas, gymnasiums, a library, and meeting rooms.</p>	
<p><b>57</b> Based on public feedback, the library (run by the County of Essex) has been identified as one of the most frequently visited indoor facilities. The Town should explore opportunities to coordinate efforts with the County of Essex and other local community groups in the efficient provision of age-specific programming and events within indoor spaces.</p>	
<p><b>58</b> Consider incorporating energy efficiency upgrades and rainwater harvesting initiatives to existing and planned indoor recreation facilities.</p>	

<p><b>59</b> Promote a climate-conscious approach when developing new or redeveloping existing indoor recreation facilities. A climate-conscious approach to indoor recreation facility design includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The reduction of energy cost, carbon emissions, and environmental footprint.</li> <li>b. A review of the day-to-day operations and maintenance of indoor recreation facilities.</li> </ul> <p>Utilizing locally sourced and sustainable building materials.</p>	
<p><b>60</b> Identify areas that require upgrades in order to continue to provide a high level of service to the growing population and review which facilities and amenities should be prioritized above others. Continue to monitor the operating costs of indoor facilities and work to schedule capital investments according to the life cycle costs of the facility.</p>	
<p><b>61</b> Complete an Asset Management Plan for all recreation facilities owned and/or operated by Community Services. Once completed for all parks and recreation facilities and amenities, this list of recommendations should be updated to include the recommendations from the Asset Management Plan.</p>	
<p><b>62</b> Encourage greater summer usage of the arena floor for indoor sports and other activities, including but not limited to, lacrosse, ball hockey leagues, indoor walking club, trade shows, etc.</p>	



Figure 33: Essex Recreational Complex Pool

### 11.5 Cultural Facility Strategies

<p><b>63</b> Promote and celebrate the Town’s culture and heritage through multiscale events and programs.</p>	
<p><b>64</b> Review the Town’s Official Plan and other key municipal guiding documents through an arts and culture lens to embed arts, culture, and heritage values and goals (including public art) within their next updates.</p>	
<p><b>65</b> Support and nurture local artists and arts organizations through organizing art events to showcase and sell their work, and through developing workshops and classes in collaboration with these artists and organizations.</p>	
<p><b>66</b> Continue to develop Heritage Park to become a destination within Essex Centre.</p>	
<p><b>67</b> Continue to develop Colchester Beach &amp; Park as a destination within Colchester.</p>	
<p><b>68</b> Consider intertwining parks, recreation and culture activities with tourism and traveller demands so that the Town becomes an attractive destination.</p>	
<p><b>69</b> Consider upgrading the Colchester Harbour entrance with local art.</p>	
<p><b>70</b> Continue to work together with the Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee to create dedicated spaces for local artists and residents to create public art. Consideration should be given to places that are currently well travelled or have potential to be well travelled if art is created at the location to make it more of a destination.</p>	
<p><b>71</b> Consider labelling and recognizing heritage trees located within Town property.</p>	
<p><b>72</b> Create a maintenance program for public art and murals to ensure that it continues to celebrate the Town of Essex’s culture and heritage in the long term.</p>	

<p><b>73</b> Offer to provide local schools with tours of murals and features of cultural significance to promote history and culture within the Town to the youth.</p>	
<p><b>74</b> The Town should continue to provide outdoor event space at an average service level of 1 space per 3,500 population (1:3,500).</p>	
<p><b>75</b> Work with the music, arts, and theater community by providing financial and / or promotional assistance.</p>	



**Figure 34: Veterans Memorial Park Entry Feature**

### 11.6 Programs and Services Delivery Strategies

<p><b>76</b> The Town of Essex should annually evaluate usage and participation/satisfaction rates of rental spaces and recreational programming to better respond to community needs as they change over time. This could be accomplished through online surveys or through documentation on essexconnect. Citizen and customer feedback can also help improve service policies and procedures.</p>	
<p><b>77</b> Continue to focus on partnerships with local sports, clubs and recreational organizations that maximize the economic development potential of the facility or service in a manner that provides return on the investment into the facility. The Town currently has partnerships with Social Services, P2P, CWATS, Bike Windsor Essex, Jumpstart, WE-CIM, and Lifesaving Society. Further, these partnerships can foster events and activities (one-off, annual, or informal) that can support community-wide involvement for all ages and abilities where there is limited service duplication or inefficiencies.</p>	
<p><b>78</b> Utilize technology and existing professional networks to improve communication and service delivery of municipal parks and recreation opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Continuing to provide annual parks and recreation online guides and 'event calendars' that are digitally available from the Town's website and on essexconnect.ca, and accessible from their social media page(s). Additionally, using digital newsletters or a paper format mailed directly could be considered.</li> <li>b. Supporting staff's training opportunities for the use of new and emerging technology and available software.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>79</b> While the Town does provide online booking for various programming, the Town should also consider conducting facility bookings online. This includes listing facility booking prices online so that interested parties can easily access this information without having to call Town staff. By allowing people to book facilities online, this can free up staff time.</p>	
<p><b>80</b> Continue to offer a wide range of programming in all four urban centres for all age groups.</p>	
<p><b>81</b> Maintain HIGH FIVE accreditation, which sets out principles and goals for youth programming, throughout the lifespan of this Master Plan.</p>	
<p><b>82</b> Request annual sport organization registration numbers to track trends and plan ahead for gaps or to fill gaps with Town programming.</p>	

<p><b>83</b> Explore the potential for Town-facilitated sports leagues to fill the gap in organized activities not covered by local service groups and to optimize facility utilization. It is recommended that the initial programming should look at running sport leagues such as hockey, basketball, tennis, pickleball, and volleyball.</p>	
<p><b>84</b> Based on the fees and charges analysis, revisit payment options for scheduled classes and programs (i.e., by class, multi-passes, or an all-inclusive membership to all facilities and programs).</p>	
<p><b>85</b> Continue to identify recreational opportunities that enable and support unstructured, self-structured and low-cost activities, in addition to local sports and other organized activities.</p>	
<p><b>86</b> Promote volunteering programs to encourage community involvement and the success of events, festivals, and recreation programming. This can be integrated with the mandatory volunteering hours required for secondary school students.</p>	
<p><b>87</b> Offer to host user group meeting to discuss issues and opportunities related to service delivery, community needs, and overall communication, with individual groups, or collectively when / if appropriate.</p>	

Join us for these great programs and more...see all offerings at [essexconnect.ca](http://essexconnect.ca)

	<b>CREATE</b>	<b>MOVE</b>
	Art Attack Get Messy Music & Me Private Piano Lessons Private Harp Lessons	Baby & Me Fit Badminton Basketball Dancing Kids & Dancing Tots Gymnastics & Totnastics Indoor Soccer Nerf Warriors Pickleball P&T/Preschool All Sorts of Sports Youth Volleyball Zoomer Fit
	<b>DISCOVER</b>	<b>SPLASH</b>
	Babysitter Training Clubhouse PA Day Camp Cooking Kids Home Alone Training P&T Stay and Play	Adult Lengths Swim Aquafit Learn to Swim Lessons Leisure Swims Lifesaving Club Private Swim Lessons Recreational Swims Spin H2O Sport Fundamentals
	<b>LEAD</b>	Registration for Fall 1 Session Opens August 14 for Online Registration or August 21 for Phone/In-Person Registration
Bronze Cross & SFA Bronze Medallion & EFA Bronze Star & BFA LSS Assistant Instructors LSS Instructor School National Lifeguard & SFA		

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Figure 35: Essex Fall 2023 Recreation Guide

11.7 Financing, Management and Staff Strategies

<p><b>88</b> The existing service and maintenance level of facilities by Town staff is deemed adequate and this baseline should be maintained over the lifespan of the plan. Based on such, over the lifespan of this Plan, the Town should ensure it maintains an adequate number of staff to support the recommendations of this master plan, including the addition of new staff members if new facilities/amenities are developed.</p>	
<p><b>89</b> Any services or amenities requested by the public or community groups that are above the recommended service delivery level should be considered above and beyond the requirements of the Town. At such time that services above and beyond the Town’s baseline are requested, the member of the public or community group requesting such service should be responsible for assisting with fund raising and maintenance of said facility.</p>	
<p><b>90</b> Following the review of service delivery recommendations of this Master Plan, an assessment of the critical path and gaps of the Community Services Department should be completed to determine what areas (if any) are requiring additional staffing support to maintain the baseline level of service delivery This process should be repeated at least every five (5) years to ensure efficiencies and staffing levels are appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>91</b> Work with a park design consultant to provide an overall plan for meeting industry standards in the development of parks and open spaces.</p>	
<p><b>92</b> Complete feasibility studies and conceptual planning for major capital projects for parks and recreation facilities well in advance to be ready to take advantage of funding and partnership opportunities as they arise.</p>	
<p><b>93</b> Maximize the efficiency of facilities and infrastructure systems to ensure their long-term sustainability, utilizing thoughtful design to ensure services are provided in a safe, reliable, and affordable way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Undertake life-cycle audits for parks and recreation facilities to identify opportunities for the redevelopment, renovation or decommissioning of amenities and facilities.</li> <li>b. Establish maintenance programs and budgets tied to population growth to reflect the increased use and maintenance requirements.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>94</b> Increase efficiencies in administration and management to create an effective department which is well-managed, efficient, and innovative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Plan for new services and facilities using an evidence-based decision-making process.</li> <li>b. Develop and implement a central departmental asset and resource management system.</li> <li>c. Implement a process for continuous service improvement, annually identifying service areas for review with the goal of improving service, function, and efficiency.</li> <li>d. Automate service offerings where possible (e.g., online booking system) to free up staff time</li> </ul>	
<p><b>95</b> Build staff leadership capacity by attracting and maintaining a key team of qualified team members and staff who are passionate about what they do and are committed to building a strong and health community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase competency-based professional development programs for staff to build knowledge, increase capacity, and grow with expertise in terms of providing parks and recreation services.</li> <li>b. Provide new job skills training to staff and internship opportunities for youth, young adults, and newcomers.</li> <li>c. Utilize volunteers as support staff where full-time or part-time is not viable.</li> <li>d. Consider working with local school boards to provide High-school students with volunteer opportunities that would meet Community Service requirements.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>96</b> Explore opportunities for additional and more reliable and sustainable funding resources for parks, recreation and culture programs and facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review funding structure and related policies and by-laws.</li> <li>b. Working with the Planning Department, review development charges rates for new developments.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>97</b> Continue to explore opportunities for additional funding resources. Work with Finance or assign a member of the community services department to explore grant opportunities, naming rights of facilities, and revenue generating opportunities and lead applications on an annual basis.</p>	
<p><b>98</b> Search for grant funding to help offset costs to meet AODA standards for accessibility at all Town facilities, including the Carnegie Library, Town Hall, outdoor facilities, etc.</p>	

<p><b>99</b> Pursue potential partnerships and sponsorship opportunities that are consistent with the Department’s vision to reduce reliance on tax dollars in providing quality parks and recreation services in Essex.</p>	
<p><b>100</b> Collaborate with the Finance Department to standardize rental rates and lease agreements based on square footage and user type for all Town-owned facilities.</p>	
<p><b>101</b> Create an asset management strategy that includes guidelines on what additional facilities and/or land should be purchased or assumed by the Town. The asset management strategy should refer to the service delivery recommendations of this plan.</p>	
<p><b>102</b> Develop a parkland conveyance by-law to be in alignment with requirements from Bill 23. Further, in alignment with parks and open space recommendations, the by-law should consider not accepting lands as parkland that are flood prone, intended for stormwater management uses, hazard lands, or other non-parkland uses, as well as lands that do not meet a minimum size requirement as determined by the Town.</p>	
<p><b>103</b> Consider updating the Town’s parks by-law regularly so that it is in alignment with current needs and trends.</p>	
<p><b>104</b> Create a Town management and maintenance strategy for all community services, including indoor and outdoor facilities, to ensure that the management and maintenance of facilities and amenities across the Town is done to a certain standard and is consistent.</p>	
<p><b>105</b> Develop and maintain a Community Service Department Fee Schedule to be approved by Council. Rates should be reviewed annually prior to budget and comparison surveys should be conducted.</p>	
<p><b>106</b> Develop a 5-year capital budget plan using the new Community Services Master Plan as a guide for new and replacement items, as well as a timeline for capital projects.</p>	

### 11.8 Monitoring Strategies

<p><b>107</b> The parks classification system recommended as part of this Master Plan should be incorporated into the Town’s Official Plan through the next housekeeping exercise.</p>	
<p><b>108</b> As a continuation of the public outreach associated with the Community Services Master Plan, a regular survey of residents of the Town of Essex is recommended to be undertaken every three (3) years to evaluate community needs, satisfaction with the services provided currently, and to identify any gaps in service.</p>	
<p><b>109</b> Collect annual registration data from all organizations that use Town parks and recreation facilities and monitor facility utilization to assist in tracking trends, changing demands, and allocations.</p>	
<p><b>110</b> Tools/metrics should be established and administered at or near the time-of-service delivery to understand user satisfaction with the service provided. User satisfaction should regularly be assessed to determine whether services need to be modified to meet changing trends and needs.</p>	
<p><b>111</b> Identify existing and future policies and master plans where parks and recreation recommendations can be incorporated into.</p>	

## 12 Conclusion

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



Figure 36: Historic Essex Train Station

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