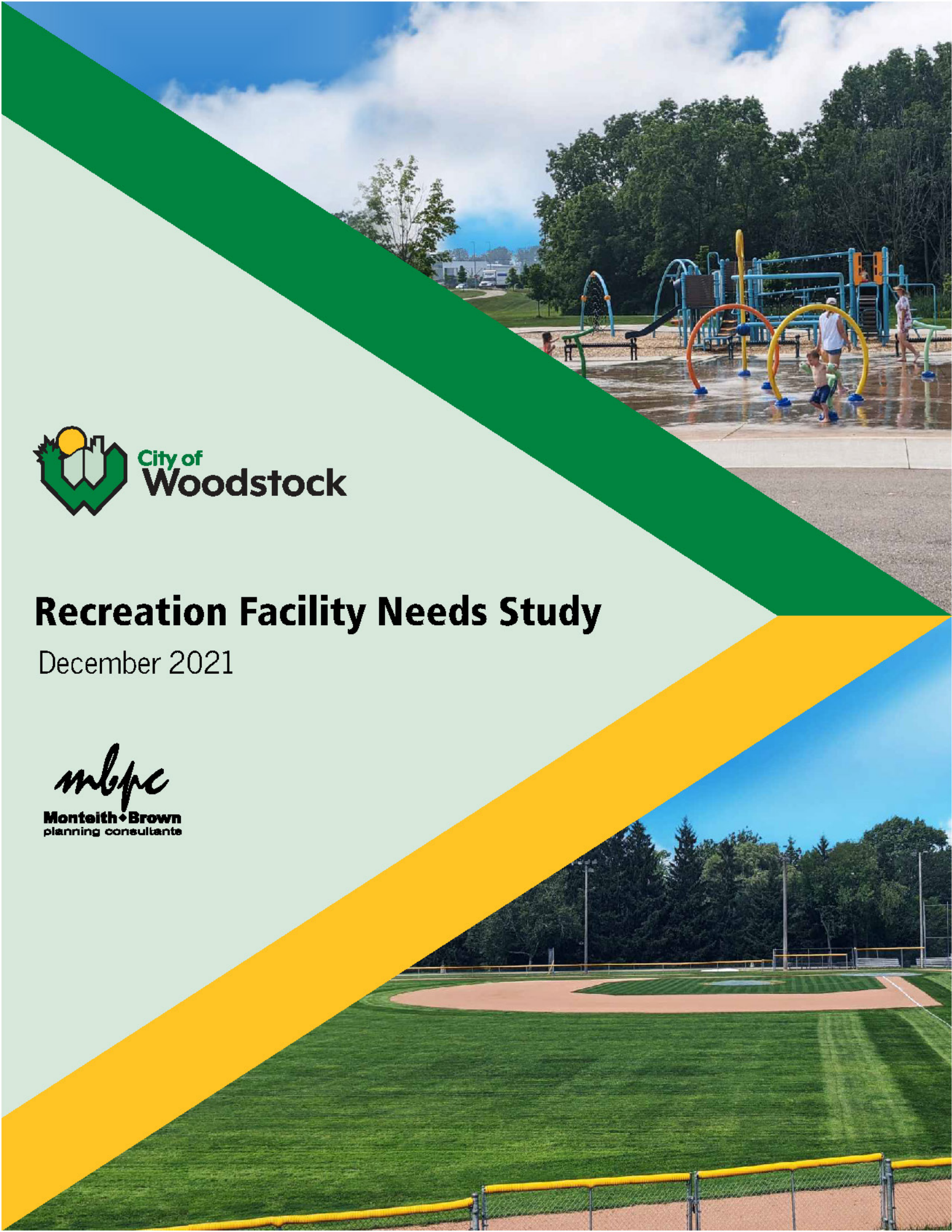




# Recreation Facility Needs Study

December 2021





City of Woodstock

# Recreation Facility Needs Study

December 9, 2021



# Acknowledgments

## **Woodstock City Council**

Mayor Trevor Birch

Deputy Mayor Ron Fraser

Councillor Jerry Acchione

Councillor Connie Lauder

Councillor Todd Poetter

Councillor Mark Schadenberg

Councillor Deb Tait

Councillor Sandra Talbot

## **RFNS Steering Committee**

Brian Connors, Director of Parks & Recreation

Darren Hall, Manager of Facility Operations

Emma Vondervoort, Manager of Facility Operations, Cowan Sportsplex

Chris Kern, Supervisor of Parks & Forestry

Reta Horan, Supervisor of Parks & Forestry

Jason Jolicoeur, Supervisor of Recreation Programs & Sponsorships

## **Project Consultants**

Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd.

# Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Recreation in Woodstock.....	1
1.2	Study Purpose.....	2
1.3	Report Organization.....	3
1.4	Recent Accomplishments.....	4
1.5	Study Methodology.....	5
<b>2.</b>	<b>Community Profile.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Historical and Projected Population Growth.....	7
2.2	Population by Age.....	9
2.3	Income, Employment, and Education.....	11
2.4	Immigration & Ethnicity.....	13
2.5	Transportation.....	14
<b>3.</b>	<b>Recreation Facility Trends.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Trends Influencing Participation.....	16
3.2	Trends in Facility Provision and Design.....	17
3.3	Potential Impacts of COVID-19 on Parks and Recreation.....	19
<b>4.</b>	<b>Community Engagement.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1	Project Awareness.....	21
4.2	Online Community Survey.....	22
4.3	Recreation Facility Stakeholder Summit.....	30
4.4	Recreation Advisory Committee Workshop.....	31
4.5	Parks & Recreation Management Team Workshop.....	33

continued..

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recreation Facility Needs Assessment.....</b>	<b>35</b>
5.1	Summary of Recreation Facilities in Woodstock.....	35
5.2	Aquatics.....	37
5.3	Arenas & Ice Pads.....	46
5.4	Curling Rinks.....	55
5.5	Gymnasiums.....	56
5.6	Fitness Facilities.....	59
5.7	Multi-Purpose Spaces and Halls.....	62
5.8	Dedicated Youth/Older Adult Space.....	65
5.9	Soccer Fields.....	68
5.10	Multi-Use & Artificial Turf Fields.....	72
5.11	Ball Diamonds.....	78
5.12	Cricket Grounds.....	81
5.13	Tennis and Pickleball Courts.....	83
5.14	Outdoor Basketball Courts.....	86
5.15	Sand Volleyball Courts.....	89
5.16	Wheeled Action Sports Facilities.....	90
5.17	Playgrounds.....	93
5.18	Lawn Bowling Greens.....	96
5.19	Recreational Trails.....	97
<b>6.</b>	<b>Summary of Recommendations &amp; Implementation.....</b>	<b>102</b>
6.1	Cowan Fields Phase 2 Development Strategy.....	102
6.2	Enhancement of Southside Aquatic Centre.....	103
6.3	Continuing to Develop the Local Trails System.....	103
6.4	Summary of Other Recreation Facility Needs.....	104
6.5	Capital Cost Estimates & Timing.....	105

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Historical and Projected Population by Census Year, 2001 – 2031 .....	8
Figure 2: Recreational Facility Visits in a Pre-Pandemic Typical Year .....	23
Figure 3: Pre-Pandemic Participation in Recreation Activities, 2019 .....	24
Figure 4: Participation Barriers to Recreation Activities .....	25
Figure 5: Most Important Parks and Recreation Amenities .....	26
Figure 6: Top Priorities for Additional Spending for Parks and Recreation Assets .....	27
Figure 7: Proposed Concept for the Southside Aquatic Centre Outdoor Pool .....	42
Figure 8: System-Wide Arena Utilization, 2015/16 – 2019/20 .....	49
Figure 9: Civic Centre Arena Utilization, 2015/16 – 2019/20 .....	49
Figure 10: Reeves Community Complex Utilization, Red Pad, 2015/16 – 2019/20 .....	50
Figure 11: Reeves Community Complex Utilization, Green Pad, 2015/16 – 2019/20 .....	50
Figure 12: Distribution of Soccer Fields .....	68

## List of Tables

Table 1: Population Projections, City of Woodstock, 2016 – 2031 .....	7
Table 2: Median Age, City of Woodstock, Oxford County & Ontario (2001 – 2016) .....	9
Table 3: City of Woodstock Historical Population by Age Group, 2006 – 2016 .....	10
Table 4: Oxford County Forecasted Proportional Age Structure, 2031 .....	10
Table 5: Median Income of Individuals, 2005 – 2015 .....	11
Table 6: Median Income of Households, 2005 – 2015 .....	11
Table 7: Labour Force Participation & Unemployment, 2006 – 2016 .....	12
Table 8: Educational Attainment, 2006 – 2016 .....	12
Table 9: Immigration, City of Woodstock (2006 – 2016) .....	13
Table 10: Mother Tongue, City of Woodstock, Oxford County & Ontario (2006 – 2016) .....	14
Table 11: Transportation Modes, City of Woodstock, Oxford County & Ontario (2006 – 2016) .....	14
Table 12: Recreation Facility Inventory & Level of Service, City of Woodstock .....	35
Table 13: Preliminary Capital Implications of Selected Recommendations .....	106

# List of Maps

Map 1: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Outdoor Aquatic Infrastructure ..... 44

Map 2: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Arenas..... 53

Map 3: Distribution of Ball Diamonds ..... 78

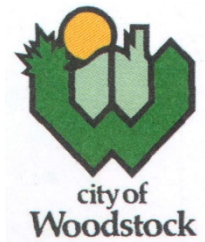
Map 4: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Racquet Sport Courts ..... 85

Map 5: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Basketball Courts ..... 87

Map 6: Distribution of Playgrounds..... 93

Map 7: Conceptual Trails Network..... 99





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Recreation in Woodstock

Over the years, thousands of people have passed through the City of Woodstock's recreation facilities. These facilities have provided the foundation for professional and amateur athletes whose roots are in Woodstock while inspiring generations of children and adults to lead active, healthy lives. Just as importantly, Woodstock's recreation facilities are - and always have been - hubs of the community that bring residents together while introducing newcomers to life in the city.

Today's recreational landscape is much different today than it was 50 years ago. The City of Woodstock continues to invest in recreation facilities so that it may keep pace with population growth, respond to evolving preferences for recreation and sport, and so that its residents can maintain social connections and healthy lifestyles. The City owns several recreational facilities with notable destinations consisting of the Reeves Community Complex, Southside Park and Southside Aquatic Centre; most recently, the City has developed the first phase of Cowan Fields (located on the former Woodall Farm property) and assumed operations of the Cowan Sportsplex building and outdoor sports fields.

Woodstock's recreation facilities are places where family members, friends, and neighbours can socialize, and participate in various physical activities. Recreation facilities are essential to achieving a balanced and healthy lifestyle, while also providing positive support to economic development and sport tourism objectives. With busy lifestyles, greater amounts of "screen time", increasing rates of social isolation, growing rates of obesity-related medical conditions, and getting through the COVID-19 pandemic, Woodstock's investments in recreation have never been more important and will be a significant investment in community health moving forward.

Looking to the future, Woodstock is expected to accommodate the majority of population growth projected for Oxford County over the next 25 years. Accordingly, the City's recreational infrastructure will be subjected to new demands from a growing and increasingly diverse population base who will be looking for the City's recreational facilities to keep pace with their growing needs and expectations.

## 1.2 Study Purpose

The City of Woodstock is refreshing its strategy for providing recreation facilities. Woodstock's first Recreation Facility Needs Study was approved in 2015 and the City has made considerable progress in implementing its recommendations by building out its recreational infrastructure in response to strong population growth and greater socio-economic diversification. The Recreation Facility Needs Study has allowed the City to formulate a fiscally-sound strategy to addressing recreational needs of residents and is following best practices in updating studies of this nature in order to maintain it as a "living document" that provides important insights into proactive planning and sustainable capital budgeting.

The 2021 Recreation Facility Needs Study (the "RFNS") advances new strategies aimed at addressing issues of aging recreational infrastructure and responding to the rapid increase in demand for recreational services as a result of continued population growth. The RFNS investigates indoor and outdoor recreation facility needs including those that may not presently exist in Woodstock, but might be expected based on local, regional, and provincial trends.

The outcome of the RFNS is a plan that articulates the need for recreation facilities, forecasts when they are required, and estimates the costs associated with implementing the strategy. It is essential that the RFNS identifies true community needs while considering the type of recreational experiences that the City wishes to foster for its residents. In this way, the RFNS helps to position Woodstock as a city where people and businesses want to live, learn, work, and play.

## 1.3 Report Organization

The RFNS is organized into the following Sections:

**Section 1: Introduction**

Describes the RFNS purpose, methodology, and organization.

**Section 2: Community Profile**

Contains a review of local socio-demographic characteristics including historic and forecasted population growth, and other demographic factors affecting recreation facility needs.

**Section 3: Recreation Facility Trends**

Provides a broad overview of emerging trends in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and leisure pursuits found in communities throughout Ontario and what impacts they may have on the provision of similar facilities in Woodstock.

**Section 4: Community Engagement**

Presents the findings from the RFNS public consultation initiatives.

**Section 5: Facility Inventory**

Assesses the current supply and future needs for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

**Section 6: Summary of Recommendations and Implementation**

Identifies Recommendations based on the planning process along with a strategy to guide their implementation.

## 1.4 Recent Accomplishments

Woodstock City Council and Staff have accomplished much since the 2015 Recreation Facility Needs Study was approved. Notable accomplishments and initiatives include:

- Refurbishment of the Southside Aquatic Centre pool tank and replacement of selected mechanical equipment in 2016.
- Assumed operations of Cowan Sportsplex indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that were previously managed by the Woodstock Soccer Club, including a complete redevelopment of the outdoor multi-use field along with ongoing and planned redevelopment of other fields to reflect high quality design standards.
- Completion of the first development phase of Cowan Fields / Woodall Park consisting of three premier ball diamonds, a splash pad, concession building and pavilion, and playground.
- New park developments such as Shanna Larsen Park and Ludington Park to support residential growth areas along with reinvestment in existing facilities such as Cowan Sportsplex and Reeves Hall.
- Expansion of the trails network through investments in off-road trail routes and pathways within selected parks.



Cowan Sportsplex Gymnasium



Ludington Park Basketball Court & Walking Track



Cowan Fields Ball Diamond

## 1.5 Study Methodology

The preparation of the Study follows four distinct phases.

**Phase 1** compiled findings from background documents that shed insight on various topics such as historical and projected population growth, performance of recreation facilities, the City's corporate vision and values, etc. In addition, market trends were reviewed to determine opportunities for the City.

**Phase 2** consisted of consultation with community members as well as City staff, Council, and the Recreation Advisory Committee. This offered valuable insights through feedback provided by residents and RFNS stakeholders.

**Phase 3** involved recreation facility needs assessments and an implementation strategy. This Recreational Facility Needs Study was compiled, incorporating the initial insights from Phase 1 along with community insights gained in Phase 2.

**Phase 4** tested the RFNS with the public prior to finalizing the process, culminating in a final presentation to Woodstock City Council in December 2021.

### Phase 1: Project Start Up & Initial Research

- Background document review
- Demographic review
- Market trends
- Facility inventory and mapping

### Phase 2: Community Engagement

- Project awareness (webpage)
- Community consultations
- City staff, Recreation Advisory Committee, and City Council engagement

### Phase 3: Recreation Facility Needs Assessment

- Implementation strategy
- Draft Recreation Facility Needs Study

### Phase 4: Study Testing & Finalization

- Finalize Recreation Facility Needs Study
- Presentation to City Council





## 2. Community Profile

Understanding Woodstock’s demographic profile and how it is anticipated to change informs current and future recreation facility needs. For example, communities with sizeable children and youth populations may drive the need for more rigorous and active facilities, whereas older adult populations may require a greater focus on recreation facilities centred upon health, wellness, and socialization. The information presented in this Section is largely based on the 2016 Statistics Canada Census; data release dates for 2021 are not yet known but are not likely to begin until 2022.

### 2.1 Historical and Projected Population Growth

The 2016 Census reported a population of 40,400 for the City of Woodstock, growing steadily over the past 20 years. Recent work carried out by Oxford County estimates that Woodstock’s year 2021 population is 46,620,<sup>1</sup> a figure that is used as the baseline for this Study. The County’s forecast suggests that Woodstock’s steady rate of growth will continue, with the population estimated to reach 54,470 by 2031. This represents average annualized growth of 1.7% that is slightly greater than the historical 1.4% average annual growth rate recorded between the 2006 and 2016 Census periods.

The Oxford County Official Plan directs much of the future population growth to occur existing built-up areas of Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg. As Woodstock’s population grows in both developing and established areas over the next 25 years, consideration will need to be placed on where recreation facilities will be most effectively suited to service the needs of the community.



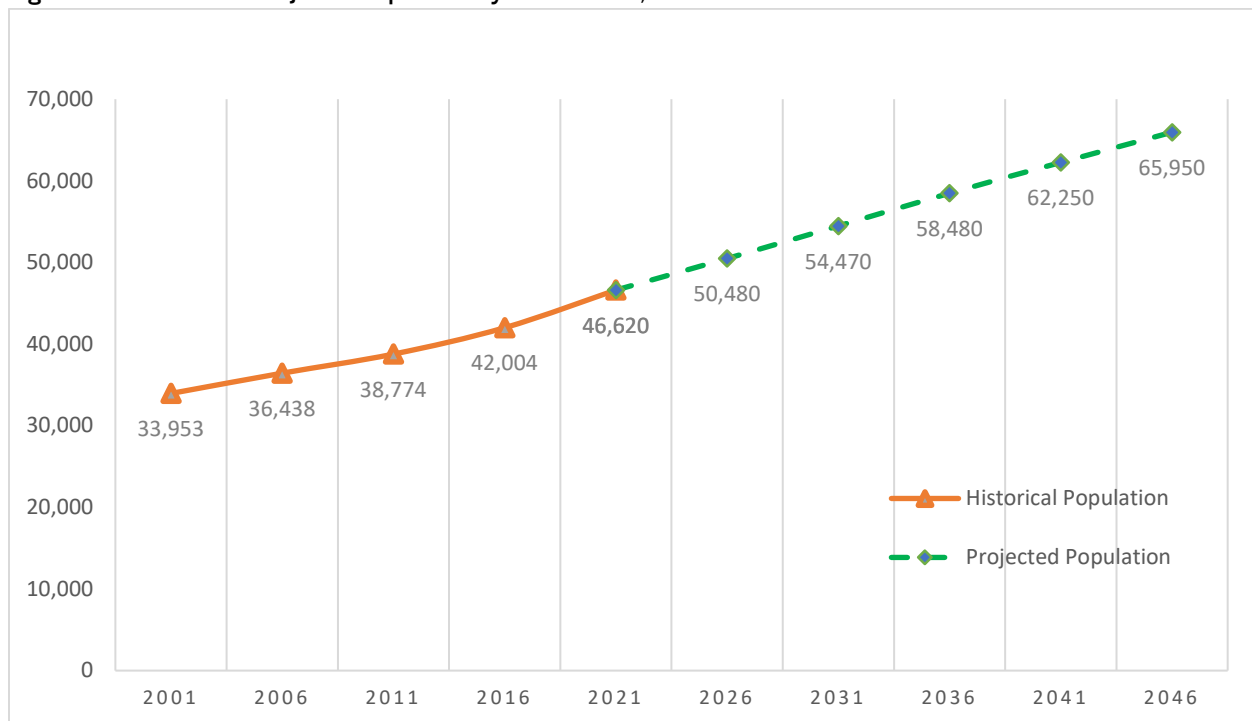
**Table 1: Population Projections, City of Woodstock, 2016 – 2031**

2021 Estimate	2026 Projection	2031 Projection	2021 – 2031 Forecasted Growth
46,620	50,480	54,470	7,850 (+16.8%)

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data 2016 (excluding undercount) and Oxford County, *Phase 1 Comprehensive Review – County and Area Municipal Growth Forecasts and Land Need Analysis*, 2020. Forecasted populations include a net census undercoverage rate of 2.7%.

<sup>1</sup> Oxford County, 2020. *Phase 1 Comprehensive Review – County and Area Municipal Growth Forecasts and Land Need Analysis*, p.41 (Table 23).

Figure 1: Historical and Projected Population by Census Year, 2001 – 2031



Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2001, 2006, 2011 & 2016; Oxford County, *Phase 1 Comprehensive Review – County and Area Municipal Growth Forecasts and Land Need Analysis*, 2020. Note that all figures include a net census undercoverage rate of 2.7% (i.e. historical Census figures may not align with Census recorded figures).

## 2.2 Population by Age

Age is an important factor for planning recreation facilities. Meeting the diverse recreational needs of families with children to elderly residents is a primary focus for municipalities. Younger populations tend to frequent recreation facilities at a higher rate and prioritize programs for children and youth, while older populations may favour more passive forms of recreational activities and flexible schedules. Overall, the Canadian population is aging as the baby boom generation enters their senior years.

Woodstock is following the aging trend with its the median age increasing from 39.7 to 41.9 years between the 2006 and 2016 Census periods (Table 2). The City's median is generally consistent with the Province median but slightly younger compared to Oxford County.

**Table 2: Median Age, City of Woodstock, Oxford County & Ontario (2001 – 2016)**

Location	2001	2006	2011	2016
Woodstock	37.6	39.7	40.7	41.9
Oxford County	37.7	39.8	41.2	42.3
Ontario	37.2	39.0	40.4	41.3

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

Table 3 shows population by age groups have grown in all categories except for Youth/Teens between the ages of 10 and 19. The 55+ age group has experienced the greatest degree of growth by number of persons and rate of change. However, young families appear to be increasing in numbers as evidenced in the population growth between the ages of 20 and 40 as well as the number of children under the age of 10.

Moving forward, Woodstock's age structure is expected to continue on an aging trajectory. While city-specific age structure forecasts are not available to inform the RFNS, Oxford County projections can provide an indication of regional trends (Table 4). With an increasing proportion of older adults, the City can expect a greater demand for recreation facilities and opportunities oriented towards this age group, although recreation activities should continue to be developed for all age groups to maximize available opportunities.

Table 3: City of Woodstock Historical Population by Age Group, 2006 – 2016

Age Group	2006 Population	2016 Population	Rate of Change (2006-2016)	Proportion of 2016 Population
Children (0-9)	4,125	4,545	10%	11 %
Youth (10-19)	4,765	4,495	- 6%	11%
Young Adults (20-34)	6,665	7,630	15%	19%
Mature Adults (35-54)	10,310	10,665	3%	26%
Older Adults (55-69)	5,295	7,685	45%	19%
Seniors (70+)	4,305	5,380	25%	13%

Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2006 & 2016

Table 4: Oxford County Forecasted Proportional Age Structure, 2031

Age Group	Proportion of 2021 Population	Proportion of 2031 Population
Children (0-9)	11.5%	12%
Youth (10-19)	12%	11%
Young Adults (20-34)	19%	19%
Mature Adults (35-54)	24%	23%
Older Adults (55-69)	20%	17%
Seniors (70+)	14%	17%

Source: Oxford County, *Phase 1 Comprehensive Review – County and Area Municipal Growth Forecasts and Land Need Analysis, 2020*



## 2.3 Income, Employment, and Education

Income, employment, and education are indicators of potential participation in recreation pursuits. Generally speaking, higher participation levels are typically correlated with greater income and level of educational attainment. Households with higher incomes have a propensity to participate in recreation to a greater degree than those with lower incomes, presumably due to their disposable income being less of a barrier to access. According to the 2016 Census, the median income for individuals over the age of 15 in Woodstock was \$35,923, consistent with the County median and slightly higher compared to the Province (\$33,539). Woodstock's median household income of \$68,048 was lower than both the County and Province.

**Table 5: Median Income of Individuals, 2005 – 2015**

Location	2005	2015
Woodstock	\$30,056	\$35,923
Oxford County	\$29,189	\$36,025
Ontario	\$29,335	\$33,539

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 & 2016 Census

**Table 6: Median Income of Households, 2005 – 2015**

Location	2005	2015
Woodstock	\$55,920	\$68,048
Oxford County	\$58,870	\$72,294
Ontario	\$60,455	\$74,287

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 & 2016 Census

The percentage of households that fall into Statistics Canada's Low-Income Median After Tax (LIM-AT) are lower in the City of Woodstock (11.4%) compared to the Province (14.4%), but are slightly higher than Oxford County (10.8%). In total, there were over 4,500 Woodstock residents living below LIM-AT in 2015 including more than 1,100 children and teens below 18 years of age.

Woodstock had lower labour participation rates in 2016 than Oxford County and the Province. Woodstock's unemployment rate was slightly higher than that of Oxford County but lower than the Province's. Since 2006, labour force participation has declined, but unemployment rates have as well. The decreasing unemployment rates experienced by the City of Woodstock could explain the lower percentage of LIM-AT households in comparison to the Provincial average.

**Table 7: Labour Force Participation & Unemployment, 2006 – 2016**

Employment	2006			2016		
	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario
Participation Rate	67.0%	69.3%	67.1%	64.9%	66.7%	64.7%
Unemployment Rate	5.7%	4.8%	6.4%	5.3%	4.8%	7.4%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006 & 2016 (excluding undercount).

Education is also correlated with employment and income with research showing that higher levels of education often tied to increased participation in recreation. Woodstock has a similar percentage of residents to Oxford County among those with no certificate, diploma, or degree, however, this is significantly higher than the Province. Woodstock residents with a high school diploma, or equivalent is slightly higher than that of Oxford County and significantly higher than Ontario. Additionally, Woodstock has a lower percentage of residents with a post-secondary education than Oxford County and Ontario.

**Table 8: Educational Attainment, 2006 – 2016**

Education	2006			2016		
	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario
No certificate, diploma, or degree	29.0%	29.3%	22.2%	23.4%	23.5%	17.5%
High school diploma, or equivalent	31.1%	29.7%	26.8%	32.6%	31.3%	27.4%
Post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree	39.9%	40.9%	51.0%	44.0%	45.3%	55.1%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006 & 2016 (excluding undercount).

These findings may suggest that based on income and education, participation in recreation activities in Woodstock is slightly below average compared to the County and Province. Direct comparison of incomes between municipalities should be viewed cautiously as the cost-of-living differences must be considered. Regardless, there is a need to continue to actively engage all residents regardless of income or educational background to ensure that affordable recreational pursuits and services are available.

## 2.4 Immigration & Ethnicity

The City of Woodstock is becoming a more diverse community through its sustained growth. Although immigration was down in 2011 from the 2006 numbers, it has been slowly increasing since 2011. Different cultures value recreation differently or may be interested in non-traditional recreational activities. As of 2016, 11.1% of Woodstock residents were born outside of Canada, a slight increase from 2011 (10.5%), indicating a relatively stable immigrant population. Furthermore, as of 2016, 5.3% of residents identify as a Visible Minority, the majority being Black and South Asian, and 2.4% identify as Aboriginal.

**Table 9: Immigration, City of Woodstock (2006 – 2016)**

Immigration	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Non-Immigrant	30,305	87.1%	33,015	89.3%	34,985	88.5%
Immigrant	4,345	12.5%	3,875	10.5%	4,400	11.1%
Non-Permanent	130	0.4%	65	0.2%	155	0.4%

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

Immigration has been increasing across the Province and the City of Woodstock has been experiencing this trend to a greater degree in recent years compared to the past particularly with its proximity to the Tri-Cities and Greater Toronto Area providing attainable home ownership opportunities. Immigration trends suggest that Woodstock will continue to receive newly landed residents and there is a need for the City to be prepared to respond to requests for non-traditional or emerging recreation activities.

English is the predominant language spoken within Woodstock homes. 89.3% of residents identify their mother tongue as English, 1.3% as French and 8.5% as Other. This is consistent with Oxford County (89.5% English; 1.0% French; and 8.7% Other) but quite different compared to Ontario (68.8% English; 3.8% French; and 27.4% Other). Further, 95% of Woodstock residents speak English most often in their homes indicating that communications through the Parks & Recreation Department should be well understood by most people.

Table 10: Mother Tongue, City of Woodstock, Oxford County &amp; Ontario (2006 – 2016)

Mother Tongue	2006			2016		
	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario
English	88.3%	88.7%	68.6%	89.3%	89.5%	68.8%
French	1.4%	1.1%	4.1%	1.3%	1.0%	3.8%
Other	10.2%	10.2%	27.3%	8.5%	8.7%	27.4%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006 & 2016 (excluding undercount).

## 2.5 Transportation

Woodstock historically has been a car-oriented community based its modal share of travel to work. Over 91% of the workforce either took their own private vehicle or were a passenger in another private vehicle to work in 2016; this is an increase of 3% from 2006 and is partially attributed to the City attracting new residents that have a greater willingness to commute longer distances to the Tri-Cities or Greater Golden Horseshoe. It is safe to assume that residents will drive to the recreation facilities or various activities they take part in the most.

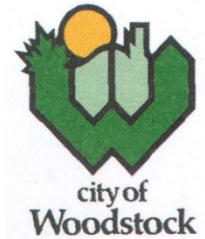
Further with 25% of Woodstock's residents working outside of Oxford County in 2016 and 23% whose commute is longer than 30 minutes each way, there is a likelihood that a number of residents may be pressed for time to spend on recreation. Nearly 1 in 5 RFNS survey respondents (19%) reported a lack of time as being their primary barrier to participating as often as they would like.

Table 11: Transportation Modes, City of Woodstock, Oxford County &amp; Ontario (2006 – 2016)

Transportation Mode	2006			2016		
	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario	Woodstock	Oxford County	Ontario
Private Vehicle	88.1%	90.8%	79.2%	91.1%	92.8%	77.9%
Public Transit	1.7%	0.7%	12.9%	1.5%	0.9%	14.6%
Walked/Biked	8.7%	7.1%	6.8%	6.6%	5.4%	6.5%
Other	1.6%	1.4%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016 (excluding undercount).





### 3. Recreation Facility Trends

#### 3.1 Trends Influencing Participation

**Health and Wellness:** A holistic and multi-faceted approach to health and wellness (including health promotion, socialization, mindfulness and management of stress and anxiety) is significantly influencing active living. Another trend influencing how programs are structured and delivered is the adoption of Sport for Life's Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity Model and the introduction of physical literacy in programs and training. The City of Woodstock diverse range of recreation facilities and programs through Southside Park and Aquatic Centre, Cowan Fields, and Cowan Sportsplex provide residents with opportunities that encourage physical activity, health and wellness. City programs are complemented by those delivered by community groups and sports organizations, resulting in a well-rounded portfolio of leisure opportunities.

**Physical Inactivity is Increasing:** Research has found that physical activity levels across Canada are low and have not improved in the past number of years due to high reports of increasingly busy lifestyles and the rise of sedentary behaviours. To combat declines in physical activity, many service providers are working together to increase communications, modify programs and service levels, encourage participation, and support healthy and active lifestyles. The City of Woodstock attempts to curb physical inactivity by providing opportunities for recreation and physical activity geared to different ages and interests, whether it be structured (e.g., skating and swimming programs, baseball, soccer, etc.) or unstructured (e.g., drop-in programs, use of parks and trail systems). The City also highlights its recreation programs and services through its website, which allows convenient online registration, as well as the Recreation & Leisure Guide and social media accounts.

**Active Transportation – Becoming More Important:** Active transportation is a core element of complete communities. These "human-powered" modes of travel can be undertaken for day-to-day and recreational purposes through as cycling, walking, or skateboarding, etc. Examples of active transportation facilities may include dedicated cycling infrastructure, signed pathways and trails, or wayfinding and navigation assistance. In recent years, Woodstock has been increasing its focus on developing a comprehensive trail network for walking, running, hiking, and cycling – some of which are available year-round.

**Increased Demand for Unstructured Activities:** Participation is gradually shifting away from structured programs and set participation schedules as people are demonstrating a desire for more drop-in, unstructured, and self-scheduled times to participate. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking activities in the evening, a shift from traditional daytime or late-evening provision. Participation in adult activities is also growing and youth engagement is being embraced in many communities. Woodstock has numerous parks full of open space where unstructured activity can take place and the City offers several drop-in type activities such as public swims and skates and will continue to offer these programs as well as expand on them.

### 3.2 Trends in Facility Provision and Design

**Aging Infrastructure:** Many municipalities in Ontario are faced with aging recreational infrastructure (e.g., arenas, pools, courts, program spaces, halls, etc.) and are pursuing renewal projects often using non-traditional funding approaches since such works are typically ineligible for growth-related funding such as development charges. Renewal projects provide opportunities to rethink provision and consider facility conversion or adaptive re-use options that accommodate emerging activities.

The City has recently redeveloped deteriorating outdoor sports fields at Cowan Sportsplex and plans to continue rejuvenation additional outdoor fields along with replacing the indoor turf that has experienced considerable wear. The City's capital budget also identifies the replacement of the aging Lion's Pool with a new outdoor pool at Southside Aquatic Centre. It is evident that the City has been proactive with its asset management plans and there is every reason to believe it will continue investing in various parks and recreation facilities, sports fields, parks, and trails for the benefit of Woodstock residents.



Civic Centre Arena



Lion's Pool

**Multi-Use and Multi-Generational Facilities:** Modern recreation facilities provide a convenient “one-stop shop” experience. The community hub model has been applied to indoor recreation facilities as well as parks designed to engage users of all ages and abilities. The Reeves Community Complex, Cowan Sportsplex and the Southside Park campus are local examples of co-locating multiple recreational spaces onsite.

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

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

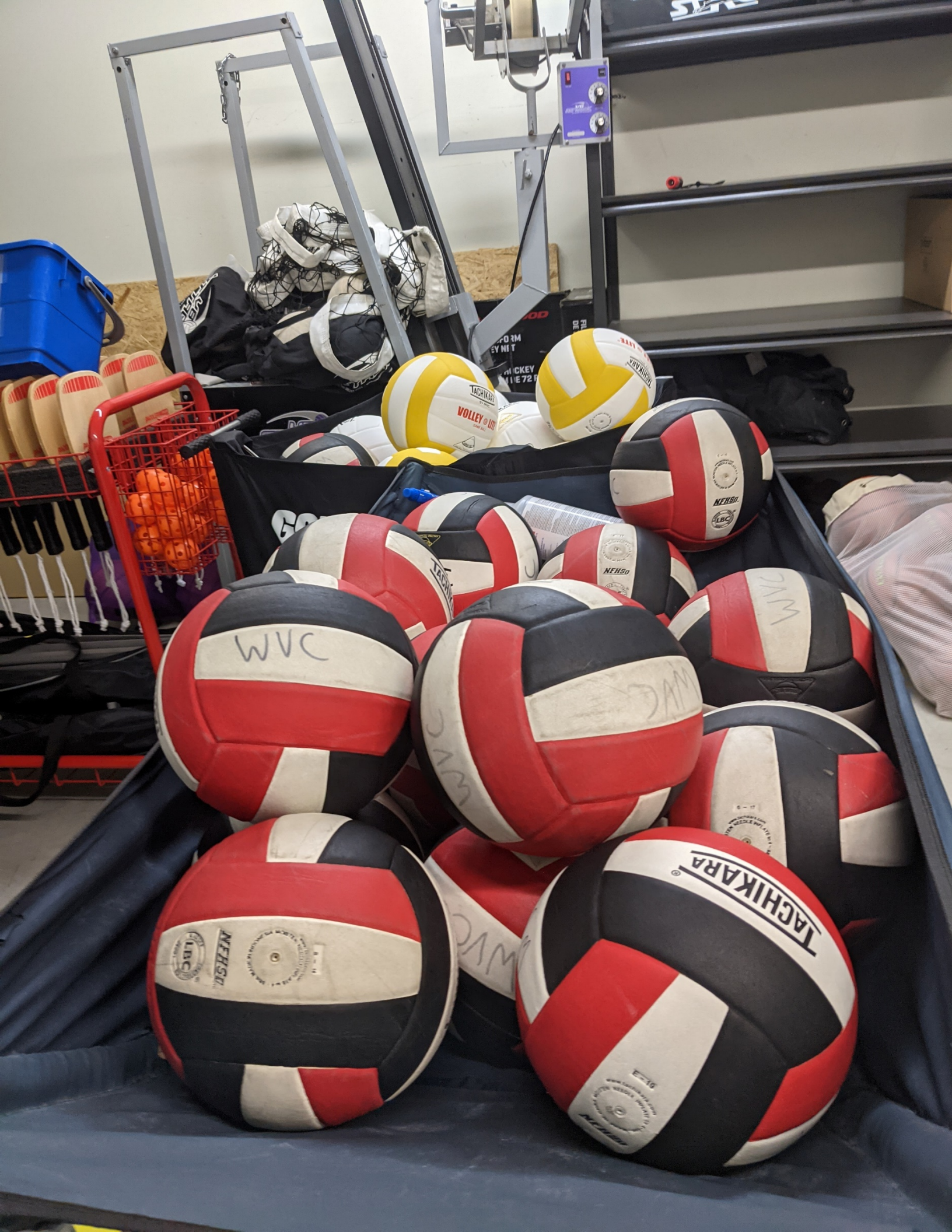
**Serving All Ages, Abilities, and Backgrounds:** Inclusion and access is a key goal for recreation. To ensure access for all, the following barriers to participation should be considered: economic (e.g., costs associated with participation); information (e.g., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities); geographic (e.g., equitable distribution of facilities and services); and inclusivity (e.g., ensuring all participants feel welcomed and supported). The City’s Accessibility Plan outlines several ways Woodstock has responded to ensure that parks and recreation opportunities are inclusive to all residents and visitors.

### 3.3 Potential Impacts of COVID-19 on Parks and Recreation

The COVID-19 pandemic will affect the long-term demand for, and delivery of recreation services and that change will be lasting; however, the ultimate scope and scale of change are unknown. As a result, long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that the recreation sector plays in personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalization.

Recognizing that the situation is evolving, and new information and guidance is emerging on a regular basis, Woodstock must prepare for a wide range of scenarios. The following are some of the many potential impacts the pandemic may have on the local recreation sector in the short to long-term.

- Significant impacts on building design (ventilation, spacing, access / egress, mid-door spaces, etc.);
- Continued migration to smaller and mid-sized municipalities as well as less urbanized areas;
- Emphasis on health equity and access to recreation facilities, parks and trails;
- Growing interest in unstructured, individual, and small group activities;
- Desire for outdoor recreation (including four seasons use), placing pressure on trails, parks, washrooms, etc.;
- A possible shift in prime-time demand as people work more flexible hours;
- Volatility in volunteer participation and the number of special events;
- Substantial changes to operations (e.g., touchless services, cleaning, visitor management, staff training, etc.), possibly with funding and capacity implications;
- Constant engagement and communication – people need accurate and real-time information;
- Rethinking (or renegotiation) of some third-party partnerships; and
- Greater use of technology to help support changes (virtual programming, etc.).



WVC

WVC

NEH50  
LBC

TACHIKARA

NEH50  
LBC

TACHIKARA  
VOLLEYBALL



## 4. Community Engagement

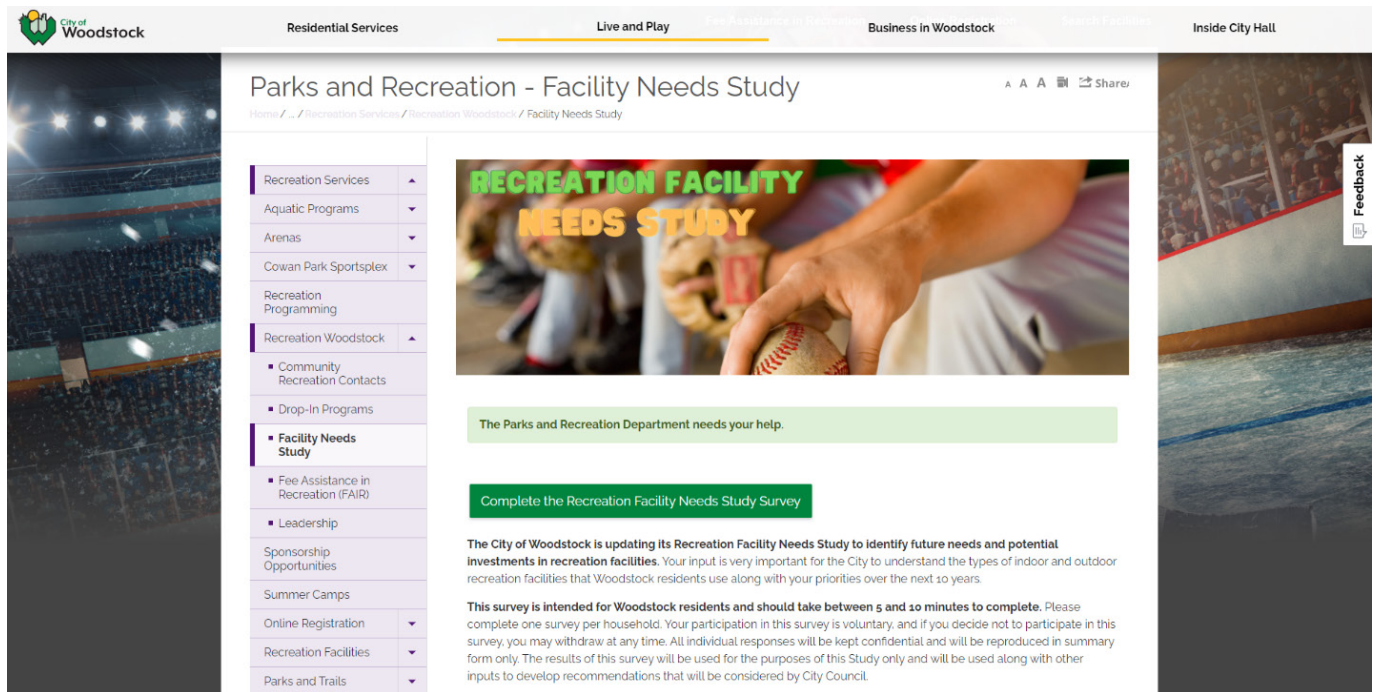
Engaging Woodstock residents is a key component of the RFNS process. It provides insights into the perceived needs of the public, stakeholders and community partners, City staff, and Council. Primary engagement tactics included:

- Project promotion through the City’s website
- An online community survey
- Stakeholder summits
- A Recreation Advisory Committee workshop
- A Parks and Recreation Management Team workshop

This section summarizes key themes and findings emerging from the various community engagement tools that have been undertaken as a part of the RFNS.

### 4.1 Project Awareness

Making residents and stakeholders (e.g., residents, service clubs, sports organizations, City staff, City Council, etc.) aware of the RFNS was a priority. The project was promoted through the City’s website and social media as well as more traditional forms of communication.



## 4.2 Online Community Survey

To support the development of the RFNS, the City hosted an online community survey that was available for a period of four weeks with a total of 926 unique responses received. Being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates varied by question. The purpose of the community survey was to elicit information on the recreation facility needs of Woodstock residents.

The survey took slightly over 5 minutes to complete on average, depending on the number of questions answered and level of detail provided. The questions gathered information regarding participation rates in both organized and unorganized activities; barriers to activity; facility use; recommended improvements; support for investment; and opinion / agreement with various statements.

### Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

The survey began by asking participants whether they have been more, the same, or less active since the COVID-19 pandemic. Over half of participants identified that they have been less active since the pandemic took place (51%) whereas 22% have been more active, and 26% have seen their level of activity remain relatively the same. Figure 2 identifies the number of times prior to COVID-19 that the respondent and / or their family visited the various recreational facilities (below) within Woodstock. Among the facilities that were used the most were City trails, playgrounds, Southside Aquatic Centre, and the arena at Reeves Community Complex. Conversely, no one reported using Cowan Fields ball diamonds or Southside Park's cricket pitch.

**926**

**Surveys Completed  
for the RFNS**



Vansittart Park

Figure 2: Recreational Facility Visits in a Pre-Pandemic Typical Year

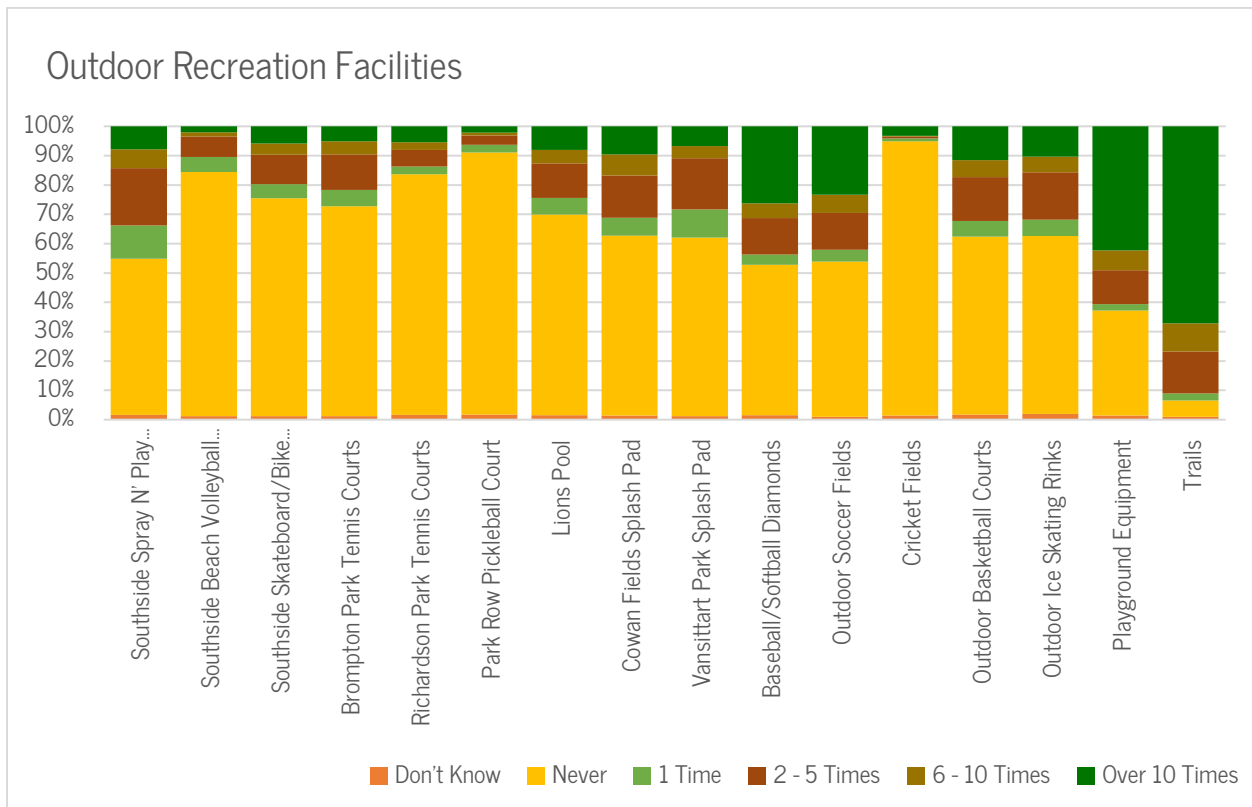
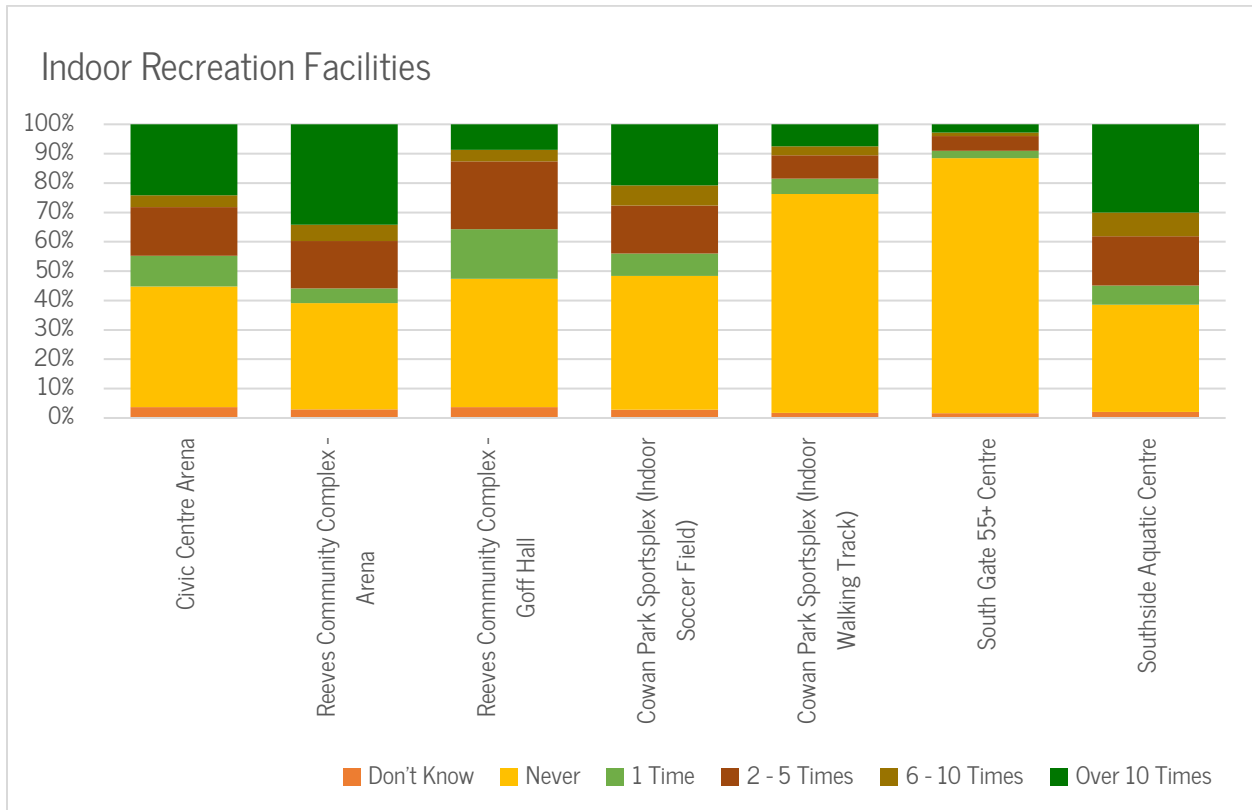
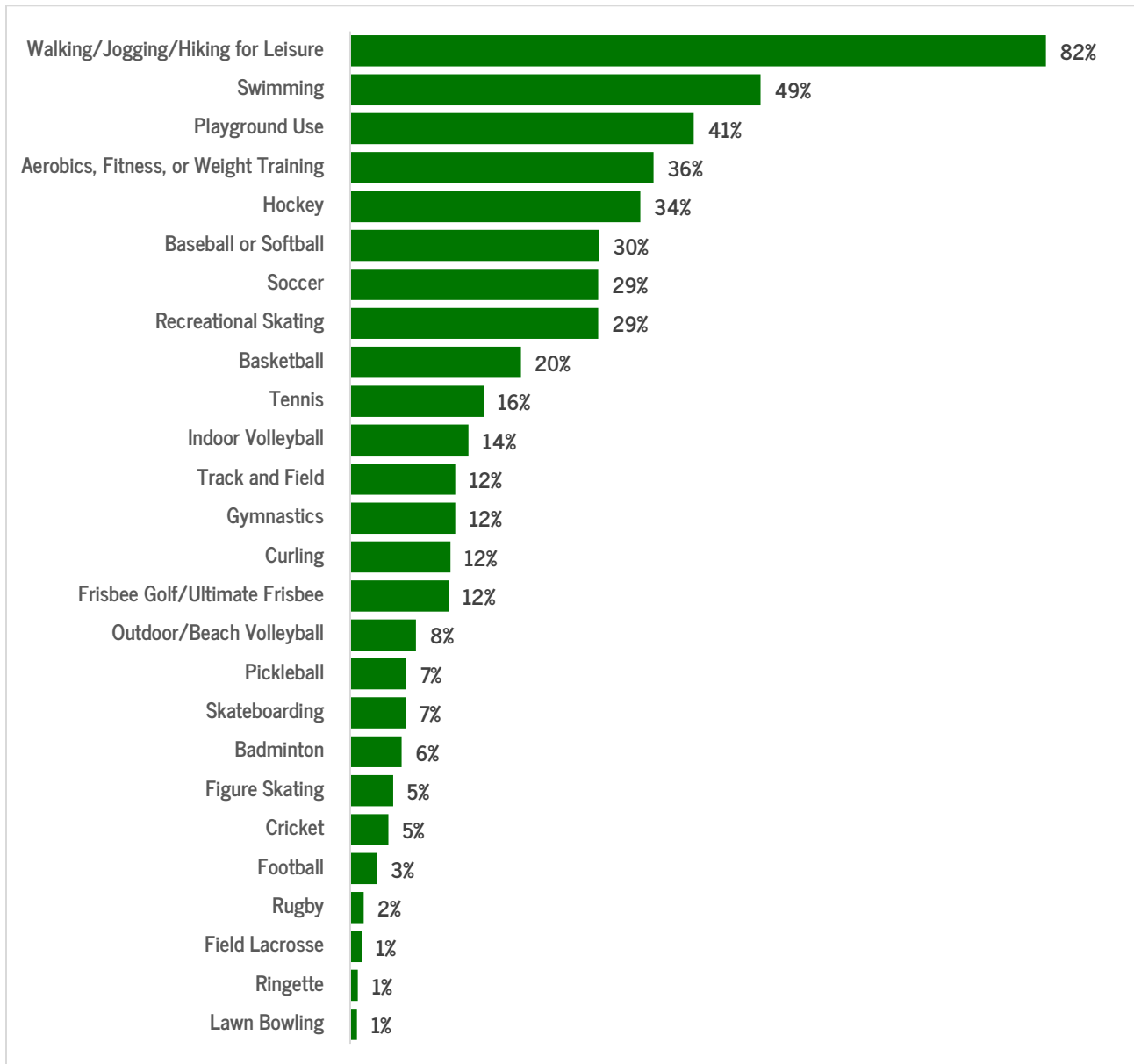


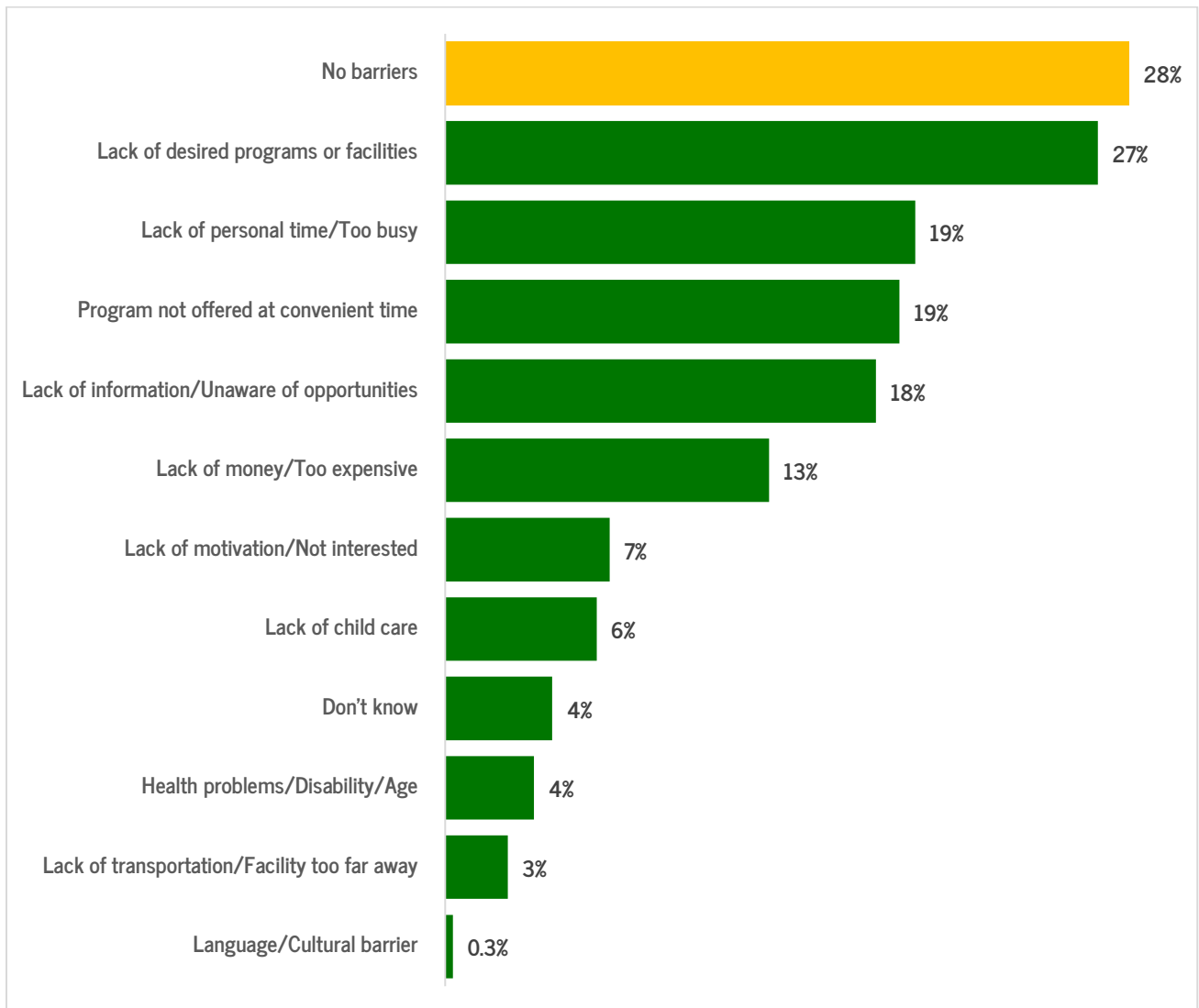
Figure 3 summarizes the 5 most **popular parks and recreation activities** respondents participated in 2019 (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), whether in Woodstock or elsewhere. A common element among the most popular activities – such as walking / jogging / hiking for leisure; swimming; playground use; aerobics, fitness, or weight training; and hockey – is that mostly they are unstructured and can generally be self-scheduled, which is consistent with participation trends observed across Ontario.

**Figure 3: Pre-Pandemic Participation in Recreation Activities, 2019**



Two out of three respondents (67%) indicated that they were unable to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as they would like prior to the pandemic. Figure 4 illustrates the common **barriers to participating in parks and recreation activities**, led by a reported lack of desired programs or facilities at 27% and suggesting that survey respondents believe that the provision of opportunities could be improved. Lack of time or being too busy was another common barrier, affecting nearly 1 out of 5 people surveyed.

**Figure 4: Participation Barriers to Recreation Activities**



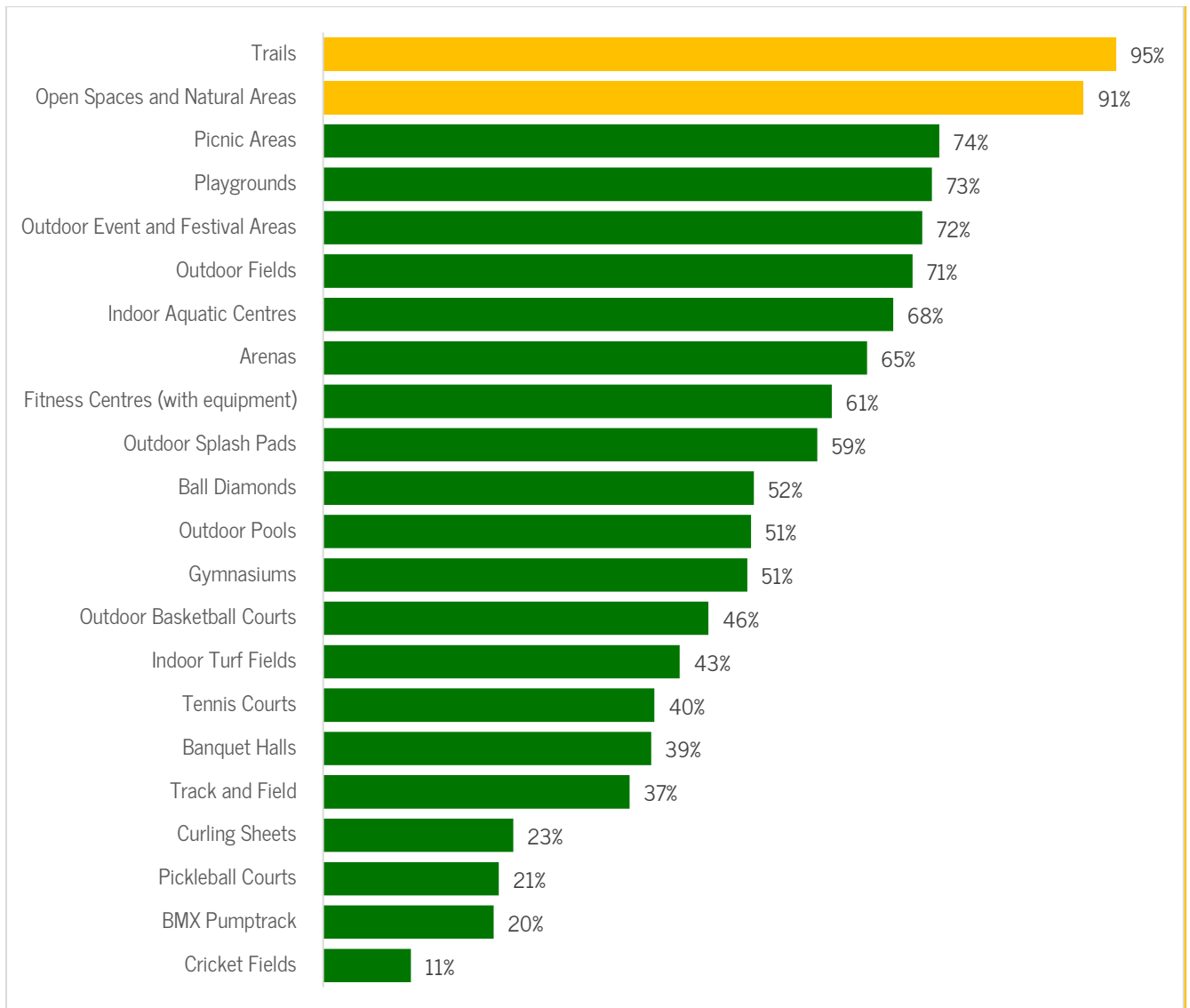
**Importance**

Figure 5 illustrates the recreation facilities that were important to survey respondents. The activities determined to be most important to respondents generally support the finding that there is public desire for unstructured, self-scheduled opportunities.

**Figure 5: Most Important Parks and Recreation Amenities**



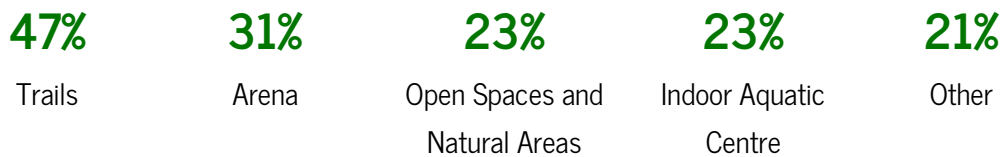
**Importance Levels of Parks and Recreation Amenities**



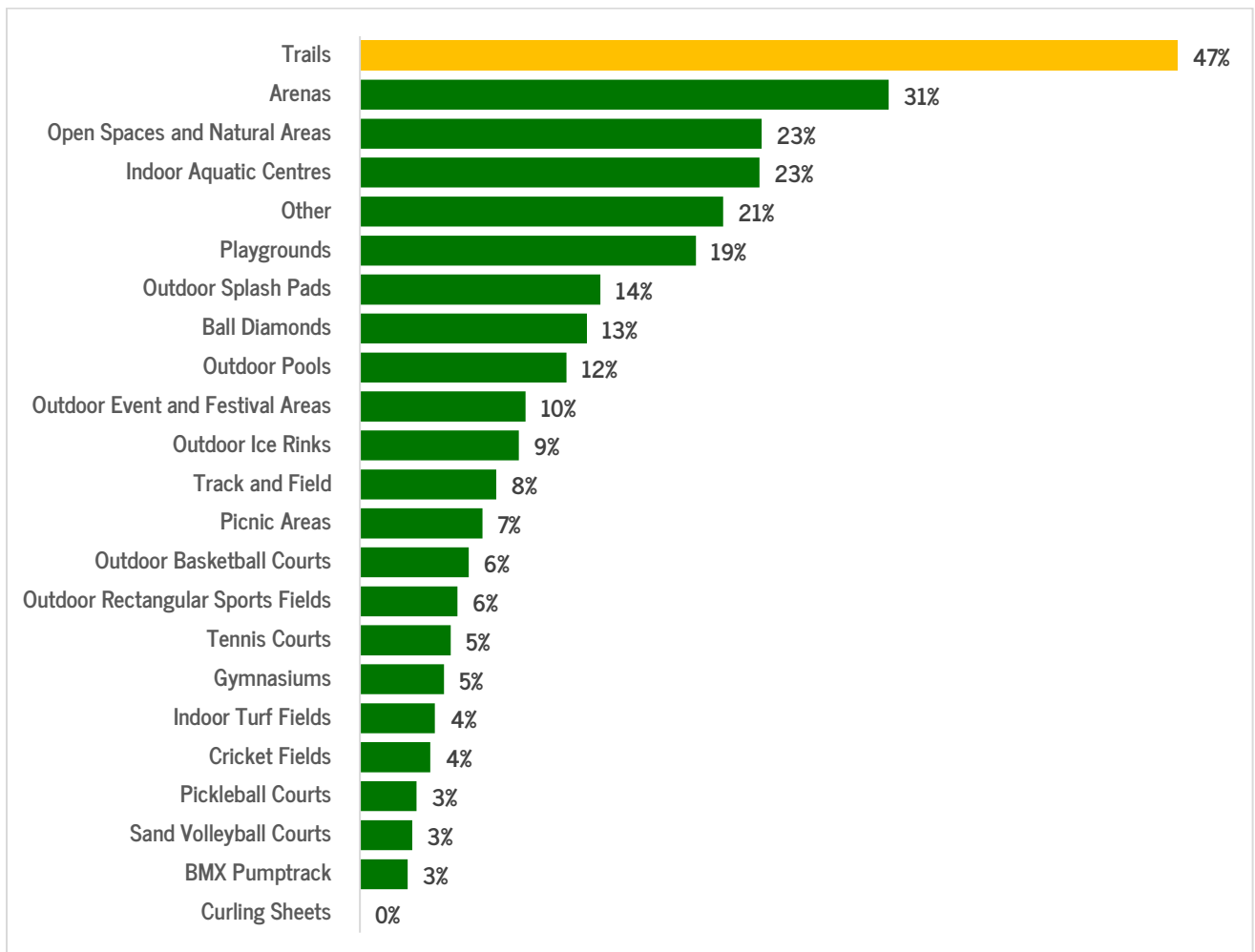
**Priorities**

Figure 6 summarizes priorities for additional spending on recreation assets (either for upgrades or new construction). The highest priorities were placed upon trails, arenas, open spaces and natural areas, and indoor aquatic centres. These priorities suggest that there is public desire for unstructured, self-scheduled opportunities, as well as desire to invest in arenas and pools.

**Figure 6: Top Priorities for Additional Spending for Parks and Recreation Assets**



**Support for Spending on Constructing or Improving Parks and Recreation Assets**



A broad range of suggestions were offered when respondents were asked what other **additional parks and recreation assets, they would like to see the City invest in**. The most common request that was received was for disc golf while other top suggestions included a new or renovated curling facility, an indoor track, trails, a BMX pump track, and community gardens. Requests were also received for golf, outdoor skating, a skateboard park, and additional covered outdoor basketball courts.

### Lasting Impacts on Parks and Recreation from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents were asked what lasting impacts – if any – the COVID-19 pandemic may have on their participation in recreation activities.

- 37% of respondents feel there will be no lasting impact on their participation in parks and recreation;
- 15% believe that there will be an overall increase in outdoor recreation;
- 8% believe that there will be a greater importance placed on outdoor spaces by the public;
- 6% believe that there will be an overall increase in recreation (both indoors and outdoors); and
- 4% believe that there will be some form of social distancing remaining in place.

### Additional Comments

In addition to the survey findings, respondents had an opportunity to provide additional input. A variety of comments were received regarding all aspects of Woodstock's parks and recreation system. The following is a summary of some of the **key themes** from the comments, which echoed many of the results found throughout the survey:

- Children's sports and recreation could be more reasonably priced to encourage more kids to be active throughout the year;
- The City could benefit from a quality running track where various meets can be held that draw people from other cities;
- The north end of Woodstock may benefit from more recreational facilities and opportunities to accommodate the significant growth that has taken place in this part of the City;

- Increased connectivity within the trail network could be prioritized;
- There could be an increase in basketball and ultimate frisbee programs;
- There is a lack of awareness and information on what services and opportunities are actually available;
- Woodstock may benefit from having one large multi-use facility that people can socialize and gather at and where sports can be run year-round (e.g., hockey, curling, basketball, tennis, cricket, etc.);
- The currently vacant lot on Julianna Drive (where an old golf course used to be) would be could be a candidate for additional trails and a disc golf course;
- There could be more washrooms at outdoor facilities (e.g., parks and splash pads); and
- The Pittock trail network could be completed (e.g., finishing the loop out towards Innerkip).

### Profile of Survey Respondents

The community survey collected information about the responding households:

- The average persons per household was calculated to be 3.4, higher than the 2016 average of 2.3 persons per household.
- Respondents had a median age of 39 years, younger by 2 years than the 2016 Census median. More specifically, 59% of the sample was between 26 and 45 years of age followed by ages 46 – 65 at 27%. Persons 25 years of age and younger constituted 8% while the 66+ age group represented 6%;
- Over half of respondents (56%) have lived in Woodstock for 16 years or more. Another 9% have lived in the City between 11 and 15 years, 16% for 6 to 10 years, and 19% have been Woodstock residents for less than 5 years;
- Nearly 1 out of 3 respondents (32%) live in the Northeast Woodstock, followed by the Northwest end (24%), Central Woodstock (15%), Southwest (14%), and South (10%), and 5% do not reside in Woodstock.

### 4.3 Recreation Facility Stakeholder Summit

Stakeholder Summits were held on June 10<sup>th</sup>, and June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with 18 representatives from the following user groups attending:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Woodstock Minor Baseball       | 7. Woodstock Cricket Club        |
| 2. Woodstock Minor Football       | 8. Woodstock Lawn Bowling Club   |
| 3. Woodstock Minor Hockey         | 9. Oxford Attack Basketball Club |
| 4. Woodstock Soccer Club          | 10. Men's Senior Baseball        |
| 5. Woodstock Volleyball Club      | 11. Why Not Us                   |
| 6. Woodstock Legion Athletic Club |                                  |

A number of stakeholders appreciate the City's willingness to listen and to try to accommodate groups, highlighting that Woodstock has made significant strides in terms of recreation from where it began to where it is now. It was evident throughout the discussions that the recreation advocates and community leaders are extremely valued for their hard work and dedication – without them the groups agreed that recreation in Woodstock would not be where it is today.

A major trend that emerged throughout the discussion was that a number of user groups have been able to either maintain or increase their memberships throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, although baseball, basketball and lawn bowling reported a decrease throughout the pandemic. For groups adversely affected by the pandemic, cancelled seasons and limited to no access to facilities was the primary reason.

Perceived **gaps** is where the majority of discussions were focused. Many user groups cited a lack of facilities oriented to competitive play or high calibre sport, which results in local sport organizations being unable to retain homegrown elite athletes nor draw athletes from other cities. Certain groups also indicated that improving the number of quality facilities (namely sports fields and gymnasiums) would allow the City to attract more tournaments or put Woodstock in a position to host competitive events at the regional and provincial level.

Certain organizations also stated that there are many people wanting to participate in their programs but there is not enough space for them all to be accommodated. This point was emphasized by certain field sport organizations who indicated that they share purpose built fields, such as the Cowan football field, with other sports who do

not have dedicated fields of their own. While field sport groups do not mind sharing and see multi-use fields as being efficient to a point, certain sports (e.g. football, cricket, soccer) indicate that they are competing with each other for time at the City's multi-use field. This results in less time for sports such as football who rely on that field for its design specifications (e.g. uprights, end zones). Groups also noted that spring and fall field sports that use soccer fields during wetter periods can result in a degraded turf conditions for summer field sports.

The general consensus among the user groups was that there is a need for a new multi-use community centre in Woodstock where multiple sports and activities can take place. Discussions including combining an arena with a gymnasium, sports fields, basketball courts, and a running track. Many user groups view such an indoor/outdoor recreational complex as being a venue where they can continue to offer their programs at a higher, more competitive level, and be able to host elite-level tournaments.

#### **4.4 Recreation Advisory Committee Workshop**

A workshop was held with the Recreation Advisory Committee to incorporate their key priorities into this Study. The Workshop identified several main priorities of the Committee such as:

- The track at Collegiate Avenue Secondary School (CASS);
- Using spaces more accordingly;
- The potential for partnerships with surrounding municipalities;
- A multi-use facility; and
- Increased trail connectivity.

The City of Woodstock and Thames Valley District School Board previously had an agreement with respect to the Terry Fox Track at Collegiate Avenue Secondary School (CASS). That agreement was not renewed and has since expired, while the condition of the CASS track has deteriorated over the years as the school board has had other funding priorities. The track previously held numerous track and field competitions, summer programs, and competitive training, however, RAC members stated that unrepaired damage no longer allows for such uses to safely take place. RAC expressed a desire for the City to have a quality track for user groups and the general public in order to offer a space to walk / run on for fitness purposes. RAC identified two options being to refurbish the CASS track or developing a new one.

Spaces within the City need to be better used. The Committee explained that many baseball fields are not used to their full capacity and sit vacant a lot of the time. They expressed their desire to explore various uses that these fields could accommodate when they are not being used. Additionally, there is a need to identify different spaces that summer programs can be held at – the locations where they are currently being held do not have a lot of spaces that offer sun protection (i.e., shaded areas).

The Committee explained that considering partnerships with surrounding communities would be beneficial since many surrounding residents use the facilities within Woodstock. If a partnership could be established, it could potentially include funding support which in turn would better the facilities that Woodstock has to offer through updating facilities, to assisting in the cost of developing new facilities such as a multi-use facility.

A multi-use facility could be a main priority for the City to accommodate the various user groups and recreational needs that presently exist. The Committee expressed that having a multi-use facility that offered all activities in one centralized location would be ideal. Furthermore, it would address the issues for additional space that will arise when the Civic Centre Arena, and Lion's Pool are closed.

Finally, the Committee identified that it may benefit the City to continue to improve on the trail network and connectivity. Two suggestions that were highlighted were completing the trail loop around Pittock Conservation Area and exploring the potential of connecting the Beachville trail into a Woodstock trail to help in linking the two communities.

## 4.5 Parks & Recreation Management Team Workshop

Parks & Recreation Department Staff were engaged to discuss opportunities and challenges that they foresee with respect to municipal recreation facilities. Notable points emerging from the workshop are as follows:

- Population growth is placing pressures on existing recreation facilities and is anticipated to create needs for new ones, particularly for aquatics, gymnasiums and sports fields with younger families moving to Woodstock.
- COVID-19 has resulted in a significant increase in trail usage with high demand for both natural (unpaved trails) and paved trails, as well as a desire to link recreational and other community destinations using the trails network;
- The Civic Centre Arena will need to be replaced and a logical destination would be Cowan Fields given the amount of undeveloped space already owned by the City at that location;
- The City's gymnasium is under significant pressure, specifically as volleyball and basketball user groups book the majority of available gymnasium hours but there is interest in many other programs (e.g. pickleball, children's activities, etc.);
- The City is moving in the right direction to make its recreation system more inclusive to residents of different ages, abilities and socio-economic backgrounds; and
- Staff envision a City where recreation facilities are of high quality, equitably distributed, and a place where residents can come together and reinforce the strong sense of community that exists in Woodstock.

MAKING WOODSTOCK PROUD!!  
Jake Muzzi 6  
CHAMPION



# SOUTHWOOD ARENA

ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE

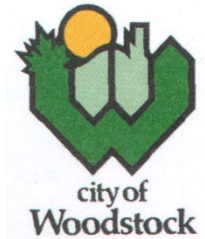
EXIT



2-12

EXIT





## 5. Recreation Facility Needs Assessment

### 5.1 Summary of Recreation Facilities in Woodstock

A summary of recreation facilities that are owned and operated by the City of Woodstock is presented in Table 12. City-owned facilities are supplemented by the Woodstock YMCA, local schools, non-profit organizations, places of worship, the private sector, and other groups that offer space for programs and community rentals.

Table 12: Recreation Facility Inventory & Level of Service, City of Woodstock

Facility	Municipal Supply	Service Level*	Location(s)
Arenas / Ice Pads	3	1 : 15,540	Reeves Community Complex (2); Civic Centre Arena
Outdoor Ice Rinks	7	1 : 6,660	Donald Thompson Park; Hunting Estates Park; Ludington Park; Northland Park; Shanna Larsen Memorial Park; Broadview Park; Park Row Park  <i>Note: Number and location of outdoor rinks varies by year based on volunteer interest and weather.</i>
Indoor Aquatics	1	1 : 46,620	Southside Aquatic Centre  <i>Note: the Woodstock YMCA operates an indoor pool (presently closed due to COVID-19)</i>
Outdoor Aquatics	4	1 : 11,655	<u>Outdoor Pool</u> : Lions Pool  <u>Wading Pool</u> : Spray & Play Wading Pool (Southside Park)  <u>Spray Pad</u> : Cowan Fields; Vansittart Park
Outdoor Pool	1		
Wading Pool	1		
Spray Pad	2		
Gymnasium	1	1 : 46,620	Cowan Sportsplex
Indoor Track	1	1 : 46,620	Cowan Sportsplex
Multi-Purpose Rooms & Halls	11	1 : 4,240	Reeves Community Complex; Southside Aquatic Centre; Market Centre; Woodstock Public Library; Art Gallery (2); Museum (2); Cowan Sportsplex; South Gate Centre (2)

Facility	Municipal Supply	Service Level*	Location(s)
<b>Soccer Fields</b>	<b>32 (32.5 ULE)</b>	<b>1 ULE : 1,430</b>	<u>Senior Lit:</u> Cowan Sportsplex  <u>Senior Unlit:</u> Hunting Estates Park; Les Cook Park; Cowan Sportsplex (5); Southwood Sports Field; Reeves Community Complex (2)  <u>Junior:</u> Cowan Sportsplex (15); McIntosh Park (3); Les McKerral (2); Southside Park  <i>Note: Lit fields are counted as 1.5 Unlit Equivalents (ULE)</i>
<b>Multi-Use Field</b>	<b>1 (1.5 ULE)</b>	<b>1 ULE : 31,080</b>	Cowan Sportsplex
<b>Indoor Turf Field</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1 : 46,620</b>	Cowan Sportsplex
<b>Baseball Diamonds</b>	<b>19 (24 ULE)</b>	<b>1 ULE : 1,940</b>	<u>Adult Hardball Lit:</u> Southside Park  <u>Minor Hardball Lit:</u> Brompton Park; Sutherland Park  <u>Minor Hardball Unlit:</u> Ferncrest Park; Edgewood Park; Chuck Armstrong Memorial Park; Kintrea Park (2); Park Row Park; West End Park  <u>Adult Softball Lit:</u> Cowan Fields (3); ; Southside Park (2); Reeves Community Complex (2)  <u>Adult Softball Unlit:</u> Victoria Park (2);  <i>Note: Lit diamonds are counted as 1.5 Unlit Equivalents (ULE)</i>
<b>Cricket Pitches</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1 : 23,310</b>	Southside Park; Southwood Sports Field
<b>Basketball Courts</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 : 930 youth</b> (ages 10 to 19)	<u>Full Court:</u> William Dutton Park; Ludington Park; Park Row Park  <u>Half Court:</u> Victoria Park, Broadview Park, Shanna Larsen Memorial Park
<b>Tennis Courts</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 : 7,770</b>	<u>Lit:</u> Richardson Park (4)  <u>Unlit:</u> Brompton Park (2);
<b>Pickleball Courts</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1 : 15,540</b>	Park Row Park (3)
<b>Playgrounds</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1 : 1,230</b>	Refer to Map 6 on Page 93
<b>Skateboard Park</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1 : 5,600 youth</b>	Southside Park
<b>Volleyball Courts</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1 : 23,310</b>	Pittock Conservation Area; Southside Park

\* Service levels are based on a 2021 population estimate of 46,620 persons

## 5.2 Aquatics

The Southside Aquatic Centre contains a 25-metre, six-lane L-shaped pool. The pool is supported by three changerooms and a barrier-free ramp to enter the pool's shallow end. Aquatic programming offered at the Southside Aquatic Centre is complemented by its outdoor swimming at Lions Pool and aquatic programs provided by the Woodstock YMCA, the latter of which has been closed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and implications on its long-term operations are presently unknown.

The Southside Aquatic Centre also provides an outdoor aquatics component by way of the Spray & Play Wading Pool which is a paid admission facility. Lions Pool has served Woodstock residents for nearly 75 years. Constructed in 1946, the outdoor pool features a 32-metre rectangular lap pool with a small building containing the front desk, changerooms, and mechanical room.

In addition to the supply of pools, there are three splash pads (available for free) located at Vansittart Park, Cowan Fields and Pittock Conservation Area.



Southside Aquatic Centre pool and barrier-free entry ramp

## Market Conditions

Indoor pools are one of the most desirable public amenities, delivering aquatic programs and activities for a wide range of age groups, interests and abilities. They provide opportunities ranging from lessons, leadership, fitness, drop-in recreation and socialization throughout the year. Participation in Woodstock's aquatic programs demonstrates the local popularity of swimming with in learn to swim registrations increasing by 45% to nearly 4,400 registrants between 2017 and 2019; participation in drop-in swims and aquatic fitness also increased by 17% and 15%, respectively.

The community survey reinforced the popularity of swimming as nearly half of respondents (49%) swam prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, making it the second most popular activity. More than two out of every three of respondents (68%) stated that indoor pools were important to their household, ranking seventh, while 23% of respondents identified that indoor pools should be a priority for public investment, ranking fourth among 22 facilities. Additional consultations with City staff and user groups identified the need for more spaces such as meeting rooms at Southside Aquatic Centre in order to run additional programming and enlarging the changerooms and lobby to accommodate more users – especially if the Southside Aquatic Centre's outdoor aquatics area is redeveloped with a new outdoor pool.

Woodstock's spray pads are well used as they are popular amenities that appeal to families with young children seeking affordable solutions to cool down on hot days. Southside Aquatic Centre's Spray & Play Wading Pool is a unique amenity in the municipal recreation sector, combining a shallow body of water with fun and engaging spray features. It utilizes recirculation system that filters and treats the water and lifeguard staff are required during operating hours; as a result, the wading pool requires greater operating resources compared to the City's other splash pads.

The community survey identified that 14% of respondents frequently used the Spray & Play facility at Southside Aquatic Centre while 11% frequently used the splash pad at Vansittart Park prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. 59% of respondents identified that splash pads were important to them, ranking tenth out of 22 facilities and 11% supported additional public spending for spray pads, which ranked sixth.

Lions Pool is a legacy project that was constructed during a period when many municipalities were providing outdoor pools in the 1960s and 1970s. The Lions Pool has historically played a key role in summertime aquatic programming and public swims. Between 2017 and 2019, drop-in recreational swimming and swim lessons increased by 75% and 37%, respectively. These trends demonstrate the popularity of swimming in Woodstock, which is consistent with broader participation trends though it also bears noting that 13% of the RFNS survey would visit Lions Pool more than 5 times in a typical pre-pandemic summer.

In recent years, a number of municipalities have reduced the number of outdoor pools as many are in advanced lifecycle states and can require significant capital reinvestment to replace aging structural and mechanical components, update barrier-free accessibility, and modernize the aquatic experience. While certain municipalities no longer operate outdoor pools (particularly those that have indoor pools), others have retained one or a smaller number of pools to still offer an opportunity for outdoor swimming pools and/or have redeveloped them to provide a broader aquatic experience such as leisure swims/waterplay in addition to traditional lane swimming.

### **Needs Analysis – Indoor Aquatics**

The Southside Aquatic Centre is a high performing aquatic centre that is accommodating more people in its recreational and programmed swims each year. Although constructed in 1974, the City recently reinvested in the Southside Aquatic Centre by replacing aging pool equipment and rejuvenating the pool tank. The City's proactive asset management efforts are such that the facility can be expected to operate over the next 10 years and beyond.

Review of aquatic program schedules and fill rates support the assumption that needs will continue to be met over the RFNS planning period. While the Southside Aquatic Centre could theoretically accommodate additional participant numbers in aquatic programs, the primary constraint to doing so is the undersized nature of the facility's changerooms. They are of such a size that it would be extremely difficult to fit the pool's participant capacity within the changerooms, particularly during peak times and periods of changeover between programs.

Woodstock's service level of one indoor pool per 46,600 persons is within the accepted range in place across Ontario. Greater pressures can be expected to be placed on Southside Aquatic Centre as population growth is expected to take Woodstock beyond 54,000 persons by the year 2031; the indoor pool also services a regional catchment throughout Oxford County as evidenced by the roughly 17% of aquatic program registrations that come from non-residents and compounds pressures being placed on the facility. Assuming that the Woodstock YMCA continues to deliver aquatic programs (subject to its COVID-19 reopening plan), the need for local opportunities is anticipated to be addressed over the next 10 years without the City having to construct a second indoor aquatic centre.

Therefore, an expansion of Southside Aquatic Centre to provide additional and/or enlarged change rooms is viewed as the more cost-effective option to increase functional programming capacity in Woodstock over the next 10 years as opposed to constructing and staffing a new indoor aquatic centre altogether. As will be discussed in the pages that follow, the City prepared a conceptual plan<sup>2</sup> for the redevelopment of the Lion's Pool in 2019, building upon the direction contained in the 2015 RFNS and continued lifecycle challenges at that facility.

The concept also included the addition of two new change rooms to the east of the existing natatorium which would serve both indoor and outdoor pool users. A proactive design whereby a new outdoor pool was identified at Southside Aquatic Centre which included design consideration of enclosing it in the future at the time when a second indoor pool would be required. Undertaking these actions is recommended as the primary means to addressing indoor and outdoor aquatics needs in Woodstock over the next 10 years.

---

<sup>2</sup> Grace Wang Architect Inc., DEI Consulting Engineers & Kalos Engineering. 2018. Southside Aquatic Centre Expansion Study.

## Needs Analysis – Outdoor Aquatics

### *Rejuvenating Outdoor Swimming Opportunities in Woodstock*

The 2015 RFNS recommended the closure of the 75 year old Lion's Pool which was confirmed through subsequent work undertaken by the City. An architectural analysis has been prepared that rationalizes the replacement of Lions Pool in favour of a new outdoor pool at Southside Park.<sup>3</sup> This 2021 RFNS supports this direction of providing an outdoor pool at Southside Aquatic Centre as it would:

- result in a 25-metre rectangular tank with four lanes and a teaching area;
- include a changeroom addition to Southside Aquatic Centre (thereby increasing the programmable capacity of the indoor pool as discussed in the preceding pages);
- reinforce Southside Park as the primary aquatic destination in the city;
- provide a modern outdoor aquatic experience to Woodstock residents; and
- potentially allow it to be enclosed in the future if/when residential growth requires an additional indoor pool.

Lion's Pool should be decommissioned once the recommended replacement at Southside Aquatic Centre has been completed, or when the City deems Lion's Pool to no longer be structurally and/or operationally viable (whichever comes first).

---

<sup>3</sup> Grace Wang Architect Inc., DEI Consulting Engineers & Kalos Engineering. 2018. Southside Aquatic Centre Expansion Study.



*Enhancing Quality Waterplay Experiences through Splash Pads*

The 2015 RFNS recommendation to provide a splash pad was implemented with the construction of the Cowan Fields splash pad. With an estimated 5,300 children between the ages of 0 and 9 presently living in Woodstock, the four splash pads result in a service level of one per 1,350 children (or one per 1,750 children if excluding the paid admission facility at Southside Park). Woodstock's service level is on the upper end of municipal provision targets that typically range from one splash pad per 3,000 to 5,000 children.

Over the RFNS planning period, substantial residential growth is expected to occur north of the Thames River which is an area presently served only by the paid admission Pittock Conservation Area splash pad; this facility is of an older design template and provides a very basic level of amenity relative to modern splash pads. Residents living in the burgeoning northwest would benefit from a free, modern splash pad and thus a new splash pad should be constructed there in order to reduce reliance on the conservation area for these needs. Cowan Sportsplex is a plausible candidate since it is an established recreational hub with available land, parking, its playground, and access to washrooms/changerooms by way of the fieldhouse. As an alternative, a splash pad could be explored at Shanna Larsen Memorial Park or at a future park.

The southwest area of the City should also be a priority for free-access waterplay opportunities given that Southside Aquatic Centre's indoor and outdoor swimming offerings are paid admission. It is recommended that a new splash pad be constructed at the Reeves Community Complex where there is established infrastructure through parking and onsite washrooms, as well as ease of access to the Highway 401 corridor to support a regional catchment as a destination amenity.



Vansittart Park Splash Pad

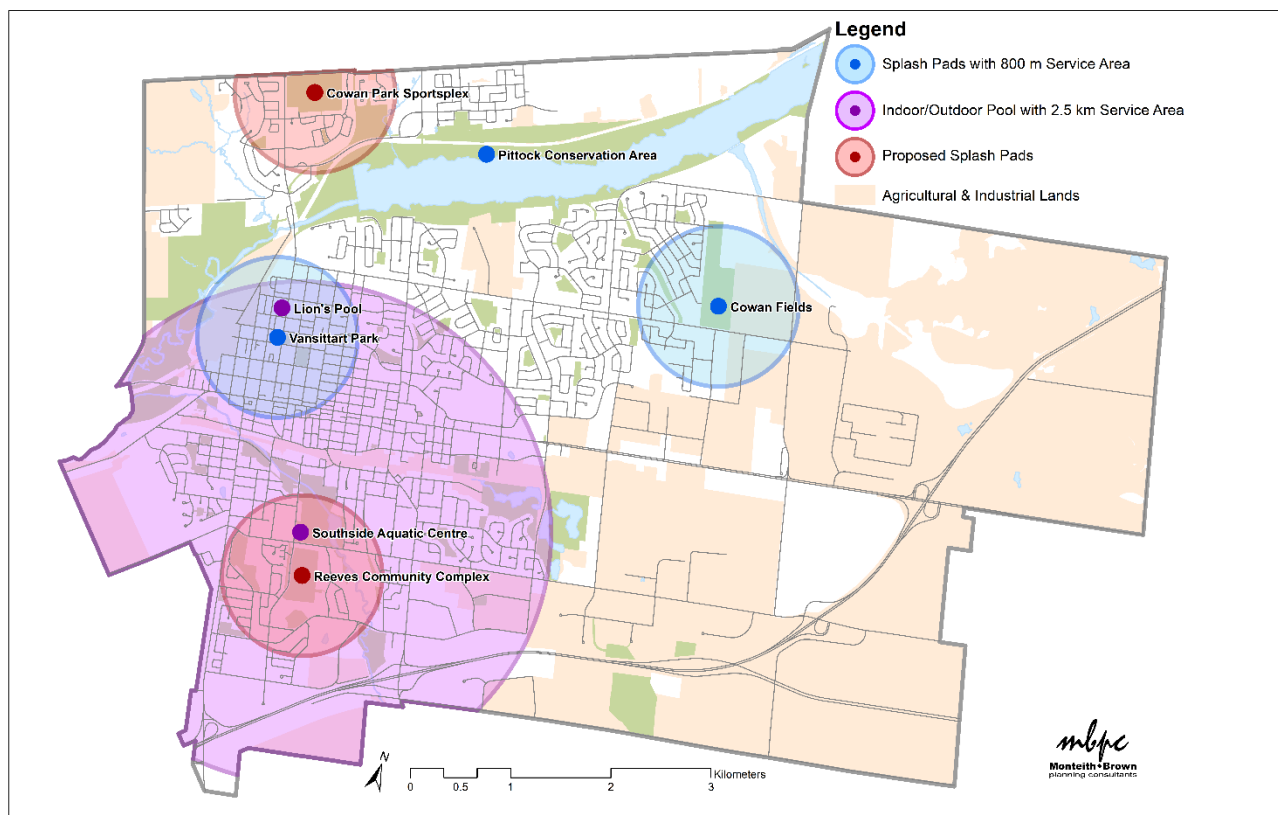


Pittock Conservation Area Splash Pad & Playground

A conceptual plan will be required to confirm facility fit at the Reeves Community Complex. The new splash pad should consider a design that complements the city-wide destination function of the Reeves Community Complex, potentially by employing a larger and higher design specification relative to the City's existing splash pads; further, the splash pad should not contain any standing water or wading elements, so that lifeguards are not required.

The geographic distribution of the proposed aquatic facility implementation strategy is illustrated in Map 1. For splash pads, with a new north end splash pad replacing Pittock Conservation Area splash pad (assumes Upper Thames Conservation Authority does not replace it) and a new south-end facility replacing the Spray & Play Wading Pool (in favour of a new outdoor pool), there would be a total of four splash pads in Woodstock by 2031. This would result in a projected service level of one splash pad per 1,400 children thereby retaining a strong level of service and attaining good geographic distribution to position the City for years to come.

Map 1: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Outdoor Aquatic Infrastructure



## Recommendations

- Rec. #1** Construct a new outdoor pool at Southside Aquatic Centre to replace the Spray & Play Wading Pool and Lion's Pool. The new outdoor pool should be designed in a manner that:
- a) allows it to be enclosed in the future (if required);
  - b) includes a building addition to the Southside Aquatic Centre that results in new changerooms to support an increase in its indoor and outdoor aquatic programming capacity; and
  - c) serves broader range of ages, abilities and aquatic interests by combining lane, leisure and waterplay opportunities.
- Rec. #2** Prepare a conceptual plan that confirms the feasibility of constructing a major splash pad at Reeves Community Complex, designed to a larger design specification than existing splash pads.
- Rec. #3** Construct a splash pad, preferably at the Cowan Sportsplex or another park as deemed appropriate, to serve residential populations living in north of the Thames River.



Cowan Fields Splash Pad

### 5.3 Arenas & Ice Pads

The City operates three ice pads across its two arenas. The Reeves Community Complex has two ice pads including an Olympic Size rink (200' x 100') in the Red Pad and a slightly undersized rink (185' x 85') by NHL standards in the Green Pad. Both ice pads are supported by a number of amenities including spectator seating for 1,848 and standing room for 500 in the Red Pad, seating for 100 in Green pad, 11 changerooms in total and a concession booth.

The Civic Centre Arena contains an undersized ice pad that measures 180' x 80' with seating area for 300 persons, 4 changerooms, and a concession booth.

In addition to its supply of arenas, the City has a volunteer ice rink program in place whereby the community takes an active role in the daily maintenance of outdoor rinks. This is a common model across Ontario and has previously resulted in rinks at Donald Thomson Park, Hunting Estates Park, Ludington Park, Northland Park, Shanna Larsen Memorial Park, Broadview Park, and Park Row Park. The locations can vary by year depending upon the level of volunteer interest and weather conditions.



Reeves Community Complex Red Pad

## Market Conditions

While ice sports such as hockey and figure skating have historically been a national pastime, there is evidence that suggests that participation in these activities is waning. Data from Hockey Canada shows national and provincial minor hockey registration has declined by 13% and 21%, respectively, since 2009.<sup>4</sup> Figure skating has experienced similar challenges over the past several years as national and provincial registrations have declined by 2% and 4% respectively.<sup>5</sup>

The escalating cost of equipment, time commitments for travel, the increasing cost of ice, an aging population, and an increasing migration from countries that do not tend to participate in ice sports are seen as the primary reasons for player attrition. Declining participation has resulted in surplus arena capacity in many communities across Ontario and Oxford County, particularly during weekends and weekday shoulder hours that fall just outside of primetime. Municipalities have implemented strategies to cope with shifting arena trends including creating/amending ice allocation policies, offering new program opportunities to promote learn-to-skate, learn-to-hockey, and sport safety, and subsidies to reduce the cost to participate. Some municipalities also close arenas on certain days or hold blackout periods in order to reduce operating costs.

Consultation with City staff and arena users suggest that ice demand remains strong in Woodstock in contrast to provincial trends. It was mentioned that due to the high demand for arena time, there is a waitlist for groups seeking additional rental periods. Groups indicated that they have been required to seek ice time in adjacent communities due to the arena pressures in Woodstock, which has also impacted the ability for groups to grow their programs and attract new participants.

A total of 1,750 arena users were estimated to be affiliated with minor hockey leagues, figure skating and adult hockey in 2019. Among minor ice sports, it would appear that recent registration increases with Woodstock Skating Club and Woodstock Wildcats (girls' hockey) have offset a decline in Woodstock Minor Hockey registration.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hockey Canada. Annual General Meeting Reports.

<sup>5</sup> Skate Canada. Annual General Meeting Reports.

Outdoor skating has traditionally been a popular national pastime, however, warmer winters in southwestern Ontario has made it operationally difficult to maintain natural ice surfaces. The availability of volunteers has also been a challenge in many communities as the provision of outdoor skating rinks are now typically community-led initiatives as is the case in Woodstock.

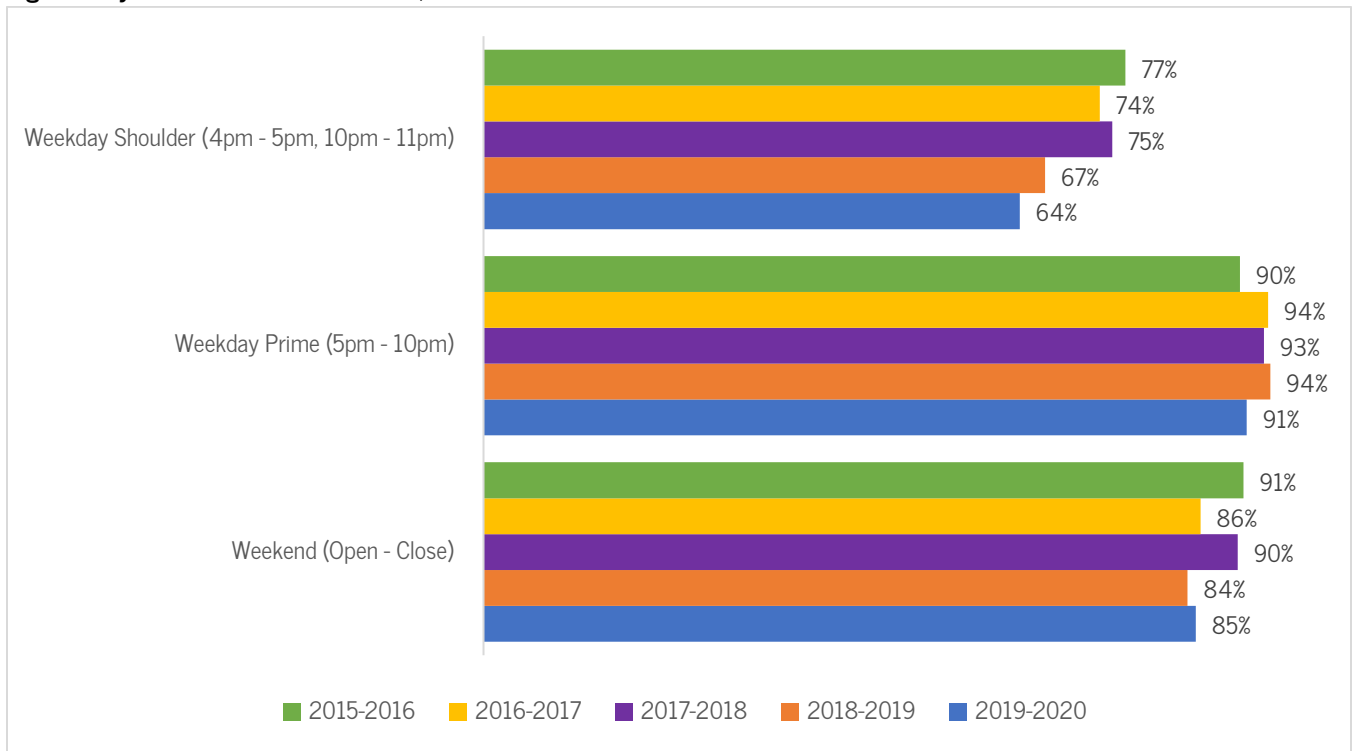
As an alternative to natural ice rinks, some municipalities have constructed covered artificial ice surfaces to maintain consistent skating conditions. These amenities generally have a longer operating window but comes at a higher cost to construct and operate compared to natural ice rinks due to their mechanical refrigeration systems.

The community survey revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 10% of respondents visited an outdoor ice rink. Less than 2% of respondents indicated that outdoor ice rinks were important and 2% felt that they should be a priority for public investment.

### Needs Analysis - Arenas

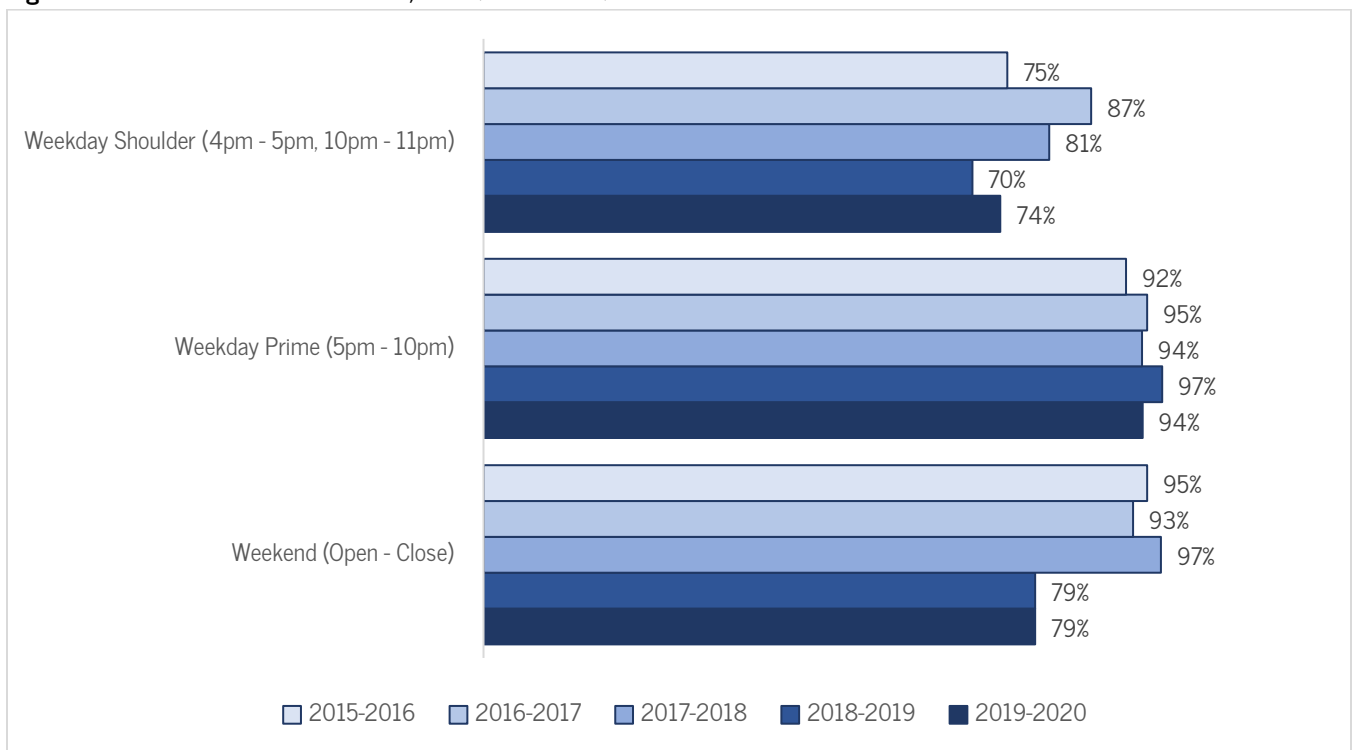
Ice usage has remained strong over the past 5 years, particularly during the most desirable prime times (5 pm to 10 pm during the week) where utilizations rates are near or exceed 90% at each of the three ice pads. Weekend usage is also adequate at 85% but also indicating that there could be a few additional rental opportunities, particularly when considering weekend usage was above 90% a few years ago. Where the most opportunity to accommodate arena pressure exists is in the weekday shoulder hours where utilization rates have fallen from 77% to 67% in the past few years. Figure 8 to Figure 11 illustrate the city-wide utilization of ice time as well as usage levels for each of the three ice pads.

Figure 8: System-Wide Arena Utilization, 2015/16 – 2019/20



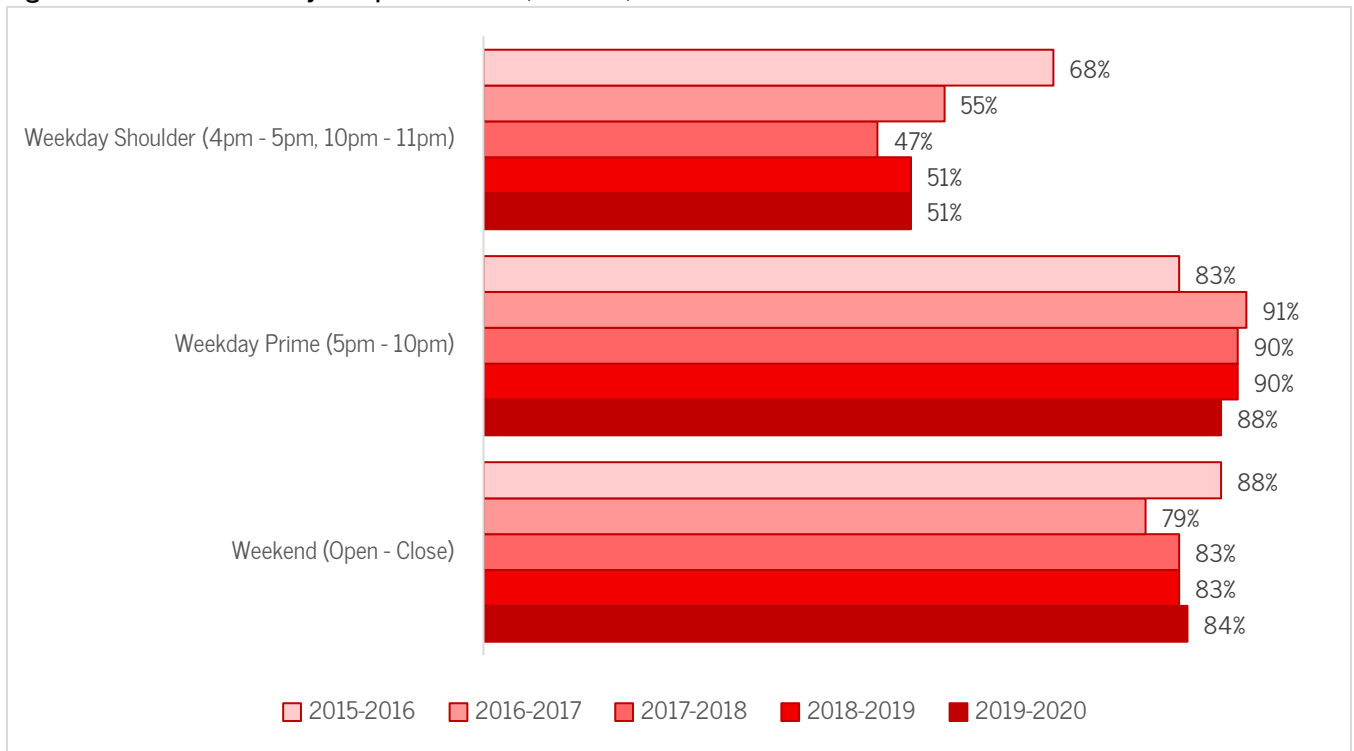
Source: City of Woodstock, 2021

Figure 9: Civic Centre Arena Utilization, 2015/16 – 2019/20



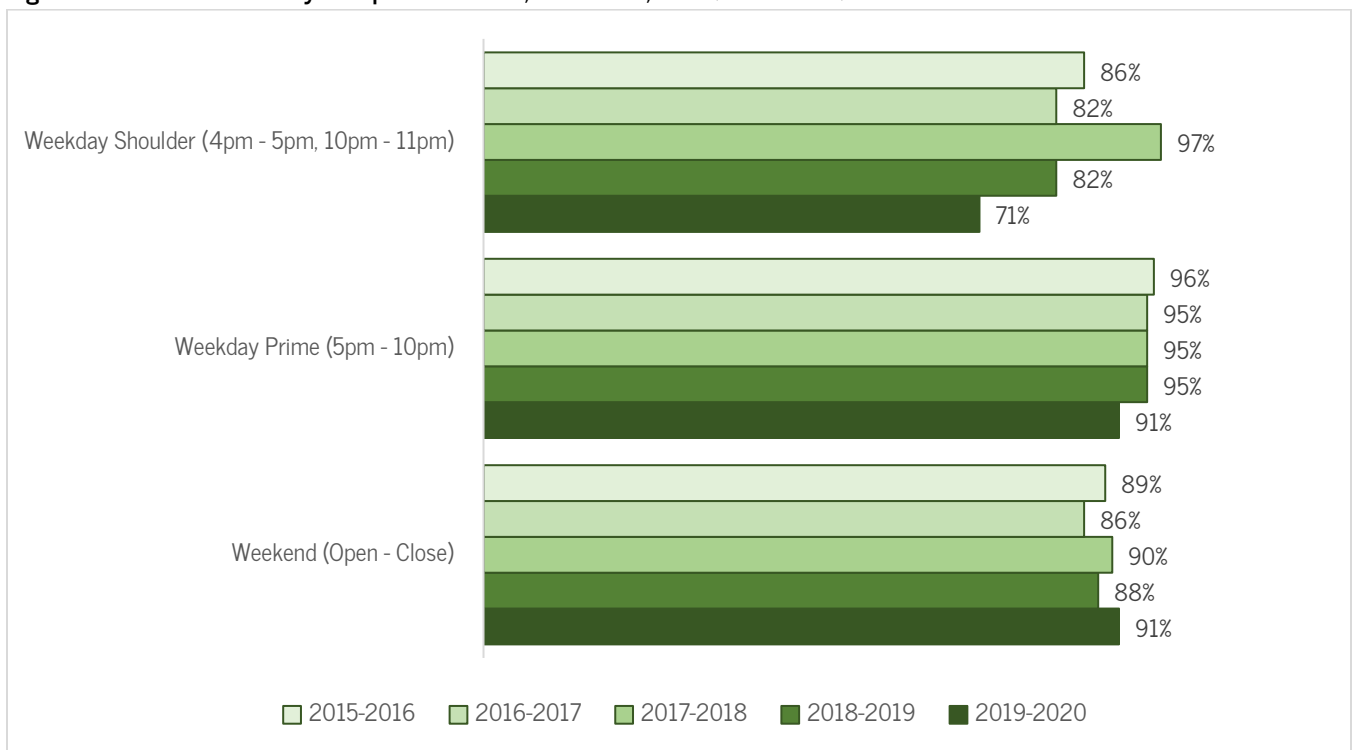
Source: City of Woodstock, 2021

Figure 10: Reeves Community Complex Utilization, Red Pad, 2015/16 – 2019/20



Source: City of Woodstock, 2021

Figure 11: Reeves Community Complex Utilization, Green Pad, 2015/16 – 2019/20



Source: City of Woodstock, 2021

The 1,750 players and skaters reported in 2019 translates into a service level of one ice pad per 575 registered participants. By comparison, a service level of one ice pad per 700 to 800 participants is generally sought in a number of municipalities across Ontario which suggests that Woodstock is exceeding this standard.

Applying the year-2019 capture rates among minor and adult ice sport participants suggests that Woodstock could have a market size of 1,950 arena users by the year 2031 assuming that participation rates remain at current levels. If targeting one ice pad per 700 registered participants, the current number of ice pads would be able to accommodate growth-related needs.

	2021	2026	2031
Estimated Market Size	1,750	1,850	1,950
Existing Supply	3.0	3.0	3.0
Required Ice Pads @ 1 ice pad per 700 participants	2.5	2.6	2.8
<b>Surplus Ice Pad Capacity</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>

Therefore, a supply of three ice pads is deemed to be sufficient over the next 10 years, particularly with softening use of late afternoon, late evening timeslots and certain weekend rentals. Based on 2019 data, there were approximately 650 hours that were unrented and amounts to an average of 27 hours per week over the course of the season; approximately 75% of these unrented hours are associated with shoulder periods.

Furthermore, City's shifting socio-cultural profile along with the COVID-19 pandemic are risk factors that need to be factored into considered prior to the City being able to support a fourth ice pad in Woodstock. Conversely, strong population growth has the potential to increase need should participation rates rebound to pre-pandemic levels and it is acknowledged that new arena users looking to gain access to local arenas or existing users looking to expand their ice time allocation will likely explore arenas outside of Woodstock if times are more convenient. While travel to other communities is not always desirable depending upon distance, it is also not uncommon for ice sport organizations to make use of a regional supply which can be relied upon to a reasonable extent so as to not overbuild the arena supply locally.

With these factors in mind, it is recommended that the City continue to maintain a supply of three ice pads during the planning period. However, this is not to say that investments in the arena system are not required since the Civic Centre Arena has reached a point in its lifecycle where it does not make strong fiscal sense to continue reinvesting in its structural, electrical and mechanical components.

### **The Case to Replace Civic Centre Arena**

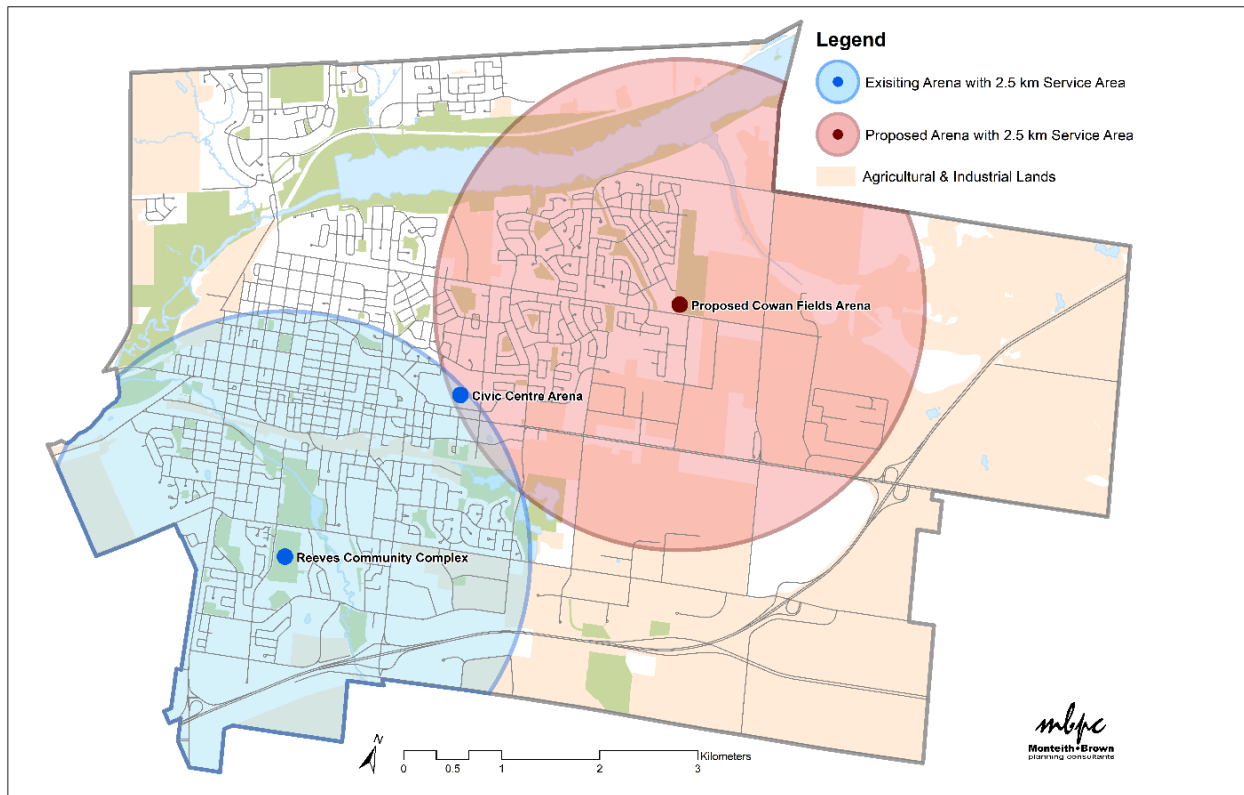
The Civic Centre Arena was constructed in 1970. Its age and era of construction is that the facility is near the end of its useful life, does not meet current barrier-free accessible standards, has required numerous regular and emergency repairs, and will require replacement of a number of higher cost items relating to keep it operational. Works carried out by the City have estimated up to \$6 million in capital upgrade costs to rejuvenate the facility, however, there are likely to be challenges to expansion in light of the historical agreement with the Woodstock Agricultural Society who own all surrounding lands (let alone add a second ice pad onsite should needs emerge after the next 10 years).

Consistent with the 2015 RFNS, this iteration of the Study supports decommissioning Civic Centre Arena in favour of relocating it to Cowan Fields where a new community centre would ideally be built to service Woodstock's burgeoning north end. Map 2 illustrates the geographic distribution of relocating an ice pad to Cowan Fields.

The development of a new arena, developed in accordance with modern best practices and amenities, would offer ice sport organizations with an enhanced player experience. If designed as part of a larger multi-use community centre (as is the model at the Reeves Community Complex), the arena would form part of a larger indoor and outdoor recreational hub for Woodstock and would have space available to accommodate an expansion in the event the City requires a fourth ice pad in the future.

To minimize further emergency repairs or a catastrophic failure at Civic Centre Arena, it is recommended that the new Cowan Fields arena should be targeted to open within the next three to five years upon which time the Civic Centre Arena should be closed.

Map 2: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Arenas



### Needs Analysis – Outdoor Skating Rinks

There is no industry standard guiding the provision of outdoor ice skating rinks. As a best practice, these amenities are provided through community-led initiatives where volunteers are responsible for providing this level of service with the support of the municipality. There are currently no volunteer groups that have come forward expressing the desire to establish a new outdoor skating location, nor did the public consultation process reveal any significant demand for additional skating opportunities.

That said, the RFNS recommends a full basketball court, tennis courts and pickleball courts at Cowan Fields (see Sections 5.13 and 5.14) which creates an opportunity to consider an outdoor ice rink. These hard surface courts could be designed to be flooded as a natural rink, potentially under the City’s existing volunteer ice rink program, or using a refrigerated system (the latter could possibly be tied into the ice plant for the new arena recommended at Cowan Fields). Doing so could alleviate pressures on the municipal supply of arenas by redirecting public skating and/or shinny to the outdoor rink.

At this time, no recommendations are made for outdoor rinks as the Volunteer Rink Program allows the City to respond to needs where community willingness to assist with rink maintenance can be demonstrated. The direction noted above for Cowan Fields can be further explored at the time conceptual planning and facility fit exercises are being carried out to confirm components to be included in the Phase 2 development of the lands.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #4** Construct a new single pad arena at Cowan Fields within the next three to five years, contingent upon replacing the Civic Centre Arena. The new arena should include an NHL-regulation ice pad, a minimum of 6 player dressing rooms and other modern amenities, and be designed in a manner to accommodate a second future ice pad, should it be required beyond the current Study period.

## 5.4 Curling Rinks

Woodstock Curling Club owns and operate their own facility. The City of Woodstock does not compete with the Curling Club through municipal curling facilities or pebbling ice in its existing arenas.

### Market Conditions

National participation in curling has been in decline over the past two decades, largely due to aging population trends, immigration patterns and shifting interests in wintertime activities. The past 15 years has seen a number of curling clubs closing their doors across Ontario while few new curling facilities have been constructed. Curling Canada reveals that although the sport continues to appeal largely to older adults and seniors, there are many curling clubs that offer youth leagues and programs to recruit new members and help sustain membership levels as older members become less active in the sport. As a result, the outlook for curling at the national level is anticipated to be one of slow growth, however, this will vary in each community.

The RFNS community survey recorded 12% of respondents as having curled in pre-pandemic times. Less than a quarter of respondents (23%) indicated that curling was important to their household and less than 1% indicated that curling facilities should be a priority for municipal investment.

### Needs Analysis

Contrary to provincial trends, the Woodstock Curling Club has maintained stable participation levels over the past number of years with approximately 300 members. As a general rule, each curling sheet can support between 100 to 125 members. As the Woodstock Curling Club has four sheets, the organization is providing a service level of one curling sheet per 75 members, suggesting that there is capacity to accommodate new members within their existing facility.

With the Woodstock Curling Club adequately serving Woodstock and area residents, there is no need for the City of Woodstock to also provide curling facilities within the 10 year period. Instead, regular dialog with the club is encouraged and where synergies exist, cross-promotional opportunities should be explored to ensure that the organization is successful over the long term.

## 5.5 Gymnasiums

The City operates one gymnasium at the Cowan Sportsplex having assumed operations of the facility from the Woodstock Soccer Club and converted the building's former hall into a gymnasium. The gym is roughly high school dimensions, has sufficient playout areas to its walls and a partition to allow it to be separated for simultaneous programming, and contains a large storage room.

### Market Conditions

Gymnasiums are flexible indoor spaces that can accommodate a variety of year-round activities including sports, active living and floor-based fitness, dance, camps, and general interests. Gymnasiums are also used for non-recreational activities such as tradeshow, social gatherings, performances, and other events, although these activities may not be compatible with certain flooring types.

The community survey revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents participated in a number of gymnasium sports such as basketball (20%), indoor volleyball (14%), gymnastics (12%), and badminton (6%). While half of survey respondents stated that gyms were important, only 5% indicated that they should be a priority for public investment. Consultations with stakeholders revealed a desire for more gymnasium time for volleyball, basketball and pickleball. Requests were made for a larger gymnasium space, particularly one that could accommodate tournaments.



Cowan Sportsplex gymnasium

## Needs Analysis

The provision of municipal gymnasiums varies in each community depending on the level of public access to school gyms and joint use agreements. While school gyms are accessible to local user groups through the provincial Community Use of Schools program, the City does not currently have a reciprocal agreement to gain additional or more affordable access on behalf of residents. As a result, certain users have reported that it is challenging for them to find time at appropriately sized school gyms.

With the City assuming operations of the Cowan Sportsplex, local user groups are afforded a new and improved opportunity to access gymnasium time in Woodstock. There is an added layer of accountability and transparency in the way that the municipal gym is scheduled, rented and priced, something that users previously had to go through the schools or the soccer club. This is a strong benefit to furthering gym access to residents as the City is now able to respond to gymnasium-based needs including City-run programs and sport rentals. At present time, a local volleyball club is the primary user of prime times (booking over 500 hours of gym time during the 2018/19 season) though other groups are looking to gain access as well. Since the space was originally designed as a large multi-purpose hall space, it is recommended that the City install a suitable flooring surface that is conducive to gymnasium activities and sports. Sprung wood floors are optimal for their ability to minimize impacts on human joints but are more costly than rubber tiled flooring that is sometimes used.

The service level of one municipal gymnasium per 46,600 population is within the range commonly provided in Ontario. The service level varies depending upon the level of public access to schools; with an absence of a reciprocal agreement in Woodstock along with a new arena being recommended at Cowan Fields, it is recommended that a gymnasium be included as part of that new development to provide complementary dry-land training opportunities as well as address the growing rental pressures from local gymnasium sport groups. A new gymnasium will also provide the Parks & Recreation Department with the flexibility to grow its portfolio of affordable municipal programming for sport, fitness, general interest and other activities as the City's population increases to its projected 54,000 persons in 2031.

In order to accommodate a broad range of recreation activities, as well as potential tournaments, the gymnasium should be designed to college regulations (as identified in the 2015 RFNS) and include multi-sport lining for activities including volleyball, basketball and pickleball. Subject to the detailed design process, supporting amenities should be consider include a spectator seating area, scoreboard/clock, equipment storage room, and changerooms.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #5** Replace the flooring at the Cowan Sportsplex gymnasium with a surface that is designed specifically for gymnasium sports and other programs.
  
- Rec. #6** Construct a gymnasium alongside the new arena being recommended at Cowan Fields in order to form a multi-use community centre. The gymnasium should be designed to meet college regulations, and include multi-sport lining for activities, with consideration given to supporting amenities including, but not limited to an electronic scoreboard, changerooms, spectator seating, storage and partition curtain/wall.

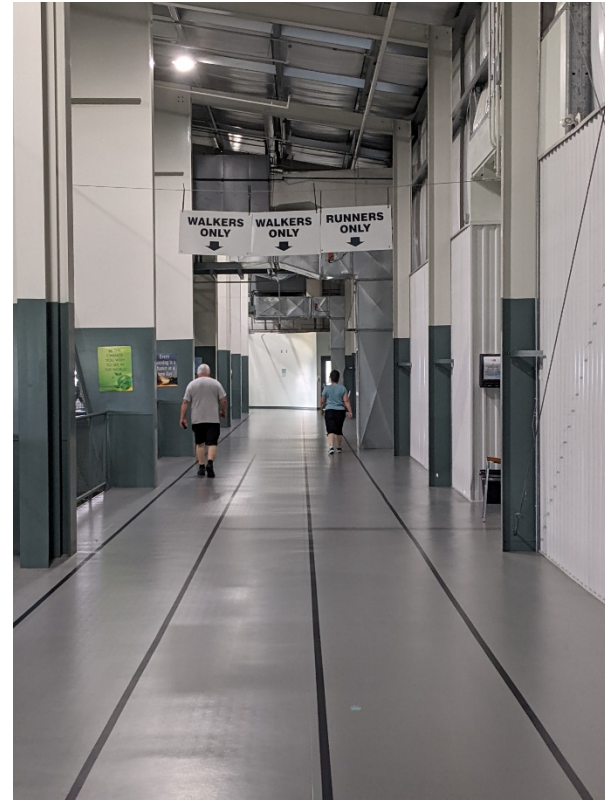
## 5.6 Fitness Facilities

The City of Woodstock does not own or operate a dedicated fitness facility. However, a three-lane indoor running track is available on the second floor of the Cowan Sportsplex, encircling the indoor field, and accessed for a drop-in fee or a membership specifically for the track.

### Market Conditions

Personal health and wellness are a top-of-mind issue for many Canadians, which has been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The desire to lead more active and healthy lifestyles has driven the demand for public and private fitness services across the province. Trends suggest that group fitness activities that focus on stretching and cardiovascular activities such as cycling, yoga, aerobics and Pilates is the most popular segment of the sector as they are designed to be fun and social activities. There are also emerging niche trends in the sector such as outdoor and virtual fitness programs.

The City offers group fitness programs within its existing multi-purpose spaces and on the Cowan Sportsplex indoor turf field. It is common for municipalities such as Woodstock to leave equipment-based fitness services to established private sector businesses. A scan of non-municipal fitness opportunities in Woodstock suggests that residents are well served with fitness providers including, but not limited to, YMCA of Woodstock, Goodlife Fitness, Fit4Less and others. That said, certain municipalities do operate or have recently entered the equipment-based fitness market largely to provide a holistic wellness experience within their multi-use community centres where fitness clubs can complement group fitness studios, aquatic centres and gymnasiums. The RFNS survey found that 36% of respondents participated in fitness activities such as group fitness or weight training, making these the fourth most popular activity prior to the pandemic. Additionally, 61% indicated that fitness centres (with equipment) are important to their household.



Cowan Sportsplex walking track

The City's active living objectives are furthered through the Cowan Sportsplex walking/running track. The popularity of indoor tracks result from several benefits such as allowing residents to maintain physical activity during cold winters and providing sports organizations with a controlled environment for cardio-training. While indoor walking tracks are not typically viewed as cost-recovery components (a nominal fee, if any, may be applied), the steady volume of use is typically seen as achieving the intent of promoting physical activity while increasing the 'foot traffic' of the facility as a whole.

### Needs Analysis

In an effort to continue meeting the active living needs of residents, the City's should continue to implement its existing fitness delivery model by accommodating programs within its multi-purpose spaces. To avoid competition and minimize service duplication, equipment-based fitness opportunities should continue to be met through the private sector. As a part of the new community centre proposed for Cowan Fields (see arena and gymnasium assessments), the City should include a group fitness studio that can accommodate active living and wellness programs.

This studio space should be designed to accommodate a variety of non-fitness-based uses and/or community rentals (e.g. private businesses or instructors looking for space). The design of the space should include, but not be limited to, a sprung wood sprung floor, mirrors, audio/visual equipment and storage. Certain communities such as the Town of Ajax have integrated enhanced technologies such as fitness-on-demand whereby fitness classes are delivered on a screen, thereby allowing people the flexibility to attend at times most convenient for them and choose the program of their choosing. Whether virtual or instructor-led, a group fitness studio will also allow the Parks & Recreation Department to enhance the number of affordable programs that are in high demand and provide healthy opportunities for residents to pursue.

The proposed community centre should consider an indoor track in support of municipal healthy living objectives. The decision to include an indoor track will need to consider whether its service model will be in line with the City's paid admission requirement at the Cowan Sportsplex track, or whether a different practice would be employed.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #7** Construct a group fitness studio as a part of the new community centre proposed for Cowan Fields. Design considerations should include wood sprung floors, audio-visual equipment, mirrors and storage.
- Rec. #8** Explore the feasibility of including an indoor walking track at the future multi-use community centre at Cowan Fields.



Cowan Sportsplex walking track

## 5.7 Multi-Purpose Spaces and Halls

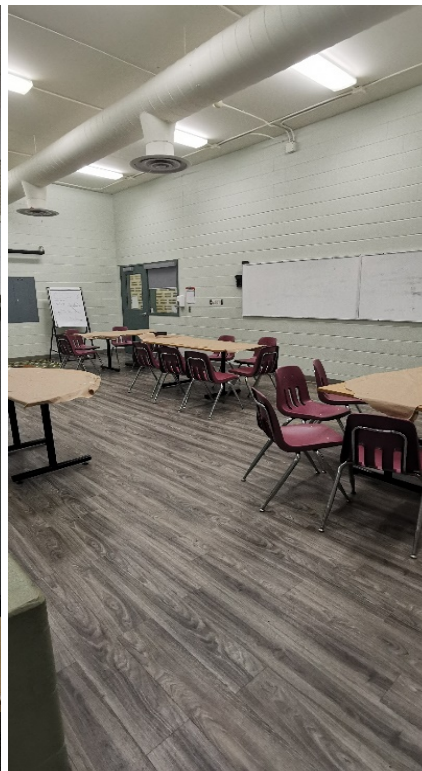
The City's supply of multi-purpose spaces and halls has remained unchanged since the 2015 RFNS was completed with are 11 multi-purpose spaces, meeting rooms, and community halls at the Reeves Community Complex, Southside Aquatic Centre, Market Centre, Woodstock Public Library, Art Gallery (2), Museum (2), Cowan Sportsplex, and South Gate Centre (2). The South Gate Centre is booked and programmed by a local community group under a service agreement.

### Market Conditions

Multi-purpose spaces and halls facilitate a range of opportunities from City-run programs and camps to general community rentals such as banquets, meetings, birthdays, and other social activities. As a general best practice, multi-purpose spaces and halls are constructed as a part of larger community and recreation centres since they can take advantage of economies of scale in construction and operation, and allow for cross-programming opportunities (e.g. annual general meetings of sports organizations, registration days, etc.).



Reeves Community Complex



Cowan Sportsplex

## Needs Analysis

The provision of multi-purpose space is based on a number of factors such as distribution and the ability to be integrated within new facility construction or redevelopment opportunities. An even distribution of multi-purpose spaces across Woodstock is a best practice to ensure that residents are located within a reasonable distance to community spaces to participate in activities and gatherings. The City provides its multi-purpose spaces and halls in the northwest, south, and central areas of Woodstock; however, the northeast side is a gap area that is not presently serviced.

This RFNS supports the City in moving forward with constructing a new community centre at Cowan Fields, which presents an opportunity to incorporate multi-purpose space to serve eastern areas of Woodstock and enable additional municipal programming. Multi-purpose spaces should be flexibly designed to accommodate a broad range of activities and should include amenities such as counter space, storage, sinks and partition walls. The provision of kitchens or kitchenettes may also be considered to support the use of multi-purpose spaces for community rentals or City-run activities (e.g., cooking programs).

Efforts should be made to optimize the use of the City's existing multi-purpose spaces. This may entail increased promotion for community uses, exploring new program opportunities and undertaking improvements to enhance the use of the space. A broad review of the City's multi-purpose spaces revealed that the commercial kitchen at the Cowan Sportsplex is now underutilized with the former hall's conversion to a gymnasium. The kitchen was previously used to support banquets that would take place at this location but since the City assumed operations of the facility, there are no future plans to accommodate large, non-recreational gatherings at this site that would otherwise require use of the kitchen.

The City should repurpose the commercial kitchen to a multi-purpose room (or similar) thereby allowing it to expand the range of programs and rentals that may take place. It also bears noting that the existing Cowan Sportsplex boardroom could be relocated to the kitchen space, thereby allowing the boardroom to be repurposed to a children's activity room that could be used for childminding, early childhood development programs and/or camps.

The City's community halls are deemed to be adequate to meet the needs of residents over the foreseeable future. With the City repurposing the hall at the Cowan Sportsplex to a gymnasium, non-recreational uses formerly occurring there (such as wedding receptions, luncheons/dinners and other large social gatherings) should be directed to Goff Hall at the Reeves Community Complex. Recognizing the presence of competing private sector businesses in the region such as the Craigowan Golf Club and Rosehill Farm, no new community halls are recommended.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #9** Construct a minimum of two multi-purpose rooms at the future multi-use community centre at Cowan Fields, largely intended for meetings and municipal programming
  
- Rec. #10** Repurpose the Cowan Sportsplex boardroom to a multi-purpose room and convert the existing kitchen to a modern boardroom equipped with furniture and technology that is conducive to sports organizations, local businesses/entrepreneurs and the community-at-large.

## 5.8 Dedicated Youth/Older Adult Space

The City does not operate dedicated youth or seniors centres, instead focusing programs for these age groups within its community centres and parks. The South Gate Centre is Woodstock's active adult space for residents aged 50 and over; while the building is owned by the City, a third party operates the South Gate Centre at arms-length under a service agreement.

### Market Conditions

Meeting the needs of youth between the ages of 10 and 19 is a high priority for municipalities to support the healthy development of this segment of the community. The City offers a number of youth-oriented activities that are complemented by those offered through youth-serving providers such as the Oxford-Elgin Child and Youth Centre, Woodstock Area Community Health Centre, and the Woodstock YMCA.

Many youth are gravitating towards unstructured activities to a greater degree than organized sports, translating into a growing demand for drop-in youth centres or rooms offering casual activities. Youth spaces typically feature lounges, computers and workspaces, gaming consoles, arts and crafts areas, music studios or video recording studios, and other spaces that evoke a sense of safety and openness. These spaces contribute to positive reinforcement and engagement among youth and help combat concerns regarding physical and mental health. The co-location of these spaces as a part of multi-use facilities also allows for cross-programming opportunities and allows for youth to access other services and amenities on site.

Similar to other communities in Ontario, Woodstock is experiencing an aging population, which is expected to continue over the foreseeable future. Trends have found that this segment of the community is more active compared to previous generations and there is a desire for active programming that centres around continuous learning and socialization. This has driven the demand for active living centres such as Woodstock's South Gate Centre that offers an extensive program complement including fitness, education, cards, music and dance, as well as health services.

The community survey found that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 3% of respondents visited the South Gate Centre more than 10 times during a typical year. Requests for youth and adult program space were expressed through other consultations as well.

### Needs Analysis

Previous assessments confirming the need for gymnasium space, fitness studio, arena and multi-purpose rooms through a community centre at Cowan Fields presents a unique opportunity to bolster youth/teen and older adult programming. From the youth perspective, inclusion of a gymnasium creates a logical opportunity for drop-in programming and sports such as basketball and volleyball. By providing a lounge-style room oriented to youth, the City would be able to offer a safe and comfortable space within the community centre that would benefit from cross-programming potential of the gym and any youth-focused outdoor spaces.

Similarly, older adult programs lend themselves well to gymnasium space and fitness studios that deliver active/healthy aging choices. The growth in pickleball, gentle yoga and tai chi, etc. is partially a result of greater awareness among older adults that staying active is critical to their long-term health. An older adult space can encourage the 50+ population to visit a multi-generational community centre (rather than a building branded as a "seniors centre") while retaining a space inside specifically for them after they have used other community centre components.

The provision of dedicated youth and older adult space is based on a number of factors such as the ability to address needs and opportunities to be co-located as a part of multi-use facilities to achieve cross-programming opportunities. With the development of a future facility at Cowan Fields, there is value in incorporating dedicated age space at this location given the presence of other recreation facility components that are planned or located at this site.

Consistent with the 2015 RFNS, a shared space for youth and older adults continues to be recommended to maximize the utilization of space given that these age groups tend to use these spaces during different times of the day – older adults and seniors are frequent daytime users, while evening hours are more appropriate for youth. Consultation with these key segments of the community is recommended to inform the design process, with consideration given to a lounge, computer and workspace, reading corner, kitchen, and more.

## Recommendations

**Rec. #11** Establish an inter-generational shared space at the future facility to be located at Cowan Fields. Consultation with residents within a broad range of age groups (namely teens and older adults) is recommended to inform the design process, which may include a lounge, computer and workspace, reading area, kitchen, and more.



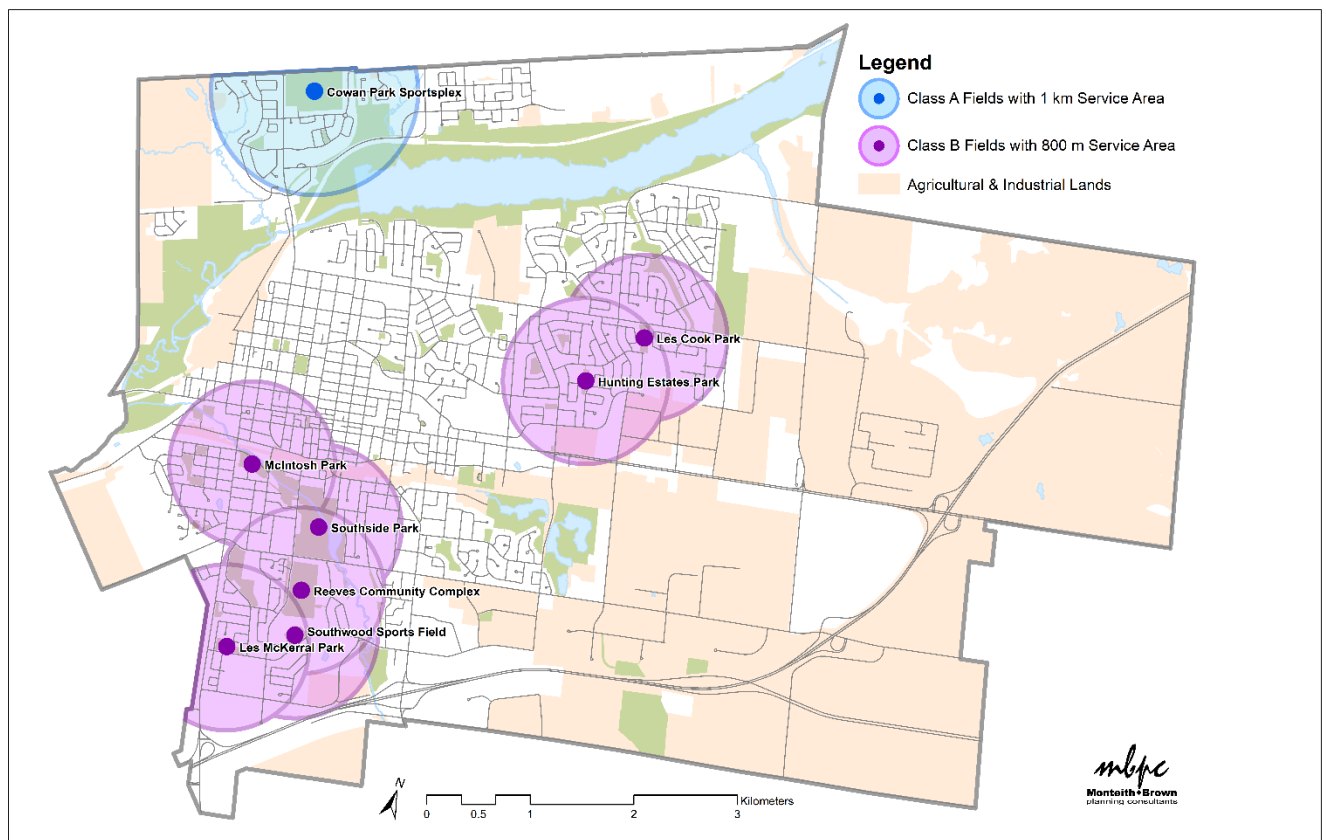
## 5.9 Soccer Fields

There are 32 soccer fields owned and maintained by the City Woodstock, of which the majority (20 fields) are located at the Cowan Sportsplex, which is Woodstock's primary soccer destination. To account for extended periods of play during the evenings, each lit soccer field provides the equivalent of 1.5 unlit fields. With one lit field in Woodstock, the City is effectively providing a supply of 32.5 unlit equivalent soccer fields.

Woodstock's soccer fields are categorized into three categories based on field type and associated amenities.

- **Class A** fields are full size, lit, irrigated, and have nets. There are 2 soccer fields falling into this category (the City's other Class A field is a multi-use field).
- **Class B** fields are full size, have nets, and may be irrigated. There are 29 fields falling into this category.

Figure 12: Distribution of Soccer Fields



### Market Conditions

Soccer continues to be one of the most popular organized sports in Ontario given its broad appeal and low barriers to participation. Ontario Soccer focuses on grassroots programming and since adopting the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) model, a focus has been placed on improved coaching, fewer games, more ball time, and skill development, opposed to the traditional emphasis on scoring and winning games. The LTPD model utilizes varying field dimensions geared to the age and ability of players, recognizing the various stages of physical and cognitive development. Woodstock's field supply is accommodating of these field requirements as a number can be partitioned for smaller divisions (e.g. 3v3 and 5v5) to meet the needs of field users.

The Woodstock Soccer Club is the primary user of the City's fields and reported having 1,400 outdoor players in 2019, the last season prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; club registration grew by approximately 200 players from its 2017 season but is lower than its 2013 reported registration of 1,350 players. The organization anticipates its registration to rebound after cancelling much of its 2020 and 2021 seasons due to public health restrictions, with the hope that new residential growth in Woodstock will result in an increased level of interest from youth moving to the area.

Through RFNS consultations, the Soccer Club suggested that certain existing fields are in poor condition and could be improved to further safety and the general player experience. Since taking over operations of Cowan Sportsplex from the Woodstock Soccer Club, the City of Woodstock has been targeting major redevelopment of one soccer field per year and has already enhanced one field dedicated to soccer at the Cowan Sportsplex.



Cowan Sportsplex



McIntosh Park

### Needs Analysis

With pre-pandemic registration of 1,400 players, there is one field per 44 players registered with the Woodstock Soccer Club. This is very strong level of service and exceeds the provision target contained in the previous RFNS (one unlit equivalent field per 80 players). It is recognized, however, that due to LTPD field requirements, the Woodstock Soccer Club is able to offer simultaneous programs on single fields and thus, the organization is able to make efficient use of existing fields.

The current service level suggests that there is excess capacity within the existing field supply, a finding that is confirmed through a review of field usage data. In 2019, the City's fields were booked for nearly 2,700 hours of which the vast majority (approximately 85% or 2,290 hours) were rented at the Cowan Sportsplex. At this location, fields were booked between 60 and 200 hours. By contrast, field bookings at other parks including Class B fields at Hunting Estates Park, Les Cook Park, Les McKerral Park, Southwood Sports Park and the Reeves Community Complex ranged between 10 and 90 hours. McIntosh Park was not booked in 2019.

The 2015 RFNS also determined a surplus of soccer fields and with player registrations having decreasing since that time, it can be reasonably expected that the City's existing supply of soccer fields beyond Cowan Sportsplex should be able to accommodate growth in player registration over the next 10 years.

With no new fields required over the foreseeable future, an emphasis should be placed on optimizing the use of existing fields through continuing to pursue strategic soccer field revitalization/redevelopment projects. With the vast majority of rentals occurring at the Cowan Sportsplex, the City should work with the Woodstock Soccer Club and other field sport users to make better use of the other rectangular fields available across Woodstock.

Use of soccer fields outside of Cowan Sportsplex is an efficient way to make use of existing infrastructure that avoids the City overbuilding its sports field supply. In doing so, the City would be able to alleviate pressure from intensively used fields and allow for a greater field resting periods, thereby improving field quality and operational sustainability. While field users often prefer to practice on Class A or high quality Class B fields, this can be resource intensive on the municipality since these fields require a greater level of upkeep and thus Class A fields are well suited for games and tournament play. It is common for practices to be scheduled on Class B fields.

Field improvements may be required at other locations to ensure that they are in a playable state for both games and practices. To encourage use of fields found across Woodstock, the City and Woodstock Soccer Club should work collaboratively to identify and prioritize field enhancements if and when needed.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #12** Target the continued redevelopment/revitalization of City-owned soccer fields over the next 10 years, initially focusing on intensively used venues such as the Cowan Sportsplex.
- Rec. #13** Encourage local soccer field users to make greater use of rectangular fields beyond the Cowan Sportsplex to address growth-related needs, scheduling pressures, and provide grass fields with sufficient periods to regenerate.

## 5.10 Multi-Use & Artificial Turf Fields

The Cowan Sportsplex contains an indoor artificial turf field measuring 34 metres by 64 metres (110 feet by 210 feet) that can be partitioned into three smaller fields. While primarily rented by soccer clubs, the indoor field is also available for booking by other field sports (e.g. football, baseball, etc.) looking for times outside their primary playing season. Cowan Sportsplex also offers an outdoor multi-use field that the City completely redeveloped in 2021 with a new irrigated natural grass surface and field lighting.



Cowan Sportsplex Indoor & Outdoor Multi-Use Fields

### Market Conditions – Indoor Fields

The provision model for **indoor artificial turf** facilities varies in each community. The Cowan Sportsplex was originally crafted using a common model whereby the City provided land and secured financing to the local soccer club who in turn operated the facility at arms-length. The soccer club was also responsible for renting out the hall, multi-purpose program rooms as well as the outdoor soccer fields (though the latter were primarily used by the club).

It is understood that the soccer club was unable to operate the facility in a sustainable manner and thus the City of Woodstock assumed operational responsibility. The City is now the sole operator of a permanent structure that places it in a class with larger cities commonly found in the GTA (e.g. Mississauga, Brampton, Oshawa, etc.); smaller to mid-sized municipalities that operate their own facilities tend to do so using air-supported structures (or bubbles/domes) as they tend to carry a lower capital cost of construction. As such, the City is providing a strong level of service and quality for its sports field community which consists of soccer, football, baseball, field lacrosse, etc. who can all make use of an indoor field during the colder/wetter months. The indoor field also supports the Parks & Recreation Department direct program delivery such as its children's activities, camps and selected fitness programs.

The Woodstock Soccer Club remains the primary indoor field user, using it to deliver programs to the approximately 800 youth and adult players registered in its indoor programs in 2019. While COVID-19 has impacted indoor activities, the Club anticipates that membership will return to pre-pandemic levels and grow over the long-term as interest in year-round soccer rebounds.

### Market Conditions – Outdoor Fields

With soccer being the primary user of rectangular fields in many municipalities, the development of multi-use fields shared primarily by football, rugby, field lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, cricket, among other uses. These sports often have difficulty accessing soccer fields given that their seasons often run in the spring and fall when wet weather makes grass fields prone to damage. In many communities, these non-soccer field sports rely heavily upon the use of school fields although their availability and quality often varies.

Woodstock's multi-use field at Cowan Park was designed with football in mind given that the Woodstock Wolverines is a well-established organization that has been operating for some time but found itself competing with other sports field users for time. At the national level, interest and participation in **football** has been cyclical and is typically played at the minor level (although football is a popular sport to follow among adults). The Woodstock Wolverines reported approximately 700 participants and through the consultations made a request for exterior washrooms and changerooms at Cowan Sportsplex.

**Rugby** has been experiencing a slight increase in popularity across Canada since the sport was introduced at the 2016 Summer Olympics and a focus by Rugby Canada to implement grassroots programs (Rookie Rugby). While it is generally not considered to be a growth sport in most parts of Ontario, there is stable to growing participation in communities where strong programs exist. Rugby Canada reported more than 35,000 registered youth and adult rugby players in 2019, including nearly 13,000 players in Ontario; rugby participation grew 18% nationally and 17% provincially compared to 2017. For both football and rugby, positive participation rates may also be a result of extensive concussion research that has resulted in identification and safety protocols, and supported by the passing of Rowan's Law.

**Ultimate Frisbee** is a non-contact sport that emerged in the 1990s. While it continues to be a niche sport, it has experienced surging popularity, particularly among young adults (including social clubs). As a result, the sport has been recognized by international sporting organizations including the International World Games Association and the International Olympic Committee (though the sport is not being included for recent upcoming Olympics). The popularity of the sport is partly driven by the low cost to participate as well as the sport attracting players from other field sports who bring transferable skills to the game.

**Lacrosse** is considered to be one of North America's oldest sports and is primarily played by youth and young adults. According to the Canadian Lacrosse Association, the most common types of lacrosse are: box lacrosse (played indoors or outdoors on a hard surface), field lacrosse, and inter-lacrosse (an introductory-level non-contact form of lacrosse that uses modified equipment).

**Track & Field** programs sometimes also make use of multi-use fields, particularly those that are encircled by a running track. Woodstock Legion Athletic Club expressed facility concerns for their track and field programs. Like football and rugby, community-based track and field clubs typically rely on secondary and postsecondary educational institutions though the quality of high school tracks can be a concern while the cost and availability of college or university tracks can also be limiting factors. Woodstock Legion Athletic Club has historically relied on the College Avenue Secondary School track which is a school-owned property.

### Needs Analysis – Indoor Turf

One artificial turf field per 100,000 residents is a common target for evaluating needs. This metric would suggest that Woodstock is currently providing a high level of service at one indoor turf field per 46,600 residents. Based on the number of indoor soccer programs, approximately 80 hours per week is estimated to be needed at present for soccer programs alone. Should indoor participation rates revert to pre-pandemic levels, it is estimated that demand would grow to approximately 100 hours per week. Given that the City's indoor field is divisible into three smaller fields, the capacity that this affords would allow the Woodstock Soccer Club to continue to deliver its programs assuming that the focus primarily remains on serving child and youth needs. As such, no additional indoor turf fieldhouses are required over the next 10 years.

That being said, site visits to Cowan Sportsplex found that the turf surface has experienced heavy wear and appears to be approaching a point where it is reasonable to expect that the turf will require replacement within the RFNS planning period. Turf replacement is deemed to be needed in order to maintain a safe and quality playing experience for all users.

### Needs Analysis – Outdoor Fields

The Cowan Sportsplex multi-use field redevelopment project was completed just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result, utilization data that is reflective of a typical usage profile is not available. Certain field sport organizations requested an outdoor artificial turf field through RFNS consultations. Synthetic or artificial turf is selectively being used to replace natural turf sport fields on high-use municipal and institutional sites as a means of extending playability, and reducing field maintenance. Despite a higher introductory cost of construction, artificial turf fields tend to require

less intensive maintenance compared to natural grass fields although general upkeep is still required to maintain a high quality playing experience. Artificial turf fields are found regionally in London, Waterloo and Kitchener but are less common in smaller urban centres outside of the GTA.

The facility model for developing artificial turf fields varies in each community and is typically dependent on the size of the local market, availability of capital funding and resources (e.g., partnerships), and financial viability of the business model as artificial fields are costly to develop compared to a traditional grass field. While certain municipalities own and operate their fields, other models found in southern Ontario include joint-development and/or operations agreements between municipalities and school boards. There are no industry standards or service levels guiding the provision of multi-use fields or artificial turf fields as they consider market-specific factors including availability of land, the supply of other rectangular fields, sport-specific trends, and projected revenues and expenditures resulting from operations.

Based on the review of local rectangular field usage data (including soccer fields) along the City's sizeable reinvestment in the redevelopment of the Cowan Sportsplex multi-use field, needs for multi-use fields are anticipated to be met over the next 10 years. From a service delivery perspective, the City is encouraged to continue allocating the Cowan Sportsplex multi-use field primarily to non-soccer field sports so that they have primary access to that Class A field and do not need to rely as heavily on soccer fields. As the City is undertaking planned improvements to a number of its soccer fields, these actions are expected to ease scheduling demands for the multi-use field. Accordingly, no capital recommendations are made for multi-use fields in Woodstock.

### *Stakeholder Interest in Track & Field*

In response to the interest expressed by the Woodstock Legion Athletic Club, a scan of track and field facilities in Ontario was undertaken to determine the degree to which municipalities directly invest in the construction and/or ongoing operation of indoor and/or outdoor track and field facilities. The majority of track and field facilities are found at secondary schools and post-secondary institutions while few municipalities were found to directly own and operate track and field facilities within their core facility portfolios (Hamilton, Oshawa, Kingston, and Brampton are noted as examples).

Based on background research, consultation with key stakeholders, and conventional roles of municipalities in track and field service delivery, it is not within the City of Woodstock's mandate to be a direct provider of track and field facilities unless it otherwise so chooses to enter into this level of service. The City has recently constructed a 250 metre walking loop at David Lowes Memorial Park along with a small asphalt track around the basketball court at Ludington Park, however, both are scaled to "neighbourhood" users in response to healthy community design trends but are not intended for organized track programs.



Ludington Park Walking Track

Given the cost of construction and operation of purpose-built track and field facilities in relation to usage relegated to warm weather months and the availability of tracks at CASS and St. Mary's High School, there is little basis for the City to undertake this responsibility on its own. Accordingly, no capital recommendations are made for the supply of multi-use fields in Woodstock. Instead, the City should help to facilitate discussions with the school board and Woodstock Legion Athletic Club to determine their interest and financial capability of reinvesting in one or more running tracks.



College Avenue Secondary School Running Track

## Recommendation

- Rec. #14** Carry out replacement of the indoor turf surface at Cowan Sportsplex in line with proactive municipal asset management practices as well as to provide a safe and quality playing experience for all users.

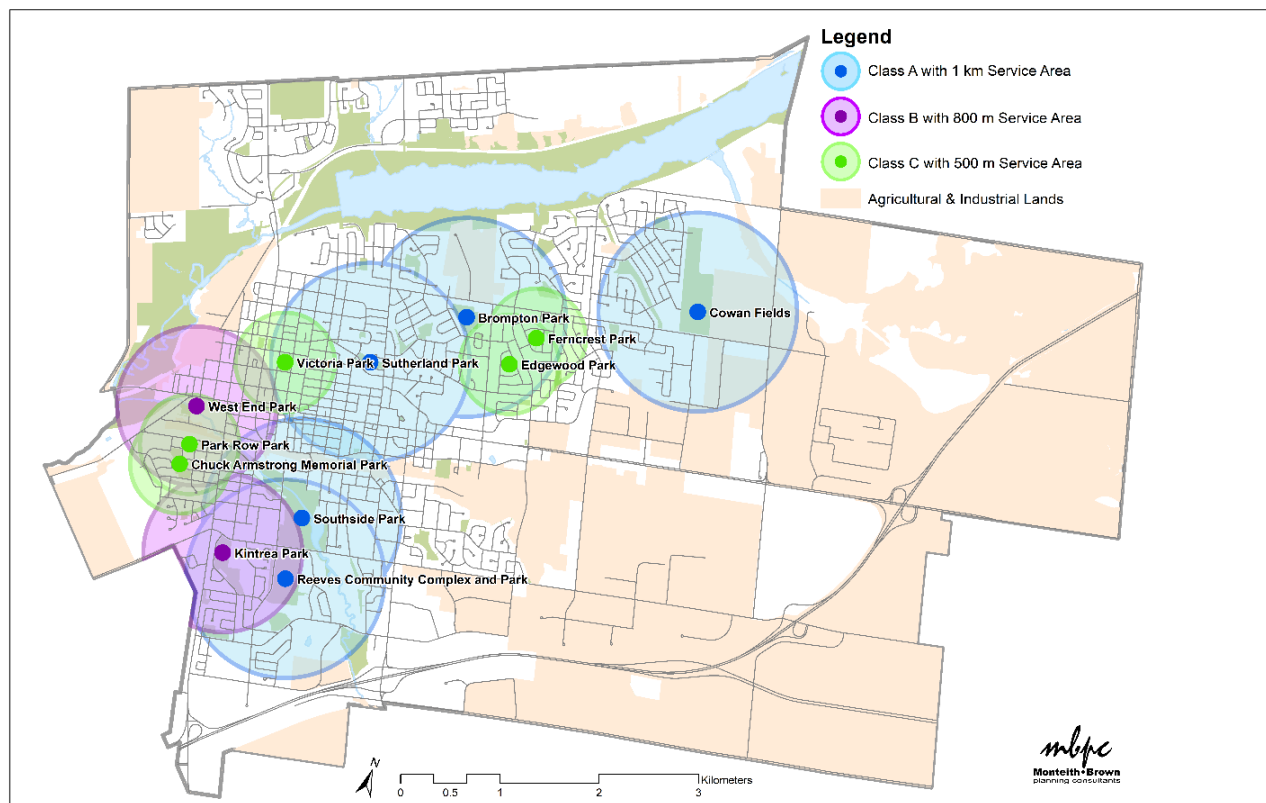
## 5.11 Ball Diamonds

The City provides 19 ball diamonds including 10 lit diamonds; within the supply, ten diamonds are designed for hardball. To account for extended periods of play during the evenings, lit diamonds are assumed to be equivalent to 1.5 unlit diamonds and thus the City has an effective supply of 24 unlit equivalent diamonds.

Woodstock's ball diamonds are categorized into three categories based on diamond quality and associated amenities.

- **Class A** diamonds have home run fencing, irrigation, lighting, and clay infields. There are 10 ball diamonds falling into this category that are found at Southside Park, Reeves Community Complex and Cowan Fields.
- **Class B** diamonds have home run fencing, may be irrigated, and have lighting. There are 3 ball diamonds falling into this category.
- **Class C** diamonds have no associated amenities and are undersized. There are 6 ball diamonds that fall into this category.

Map 3: Distribution of Ball Diamonds



### Market Conditions

Baseball and softball (in their various forms) have experienced a resurgence over the past decade due to factors such as a greater emphasis on grassroots programming to engage children and youth at an earlier age, as well as the popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays has renewing interest in baseball nationally. Growth among minor players is also due in part to Baseball Canada's focus on skill development through its Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity model.

The City's ball diamonds are used by a number of groups including the Woodstock Minor Baseball Association, which is the primary user of the City's ball diamonds, and a number of adult teams and leagues. A total of approximately 1,900 players were registered in minor and adult ball leagues in 2019, representing approximately 300 fewer participants compared to 2017.

A request was also made for a diamond to accommodate blast ball, Suggestions were also be made to undertake improvements including replacing the lighting at the Tip O'Neill diamond and at Brompton Park.

### Needs Analysis

The City has implemented the recommendation from the previous RFNS to construct three Class A diamonds at Cowan Fields which have significantly increased the amount of time for high quality diamonds in Woodstock. Further, these investments have improved the City's service level to one ball diamond per 79 participants, which exceeds the typical industry standard of one diamond per 100 participants.



Southside Park



Cowan Fields

Utilization data revealed that in 2019, the City's ball diamonds were booked for 5,000 hours in 2019, a steep 39% decline from the 8,100 hours rented in 2017 and is most likely a result of the player attrition noted above. While Cowan Fields received strong bookings, many of the Class B and Class C diamonds have lower usage levels such as at West End Park and Armstrong Park, which were booked for 49 and 59 hours, respectively. The loss of rentals suggests that there is capacity within the existing system to accommodate additional usage should participation rates rebound post-pandemic.

Although there is presently no evidence that would support the construction of additional ball diamonds, Woodstock Minor Baseball Association requested a new hardball diamond through RFNS consultations to alleviate some of the demand pressures that the existing hardball diamonds are faced with. Based on their registration and a three-year growth trend, it would appear that there is merit in considering a fifth hardball diamond in the city.

The preferred strategy would be to examine the existing ball diamond supply to identify a candidate conducive to hardball. Certain municipalities have explored portable mounds placed on softball diamonds to varying degrees of success but is a cost-effective option (particularly if diamonds are underutilized as is the case in Woodstock. However, typically this would require a storage shed or container. Should hardball registration rates continue to grow as sport rebounds after the pandemic, a more permanent solution may be explored by either converting an existing softball diamond (preferred) or constructing a new hardball diamond.

## Recommendations

**Rec. #15** Work with Woodstock Minor Baseball Association to explore ways in which existing softball diamonds can be adapted to allow the organization to increase its hardball programming.

## 5.12 Cricket Grounds

The City provides a dedicated cricket grounds at Southside Park and has installed a temporary overlay pitch at the Southwood Sports Field.

### Market Conditions

Woodstock has been ahead of the municipal trend of responding to the growth in cricket by having grounds available at Southside Park for a number of years. In response to continued growth, a temporary overlay was recently installed at Southwood Sports Field. The growing popularity of cricket in Ontario is being driven by immigration from cricket-playing countries (e.g., South Asian, Caribbean and certain European and Indo-Pacific nations); approximately 2% of Woodstock's population are from cricket playing countries based on 2016 data, however, this percentage can be expected to be different once 2021 Census results are released next year.

The Woodstock Warriors Cricket Club and the Woodstock Kings XI are the City's local organizations. Through the stakeholder consultation process, the groups identified the desire for an elite-level cricket facility that allows competition-level play and tournaments. The cricket grounds at Southside Park is now undersized for local needs given the emergence of the sport and quality of players in Woodstock over the past 5 years and while the temporary overlay at Southwood Sports Field has alleviated pressures on Southside Park, it is not ideal since it is shared with other field sports and thus not consistently available to local cricketers. The cricket groups indicated that their participation has been impacted by players leaving for organizations in other communities that have built higher quality cricket pitches than found in Woodstock.



Woodstock Cricket Grounds (Southside Park)

## Needs Analysis

Municipalities that provide cricket pitches generally utilize an industry standard of one cricket pitch per 100,000 residents, which is consistent with the City's approach as identified in the 2015 RFNS. Woodstock's two cricket pitches translate into a higher level of service although it is recognized that one pitch is undersized for regulation play and the second is a multi-use field that accommodates a variety of sports.

The two cricket grounds are booked primarily on weekends by the two local clubs. Continued population growth and diversification in Woodstock suggests that demands for time at the cricket grounds can be expected to continue and that players will require regulation-size facilities. It is reasonable to presume that one cricket grounds would be sufficient for a City of 54,000 persons in 2031, however, a larger pitch would be required. The current area that the grounds occupy at Southside Park are unlikely to be enlarged and there are no reasonable alternatives within that property. As a result, the City will need to investigate opportunities to establish a new cricket grounds that is designed in accordance with generally accepted standards of the sport.

Cowan Fields is viewed as an optimal site given the availability of land there - cricket grounds require a substantial land base – as well as the presence of other sports fields that may generate operational efficiencies in turf maintenance and reinforce the site as an outdoor recreation hub for the community and visitors. Once the new cricket pitch is completed, the existing pitch at Southside Park could be oriented towards practices (as well as youth programming, should there be demand), while the temporary pitch at Southwood Park location should be removed.

## Recommendation

- Rec. #16** Establish a dedicated cricket pitch at Cowan Field, designed in a manner to accommodate adult play and considers input provided by local cricket clubs to address specific design details. Once complete, the existing Southside Park cricket pitch should be reoriented to casual/recreational play while the Southwood Park pitch should be removed.

### 5.13 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

The City maintains six tennis courts at two parks; Richardson Park contains four lit courts while two unlit courts are found at Brompton Park. Three dedicated pickleball courts are provided at Park Row Park.



Richardson Park



Brompton Park



Park Row Park

### Market Conditions

Tennis has experienced a resurgence across Ontario over the past several years due to factors such as Tennis Canada and Ontario Tennis Association efforts to promote the sport at the grassroots level, success of Canadian tennis professionals on the international stage, and a growing segment of the aging baby boomer population taking up tennis or returning to the sport to remain active later in life.

Baby Boomers are also driving the growth of pickleball, which is widely recognized as one of the fastest growing sports in Canada. Compared to tennis, pickleball is a lower intensity sport that can be played indoors or outdoors. The popularity of pickleball continues to spread across Ontario and its prominence is highlighted by being played at the Ontario Senior Games. There is a growing base of pickleball enthusiasts in Woodstock that regularly play at the Park Row Park courts.

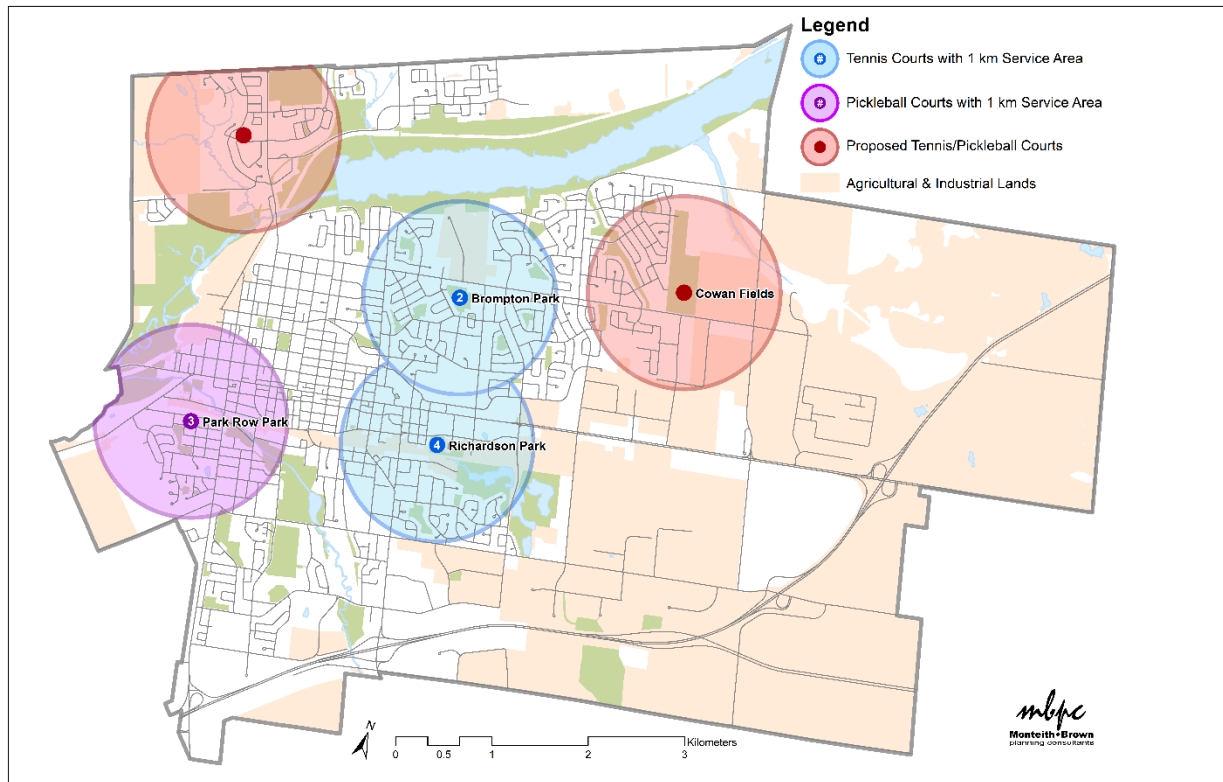
The RFNS survey found that 16% and 7% of respondents played tennis and pickleball, respectively, prior to the pandemic. 40% of respondents felt that tennis courts were important, but 5% supported additional investment in improving or building new courts. Similarly, 21% of respondents identified that pickleball courts were important; however, 3% supported investment in these amenities. These results suggests that tennis and pickleball courts are not high priorities in the community, although it is recognized that these sports are played by a certain subset of the community.

### Needs Analysis

The City is currently providing a service level of one tennis court per 7,152 residents. Municipalities target the provision of tennis courts at a rate of one court per 5,000 residents. This target was used in the 2015 RFNS and is carried forward to guide future needs. Based on this target, the City currently has a deficit of two tennis courts, which is projected to grow to five courts by the end of the planning period.

A distributional review of existing tennis courts revealed the central area of Woodstock is well served, although service gaps exist on the north, east and west sides of the City. The 2015 RFNS recommended potential locations for new tennis courts including Cowan Fields and at a new or existing park in the City's north end (such as at the Cowan Sportsplex). These proposed locations continue to be viable options to address gap areas and to serve emerging residential areas.

Map 4: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Racquet Sport Courts



There is no industry standard for the provision of pickleball courts as these amenities are primarily provided in response to local demand. The sport continues to gain traction in Woodstock having provided three dedicated courts at Park Row Park, and this is expected to continue given the City’s aging population. To ensure that there is a balanced distribution of outdoor pickleball courts in Woodstock, it is recommended that three new courts be established on the east side of the City. Cowan Fields is a logical location given the availability of land and the new tennis courts proposed in preceding paragraphs.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #17** Construct 5 new tennis courts of which three should be provided at Cowan Fields along with two courts at an existing or future park in northwest Woodstock.
- Rec. #18** Construct three dedicated pickleball courts at Cowan Fields.

## 5.14 Outdoor Basketball Courts

Outdoor basketball courts are provided at six parks across the City and are augmented by courts found at local schools.

### Market Conditions

While outdoor hard surface pads are primarily used for basketball, some can be utilized as multi-purpose courts that accommodate a variety of informal and unstructured activities. Basketball continues to be a popular pastime activity in many communities due to its national appeal, particularly given the success of the Toronto Raptors. It is relatively affordable compared to other sports, easy to learn, and can be played individually or in small groups. The RFNS survey found that, 20% of respondents played basketball prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which was the ninth most popular activity.

The need for additional basketball courts was also expressed through the other consultation initiatives with the public and local community groups. It was expressed that there is a gap in public basketball to support organized programming, noting that school courts cannot be relied upon as they are not regularly maintained or available. Why Not Us, a local community organization, has been a leading voice for providing covered outdoor basketball courts and provide positive activities for local youth.



Victoria Park



Shanna Larsen Memorial Park

### Needs Analysis

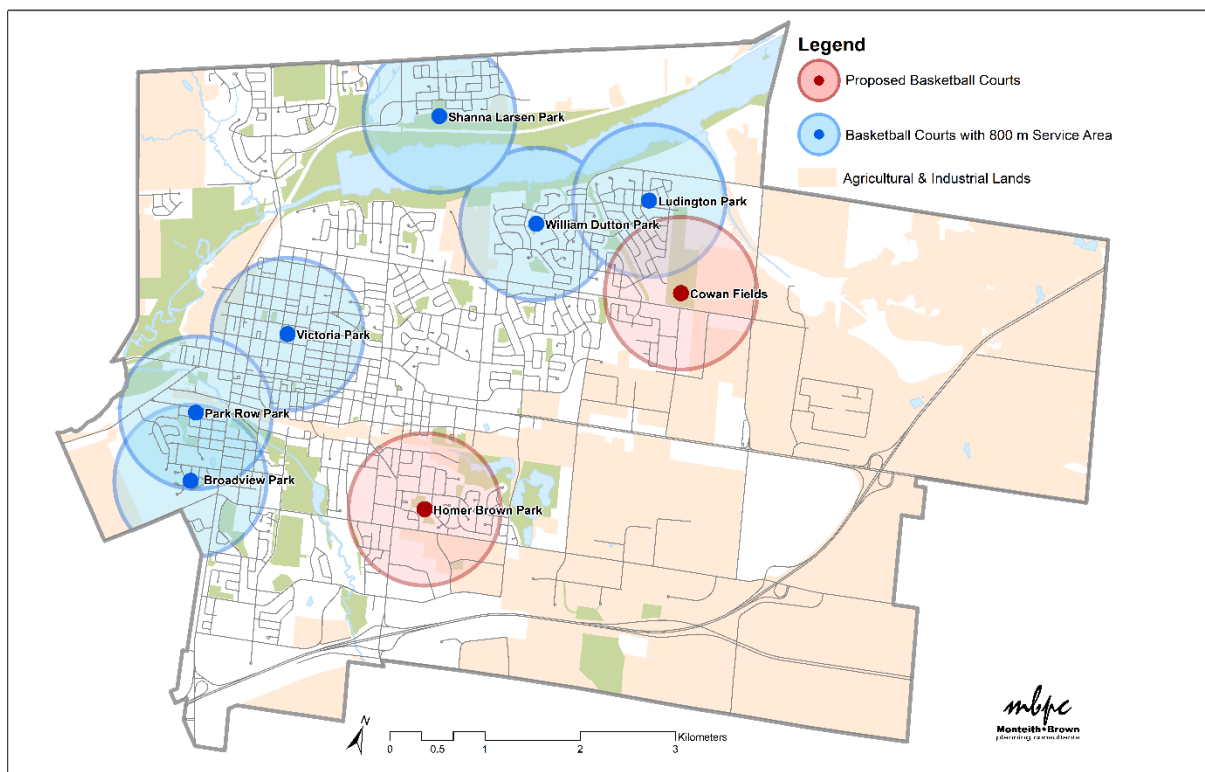
The City has adopted a target of one outdoor basketball court per 800 youth between the ages of 10 and 19, which was recommended in the previous RFNS. This target continues to serve as an industry standard and thus it is carried forward to guide basketball court needs in Woodstock. With an estimated 5,600 youth and teens in Woodstock, the City is currently providing a service level of one outdoor basketball court per 930 youth which is slightly below the recommended target. This suggests that the City is currently undersupplied with outdoor basketball courts, and is consistent with what was heard through the consultation process. The youth population is projected to increase to 6,000 persons by 2031 which would result in a

need for between seven and eight basketball courts in total, thus requiring a minimum of two additional courts to be constructed over the next 10 years.

As youth-serving facilities, basketball courts are optimally provided in reasonable walking or cycling distance of residential areas. Map 5 applies an 800 metre radius (about a 10 minute walk) for illustrative purposes noting that catchment areas may be slightly larger for youth traveling by bicycle, skateboards, scooters, etc. Notable gaps are apparent in the northwest, southwest, and central areas of Woodstock.

It is recommended that the City evaluate and identify existing and future park locations to reconcile these gap areas to establish two new outdoor basketball courts. One of these courts, preferably developed as a full court template, should be constructed at Cowan Fields. The second court is recommended to be developed as a full court at Homer Brown Park. Potential locations for additional courts should be directed towards gap areas where the geographical distribution of basketball is lacking such as an existing or future park in the northwest, Richardson Park or the Reeves Community Complex given that other youth-oriented amenities are currently available at these locations.

Map 5: Distribution of Existing & Proposed Basketball Courts



### *A Proposal for a Covered Outdoor Basketball Court*

Formal submissions have been for an initiative referred to as the Kendall Courts Project through the previous and current RFNS planning processes. The proposal is for two covered full courts oriented to 3-on-3 basketball and provide positive, meaningful opportunities for local youth.

The proposal is for a non-traditional approach to municipal basketball court provision by way of its specialized flooring, seating system, and structure. As such, it would carry a much different design standard than commonly found in the municipal recreation sector along with significantly higher capital costs and a different operational model. The proposal has merits, however, would ideally require a strong commitment from the community in terms of fundraising and possibly programming.



Source: Why Not Us submission, 2021

As indicated in the preceding pages, a new full basketball court should be constructed at Cowan Fields. It is recommended that a standard municipal design template be implemented (i.e. standard dimensions, concrete or asphalt surfacing with an acrylic treatment, park benches, etc.). Should Why Not Us or another community group approach the City with a proposal and business plan, or fundraising plan that demonstrates that the community can reasonably fund an enhanced design, the City should explore the merits and feasibility of the concept.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #19** Construct a minimum of 2 outdoor basketball courts, of which one should be a full court at Cowan Fields and the other as a full court at Homer Brown Park. Additional basketball courts may be considered with the intent of addressing gap areas in in northwest, southwest and/or central Woodstock.

## 5.15 Sand Volleyball Courts

The City currently provides a sand volleyball court at Southside Park which is open for drop-in use by the general public.

### Market Conditions

Demand has been expressed in certain municipalities for sand volleyball courts in parks and beaches. Beach volleyball is a sport that is popular among youth and younger adults and the sport is low-cost, further adding to its appeal. The strong local interest in volleyball is evidenced by approximately 20 prime time hours per week being booked in the Cowan Sportsplex gymnasium for indoor volleyball and sporadic rentals for the outdoor court (noting its one-court configuration is not conducive to league play or club programming). The community survey found that 8% of responding households played beach volleyball prior to the COVID-19 pandemic while 3% of respondents support sand volleyball courts as a high priority for future investment.

### Needs Analysis

While there are no municipal standards guiding sand court service levels, input from the volleyball community and City staff reinforces the sport's popularity in Woodstock. There is merit in developing a sand volleyball court complex containing a minimum of four courts. This would allow organized program delivery, league play and drop-in usage in order to help grow local volleyball, attract sand volleyball tournaments, as well as alleviate a degree of pressure on municipal gymnasiums in warmer months (especially during summer camp season). Cowan Fields would be an ideal location for the sand courts since there is space available, the availability of the pavilion, operations and maintenance efficiencies with the other recreation services co-located onsite, sufficient parking, and excellent access to Highway 401.

## Recommendations

**Rec. #20** The City should develop four sand volleyball courts at Cowan Fields, designed in a manner that enables delivery of organized programming, league play and tournaments.

## 5.16 Wheeled Action Sports Facilities

Woodstock provides a high quality, 7,200 square foot concrete skateboard park at Southside Park featuring a number of ramps, bowls, rails and stairs. As a result, the skatepark is also well suited for many wheeled action sports such as BMX, scooters, and inline skating in addition to skateboards.

The City does not currently provide dedicated bicycle parks, although some non-municipal facilities permit these types of activities such as trails operated by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and a bike track maintained by the Woodstock Cycling Club at the Pines, the latter of which is generally suited for intermediate to advanced riders.



Southside Park Skateboard Park

### Market Conditions

Skateboarding and other wheeled action sports is an outlet for self-expression and an opportunity to find a sense of belonging for many youth. Skateboarding is also becoming increasingly popular with adults, many of whom participated in the sport when they were younger or wish to do so with their children. Skateboard parks are now commonly found across Canada as they provide a positive and safe space for users to engage in outdoor physical activity, while gathering and socializing with others who share common interests. The sport was recently introduced in the 2020

Tokyo Olympics, which may generate a heightened level of interest and an increased demand for skateboard parks in communities including Woodstock. The community survey found that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 7% of respondents participated in skateboarding.

The City has been receiving requests for bicycle-based infrastructure in parks such as pump tracks. Pump tracks are gaining popularity as an extreme sport that utilizes a dirt, concrete or asphalt track consisting of jumps, berms, banks, and other obstacles designed to test the bike handling skills of the riders. The type of surfacing will dictate how much operational time is required as dirt tracks require a lower cost to build but are more intensive to maintain (grooming, reshaping, etc.) compared to asphalt or concrete tracks.

The existence of pump tracks can discourage informal riding that may otherwise take place in ecologically sensitive areas, thereby preventing damage and disruption to flora and fauna. The municipal role of facilitating bike opportunities has largely been through integration with the skateboard park at Southside Park. Limited input was received with respect to a pump track. The online community survey found that 8% of responding households indicated that a pump track was important to them and 3% indicated that a pump track should be a high priority for additional public spending.

### **Needs Analysis**

Woodstock is currently providing a service level of one skateboard park per 5,600 youth between the ages of 10 to 19, is in line with the target established in the previous RFNS. The youth population is estimated to grow to 6,000 persons by 2031 which would still be an acceptable service level, however, Southside Park may be inaccessible to certain youth living in north Woodstock due to distance.

For this reason, the City should explore small-scale facilities commonly referred to as "skate spots" or "skate zones" oriented to wheeled action sports for beginner and intermediate skill levels. They are designed with a limited range of features so they utilize a much smaller footprint compared to what currently exists at Southside Park; in fact, they may consist of only a couple of basic features such as a rail or shallow bowl that can be easily integrated into neighbourhood park designs. This facility model should be considered at future or existing parks that serve growing areas of Woodstock, preferably co-located with other child and youth-serving amenities.

With respect to pump tracks, there are no provision standards for these types of facilities given their specialized nature and the demand for these facilities generally remains unproven. While not raised through the RFNS as a priority, the requests received by City staff is worthy of further exploration prior to committing to this new type of facility. It bears noting that while the Southside Park skateboard park is used by bikes, dedicated pump tracks tend to attract a singular type of use which poses a risk should trends change.

City staff should engage the local bike sport community to further understand the type of facility that is being sought, including size, scale, and type of surface at a minimum. Input from environmentally focused organizations such as the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority is also encouraged to determine prospective locations should the need for a pump track be rationalized in the future.

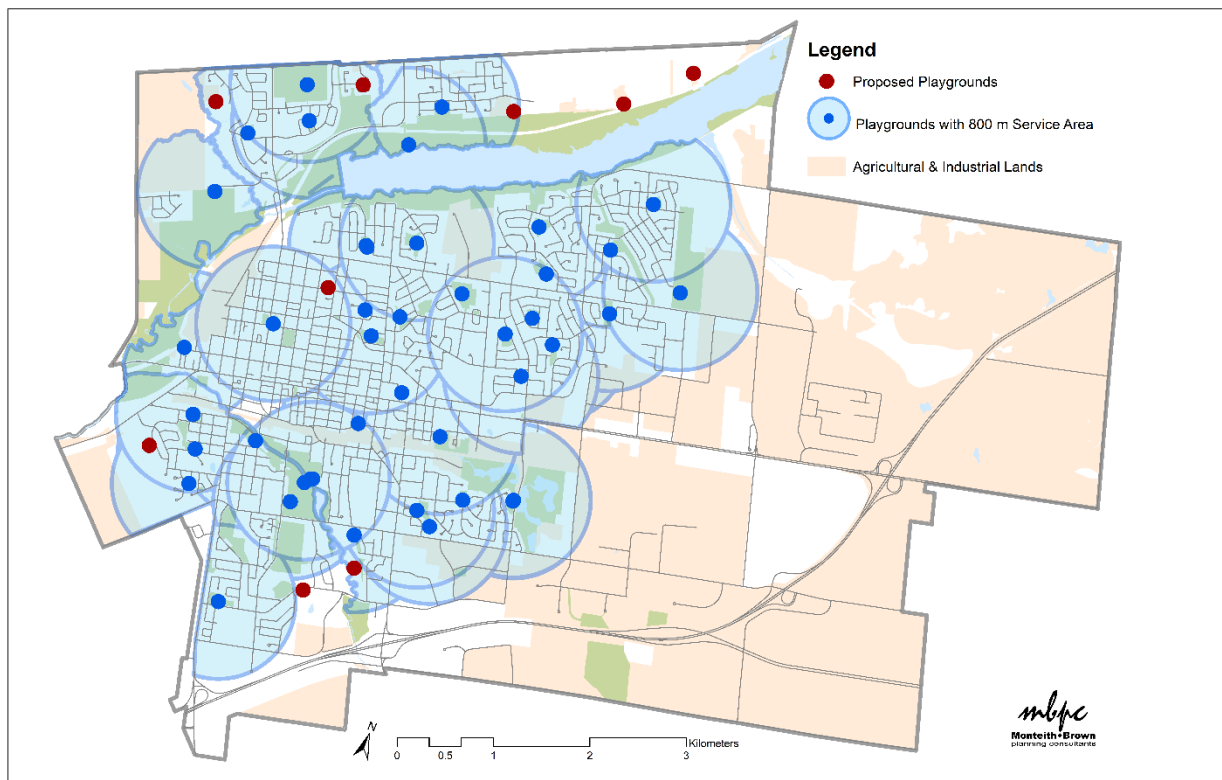
## Recommendations

- Rec. #21** Construct "skate spots / zones" at appropriate neighbourhood-level parks containing basic features oriented to beginner and intermediate skill levels.
- Rec. #22** Engage the local bike sport community to determine whether sufficient interest exists to warrant consideration of a bike-specific facility in Woodstock such as a pump track, along with potential opportunities to partner.

## 5.17 Playgrounds

Woodstock has 38 playgrounds that range in size, design and variety at parks throughout the City. Several playgrounds have been constructed across Woodstock in the time since the previous RFNS as new residential subdivisions have been developed. Play equipment typically consists of climbing structures, swings, and various interactive features depending upon the size and type of park in which they are located.

Map 6: Distribution of Playgrounds



### Market Conditions

Playgrounds are neighbourhood-level amenities that benefit early childhood development, foster cognitive development and social skills, and encourage physical activity. Playground designs have evolved overtime from traditional play equipment (i.e., swings, slides, etc.) to creative structures that facilitate environments that encourage users to use their imagination to create unique play experiences. This may include design elements such as vibrant colours, interactive play features, thematic designs, and components that stimulate the senses.

The community survey reported that 41% of respondents used a playground prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was the third most popular activity. 73% of respondents felt that playgrounds are an important recreational amenity, which ranked fourth in importance. One out of five respondents identified investment in playgrounds as a high priority, ranking sixth out of 22 facility types.



Ludington Park

### Needs Analysis

Maintaining equitable access to playgrounds throughout Woodstock helps to enable the healthy development of children. Playgrounds should be located within 800-metres of residential areas, which generally equates to a 10-minute walk without having to cross major pedestrian barriers such as high volume/arterial roads, rail lines or watercourses.

In applying an 800 metre service area, Map 6 clearly illustrates that most residential areas in Woodstock are well served. Gaps are largely relegated to recent or future residential areas such as the City's northwest. Playgrounds located at school sites (such as Oliver Stephens to the east of Southside Park) reinforce municipal coverage although school are not always publicly accessible particularly during school hours.

To ensure that the City's playgrounds continue to be safe and encourage play, efforts should be made to ensure that play structures are renewed at the end of their lifecycle, which tends to be between 15 to 20 years. This will include ensuring that sufficient capital is allocated to fund the cost of replacement. Consistent with legislation such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, new or redeveloped playgrounds must be inclusive of all users and include elements such as barrier-free components such as ramps and firm and stable surfaces.

The development of adventure and natural playgrounds have also been gaining traction in many municipalities to provide an enhanced playing experience. Research has demonstrated that adventure playgrounds support the modern concept of "risky play" through climbing, exploring, and movement to develop motor skills. The use of natural materials such as wood, ropes, boulders, landscaping, and terrain, also provides users with new playing experiences that stimulates creative play through imagination. The implementation of adventure and natural playgrounds are commonly located at higher-order park locations to create a destination venue for children and should be a key consideration for the City, particularly at a park such as Southside Park whether in the original park boundary or within the recently acquired expansion area (the former golf course lands) which would be well suited as a naturalized open space due to its environmental features and floodplain constraints.

## Recommendations

- Rec. #23** Establish playgrounds within 800-metres of residential areas with an emphasis placed on serving new residential areas.
- Rec. #24** Ensure the timely replacement of aging playgrounds with new structures that are inclusive of all users and include features such as barrier-free components and firm and stable surfaces. Allocating adequate annual funding should support playground replacement projects.
- Rec. #25** Provide a natural playground at Southside Park (or alternatively as part of a new park development or an existing playground replacement project).

## 5.18 Lawn Bowling Greens

The Woodstock Lawn Bowling Club operates at Southside Park providing a number of greens accompanied by amenities including shade seating, lighting, and a clubhouse.

### Market Conditions

Lawn bowling is typically played on manicured greens, artificial surfaces or mats. The sport is mostly popular among seniors; however, some clubs have had success in introducing younger adults to the sport in part to its social nature as well as the Ontario Lawn Bowling Association's buddy program that partners entry-level players with veteran players to enable skill development and overall understanding. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 33 members of the Woodstock Lawn Bowling Club, which is a slight decline from the 36 members reported in the 2015 RFNS.

The Woodstock Lawn Bowling Club notes that physically accessibility to the clubhouse has been a challenge. The pathway from the parking lot situated on a steep, grassed hill, which is an accessibility challenge for members with reduced mobility. Requests were made for the pathway to be paved as well as for short mats to support indoor lawn bowling within the clubhouse.

### Needs Analysis

Since the previous RFNS was completed, the Woodstock Lawn Bowling Club has had a modest decline in its membership base and based on the Club's current level of participation, there is no need for additional lawn bowling greens in Woodstock. Under the terms of its service agreement with the City, the Lawn Bowling Club operates the facility at arms-length and is responsible for funding most capital upgrades. As such, any expressed demand for improved facility access should be evaluated in the context of the existing service agreement to determine what role, if any, the City might play and thus no facility-specific recommendations have been made for lawn bowling.

## 5.19 Recreational Trails

There are approximately 43 kilometres of recreational trails that are owned by the City of Woodstock. These trails are primarily found within the City's parks system such as at Roth Park, Southside Park, and Burgess Park Trail, which are complemented by an extensive sidewalk network that connects users to various destinations across the City. In addition, there are several non-municipal trail systems in and around Woodstock including Vansittart Woods Trail and the trails found within the Pittock Conservation Area.

### Market Conditions

Recreation trails tend to be one of the most highly desirable amenities in any community. They facilitate low-cost outdoor physical activity opportunities and can be used by residents of all ages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, municipalities across the Province experienced a strong increase in trail usage, highlighting the importance of providing a connected trail network that connects residents within the community.

Not only do recreational trails facilitate active and healthy lifestyles, they also have an environmental benefit as it alleviates road congestion and minimizes vehicular greenhouse gas emissions, land consumption, and the costs for road construction and maintenance. From a social perspective, active transportation can heighten community and social vibrancy by encouraging compact developments and more livable communities where people are more likely to have personal contact with each other.

The popularity of recreational trails in Woodstock was demonstrated through the consultation process. The community survey found that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 82% of respondents participated in walking, jogging, or hiking for leisure, which was the most popular recreation activity. Two out of three survey respondents used City trails more than 10 times in a typical pre-pandemic year while another 10% reported that they typically use trails 6 to 10 times. 95% of respondents felt trails were important amenities, and 47% of respondents feel that trails should be a high priority for future municipal investment. The public also expressed the desire to extend the Pittock Trail and establish a walking loop around the Thames River. Connecting Beachville Trail to Burgess Park Trail was also suggested.

Strengthening the recreational trail system in Woodstock has been an ongoing initiative for the City, as well as Oxford County. Trail development in Woodstock is currently being guided by documents including the 2014 Oxford County Trails Master Plan and Oxford County Cycling Master Plan (currently ongoing). Together, these documents seek to improve connectivity through active transportation modes such as walking and cycling.

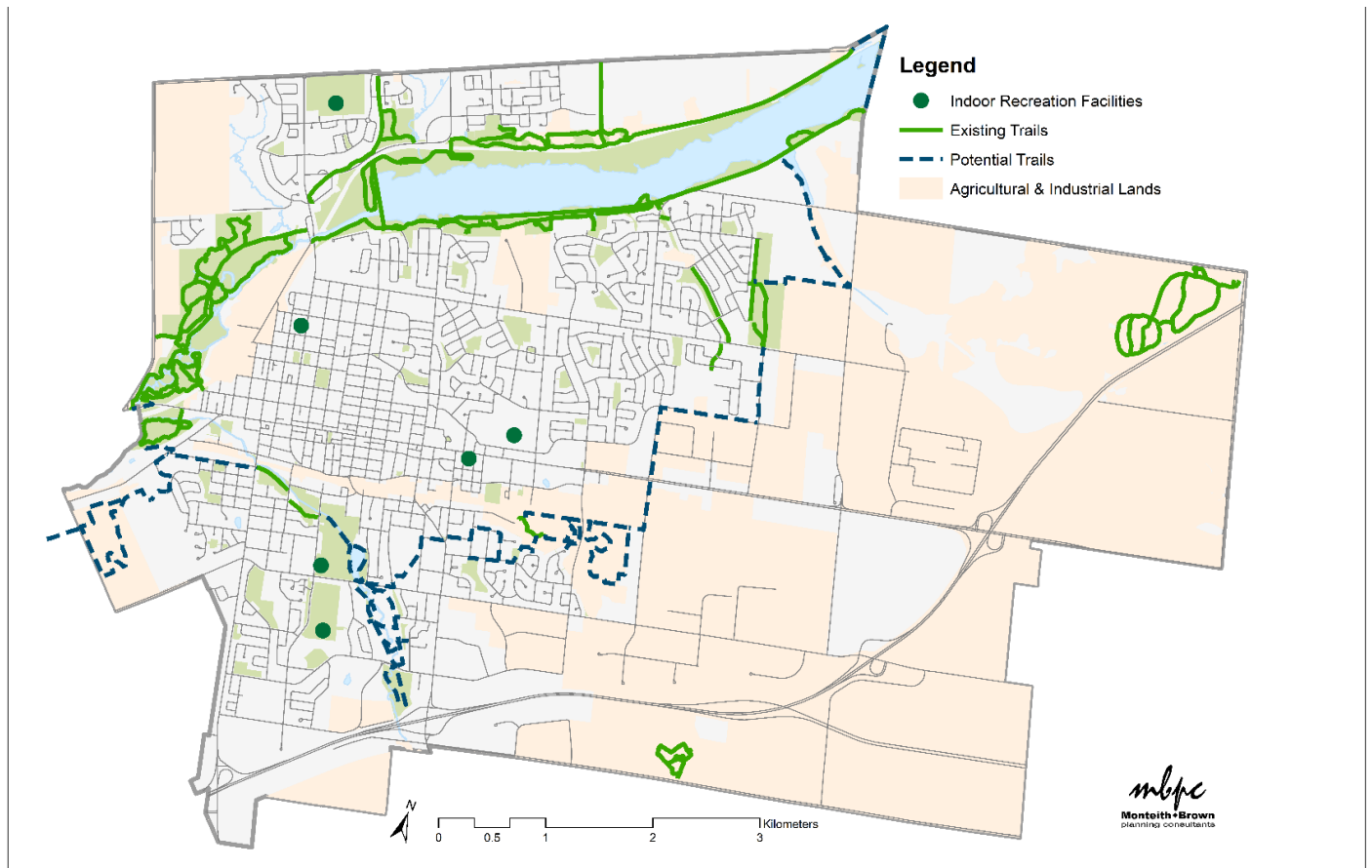
### Needs Analysis

Map 7 articulates a conceptual network that identifies potential routes and linkages to enhance the existing trail network. The conceptual network builds upon planned trails that the City has already identified through its Five-Year Plan, as well as past planning documents, public input and opportunities to connect to community destinations, as well as future residential areas. Full implementation of the conceptual trail network will require collaboration with other trail providers including the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, as well as adjacent municipalities and Oxford County. In certain instances, the City may be required to negotiate public access through non-municipally owned property or explore land acquisition strategies such as land purchase, swaps, or other tactics.

The key to developing an effective trail network is to create a connected system of trail routes that are safe, accessible, and conveniently link users to key destinations (e.g., parks, recreation and community facilities, schools, etc.). The conceptual trail map highlights key routes that should be explored include building upon the Roth Park Trail to complete a walking loop around the Thames River. With a strong trail network in the north end, the City should pursue the development of trails in the south end in order to create a City-wide loop trail, which would consist of linking together the Youth Start Trail to McIntosh Park, then towards Southside Park and Cowan Fields. Efforts to connect to trail systems in adjacent communities should also be explored, such as connecting the Burgess Park Trail to the Beachville Trail west of Woodstock.

As future residential development occurs, particularly in the northeast and northwest of the City, consideration should be given to recreational trail development, as well as sidewalks, to support active transportation movement. While trail development within established urban areas is often a challenge, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that there are walking pathways within the City's parks at a minimum to provide accessible circulation areas and linkages to internal amenities (e.g., playgrounds).

Map 7: Conceptual Trails Network



An important component of a successful trail system is to ensure that they are safe and comfortable to encourage usage. In strategic areas, Woodstock's trail system should feature convenience and comfort-based amenities including, but not limited to natural landscaping, signage, shade, benches, rest areas, fitness equipment, and parking.

To implement the conceptual trail network contained in the RFNS, as well as existing planned trails in Woodstock, the City may benefit from preparing a Trails Master Plan to guide future decision-making with respect to recreational trails throughout Woodstock. This initiative may further explore the feasibility of implementing new trail routes, as well as identify design guidelines, policies, maintenance practices, funding opportunities, and other related matters.

## Recommendations

**Rec. #26** Construct a network of paved and unpaved trails throughout Southside Park including the recently acquired expansion area (the former golf course lands), the latter of which would preferably serve primarily as a naturalized open space. The Southside Park trails network should connect wherever possible to other trail routes in the vicinity.

**Rec. #27** Build upon the existing trail network, potentially working with others, with consideration given to the following:

- Complete a walking loop around the Thames River linking together trails within the Pittock Conservation Area and other existing trail systems in the area.
- Bolster recreational trails in the southern portion of Woodstock by linking together the Youth Start Trail, McIntosh Park, Southside Park, Cowan Fields, and other key destinations to create a City-wide walking loop.
- Establish trail routes within future residential areas that connect to the existing trail network.
- Develop walking pathways within existing parks and public spaces to create designated circulation areas and accessible linkages to park amenities (e.g., pathways to playgrounds, etc.).
- Investigate strategies to connect City trails to adjacent communities, such as connecting the Burgess Park Trail to the Beachville Trail west of Woodstock.

**Rec. #28** Strategically identify locations for comfort features to encourage trail usage including (but not limited to) signage, seating, shade, parking, landscaping, and rest areas.



## 6. Summary of Recommendations & Implementation

This section summarizes recommendations of the RFNS along with information to assist with its implementation. Given the amount of population growth occurring in Woodstock along with the need to align recreational investment priorities with the City of Woodstock capital budget and development charges planning, updating the RFNS in 5 years (2026) would be highly advisable.

### 6.1 Cowan Fields Phase 2 Development Strategy

Cowan Fields offers the potential to address a significant portion of Woodstock's future recreational needs in a manner that limits the purchase of additional lands. Cowan Fields provides strong access to existing and planned trail networks as well as the Highway 2 and Highway 401 corridors which makes it ideal to serve both local and regional recreation opportunities. It is envisioned to become a prominent indoor and outdoor recreational hub in the east end of Woodstock, providing similar experiences to those found at Southside Park and Reeves Community Complex.

The RFNS has been determined that a new community centre should be built at Cowan Fields that contains the following components at a minimum:

- Single pad arena (designed to accommodate future expansion if required);
- Gymnasium
- Group fitness studio; and
- Multi-purpose rooms for meetings, gatherings and municipal programs.

Outdoor recreational facilities recommended at Cowan Fields include:

- a regulation-size cricket grounds;
- one full basketball court
- three tennis courts and three pickleball courts;
- four sand volleyball courts; and
- development of internal pathways and/or walking loops.

## 6.2 Enhancement of Southside Aquatic Centre

A new outdoor pool featuring lane and leisure components should be built at Southside Aquatic Centre to replace the existing Spray & Play Wading Pool and Lion's Pool, the latter of which should be permanently decommissioned. An expansion to the Southside Aquatic Centre building is also recommended to accompany the new pool so that additional changeroom and lobby space is provided to serve both indoor and outdoor pool users.

To replace the waterplay amenities that will no longer be available through the Spray & Play Wading Pool, a new major splash pad designed to attract users from across the City and area municipalities is recommended, preferably at the Reeves Community Complex should conceptual facility fit exercises confirm the feasibility of doing so.

## 6.3 Continuing to Develop the Local Trails System

The City should continue to carry out technical assessments to build on the conceptual trails network identified in the RFNS and guide future decision-making in regards to recreational trails found throughout Woodstock. Alignment with land use planning exercises and trail acquisitions permitted through the Planning Act should also be explored. Additionally, the existing trail network should be built upon with consideration given to:

- developing paved and unpaved trailways within Southside Park's existing and expansion areas;
- completing the loop around the Thames River;
- creating a City-wide loop that links together the Youth Start Trail, McIntosh Park, Southside Park, Cowan Fields, and other key destinations;
- establishing trail routes in future residential areas that connect to the existing trail network;
- developing walking pathways in existing parks and public spaces;
- investigating strategies to connect City trails to adjacent communities; and
- identifying strategic locations for comfort features along trails (i.e., signage, seating, shade, parking, outdoor fitness equipment, landscaping, and rest areas).

## 6.4 Summary of Other Recreation Facility Needs

The RFNS recommends several other initiatives to address recreation facility needs:

- Carry out the planned replacement of the indoor turf at Cowan Sportsplex and continuing to target the redevelopment of at least one soccer field per year in line with asset management plans;
- Examining if/how an existing softball diamond(s) can be adapted to also allow hardball programs for minor baseball;
- Providing a minimum of two new basketball courts to respond to future growth and serve gap areas of the City;
- Constructing a new splash pad to serve growing residential populations in northwest Woodstock;
- Building a natural playground structure, potentially at Southside Park, while replacing aging playgrounds in a timely manner with barrier-free components.



Park Row Park Pickleball & Basketball Courts

## 6.5 Capital Cost Estimates & Timing

Due to the City's historical and recent investments in its recreation system, the RFNS Recommendations are generally balanced between population growth-related requirements along with leveraging the City's ongoing works and existing infrastructure.

The RFNS results in a preliminary capital estimate of \$32.2 million arising from major recommendations (see Table 13), primarily a result of two major projects:

- **Cowan Fields Phase 2** community centre, cricket grounds and various sport courts (approximately \$23.4 million); and
- **Southside Aquatic Centre Outdoor Pool** and building addition (\$5.9 million).

The remainder of capital is attributable to sports field rejuvenation projects and developing outdoor infrastructure such as playing courts, playgrounds and splash pads to keep pace with population growth. Certain initiatives require further consultation and design-based work to be completed prior to understanding their respective capital implications.

All RFNS Recommendations that have a capital requirement would be brought forward on an annual basis through the budgeting process once the City has the information it needs to develop costs (e.g. design characteristics, funding sources, etc.). A portion of the \$32.2 million would be eligible for Development Charge funding under provincial legislation due to growth-related service needs.

Please note that **all costs presented herein are to be considered preliminary estimates** that will need to be independently verified by the City of Woodstock based on final design, site conditions, and due to the fact there is extreme volatility in the cost of materials, labour and construction due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



David Lowes Memorial Park

Table 13: Preliminary Capital Implications of Selected Recommendations

Major Capital Item Recommended	Suggested Timing	Estimated Cost
<u>Cowan Fields Phase 2</u>		
Cowan Fields Community Centre	2025 to 2027	\$22,500,000*
Cricket Grounds (field only)		\$500,000
Tennis Courts (x3)		\$210,000
Pickleball Courts (x3)		\$60,000
Sandy Volleyball Courts (4)		\$50,000
Basketball Court		\$45,000
<u>Aquatic System Enhancements</u>		
Southside Aquatic Centre Outdoor Pool & Building Addition	2023	\$5,900,000*
Major Splash Pad (subject to conceptual plan)	2023	\$900,000*
Splash Pad (North End)	2025	\$700,000
<u>Outdoor Recreation</u>		
Rectangular Fields Rejuvenations (allocation of \$100,000/year)	Ongoing	\$1,000,000
Basketball Court	2022	\$45,000
Southside Park Natural Playground	2027	\$130,000*
Tennis Courts (x2)	2028	\$140,000
Trails System Development	Ongoing	TBD
<b>Preliminary Capital Implications</b>		<b>\$32,180,000</b>

\* Denotes suggested cost allocation for budgeting purposes noting that the actual cost will depend upon final design. For the Cowan Fields community centre, estimate assumes an average construction cost of \$375 per square foot at 60,000 square feet (a similar gross floor area as was estimated for this community centre in the 2015 RFNS). The Southside Aquatic Centre outdoor pool estimate is based on a 2019 estimate provided to City Staff.

Notes: Costs for RFNS major capital items exclude purchases of land and assume optimal site development conditions. Costs are order of magnitude, preliminary in nature based on experience in other municipalities. The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing at time of writing and has created extreme variability/volatility in the price of materials, labour and construction. All costs presented above should be confirmed by the City through detailed analyses prior to integration into budgets/work plans. All costs are stated in 2021 dollars and exclude adjustments for future escalation.



City of  
**Woodstock**

*mbpc*

**Monteith♦Brown**  
planning consultants

40<sup>Years</sup>  
+

of Planning Excellence  
Established • 1977