



Executive Summary

Recreation, Arts, and Culture Master Plan

April 2018

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The Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan identifies needs and priorities for the Township and its community stakeholders to consider towards 2028. Over the course of this ten year period, Zorra's population is expected to grow from 8,172 to 8,332 residents. Changes in Zorra's age profile together with evolving interests among residents provided the impetus for the Township to undertake this Master Plan to ensure that parks, recreation, arts, and culture facilities, programs, and services are aligned with current and future needs.

The Master Plan's methodology involved a combination of research, consultation, and assessment efforts. Through open houses, focus groups, interviews, and surveys, the Master Plan's engagement strategy resulted in the direct participation of residents, representatives of community groups, Township staff, Council, and the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee. Common themes expressed during consultations included the recognition of the program and service delivery role of the Township's community groups and volunteers, requests for new facilities and programs, the desire for enhanced trail connections, the need to maximize the use of the Township's indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, and the need to improve communication between the Township, stakeholders, and residents.

Five strategic directions were developed to serve as the framework for advancing parks, recreation, arts, and culture in the Township of Zorra. The strategic directions are high level directional statements that support the Township's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, which declares that Zorra is "A vibrant, prosperous, engaged, and environmentally conscious community that evokes pride in residents for its accomplishments and continuing resilience as it forges the future."

The strategic directions are presented below, in no particular order:

Focus on Healthy Communities

Encourage active lifestyles, public engagement, and strong communities.

Work Together

Build capacity through continuous staff development, supporting volunteers, and seeking community partners in the delivery of parks, recreation, arts, and culture services.

Promote Awareness of Opportunities

Promote the coordinated communication of parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities and facilitate the sharing of information among community partners.

Keep Facilities Relevant

Commit to a high standard of facility maintenance and management, and update and renew aging facilities, as necessary, in coordination with facility users.

Enhance Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails

Be stewards of parks, open spaces, and trails to ensure that current and future generations are able to experience Zorra's natural environment.

"A vibrant, prosperous, engaged, and environmentally conscious community that evokes pride in residents for its accomplishments and continuing resilience as it forges the future."

Township of Zorra Vision 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

The Master Plan contains 54 recommendations spanning the municipal delivery of parks, recreation, arts, and culture facilities, programs, and services, which have been prioritized into short, medium, and long term actions. The following synopsis summarizes the most pressing actions for the Township to implement in the coming years (not necessarily presented in order of priority or timing).

1. Monitor ice utilization and ice sport participation trends as well as coordination with adjacent municipalities on ice provision strategies. This process should include strategies to bolster ice usage and optimize ice operations, such as introducing new drop-in skating programs, working with user groups on strategies to optimize available ice, engaging local schools to use the arena, and continuing to promote usage to non-local users. Blackout periods may also be required in coordination with ice users to minimize scheduling conflicts.
2. Engage in discussions with the Ingersoll Fusion Centre and Ingersoll Services for Seniors to explore opportunities to meet the needs of Zorra youth, older adults, and seniors, including outreach programs and services.
3. Prepare an updated conceptual design plan for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre to serve as a vision for the park and to guide future development. The concept should incorporate the recreation facilities recommended in this Master Plan including a full size soccer field, adult ball diamond, beach volleyball courts, basketball court, trail routes, and outdoor fitness equipment. The need to relocate existing outdoor recreation facilities should also be considered. Alternative locations should be considered if all or some of the outdoor recreation facilities cannot be accommodated.
4. Undertake a cultural mapping exercise to identify local arts and cultural providers, programs, and services in the Township with a view of promoting opportunities and addressing gaps in service provision.
5. Proceed with the development of a spray pad and skateboard park in Thamesford and establish a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee to lead fundraising efforts for a small scale spray pad and skateboard park in Embro, should demand exist.

6. Develop a playground replacement program to establish a plan to renew aging playground structures. The design of new and redeveloped playgrounds should consider accessible features, as well as risky play and natural features such as ropes, higher heights, boulders, wood, stones, and more.
7. Enhance trail opportunities in Zorra by continuing to implement Zorra-specific elements of the County of Oxford Trails Master Plan and the park-based trail routes identified in this Master Plan. The Terms of Reference for the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee should also be reviewed to oversee trail development activity (including coordinating with Oxford County Trails Council) and advise Council on trail related matters.
8. In order to position the Recreation Department to meet the current and future needs of the community and to address the recommendations of this Master Plan:
 - a. Adopt a Department **mandate**;
 - b. Create a **Recreation Facilities & Services Manager** position;
 - c. **Review, revise, and update the roles and responsibilities of each staff member** periodically; and
 - d. Prepare a **staff development and training plan**