



Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan

Township of Zorra | April 2018





Recreation, Arts, and Culture Master Plan

April 2018



Executive Summary

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**.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

1.0 Introduction 1

 1.1 Importance of Master Planning 1

 1.2 Purpose 1

 1.3 Methodology and Approach 2

 1.4 Alignment with Strategic Policy Documents and Background Review 3

2.0 Key Inputs to Consider 5

 2.1 Community Profile 5

 2.2 Trends in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture 7

3.0 Community Engagement..... 13

 3.1 Summary of Community Engagement Themes 13

 3.2 Public Open Houses 14

 3.3 Online Community Survey 17

 3.4 Student Survey 20

 3.5 Focus Groups 22

 3.6 Council and Staff Interviews 23

 3.7 Final Public Open House 23

4.0 Strategic Directions..... 24

 4.1 Strategic Directions for Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture 24

5.0 Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails 25

 5.1 Zorra’s Supply of Parkland 25

 5.2 Parkland Policies and Acquisition Guidelines 29

 5.3 Enhancing Trails in Zorra 31

6.0 Recreation Facilities 38

 6.1 Summary of Recreation Facilities 38

 6.2 Ice Pads 39

 6.3 Gymnasiums 44

 6.4 Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms 45

 6.5 Fitness Space 48

 6.6 Dedicated Youth Space 51

 6.7 Dedicated Older Adult Space 52

 6.8 Aquatics 54

 6.9 Soccer Fields 57

 6.10 Ball Diamonds 62

 6.11 Outdoor Racquet Courts 65

 6.12 Outdoor Basketball Courts 66

 6.13 Playgrounds 70

 6.14 Skateboard Parks 72

6.15	Beach Volleyball Courts.....	73
6.16	Other Specialty Recreation Facilities.....	75
7.0	Arts and Cultural Opportunities.....	78
7.1	Defining Arts and Culture.....	78
7.2	Benefits of Arts and Culture.....	78
7.3	Strengthening Arts and Cultural Policy.....	79
7.4	Arts and Cultural Assets.....	80
7.5	Arts and Cultural Space.....	82
7.6	Greater Coordination in Arts and Culture.....	84
7.7	Marketing and Promoting Arts and Culture.....	84
8.0	Service Delivery.....	86
8.1	2011 Recreation Department Organizational and Operation Review.....	86
8.2	Township's Role in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture.....	86
8.3	Organizational Structure.....	88
8.4	Continuous Professional Development.....	90
8.5	Programs and Activities.....	91
8.6	Rates and Fees Scan.....	93
8.7	Pursuing Partnership Opportunities.....	95
8.8	Leveraging Technology.....	96
8.9	Enhancing Volunteer Opportunities.....	97
9.0	Implementation.....	99
9.1	Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan.....	99
9.2	Funding Considerations.....	100
9.3	Implementation Strategy.....	101
Appendix A: Background Documents Reviewed		
Appendix B: Public Open Houses Summary		
Appendix C: Online Community Survey Summary		
Appendix D: Student Survey Summary		
Appendix E: Focus Group Participants		
Appendix F: Rates and Fees Scan		

1.0 Introduction

This section highlights the importance of master planning for parks, recreation, arts, and culture in the Township of Zorra. The purpose, methodology and approach for undertaking the Recreation, Arts, and Culture Master Plan (“Master Plan”) is described, as well as key background documents that were reviewed to establish a thorough understanding of Zorra’s local context.

1.1 Importance of Master Planning

The Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan identifies the Township’s high level needs and priorities as they pertain to local recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities. Master Plans ensure that the right mix of recreation, arts, and cultural facilities, programs and services are available so that residents can engage in meaningful social and physical activities. The creation of a Master Plan provides Township Council and staff, stakeholders, and the general public with insights into recreational, arts, and cultural needs that are rationalized by supporting documents/studies, best practices, consultation, quantifiable data, and a host of other inputs.

Recognizing that investments in Zorra need to be fiscally responsible and sustainable, the Master Plan will effectively prioritize direction to ensure that the most pressing needs are addressed in a timely manner. Building upon this, the Master Plan can assist the Township with securing external funding given that long term plans can assist with grant consideration. As a result, the importance of preparing a master plan that is community responsive and fiscally responsible cannot be overstated.

1.2 Purpose

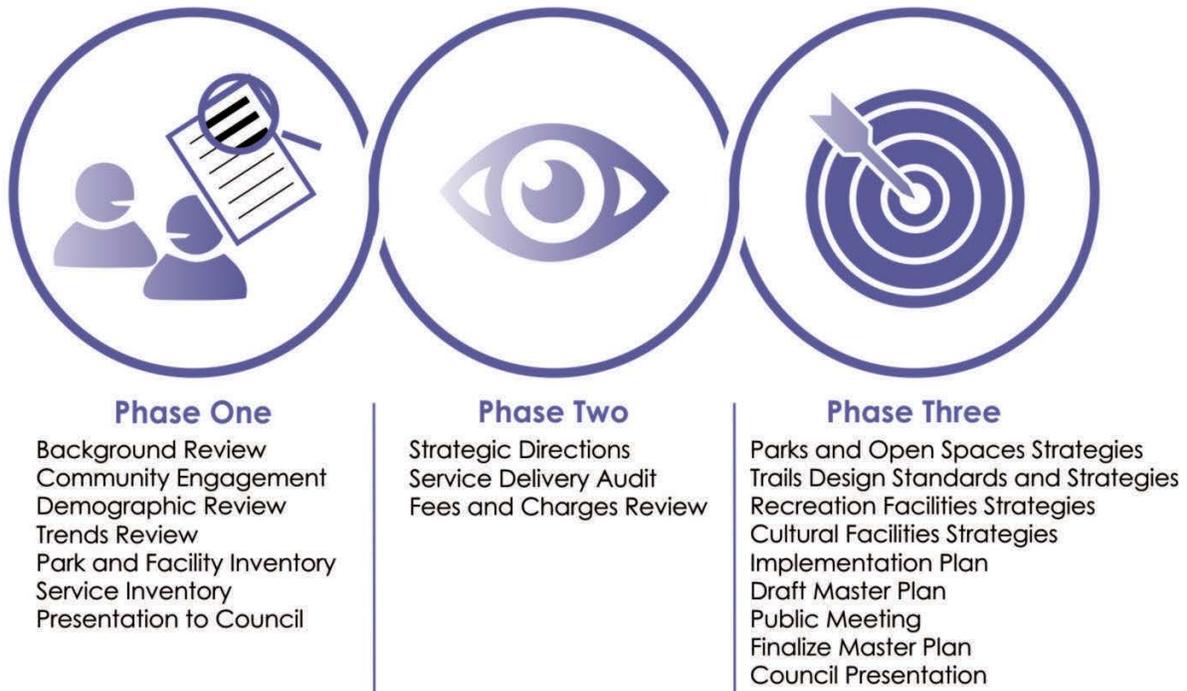
The purpose of this Master Plan is to guide future decision-making with respect to parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities over the next ten years. The scope of the Master Plan includes indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, parks and open spaces, trails, arts and cultural opportunities, and related programs and services. Changes in demographics, trends, interests, aging infrastructure, and other factors necessitate the need for a Master Plan that is responsive to address on-going community needs to ensure that residents are healthy, active, and engaged in their daily lives.

1.3 Methodology and Approach

The Master Plan is based on several inputs and has been prepared through a three step process. The first phase summarized the socio-demographic profile of the Township of Zorra; trends in parks, recreation, arts, and culture; the results from the community engagement process; and the state of parks, recreation, and culture in the community.

The second and third phases involved undertaking an analysis of parks, recreation, arts, and culture facility needs, a service delivery review, and a high level analysis of user fees. An implementation plan was developed to prioritize each recommendation contained in the Master Plan. Testing recommendations with the Steering Committee, Council, and the community will take place prior to the Master Plan being finalized.

Figure 1: Master Plan Process



1.4 Alignment with Strategic Policy Documents and Background Review

The Master Plan is aligned with the Township’s 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan, which identifies a common vision, direction, and goals in the community. The following goals and directions from the Strategic Plan have relevance to the Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan.

Table 1: Township of Zorra Strategic Plan Relevant Goals, Directions, and Actions

<p>Goal #1: We are a <u>vibrant</u> community that values our uniqueness, creativity and takes pride in calling Zorra home.</p>
<p>Direction: Providing recreational opportunities for everyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a Recreation Master Planning process inclusive of completing an assessment of the long-term viability of Thamesford District Recreation Centre and Embro Zorra Community Centre. • Work with Maple Leaf Foods for land donation along Thames River to create a trail from Middleton Street to Dundas Street. • Consider establishment of a Trails Committee and/or work more closely with Oxford Trails Council. • Work with UTRCA and Oxford Trails Council to improve public access to the Thames River. • Explore the viability of a splash pad for Embro. • Improve marketing and promotion efforts for the Township’s recreational facilities and programs to increase participation and revenues. • Strategize on ways and means to increase youth and senior participation in recreational activities.
<p>Direction: Supporting our community, events, and celebrations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for the Township to assist minor sports organizations in taking a more active role in co-ordinating activities. • Investigate how to better support and work with service groups and to encourage service clubs to collaborate with each other. • Recognize one volunteer of the year and one senior of the year.
<p>Direction: Preservation of our history and heritage and growing the arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile a cultural inventory of community assets and implement an interactive map on the Township website. • Display works of Zorra’s artisans and craftspeople. Promoting the same on the website.
<p>Goal #2: We are a <u>prosperous</u> community that values our uniqueness, creativity and takes pride in calling Zorra home.</p>
<p>Direction: Improving municipal efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of recreation user fees.

Goal #3: We are an engaged community that values all members and actively encourages involvement, engagement, openness, and transparency.

Direction: By being inclusive and accessible

- Consider establishing a Youth Council to receive insight and feedback on ways to engage youth and to develop future leaders.

Direction: By strengthening our customer service and being an employer of choice

- Constantly review operational efficiencies and use of resources.
- Keep organization focused on providing a high level of customer service.
- Ensuring staff are cross-trained and ensuring gaps do not occur during absences.
- Build municipal leadership skill through preparation of a Succession Plan.
- Commit to staff training, team building and professional development through annual budgets.

Goal #4: We are an environmentally conscious community that are good stewards of our natural environment and we protect our environment by valuing our natural assets and using our resources wisely.

Direction: By using our resources wisely

- Installing more garbage and recycling containers in all of our parks and in Embro and Thamesford.

In addition to the Township’s Strategic Plan, the Master Plan has regard for other strategic documents at all levels of government including *The Planning Act*, the Oxford County Strategic Plan, and the County of Oxford Official Plan. Several other background documents have been reviewed to establish the planning context associated with the Master Plan. These documents are broad in scope and include information regarding population growth, land use patterns, facilities, programs, and other municipal elements. Information contained within these documents are used to provide baseline content for the Master Plan. A list of background documents that have been reviewed as a part of the planning process is found in **Appendix A**.

2.0 Key Inputs to Consider

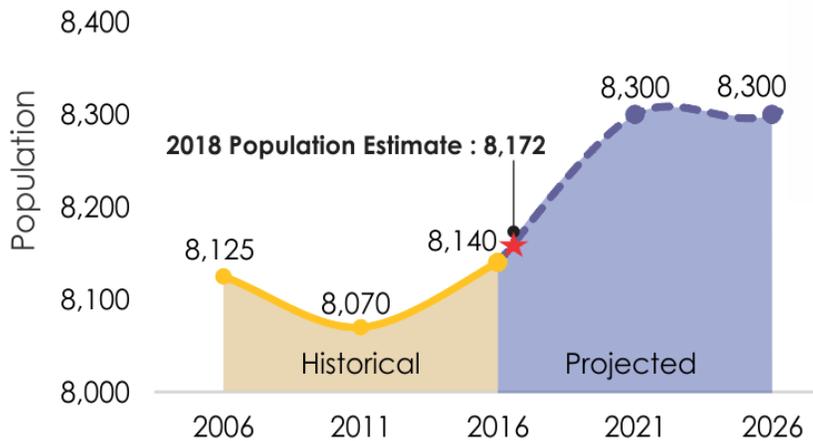
This section provides a broad overview of trends related to the provision of parks, recreation, and culture, which may influence the analysis and recommendations of the Master Plan. Trends observed at the national level are identified along with their implications in the local context, which is supported by the Township’s socio-demographic profile (based on data from Statistics Canada and the Township) and secondary research.

2.1 Community Profile

Population Growth

Over the past decade, Zorra’s population has remained effectively unchanged, with a 2016 Census population of 8,140 residents representing growth of just 15 people since 2006. Geographically, the majority of the Township is rural with a number of small urban villages. The largest village is Thamesford, which has a 2016 Census population of 2,116. Other villages in Zorra include Embro, Harrington, and Kintore (Census data is not readily available for these smaller villages).

Figure 2: Historical and Projected Population Growth, 2006 – 2026



Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 - 2016 Census. Oxford County Population Household and Employment Forecasts and Employment Lands Study, 2014.

The Township is expected to reach 8,300 residents by the year 2026,¹ which is an increase of 160 residents. Based on active plans of subdivision and Official Plan growth policies, the majority of growth is expected to occur in Thamesford and Embro. Regardless of where growth is expected to occur, however, it will be important to ensure that there is a balanced supply of

¹ Oxford County Population Household and Employment Forecasts and Employment Lands Study, 2014.

parks, recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities available throughout the Township to serve all residents.

The Master Plan is being prepared based on the assumption that the Township’s population will increase by an average of 16 persons per year using the County’s 2016-2026 forecast. The estimated 2018 population is **8,172**, with a projected 2028 population of **8,332**. These figures will be referenced throughout the Master Plan to identify current and projected service levels.

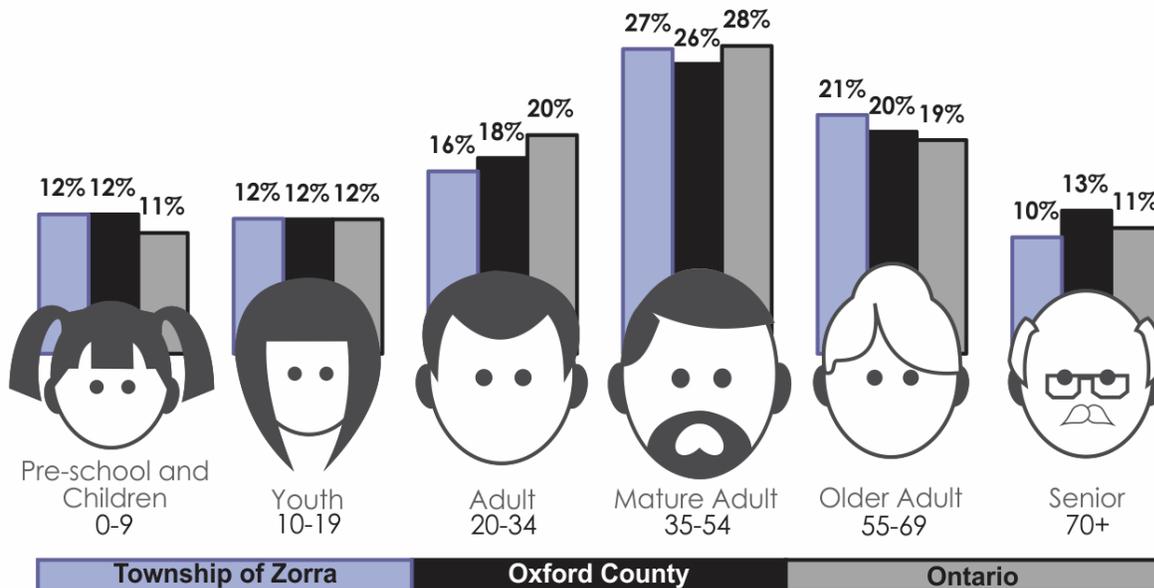
Participation Preferences among Age Groups

Analyzing Zorra’s age structure provides insights into the types of parks, recreation, arts, and cultural facilities, programs, and services that are or will be in demand. For example, children and youth populations tend to bolster minor sports such as soccer, hockey, and figure skating. Older adults and seniors tend to have a greater interest low impact recreation pursuits that emphasize social interaction and cognitive stimulation.

A look at the 2016 Census revealed the following facts:

- 27% of the population are adults age 35 to 54. This is the largest demographic group, which is closely followed by older adults age 55 to 69.
- The median age was 42.5 years, which is on par with the County (42.3) and slightly higher than the Province (41.3). Since the 2006 Census, Zorra’s median population increased by 2.5 years, suggesting that the Township’s population is aging as a whole.

Figure 3: Population by Age Cohort, 2016 Census



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census.

A look at Township-wide demographic trends between the 2011 and 2016 Census reveals additional evidence of an aging community:

- The number of youth (age 10 to 19) declined by 15%.
- The number of older adults (age 55 to 69) and seniors (age 70+) increased by 11% and 13%, respectively.

These aging trends are consistent with trends observed across Canada, which are driven in part by the aging Baby Boomer generation. It is expected that the overall aging trend will continue to occur in Zorra throughout the foreseeable future. Regardless of where growth is expected to occur, there will be a need to ensure that there are parks, recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities available at all life stages.

Table 2: Population Growth by Age Cohort, 2011 – 2016 Census

	2011	2016	Growth (#)	Growth (%)
0 – 9 Years	945	1015	70	7%
10 – 19 Years	1,155	985	-170	-15%
20 – 34 Years	1,275	1330	55	4%
35 – 54 Years	2,375	2220	-155	-7%
55 – 69 Years	1,565	1740	175	11%
70+ Years	755	850	95	13%
Total	8,070	8,140	70	1%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 and 2016 Census

2.2 Trends in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture

Lack of Free Time and Physical Inactivity

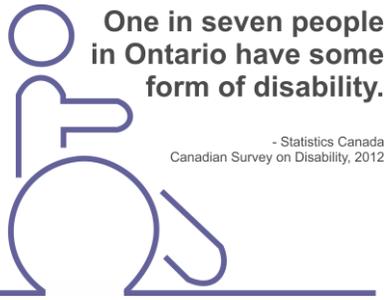
	<p>Trend – The 2016 ParticipACTION report card on physical activity for youth and children graded overall physical activity levels at D- for the fourth year in a row, suggesting that there has been limited progress in improving physical activity at the national level. Providing opportunities for unstructured, drop-in activities is one of the strategies that communities have explored in order to increase physical activity levels among time-pressed Canadians.</p>
	<p>Local Context – Regionally, Oxford County reported that approximately 40% of youth are physically active.² The Township offers a number of opportunities to increase levels of physical activity by offering a number of recreational swim and skate programs that do not require registration, as well as access to a range of outdoor active and passive parks spaces.</p>

² Oxford County. Healthy places – Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordcounty.ca>

Affordability

	<p>Trend – The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute found that participation in physical activity is proportional to household income. For example, it was revealed that children between the ages of 5 to 19 who live in higher income households (\$80,000 per year or more) are more likely to participate in organized physical activities and sports compared to their counterparts who live in lower income households (\$30,000 per year or less).³</p>
	<p>Local Context – The 2016 Census found that the median after-tax family income for Zorra was \$84,864 in 2015. On the basis of income alone, this infers that Zorra residents are slightly more active compared to the County (median household income of \$76,275) and the Province (\$79,531). Statistics Canada also reported that approximately 11% of Zorra’s population under the age of 17 live in low income households, which is lower compared to the County (14%) and the Province (18%). This suggests that local children and youth are less vulnerable compared to their county-wide and provincial counterparts; however, there is a need to minimize participation barriers to engage all residents, regardless of income.</p> <p>The Township does not currently offer any financial assistance programs directly to individuals or households, although the Township does subsidize facility rental costs and allows the use of some community spaces free of charge. Residents may also be eligible for non-municipal funding through initiatives such as Canadian Tire Jumpstart. It is also noted that local user groups often have internally developed programs or subsidies to respond to the income barrier.</p>

Engaging Persons with Disabilities

	<p>Trend – Municipalities across the Province have embraced the principles of inclusivity through facility design and service delivery. This practice is guided by the <i>Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A.)</i> which requires municipalities to remove all barriers within municipal facilities by 2025.</p>
	<p>Local Context – the Township has a 2014-2019 Accessibility Plan that identifies past achievements and future strategies to remove barriers, which includes undertaking various accessibility updates and improvements to the Township’s facilities.⁴</p>

³ Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.cflri.ca>

⁴ Township of Zorra. 2013. 2014-2019 Multi-year accessibility plan. Retrieved from <http://www.zorra.on.ca/>

Celebrating Arts and Culture



Trend – The presence of arts and cultural opportunities is highly desirable in a community as they play a prominent role in creating vibrant and livable communities, contribute to knowledge building, and bolster the local economy. Arts and culture includes a broad spectrum of activities including visual and creative arts (e.g., dance and music), special events and festivals, and natural heritage and environmental appreciation.

Local Context – While the Township does not have a Cultural Plan, which typically guides cultural development, there are several arts and culture opportunities available in Zorra, many of which are offered through community partners such as the Thistle Theatre, Oxford County Library, Beachville Museum, service clubs, and places of worship. With the support of the Township, community groups provide a number of special events including, but not limited to, the Embro Fair, Calithumpian Weekend, Embro Highland Games, Thamesford Lions Trout Brunch, and more.

Youth Outreach and Youth Friendly Communities



Trend – Municipalities and supporting agencies have made strides to ensure that youth are engaged to contribute positively to the community. One of the supports available to municipalities is the Play Works Partnership, which was established to ensure that surrounding environments are youth friendly and that youth have a voice within communities, and to encourage communities to be more “youth friendly”.

Local Context – Regionally, the United Way in Woodstock completed consultation with youth to understand how the municipality can make the City of Woodstock more youth friendly. Suggested ideas included having a dedicated youth space that is accessible, opportunities to participate in non-sport activities such as arts, technology, and games, WIFI in public areas, and engaging youth to collaborate on new ideas.⁵

⁵ Oxford United Way. Woodstock Youth Speak Out About Places & Spaces. 2017.

Engaging Older Adults and Seniors

	<p>Trend – Research reveals that there are two types of older adults and seniors (age 55 and over) – those that seek to participate in active physical activities (e.g., pickleball) and those that seek traditional seniors’ activities (e.g., cards). Communities and related agencies and volunteer organizations are now faced with demand to provide a broad range of activities to reach out and engage as many older adults and seniors as possible.</p>
	<p>Local Context – The Township previously engaged the public to understand the needs and interests among these age groups. While there was some good discussion through this process, older adult and senior programming remains unchanged with the exception of introducing pickleball. The Township’s spaces continue to be utilized by the Friendship Club, which is a casual older adult and seniors social group that holds meetings monthly at the Beaty Room in Thamesford. It is recognized that there are a number of community organizations that provide a range of older adult and seniors activities including, but not limited to, the Thamesford Lions Club, Embro Legion, lawn bowling clubs, religious institutions, and more.</p>

Aging Infrastructure

	<p>Trend – The 2016 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card rated Canada’s overall sports and recreation facilities as “Fair”, which was the lowest ranking out of all municipal assets that were evaluated. This ranking suggests that municipal facilities require attention, show signs of deterioration, or have deteriorating facility components. While investment in municipal infrastructure has been underfunded for some time, pressures have been somewhat alleviated through various provincial and federal stimulus programs. Most recently, the federal government demonstrated its commitment to renewing parks and recreation infrastructure with over \$1.3 Billion in funding directed to improving and managing parks and recreation assets, in addition to accessibility and trail improvements.⁶ Funding will be made available through various future infrastructure stimulus programs.</p>
	<p>Local Context – The Township and its community groups have benefited from various infrastructure stimulus programs and have received nearly \$2 Million to undertake enhancements to the Embro Town Hall (Thistle Theatre), Thamesford Area Swimming Pool, Thamesford District Recreation Centre, and Embro Zorra Community Centre.</p>

⁶ Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. CPRA applauds federal government commitment to parks and recreation opportunities for Canadians. Retrieved from <http://www.cpra.ca>

Adopting Green Design

	<p>Trend – Environmental concerns are often top of mind among many Canadians as there is an increasing need to make efficient use of natural resources. Many municipalities demonstrate environmental awareness in the design and redevelopment of facilities that integrate state-of-the-art technologies to enhance environmental efficiency to achieve certification standards such as LEED, Green Globes, and BOMA Best.</p>
	<p>Local Context – While the Township does not have any energy certified buildings, it has taken steps to become more environmentally friendly, including retrofitting street lighting and facilities with LEDs and electric vehicle charging stations. The development of new municipal facilities also considers green design, such as the new Thamesford Fire Hall, including energy efficient equipment, LED lighting, etc. Additionally, the Township leases the arena roof space to a third party for solar power generation.</p>

Volunteerism

	<p>Trend – Volunteers are essential to the operation and delivery of high quality opportunities as the Township relies heavily on their assistance for the delivery of recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities. In the 2013 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 44% of Canadians participated in some form of volunteer work, which is a decrease from 47% reported in 2010. This trend is consistent in many municipalities as many groups struggle in finding volunteers.⁷</p>
	<p>Local Context – Consistent with broader trends, many of the Township’s community organizations are challenged with recruiting new volunteers. The Township recognizes the important role volunteers have in the community and recognize them regularly through a Volunteer & Seniors Breakfast.</p>

⁷ Statistics Canada. Volunteering and charitable giving in Canada. 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

Partnerships



Trend - Partnerships between the municipality and local organizations is an effective way to leverage available resources to delivery community programs and services.

Local Context - The Township collaborates with community partners in a number of ways to provide a broad range of activities. Minor sports organizations, service clubs, private organizations, school boards, religious institutions, and other related agencies are critical pillars of the Township’s parks, recreation, arts, and culture system as working together achieves a number of benefits.

Engaging Residents through Technology



Trend - The adoption of new technologies has provided municipalities and community groups with a more advanced and streamlined process to track participation levels, improve scheduling, and provide quick registration for participants when used effectively. The use of social media and personal devices has also revolutionized the way people communicate and socialize, while using very few resources.

Local Context - The Township’s website together with its social media pages provides a good place to access information online, and to promote information and opportunities. These resources are complementary to traditional mediums such as the Zorra Now magazine and the Village Voice.

3.0 Community Engagement

This section provides an overview of the common themes that were heard through the community engagement process. A summary of the public input received through each community engagement tool is also presented.

Note: The information and suggestions presented in this section should not be interpreted as recommendations. Public input has not been altered even in instances where comments incorrectly reflect the Township’s actual policies, practices, or level of provision.

3.1 Summary of Community Engagement Themes

A broad range of comments was expressed throughout the community engagement program during this first phase of the project. Table 3 summarizes the most common themes that were heard based on the opinions, preferences, and priorities of residents, stakeholder groups, Township staff, and Council. These themes, which are listed in no particular order of importance or priority, were considered in the development of the Master Plan.

Table 3: Summary of Key Community Engagement Themes by Engagement Session

Common Themes (in no particular order)	Public Open Houses	Online Community Survey	Student Survey	Focus Groups	Key Informant Interviews
The Township’s community groups and partners are very important with respect to the provision of parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities.	•			•	•
There is a desire for new parks, recreation, arts, and culture facilities and programs to meet the needs of residents.	•	•	•	•	•
Trails are highly valued in the Township with a desire to enhance connections.	•	•	•	•	•
There is a need to explore ways to maximize the use of the Township’s indoor and outdoor facilities.	•	•	•	•	•
Communication between the Township, residents, and stakeholders is an area to focus on improvement.	•	•		•	•

3.2 Public Open Houses

Public Open Houses were held in September 2017 at the Thamesford Public Library and at the Embro Zorra Community Centre to introduce the Master Plan and encourage residents to contribute ideas. Display boards were presented that highlighted background information about the Township and attendees were asked to respond to questions about parks, recreation, arts, and culture. The event was attended by more than 60 members of the public. In addition, members of Council were in attendance to observe. Common themes heard during these events are summarized below, while a detailed summary is contained in **Appendix B**.

Public Open House Comment Boards



Community Values

It was clear that attendees are proud to have access to a range of parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities, which are highly valued in the Township. Particular reference was made to various recreation activities such as hockey, the outdoor pool, and baseball, as well as the park system (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Community Values in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture



Note: Larger text sizes correlates to more frequently mentioned responses.

Improve Indoor Recreation Facilities

A number of suggestions to improve indoor recreation facilities were put forward. The most common ideas that were expressed was the desire for a gymnasium and fitness centre, as well as a walking/running track (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Improving Indoor Recreation Facilities



Note: Larger text sizes correlates to more frequently mentioned responses.

Improving Outdoor Recreation Facilities

With respect to improving outdoor recreation facilities, a number of attendees expressed the desire for an outdoor skating rink. Other comments related to general improvements to existing outdoor recreation facilities such as updating playgrounds (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Improving Outdoor Recreation Facilities



Note: Larger text sizes correlates to more frequently mentioned responses.

Improving Parks and Open Spaces

Attendees offered a number of ideas to improve parks and open spaces. The most common suggestions included outdoor washrooms, walking paths, and trails for hiking and cycling (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Improving Parks and Open Spaces



Note: Larger text sizes correlates to more frequently mentioned responses.

Improving Arts and Culture

Several suggestions were identified to enhance arts and culture opportunities in the Township. The most common ideas included supporting and protecting local history, and encouraging local initiatives. Program ideas were also suggested such as painting, music, and cooking (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Improving Arts and Culture



Note: Larger text sizes correlates to more frequently mentioned responses.

3.3 Online Community Survey

A community survey was active from September 11 to October 9, 2017 to collect resident feedback on a variety of topics related to parks, recreation, arts, and culture. Input was received to understand local participation and usage patterns, opinions, and priorities. The survey was promoted through the Township’s website, Zorra Now, Village Voice, social media, and word of mouth.

A total of 188 surveys were completed and analyzed. This section summarizes key findings of the survey and excludes ‘Don’t Know’ and non-responses. A greater level of detail found in **Appendix C**.

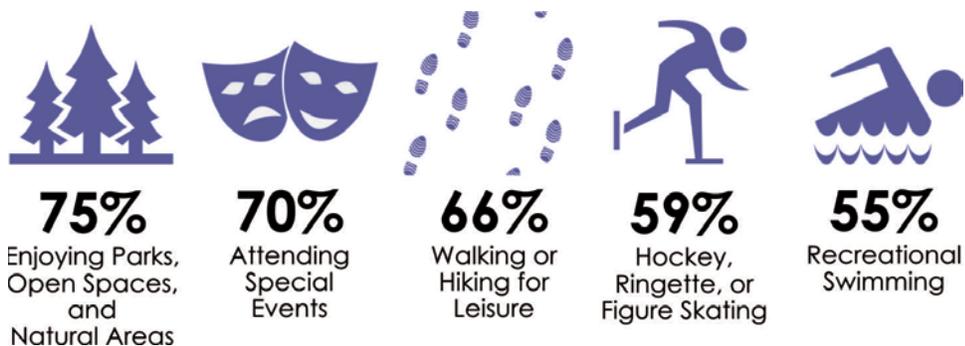
It is important to note that this was a self-administered, non-random survey and thus the results cannot be considered statistically significant or representative of the opinions of all residents. As with other consultation tools, the survey findings should not be considered in isolation, but instead factored within the context of other community input and assessment methodologies.

It is recognized that the Township conducted a separate Recreational Needs Survey in 2014 to help guide the development of recreational leisure services in Zorra. Generally speaking, the findings from the 2014 Survey are consistent with the results from the survey undertaken for this Master Plan. Variances in findings are identified in this section, where appropriate.

Participation in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

Figure 9 summarizes the top five most popular parks, recreation, arts, and culture activities that respondents participated in over the past 12 months. With the exception of arena sports, a common element among the popular activities is that they are unstructured and can be self-scheduled, which is consistent with participation trends observed across the Province.

Figure 9: Top Five Most Popular Parks Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities, Past 12 Months



About 40% of respondents indicated that they are not able to participate in parks, recreation, arts, and culture activities as often as they would like. Figure 10 illustrates the top five barriers to participating in parks and recreation activities that were identified by participants, while Figure 11

summarizes the top five barriers for participating in arts and culture activities.

Figure 10: Top Five Barriers to Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities

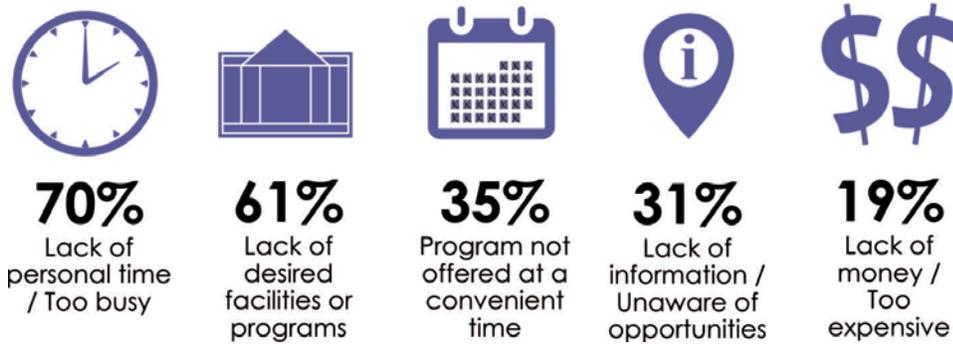
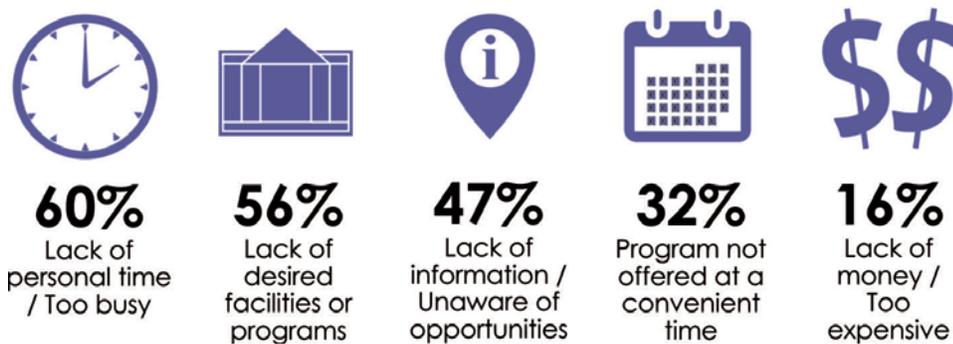


Figure 11: Top Five Barriers to Participation in Arts and Culture Activities



A broad range of parks, recreation, arts, and culture facilities and programs were requested by participants, which are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Top Requested Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Opportunities

Parks and Recreation Facilities	Parks and Recreation Programs	Arts and Culture Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Splash pad Walking trails Biking trails Gymnasium Skateboard Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yoga and Zumba Fitness classes Pre-teen programs Dance and gymnastics Karate classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Classes Performing Arts Classes Special Events Theatres Museums

Importance and Satisfaction with Parks, Recreation and Culture

Figure 12 illustrates respondents' level of satisfaction with various facility types. Results indicate that indoor recreation facilities were the most important facility type, followed by park pathways, outdoor recreation facilities, passive parks, arts facilities, and cultural facilities. For each facility type, respondents reported a lower level of satisfaction, suggesting that their expectations are not being fully met in relation to the importance placed on each facility type. Approximately half of the respondents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with respect to arts and cultural facilities.

Figure 12: Importance and Satisfaction with Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Facilities

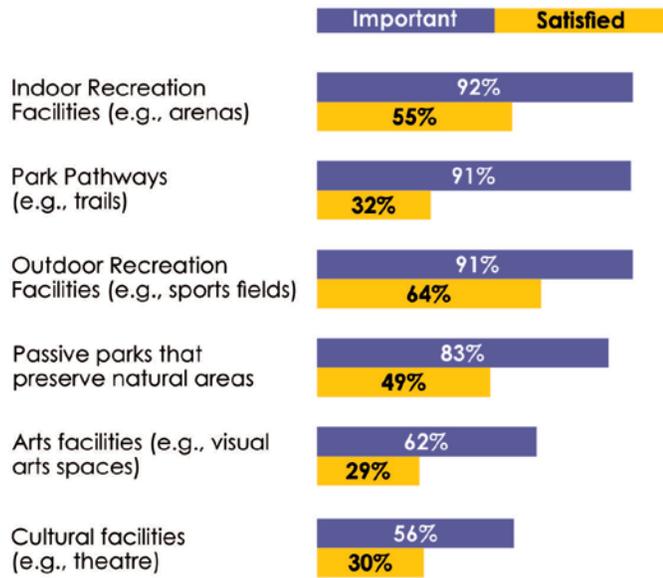
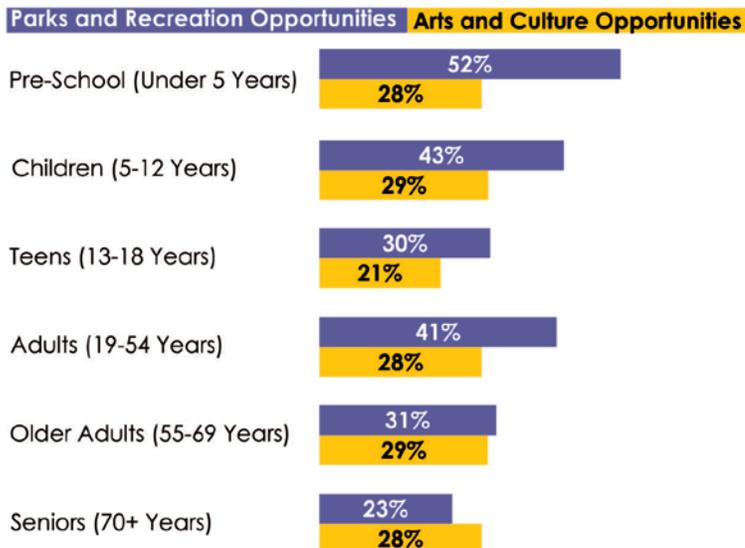


Figure 13 summarizes respondents’ satisfaction levels with respect to parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities by age group. With respect to parks and recreation, respondents were most satisfied with opportunities for pre-school children. Satisfaction levels generally declined with each subsequent age group. Regarding arts and culture opportunities, satisfaction levels were generally consistent among each age group. Approximately half of the respondents were not satisfied nor unsatisfied with arts and cultural opportunities for pre-school and children, older adults, and seniors.

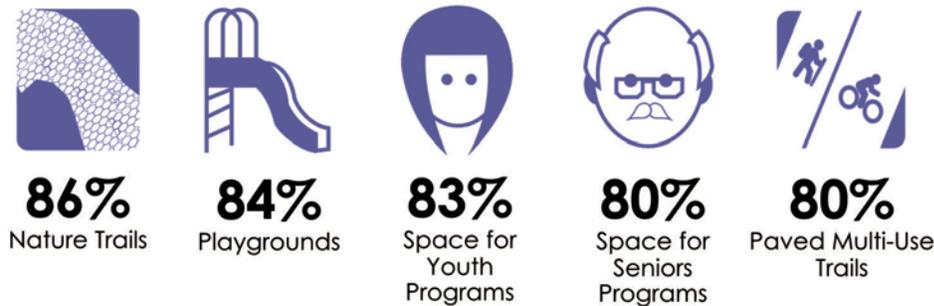
Figure 13: Satisfaction with Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Opportunities by Age Group



Support for Public Spending

The highest priorities for additional public spending for parks, recreation, arts, and culture facilities (for upgrades or new construction) is highlighted in Figure 14. Comtrary to the results from this Survey, the 2014 Recreational Needs Survey found that respondents supported investment in an indoor gymnasium for activities such as basketball. Other highly supported facilities from the 2014 Survey included curling rinks, tennis courts, and multi-purpose spaces.⁸

Figure 14: Top Five Priorities for Township Spending



3.4 Student Survey

A student survey was conducted at the Township’s three public schools including Thamesford Public School, AJ Baker Public School in Kintore, and Zorra Highland Public School in Embro. The survey was completed by students between Grades 3 and 8 to understand what parks, recreation, arts, and culture activities they **currently** do and what they would **like** to do. Survey responses were separated into two groups – Grades 3 to 6 and Grades 7 to 8 – to better understand how activity interests change as students get older. The following is a high level summary of the responses. A complete summary of responses can be found in **Appendix D**.

Participation in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

When students were asked what activities they currently do, biking and swimming were among the most common responses. Older students were more likely to participate in various sports such as hockey and volleyball. Younger students were more likely to participate in non-sports such as arts and crafts (e.g., painting and drawing), walking or hiking, running, enjoying nature, and attending special events (e.g., Embro Fair) (Table 5).

⁸ Township of Zorra. Recreational Needs Survey. 2014.

Table 5: Top 10 Activities Currently Participated in

Grade 3 – 6 Students	Grade 7 – 8 Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biking • Swimming • Enjoying Parks and Nature • Hockey, Ringette or Figure Skating • Volleyball • Walking or Hiking • Soccer • Running or Jogging • Basketball • Arts and Crafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming • Biking • Walking or Hiking • Arts and Crafts • Running or Jogging • Enjoying Parks and Nature • Hockey, Ringette or Figure Skating • Soccer • Use of Playground Equipment • Attending Special Events

Requested Indoor Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

When students were asked to identify what indoor recreation, arts, and culture activities they would like to do, a range of ideas were put forward. The top responses are illustrated in Table 6. Younger students were more likely to request non-sport activities such as arts and crafts (e.g., painting and drawing), and performing arts such as dance, music, and drama. Sports were also requested including ice sports and soccer. Older students were more likely to request sports such as hockey and skating, volleyball, and basketball.

Table 6: Top 10 Requested Indoor Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

Grade 3 – 6 Students	Grade 7 – 8 Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Crafts • Dance, Music, Drama • Swimming • Hockey and Skating • Soccer • Volleyball • Video Games and Technology • Basketball • Reading • Running and Jogging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hockey and Figure Skating • Arts and Crafts • Basketball • Volleyball • Dance, music, drama • Swimming • Fitness • Tennis • Skateboard park • Soccer

Requested Outdoor Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

Table 7 summarize the top ten requests from students for outdoor recreation facilities. The top request among both groups of students were opportunities for biking and swimming. Support for sports was also reported including soccer, baseball, and volleyball. Walking and hiking infrastructure such as trails and sidewalks was also a common request.

Table 7: Top 10 Requested Outdoor Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities

Grade 3 – 6 Students	Grade 7 – 8 Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soccer • Biking • Swimming • Walking and hiking • Baseball • Running and Jogging • Playground • Volleyball • Gymnastics: • Enjoying parks and nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming • Biking • Soccer • Volleyball • Baseball • Walking and Hiking • Basketball • Running and Jogging • Skateboard Park • Hockey

3.5 Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with a range of representatives of community organizations to obtain specific insight into facility and program demands/needs, current pressures, and other key priorities impacting the delivery of parks, recreation, arts, and culture in the Township. These sessions provided an opportunity for participants to network with each other through the expression of creative ideas.

Four focus groups were organized by indoor users, outdoor users, service clubs, and other service providers (e.g., places of worship, schools, and libraries). Members of the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee also participated in each of the focus groups. **Appendix E** contains a list of groups who participated in each focus group. The following is a high level summary of the key themes that emerged from the focus group sessions:

- The Township’s community groups are valued providers of parks, recreation, arts, and culture programming.
- A number of community groups serve their own villages, exclusively, with local needs believed to be generally met.
- Participation in minor sports is mostly declining or stable. The lack of a high school in the Township is making it challenging to attract older youth as they end up playing in adjacent communities.
- A reciprocal agreement between the Township and schools should be explored to provide residents with greater access to gymnasium space. Schools were supportive of continuing discussions in this regard, but noted that the final decision is by the school board.
- Efforts to improve communication were identified to strengthen relationships between the Township and local community organizations, and to ensure that information is consistently conveyed.

3.6 Council and Staff Interviews

One-on-one interviews were held with members of Council and key staff to establish an understanding of their expectations for the Master Plan and to gain their perspective on parks, recreation, arts, and culture in the Township. Engaging municipal decision-makers provided an opportunity to discuss hot button issues that they were aware of. The following are key themes that emerged from the discussions:

- The Township has expressed its commitment to recreation through the addition of a Recreation and Facilities Program Coordinator.
- There is strong support from local community organizations to deliver parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities.
- Some residents are more likely to participate in parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities in adjacent municipalities rather than within the Township. This trend is driven by factors such as working or going to school in other communities.
- Accessing school gymnasiums should be explored.
- The Township's population is aging indicating a need to ensure that older adults and seniors are engaged in parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities.
- The Master Plan should provide direction on the future of the Thamesford District Recreation Centre and Embro Zorra Community Centre.

3.7 Final Public Open House

Final Public Open Houses were held on March 27 (Thamesford) and April 4 (Embro) to present and receive feedback on the Draft Master Plan and its preliminary recommendations. The Open Houses were well attended as the events were held in the Beaty Room at the Thamesford Public Library and in the lobby of the Embro Zorra Community Centre. Attendees had an opportunity to review key recommendations, ask questions, and provide comments. Residents that were not able to attend the event were able to review the Draft Master Plan online and provide feedback via email. Comments received were carefully considered during the finalization of the Master Plan.

4.0 Strategic Directions

This section identifies the strategic directions to serve as the framework for advancing parks, recreation, arts and culture in the Township of Zorra.

4.1 Strategic Directions for Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture

The strategic directions are high level directional statements that supports the Township's vision contained in the 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 presented below, in no particular order, are structured around three key streams of analysis, which are further detailed in the following sections of the Master Plan:

- 1) Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails
- 2) Culture and Recreation Facilities and Services
- 3) Financing, Management, and Staffing

Strategic Direction #1 – Focus on Healthy Communities

Encourage active lifestyles, public engagement, and strong communities.

Strategic Direction #2 – Work Together

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

Strategic Direction #3 – Promote Awareness of Opportunities

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

Strategic Direction #4 – 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.

Strategic Direction #5 – 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.

5.0 Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails

This section evaluates Zorra’s parks system, evaluates the parkland classification system, and assesses future parkland needs, park policy, and acquisition strategies. Opportunities to enhance the Township’s trails system are also explored.

5.1 Zorra’s Supply of Parkland

A parkland classification system is used to guide parkland development by directing usage, size, form, function, and/or level of amenity found within different types of parks. A classification system allows the public to understand what a park may include and position parks to be compatible with adjacent land uses. The Township’s parks are guided by the classification system contained in Section 6.6 of the County of Oxford Official Plan, which applies to all lower tier municipalities, including the Township of Zorra. The classification system is composed of two categories – Community and Neighbourhood Parks. The classification system appears to adequately classify the Township’s existing parkland supply and provide sufficient direction for future parkland that may be obtained. A summary of these park classifications is contained in Table 8.

Memorial Park



Table 8: Existing Park Classification

Community Park	Neighbourhood Park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support recreation activities, which serve the municipality and surrounding area • Uses including, but not limited to, major sports fields, picnic areas, pools, and playgrounds • Minimum size of 2.0 hectares • Other attributes includes on-site parking and extensive street frontage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organized and spontaneous activities for residents • Uses include small-scale recreation activities such as playground equipment and hard surface courts • Maximum size of 2.0 hectares • Other attributes include being centrally-located with non-vehicular access, extensive street frontage, and where feasible, adjacent to a school.

Source: County of Oxford Official Plan, 2008

Zorra’s parkland system consists of 26.1 hectares (64.5 acres) located across 14 sites. These parks contain a range of activity spaces, facilities and amenities, including sports fields, playgrounds, seating, pavilions, and passive spaces for informal gatherings or activities. A summary of parkland is contained in Table 9.

In addition to the Township’s supply of parkland, a number of non-municipal parks and open spaces are found at local schools, conservation areas (UTRCA), and private providers.

Table 9: Township Parkland Supply (Non-Municipal parkland excluded)

Community Parks	Area (Hectares)	Neighbourhood Parks	Area (Hectares)
Thamesford			
Grace Patterson Park	2.5	Dr. Kosmal Park	0.5
Lions River Park	3.0	Terry Fox Park	0.6
Lions South Park	2.7		
North Park	2.1		
Robert Fisher Soccer Field	1.3		
Thamesford District Recreation Centre	2.6		
Thamesford Area Swimming Pool	0.1		
Sub-Total	14.3		1.1
Embro			
Embro Zorra Community Centre Park	6.5	Memorial Park	0.4
Matheson Park	2.5	Wallace Park	0.4
Sub-Total	9.0		0.8
Harrington			
Harrington Community Park	0.9		
Sub-Total	0.9		
Total	24.2		1.9
Area measurements based on Oxford County Mapping	Township-wide Parkland		26.1
	Existing Service Level (Population: 8,172)		3.2 ha / 1,000 residents

Figure 15: Distribution of Parkland



Based on a current population estimate of 8,172 residents, the Township is achieving an overall parkland service level of 3.2 hectares per 1,000 residents. This compares favourably to parkland service levels provided in other municipalities in Ontario, though parkland service levels are subject to numerous variables including historical levels of service, population size and density, distribution, availability of developable land, etc.

Further evidence of the Township's strong parkland service level is found by looking at the geographic distribution across Zorra's villages and applying an 800 metre service area to each municipal park (without crossing major barriers), which equates to a ten to twelve minute walk. A high level observation of parkland distribution reveals that the vast majority of major residential areas within villages are served with some form of parkland.

In addition to existing supplies, understanding future parkland development opportunities helps to establish a clear picture of how much additional parkland the Township will be receiving through parkland dedication as a part of subdivision development or through alternative acquisition methods as it will contribute to the overall parkland service level. At present, the following future parkland development opportunities are known.

- A plan of subdivision for lands west of 15th Line in Thamesford is currently in the planning process, which identifies 0.95 hectares (2.3 acres) of parkland for dedication. Assuming the park is conveyed as planned, it should include a playground. The rationale for these outdoor recreation facilities can be found in Section 5 of this Master Plan. **(+0.95 hectares)**
- The Embro Parks Study (2010) identified a number of recommendations to acquire new parkland, including expanding the Embro Zorra Community Centre Park lands to provide additional soccer fields. Redeveloping Matheson Park with two ball diamonds and establishing a new Neighbourhood Park in the residential area north of Commissioner Street was also proposed. These recommendations were never implemented and it is understood that expansion of the Embro Zorra Community Centre Park and acquiring additional parkland north of Commissioner Street is no longer viable. **(No net change)**
- A conceptual park plan was prepared in 1999 for the open space at the rear of the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. Proposed outdoor recreation facilities included a ball diamond, multi-use court, and playground. This design was never implemented and it is recognized that these lands have already been factored into the current parkland supply. A new conceptual design plan is recommended to serve as a vision for the park and to guide future development. The concept plan should incorporate the recommended outdoor recreation facilities identified in this Master Plan. A preliminary review suggests that the Thamesford Recreation Centre Park can accommodate the proposed outdoor recreation

facilities recommended in this Master Plan. However, this should be confirmed through the concept plan development process. Alternative locations should be identified through this concept plan process if it is determined that there is insufficient space to accommodate some or all of the recommended outdoor recreation facilities. **(No net change)**

Based on the above, the planned new park in Thamesford will increase the Township’s parkland supply to 27.1 hectares. **Based on a projected population of 8,300 in 2028, the Township’s parkland service level would thus improve to 3.3 hectares per 1,000 residents** and is expected to satisfy parkland needs over the master planning period. Recognizing that parkland is highly valued by the community, as identified throughout the consultation process, the Township should continue to maximize its parkland dedication requirements through the subdivision process to effectively service parkland needs during the planning period. This should be complemented by enhancing the outdoor experience at existing parks, which may include efforts to enhance access to the Thames River and trail development (discussed further in Section 5.3)

Recommendations – Zorra’s Supply of Parkland
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide parks within 800 metres of all residential areas (about a 10 minute walk), unobstructed by barriers such as major roads, railways, and waterbodies. 2. Continue to maximize parkland dedication requirements through the subdivision approval process to effectively service parkland needs during the planning period. 3. Prepare a new conceptual design plan for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre Park to serve as a vision for the park and to guide future development. The design should incorporate the recommended outdoor recreation facilities for this site including a full size soccer field, adult size ball diamond, basketball court, beach volleyball courts, trail routes, and outdoor fitness equipment. The placement and potential relocation of existing recreation facilities on site should also be considered. Should it be determined that some or all of the outdoor recreation facilities cannot be accommodated, alternative site locations should be identified as a part of the concept plan development process.

5.2 Parkland Policies and Acquisition Guidelines

The Ontario Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990) and Bill 73

The *Planning Act* outlines a framework for parkland dedication in Section 42 and 51.1, which allows approval authorities to enforce parkland dedication requirements as a condition of land development or plan of subdivision. These sections establishes that 5% of residential development and 2% for all other forms of development be conveyed to the municipality

for parkland or other public recreational purposes. An alternative rate of one hectare per 300 dwelling units may also be applied if identified in an Official Plan. If no dedicated land is proposed for parkland, the *Planning Act* and Bill 73 allows the approval authority to accept cash-in-lieu thereof.

County of Oxford Official Plan

As previously mentioned, land use planning policies for the Township are contained in the County of Oxford Official Plan. Section 6.6 speaks to parkland acquisition policies which are consistent with the requirements of the *Planning Act* being 5% of land for residential development and 2% of land for all other types of development for parkland. The alternate parkland dedication rate is also described at one hectare per 300 dwelling units. The Official Plan also identifies criteria for when cash-in-lieu of parkland may be accepted including:

- Where the required land dedication fails to provide an area of suitable shape, size, or location for development as public parkland,
- Where the required dedication of land would render the remainder of the site unsuitable or impractical for development, and
- Where existing or proposed park and recreational facilities in the vicinity of the site are or will be clearly adequate to serve the projected increase in population.

The Official Plan indicates that conveyed parkland will generally be flat and open land; however, where the need for flat and open land is sufficient, lands containing natural features such as ravines, woodlots, riparian lands, and other vegetation or variations in topography may be accepted as a portion of parkland dedication.

Future Parkland Acquisition

As alluded in the County Official Plan, future parkland development must be of an appropriate size and configuration to effectively utilize municipal resources and to facilitate meaningful recreation activities. As a general rule, accepting or developing parkland smaller than 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres) should be discouraged given that small parcels of parkland offer limited parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities. Exceptions to this rule may be permitted in instances that may be advantageous to the Township to resolve gap areas or to address parkland shortages. In instances where park development is too small to receive a meaningful park parcel, or where the immediate area already has suitable and unimpeded access to sufficient parkland, the Township is encouraged to accept cash-in-lieu of parkland to be used to secure parkland in more appropriate locations to better serve the community.

Given that the amount of parkland that can be received through the subdivision development process is limited given the low growth nature of development, the Township must consider how to augment this approach

using alternative acquisition strategies, which can be used to secure additional parkland to address gaps within established villages. There are a number of alternative acquisition strategies that may be considered to ensure that a sufficient supply and distribution of parkland is available to support both active and passive recreational uses including, but not limited to:

- Municipal land purchase or lease;
- Partnership / joint provision of lands with partners (e.g., UTRCA);
- Land exchanges of swaps, particularly if development is to occur in natural areas that are highly valued by the community;
- Establishment of a Parks Foundation (e.g., community, corporate, or municipal donations towards parkland acquisition); and/or
- Reallocating surplus municipal lands to park use.

5.3 Enhancing Trails in Zorra

Existing Supply

There are over 54 kilometres of trails in the Township that are owned and maintained by non-municipal agencies (e.g., U.T.R.C.A.) including the Avon Trail, Embro Pond Trail, Oxford Thames River Trail, and Wildwood Lake Trail. Augmenting these trails are 700 metres of walking trails within Lions River South Park and Lions South Park. Other informal trail routes are also found throughout Zorra that are not owned or maintained by the Township. Sidewalks also connect residents throughout the villages of Thamesford and Embro. Table 10 highlights the municipal and non-municipal trails in the Township.

Creating a Robust Trails Network

The key to creating a robust trails network is to connect users with destinations (e.g., parks, recreation facilities, schools, etc.) in a safe and convenient manner by utilizing available corridors, while being sensitive to naturalized areas.

Community consultations made it clear that the availability of trails (as well as other human-powered modes of transportation) are highly desired amenities. The County (and Township) recognizes these demands and has a Trails Master Plan⁹ in place that provides direction on developing a trails

Table 10: Existing Trail Inventory

Trail Name	Length (km)
Township Trails	
Lions River South Park	0.4
Lions South Park	0.3
Sub-Total	0.7
Non-Municipal Trails	
Avon Trail	19.0
Embro Pond Trail	2.4
Oxford Thames River Trail	0.6
Wildwood Lake Trail	31.7
Sub-Total	53.7
Total	54.4

Source: Township of Zorra

⁹ County of Oxford. 2014. Oxford County Trails Master Plan.

system that connects users within municipalities, throughout the County, and beyond.

With respect to the Township of Zorra, the Trails Master Plan proposed over 170 kilometres of desired connections, multi-use trails, signed routes, and paved shoulders. A summary of proposed trails and a description of each trail type is contained in Table 11. Key linkages that were identified in Zorra consisted of connecting Thamesford, Embro, and Harrington, as well as on-road connections through each of these villages.

Table 11: Proposed Trails in the Township of Zorra, Oxford County Trails Master Plan (2014)

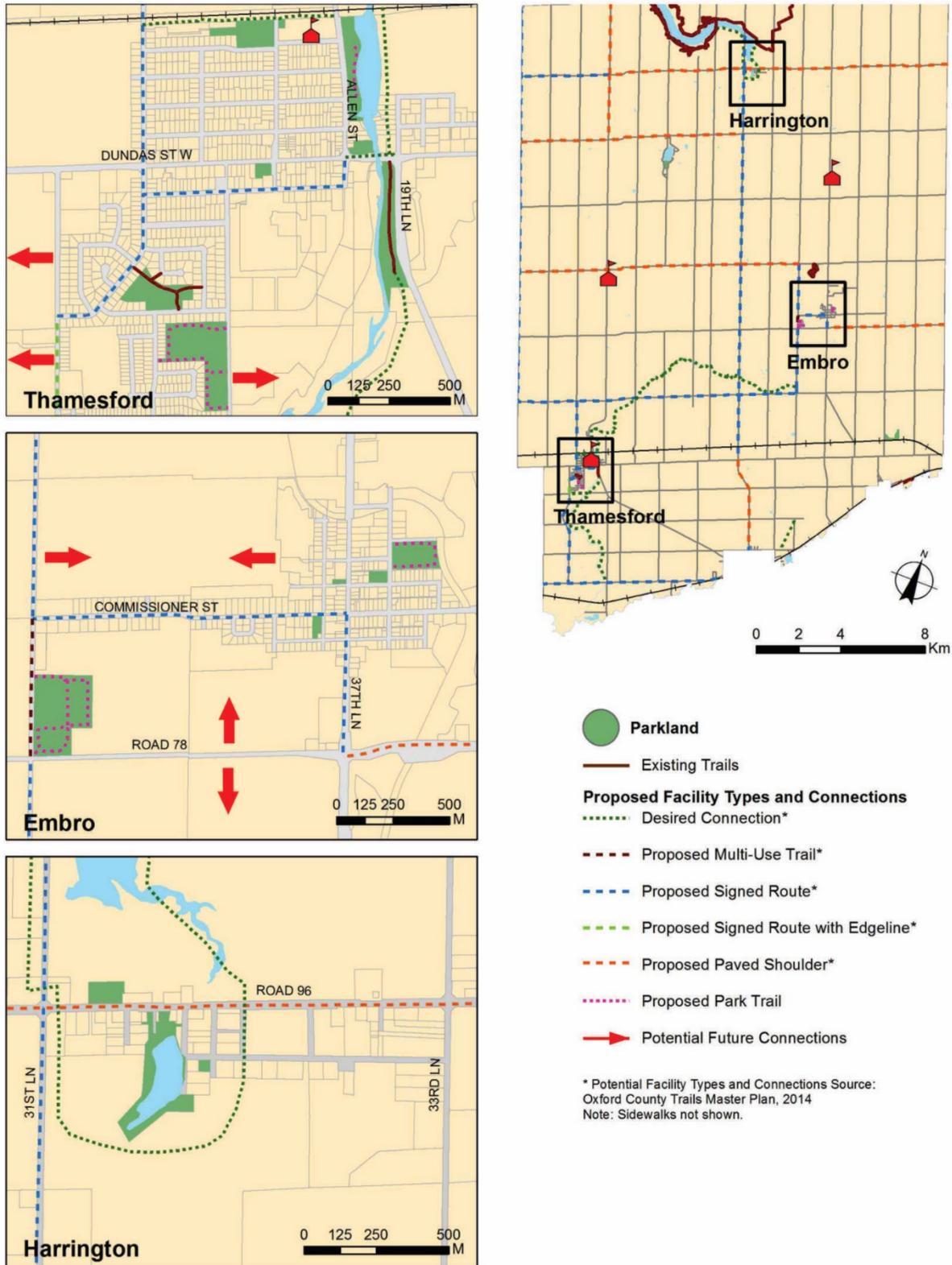
Proposed Facility Types and Connections	Length (km)
Desired Connections – may be on or off-road connections that should be explored in the future as trail development occurs. Permitted uses vary depending on the final trail design.	33.0
Multi-Use Trail – may be on or off-road routes that accommodates walking, cycling, and other non-motorized forms of transportation.	0.6
On-Road Connections – may include signed cycling routes (with or without painted markings known as edgeline) or a paved shoulder. On-road connections primarily accommodate cycling traffic.	139.5
Total	173.1

Source: Oxford County Trails Master Plan, 2014

Building upon the proposed connections from the County Trails Master Plan, this Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan recommends another 2.8 kilometres of trails to further enhance the network in Zorra. Proposed routes primarily consist of park trails that meander through existing Township-owned lands, including Thamesford District Recreation Centre, Grace Patterson Park, Embro Zorra Community Centre Park, and Matheson Park. As opportunities arise, other connections (e.g., sidewalks and trails) should be explored in undeveloped areas of Thamesford and Embro. Trails within future residential areas should be determined through the planning process in consultation with land developers and the public. In addition, potential opportunities to secure and provide public access to the Thames River should be explored. These proposed trail connections, together with those recommended in the County Trails Master Plan are illustrated in Figure 16.

It bears noting that implementing the proposed trail network will be incremental as opportunities and funding becomes available. Realignments and adjustments to the trails network may be necessary due to unforeseen challenges relating to terrain, cost, or other implications. The Township is encouraged to explore new trail development opportunities that have not been identified, provided that the general intent of connecting users with destinations is maintained.

Figure 16: Proposed Trail Network



To ensure that the recommended trail network is effectively implemented, best practices suggests that creating a Trails Committee has proven to be successful in advancing trails. Trails Committees offer a number of benefits including being able to champion trails projects more efficiently, education and raise awareness, and apply for external funding sources, receive donations, fundraise, and operate independently from the municipality. While there is an Oxford County Trails Council dedicated to developing trails across the County, as well as the Thames Valley Trails Association (that is responsible for portions of trails in the Township), a Zorra Trails Committee is recommended to coordinate local trail development as it relates to the Township. In support of the Township's Strategic Plan, it is recommended that the Township pursue one of the following two options:

- Amend the Terms of Reference for the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee (ZRAC) to include trail-related oversight and advice; or
- Forming a separate Trails Advisory Committee altogether to advocate the development of Zorra's trails system. These types of committees generally consist of volunteers and a minimum of one Council member.

There are benefits and challenges to each approach, and the eventual outcome will necessitate further dialogue with existing ZRAC members and local trail advocates prior to arriving at a decision. For example, the Township will need to review of ZRAC's existing capacity, composition of members, and whether new seats need to be added to ZRAC. While combining recreation and trail-related oversight into one advisory body may result in greater operational efficiencies (relating to committee recruitment, Staff and Council time dedicated one committee instead of two, etc.), the Township must assure itself that both recreation and trail-related matters (and parks, to an extent) can be treated with sufficient attention.

Trail Design Considerations

The following are high level design considerations that should be considered during trail development. The design standards contained in this section are based on general standards and best practices in other municipalities, as well as supporting documents including the Oxford County Trails Master Plan, Ontario Regulation 413/12 (Design of Public Spaces Standards – Accessibility for the Built Environment Standard) made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Ontario Building Code, and Ontario Traffic Manual Book 18: Cycling Facilities. These design considerations should be supplemented with Township engineering and construction practices and consultation with the appropriate groups (e.g., Oxford County Public Health Unit, Oxford County Trails Council, etc.).

Trail/Pathway Surface

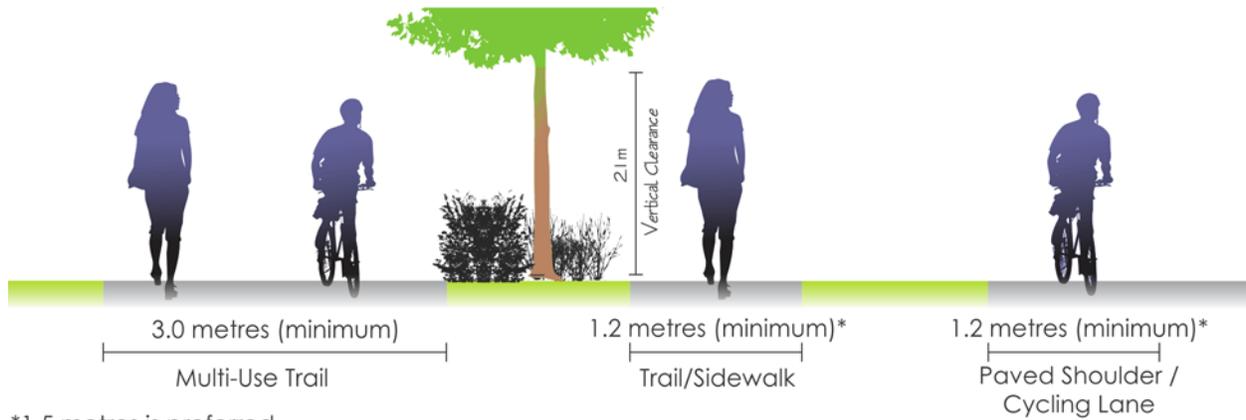
Asphalt should be the preferred surface material for all trails. At the Township's discretion, alternative surface materials (e.g., engineered wood

fibre or wood chips) may be used with consideration given to its location, environmental constraints, etc. Concrete should continue to be the preferred surface material for municipal sidewalks.

Trail Width

A standard trail or pathway should be a minimum of 1.2 metres in width (1.5 metres is preferred) to facilitate safe and comfortable movement in one way. Multi-use trails should be a minimum of 3.0 metres to accommodate the bidirectional movement of trail users (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Sample Trail Widths



*1.5 metres is preferred

Trail Clearance

A minimum vertical height clearance of 2.5 metres above grade shall be maintained along all trails.

On-Road Cycling Lanes

There are several cycling solutions that the Township can utilize; however, in order for cycling infrastructure to be effective, the most appropriate solution must respond to the surrounding context as well as available resources. The three most common on-road cycling solutions are paved shoulders, shared roadways, and dedicated cycling lanes. Each solution can be provided in a relatively cost-effective manner as some cycling routes may simply require a combination of paint markings and supporting signage within the existing right-of-way. The application of each facility type should be considered on a case-by-case basis together with the County (given that some proposed cycling routes are located along County roads) and other stakeholders, where appropriate. The Township should refer to the Oxford County Trails Master Plan for specific design standards for each of the three types of cycling lanes. Coordination with the Oxford County Trails Council may be required to ensure that the appropriate design specifications are used and to ensure consistency with the Oxford County Trails Master Plan.



Signage and Wayfinding

Trail signage and wayfinding are critical components of a trail network as they are essential awareness tools to attract, guide, and direct users along designated pathways. Using high contrast and a clear font style, signage should be clear, consistent, and accessible, serving many purposes including, but not limited to:

- Identifying the name of the trail network to signify municipally-owned lands and trail routes;
- Providing information regarding trail length, surface, width, slope, and difficulty, accompanied by a map;
- Identifying key points of interest along trail routes;
- Identifying permitted uses (e.g., walking, cycling, etc.); and
- Identifying rules pertaining to trail usage and hours of operation.

Trail Amenities

There are a broad range of amenities that can be provided to enhance the comforts of Zorra’s trail network. Not only do amenities encourage the use of trails, they may also be necessary to maintain trail safety and support persons with disabilities, children, older adults, and seniors. At the Township’s discretion, active transportation amenities should be provided along trail routes including, but not limited to, safety measures (e.g., pedestrian crossings), seating, shade, bike racks, staging areas, landscaping, screening, and outdoor fitness equipment. Where possible, the Township should leverage the use of existing recreation facilities to provide some amenities such as parking and washrooms.

Example Signage and Wayfinding



Recommendations – Enhancing Trails in Zorra
<p>4. Continue to implement Zorra-specific elements of the County of Oxford Trails Master Plan, with a priority on connecting existing parks, recreation facilities and other community destinations.</p> <p>5. Through planning and detailed design, explore the feasibility of implementing the park-based trail routes recommended in the Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan in order to enhance walkability, connectivity and linkages throughout the Township.</p> <p>6. As necessary, undertaken revisions to the proposed trail routes to respond to physical geography and constraints, new development, and gap areas.</p> <p>7. Undertake a review of the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee’s capacity and Terms of Reference to include oversight of the Township’s trails system (including coordinating with the Oxford County Trails Council) versus establishing a separate Trails Committee altogether. In any event, there should be a committee that provides trails-related advice to Township Council and is an advocate for Zorra’s trails system.</p>

Recommendations – Enhancing Trails in Zorra

- 8. Utilize the trail design considerations contained in this Master Plan, augmented by design guidelines and standards described in the County of Oxford Trails Master Plan and other relevant documents in the planning, design, and construction of trail infrastructure in the Township.



Lions River Park

6.0 Recreation Facilities

This section explores the state of the Township's existing recreation system and the factors that can influence the future provision of facilities, services, and programs. An inventory of the Township's recreation facilities is contained in this section and, where appropriate, supporting mapping is provided to illustrate geographic distribution. General facility observations are articulated, together with relevant market trends and related public input.

6.1 Summary of Recreation Facilities

Table 12 summarizes indoor and outdoor recreation facilities owned by the Township of Zorra. Non-municipal recreation facilities are excluded, although they are recognized for their contributions to the local recreation system and are referenced where applicable.

Table 12: Summary of Recreation Facilities

Recreation Facility	Supply	Location(s)
Ice Pads	2	Embroid Zorra Community Centre, Thamesford District Recreation Centre
Gymnasiums	0	-
Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms	8	Beaty Room (Thamesford Public Library), Embroid Zorra Community Centre (3), Embroid Town Hall, Harrington Hall, Thamesford District Recreation Centre (2)
Fitness Spaces	0	-
Youth Spaces	0	-
Older Adult Spaces	0	-
Aquatics	2	Thamesford Area Swimming Pool, Lions South Park Spray Pad (future project)
Soccer Fields	2	Embroid Zorra Community Centre Park, Robert Fisher Soccer Fields
Ball Diamonds	5	<u>Lit</u> : Matheson Park, North Park, Harrington Community Park <u>Unlit</u> : Lions South Park, North Park
Tennis Courts	0	
Basketball Courts	2	Memorial Park, Harrington Community Park
Playgrounds	6	Embroid Zorra Community Centre Park, Harrington Community Park, Lions South Park, Memorial Park, North Park, Wallace Park
Leash Free Areas	1	Grace Patterson Park
Skateboard Parks	1	Terry Fox Park (future project)
Beach Volleyball Courts	2	Thamesford District Recreation Centre

6.2 Ice Pads

The Township operates two single-pad arenas (both rinks measure 185' by 85' and each arena has six change rooms):

- **Thamesford District Recreation Centre** was renovated in 2000 to provide new change rooms, a referee room, and other ancillary spaces. It has seating for 350 spectators.
- **Embro Zorra Community Centre** was renovated in 2010 to enhance support spaces including the front lobby and ancillary rooms. It has seating for 600 spectators.



Winter ice sports such as hockey and figure skating have been definitive Canadian pastimes for decades. Hockey Canada reports that participation in minor hockey is steadily declining across Canada and Ontario.¹⁰ The decline in hockey participation is being driven by a number of factors including, but not limited to, the costs of equipment and travel, and greater concerns over safety. The increasing cost of renting ice is also a common concern reported by user groups in many communities. Declining participation levels have led to surplus arena capacity across Canada. In response to this trend, municipalities have employed various strategies to cope with shifting arena needs and underutilized ice pads. Strategies sometimes include amendments to ice allocation policies, enhancing programming to promote learn-to-skate and sport safety, subsidies to reduce the cost to participate, and decommissioning ice pads.

Participation levels in Zorra are consistent with national level trends. The Township has seven main ice users whose combined membership is 615 minor and adult participants. These user groups indicated that registration has either declined or remained stable over the past three years.

Throughout the consultation process, the public expressed the need to identify a long term arena strategy as some residents feel that these facilities are underutilized. In total, 59% of Online Community Survey respondents participated in ice activities such as hockey, figure skating, or ringette, which was the fourth most popular activity in the past 12 months. 70% of respondents also supported additional investment in arenas, ranking ninth out of 26 facility types.

Focus group discussions with arena users revealed a number of insights. In addition to declining or stable participation rates (as previously mentioned), groups noted challenges with attracting new participants as

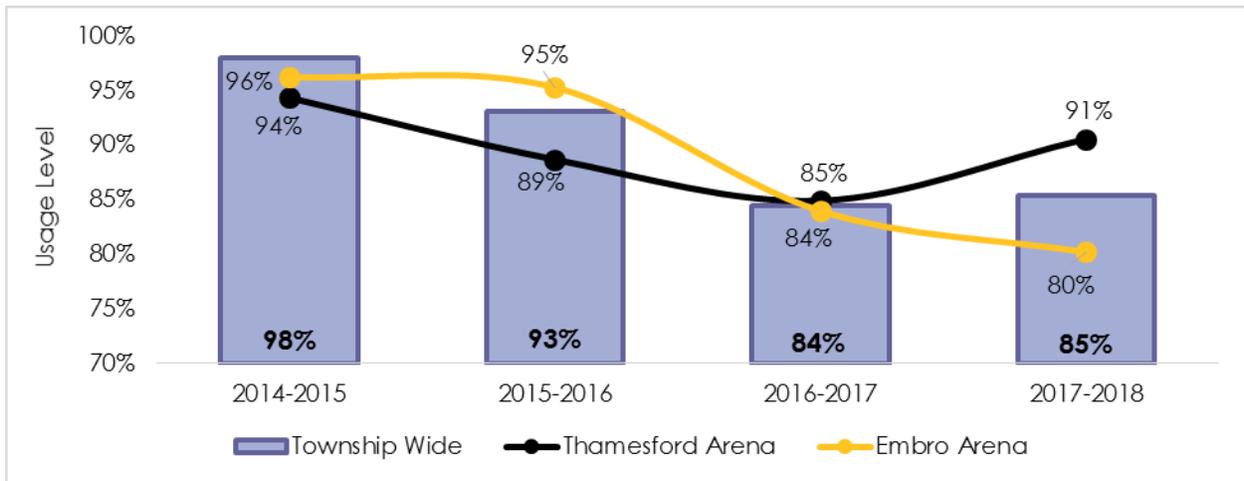
¹⁰ Hockey Canada. Annual General Meeting Reports.

some residents are participating in ice sports in adjacent municipalities. Several suggestions were offered to enhance arena usage including offering learn-to-skate programs, enhancing arena amenities, and improving communication between the Township and user groups to ensure that information (such as ice availability) is conveyed transparently and consistently.

Usage

For the purposes of this Master Plan, “core” prime time ice is analyzed to understand how the two arenas are being used during peak usage periods. The core prime time is defined as weekdays between 5 pm and 10 pm and on weekends between 8 am and 10 pm. Figure 18 contains a summary of *scheduled* ice system-wide (noting that *actual* ice usage may differ as this data is not formally recorded at present time).

Figure 18: Scheduled Core Prime-Time Ice, Township of Zorra



Note: reflects scheduled bookings that does not capture actual usage data and therefore may not account for turned back times, unscheduled closures, etc.
 Source: Data provided by the Township.

Despite the existing user level and participation trending, the Township’s arena schedules show that anticipated use of available time has been relatively good over the years. However, the past two years in particular have shown a marked decline in arena needs with schedules anticipating 85% usage. This represents a significant decline compared to the 2014/15 season as arena users now collectively anticipating the need for 13% less time at the time of submitting their schedules.

For the most recent season, the Township’s schedules indicate that there are 15.5 hours of unused ice each week across both arenas. That said, actual ice usage data is not formally tracked requiring that Township staff estimate actual usage versus booked time. Based on input from Township staff, it is estimated that approximately 5% of scheduled ice is unused (e.g., returned or “turned back”); thus, actual Township wide ice usage may be

closer to 80%. According to the 2017-2018 arena schedules, the following statistics were also revealed:

- Thamesford Arena had 91% of its hours scheduled, a decline of 3% over the past four seasons. The scheduled ice is partly bolstered by non-local groups, which were scheduling approximately eight hours per week.
- The Thamesford Arena had marginally more scheduled ice during the weekend (24.5 hours) compared to the weekday (23.5).
- Embro Arena had 80% of its hours scheduled, a decline of 16% over the past four seasons.
- More ice was scheduled during the weekend at Embro Arena (23 hours) compared to the weekday (21.5 hours). Non-local organizations are scheduled approximately two hours a week.

Needs Assessment

A participant-based target is often used to forecast long-range arena needs. Based upon information collected during the Master Plan, the 615 estimated ice participants in Zorra are unlikely to change to any great extent due to low population growth and continued aging of the population in the current year (even under a best case scenario where assuming that Zorra's ice capture rate remains stable over the planning period). In fact, based on national participation trends, an aging of the population, and input received during the community consultation process, the likelihood of a continued decline in ice utilization is most probable. In urban/rural municipalities like Zorra, a local membership base composed of minor and adult players typically target a service level of one ice pad per 500 to 700 participants. Based upon an existing user level of 615 participants, this suggests that the Township is at or approaching a surplus of one full ice pad.

Notwithstanding the above, there is not an immediate need for the Township to reduce its ice pad supply as scheduled core prime time hours remain relatively good. If the Township were to immediately reduce the supply to one ice pad, it would likely place significant pressure on existing user groups to schedule games and practices at times most appropriate for certain age groups or divisions (e.g., some younger divisions may have to play later in the evening, adults might be pushed into later shoulder hours, etc.).

As previously mentioned, the Township's arenas have been bolstered by usage from adjacent municipalities where non-local groups are seeking available (or convenient) prime time ice. This has assisted the Township in maintaining its relatively good core prime time utilization level. Combined, the Township's ice schedule suggests that non-local groups are using 10 hours per week, which is equivalent to nearly 0.2 ice pads. Taking the above

into consideration, there is a need for approximately 1.15 to 1.5 ice pads to serve both local and non-resident ice sport users.

However, municipal arena ice usage tracking and its accuracy needs to be improved to better position the Township to assess actual ice usage - particularly during core prime time hours. As such, prior to considering any adjustment to the arena supply, improvements to the Township’s ice usage and participation level tracking systems should be undertaken in order to accurately identify Township ice needs going forward. The Township also needs to determine if it wishes to continue to supply ice for non-resident users as elimination of this service would reduce ice needs.

Another important consideration in determining the demand for ice in Zorra is the regional arena supply. A new multi-use recreation facility being planned in the Town of Ingersoll is proposed to contain a single-pad arena with expansion potential to add a second ice pad, which is quite likely to have a negative impact on Zorra’s ice demand. The timing of construction and the location of the proposed facility is currently undefined, though preliminary discussions suggest that it could be located 10 minutes from Thamesford. This has the potential to dramatically impact ice usage at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre where the Ingersoll Minor Hockey Association uses eight hours of ice time per week (two hours per week of ice time are used by other non-resident users).

The financial performance of Zorra’s arenas has also been reviewed, with revenue and expenditures of the Thamesford Arena and Embro Arena summarized in Table 13.

Table 13: Financial Performance for Arenas in Zorra

	2015	2016	2017
Thamesford Arena			
Expenditures	\$280,995	\$317,724	\$296,181
Revenue	\$212,245	\$196,702	\$191,941
Operating Deficit	\$68,749	\$121,022	\$104,240
Embro Arena			
Expenditures	\$307,794	\$256,283	\$290,901
Revenue	\$202,149	\$183,250	\$179,564
Operating Deficit	\$105,645	\$73,033	\$111,336
Township Wide			
Expenditures	\$588,789	\$574,008	\$587,083
Revenue	\$414,394	\$379,952	\$371,506
Operating Deficit (Cost Recovery)	\$174,395 (70%)	\$194,055 (66%)	\$215,576 (63%)

Note: Data reflects the expenditures and revenue of the arena portion only. For the purposes of this analysis, it was assumed that approximately 50% - 100% of all facility costs was attributed to the arenas.

Source: Township of Zorra

Over the past three years, the Township's operating subsidy for the arena system reached \$216,000, representing an average of about \$108,000 per arena. This level subsidy has increased by over \$40,000 from 2015, due in part to a 10% decline in ice revenue over the years. As a result, the cost recover rate declined from 70% to 63% between 2015 and 2017.

Until a new multi-use recreation centre in Ingersoll is constructed and an improved system of tracking Zorra's ice pad usage and user group registrations is in place, it is difficult to precisely determine when the Township's arena usage level will reach a point when one ice pad will be sufficient to meet local needs. Based on the analysis of ice supply and demand, participation trends and other influences, it is recommended that the Township initiate a process to evaluate alternative use of one ice pad. The timing for repurposing one of the ice pads is likely 3 to 5 years from the present and will be determined by on-going factors related to the regional supply and accurate information regarding local use and registrations.

Once these factors are known, the Township will be better positioned to make an informed decision on its ice pad supply. A potential "trigger" would be if actual prime time ice utilization rates diminish to 70% or less of available system-wide core prime time hours. In such a case, the Township will need to evaluate which ice pad will be decommissioned and consider alternative purposes for the arena space. Adaptive reuse strategies could include recreational uses or other municipal requirements, (e.g., storage, works yard, works depot, and other civic uses). For the purposes of this Master Plan, a significant and space intensive recreation use has not been identified as being in significant deficit. That said, should a recreational use be preferred, a gymnasium with walking track could be considered. Other indoor recreation facilities that may be considered include space for events and floor activities, indoor soccer, gymnastics facility, indoor playground, ball hockey/lacrosse facility, indoor skate park, or other options. Arts and cultural space or a "community hub" model may also be considered, where the place could be repurposed to house a range of organizations such as health care, social services, library services, older adult space, private sector spaces such as daycare, etc.

During this interim period of data collection, the Township should concurrently explore additional strategies to bolster ice usage and optimize ice pad operations. The Township has already made efforts to increase ice usage through the introduction of youth and adult shinny programs, which have been well received thus far. Engaging local schools to use the arenas and continuing to promote them to non-resident users is also encouraged. Should there be periods of unused ice, consideration may also be given to implementing blackout periods, although this practice should be coordinated with ice users to ensure that their schedules are not impacted. The Township should also work with the ice users to review its ice schedules to ensure that they are accurate in order to inform the next ice needs review and the Township should engage in discussions with the Town of

Ingersoll to better position the Township in terms of timing and potential impact from the proposed new Ingersoll arena facility.

Recommendations – Ice Pads	
9.	In the near-term, explore strategies to bolster ice usage and optimize ice pad operations, which may include 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. Consideration may also be given to implementing blackout periods in coordination with ice users to minimize scheduling impacts which may require transferring ice bookings from one ice pad to the other to create blocks of ice that are unscheduled.
10.	Initiate a process to explore alternative uses for one of the Township’s ice pads, including recreational use(s), other Township indoor space needs, development of a community hub, etc.
11.	Over the next 3 to 5 years, the Township should continue to monitor the Town of Ingersoll’s plans and timing to construct a new Town arena. During this time, the Township should improve tracking/collection of accurate arena usage data (i.e. actual hours available and used), and track registration levels in local ice sport organizations to determine participation trends and their effect on arena needs.

6.3 Gymnasiums

The Township does not operate a gymnasium, instead relying upon a number of elementary school gyms to meet community needs.

Gymnasiums provide a venue for a wide variety of indoor sports and recreation opportunities that require a hard surface and a large open space. Gymnasiums support both formal and drop-in activities including basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball, general fitness, and other active programs. Certain non-recreational activities can also be held such as trade shows, large gatherings, and other events.

A number of requests were received for a gymnasium throughout the consultation process to support indoor sports such as ball hockey, basketball, and volleyball. Some residents felt that the Township should work with the school boards to improve local access to school gyms in order to relieve pressures for this facility type. 64% of Online Community Survey respondents supported investment in gymnasium space, ranking 13th in priority out of 22 facility options.

Needs Assessment

There is no common municipal service target for gymnasiums as they are typically incorporated into the development of new community facilities as

complementary spaces (typically in communities with a larger population base). Varying degrees of school access also impacts the provision of municipal gymnasiums. The Township has been fortunate to have access to local school gymnasium space at an affordable rate through the provincial Community Use of Schools initiative that has allowed it to deliver pickleball programming (which is currently the only indoor recreation program offered by the Department). The Township has previously sought to establish increased access to school gymnasiums, particularly during the summer to support the Township’s summer camp program, although the Township and the school board has been unable to finalize an agreement.

The preferred strategy is that the Township should continue to work with the local school boards to formalize an agreement to enhance the level of municipal and community access to maximize the use of existing school gymnasiums. One approach that may be considered is a reciprocal agreement with the school board, which allows the Township (and affiliated user groups) to access school facilities (such as the gymnasium and/or other spaces) in return for the school board having improved access to Township facilities (such as the arena). Should the Township be successful, an opportunity exists to improve indoor recreation opportunities, as well as enhance the Township’s summer camp program. Should a sustainable and practical agreement not be achieved with the local school for use of gymnasiums, the Township may, as part of the recommendation to evaluate alternative use(s) for one ice pad, consider the potential for a gymnasium as one possible use.

Augmenting use of the school gymnasiums, the Township should continue to explore indoor recreation programs within its existing facilities, given that there is capacity within its facilities to increase usage. It is recognized the Township previously used the arena dry floors during the off-season to offer pickleball programs, although this was not ultimately successful. Whether in a school or a municipal facility, access to gyms or large multi-use rooms will allow the Township to explore interest in other indoor recreation programs, as discussed further in Section 7.5 of the Master Plan, with the intent of increasing physical activity levels and healthy outcomes in Zorra.

Recommendations – Gymnasiums
<p>12. Continue to engage the Thames Valley District School Board to formalize a reciprocal use agreement in order to secure future access to gymnasium space (and other spaces as necessary).</p> <p>13. Explore opportunities to provide indoor recreation programs within existing underutilized municipal spaces.</p>

6.4 Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms

Eight multi-purpose and meeting rooms are available in the Township, including one hall that is operated by the Harrington Area Community

Association. These rooms can be used for a broad range of activities including community programs, meetings, birthdays, social gatherings, weddings, banquets, and other special events. The Township’s multi-purpose and meeting rooms are equipped with a number of amenities that vary by location including kitchens, seating areas, tables, storage, washrooms, and more. The Township generally achieves a balanced distribution of multi-purpose and meeting rooms, with a variety of options and locations to choose from. Spaces available for booking include:

- **Thamesford:** Thamesford District Recreation Centre (2) and Beaty Room
- **Embro:** Embro Zorra Community Centre (3), Embro Town Hall
- **Harrington:** Harrington Hall (operated by a third party)

Historically, stand-alone community spaces were constructed as single-purpose facilities generally for passive activities (such as social gatherings and meetings). The construction of stand-alone facilities is no longer common due program limitations, operational costs, and other factors.

Multi-purpose spaces and meeting rooms are typically incorporated within facility designs as complementary spaces to other facility components as they can accommodate a broader range of uses, including community programs to supplement rental revenues. The multi-purpose and meeting rooms within the Township’s facilities are examples of co-locating multiple recreation facility components to facilitate cross programming opportunities, while achieving efficiencies in maintenance and management.

Embro Zorra Community Centre



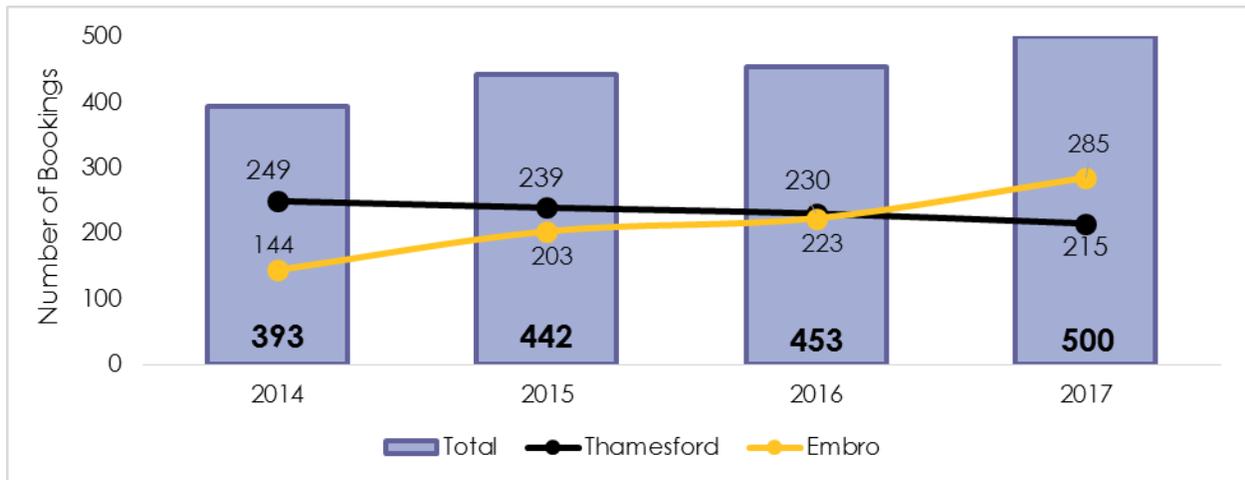
Limited input was received with respect to multi-purpose and meeting rooms. In the Online Community Survey, 64% of respondents supported additional investment in Community Hall spaces, which ranked 14th out of 22 facility types.

Usage Profile

Booking data from the Township’s Google Calendar was analyzed to understand how Zorra’s municipally-operated multi-purpose and meeting rooms were used. In 2017, the Township’s rooms were booked 500 time, which represents an increase of 27% since 2014. This increase is due to an increase in bookings in Embro, which have nearly doubled. This may be driven by renovations that were undertaken to the facility to update and expand indoor spaces. While the number of bookings have increased over the past four years, there is ample capacity to accommodate additional usage at existing multi-purpose and meeting spaces. Between 2014 and 2017, the following findings were also identified:

- The Beaty Room was the most booked space in the Township with 100 bookings in 2017, which is a decline of 46 bookings compared to 2014.
- The large hall at the Embro Zorra Community Centre was the most used space in Embro for 2017 with 81 bookings, which is an increase of seven bookings compared to 2014.
- The meeting room (coat room) at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre was the least booked space in 2017 with 20 bookings, an increase of seven bookings compared to 2014.

Figure 19: Usage of Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms, Township of Zorra



Source: Township of Zorra Google Booking Calendar

Needs Assessment

Many factors influence the usage of multi-purpose and meeting spaces such as their location, cost, room capacity, and the number, type and quality of amenities. Regardless of these factors, these spaces tend to have low to moderate usage levels as they are typically used as supporting or secondary spaces. Nevertheless, the availability of convenient and affordable multi-purpose and meeting space is essential to ensure that residents have gathering spaces to engage in a range of activities.

With ample time available to accommodate more usage within the Township’s existing supply, additional multi-purpose and meeting spaces are not required. Instead, emphasis should be placed on maximizing the use of existing spaces. The Township has explored strategies to boost utilization such as modernizing facility spaces, offering free rentals, and charging booking fees based on the number of participants (instead of fixed rates) for community programs. Other tactics may include greater promotion of spaces available for rent to ensure that the community is aware of these spaces, working with community providers to develop programs within Township spaces, working with the business community to promote the spaces for corporate functions and meetings, etc. Continuing

to strategically identify opportunities to update and modernize multi-purpose and meeting rooms is also encouraged, as best practices suggest that improving municipal facilities may increase desirability and usage of these spaces.

Recommendations – Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms

14. Continue to promote and encourage the use of the Township’s multi-purpose and meeting rooms to facilitate a broad range of uses. Strategies to maximize the use of existing space include continuing to identify opportunities to modernize and update spaces, ensuring that facility users are fully aware of the opportunities that are available, working with community providers to develop programs within the Township’s spaces, working with the business community to promote use for corporate functions and meetings, or other strategies identified by the Township.

6.5 Fitness Space

Consistent with many smaller municipalities, the Township does not operate fitness centres or studios but instead uses certain multi-purpose or meeting rooms for a limited range of fitness activities.

As with many communities large and small, local fitness providers (e.g., For the Love of Fitness, Fung Loy Kok Taoist Tai Chi, etc.) offer active living programs in private studios. Equipment-based fitness centres (e.g., Goodlife, etc.) can be found within driving distance in area municipalities including London, Ingersoll, and Woodstock. While the Township does not offer direct fitness programming, a boot camp program is offered through a community-based program provider in Embro, which utilizes the small hall in the Embro Zorra Community Centre.

The emphasis being placed on personal health is resulting in growing participation across Ontario for physical fitness activities. This is translating into increasing use of private and public sector fitness services including active living programming centred on general health and wellness, cardiovascular training and stretching activities (e.g., aerobics, yoga, Pilates, etc.). Group fitness programming is one of the fastest growing segments of the sector, more so than traditional weight-training, given that these programs are designed to be fun, social activities (‘Zumba’ is a notable example).



The Online Community Survey found that 41% of respondents participated in aerobics, fitness, or weight-training, which was the eighth most popular activity. Participating in fitness programs outside of the Township was also a

common response. 67% of respondents supported additional investment in fitness centres, which ranked 12th in priority out of 22 facility types. There were requests for fitness programs such as yoga and Zumba. Outdoor fitness equipment within parks was suggested.

Needs Assessment

Indoor Fitness Space

Smaller municipalities typically do not have a sufficient market to construct and operate equipment-based fitness centres to justify the cost. Small municipalities that do provide this service tend to provide entry-level, basic fitness equipment – often in a turnkey environment – while larger municipalities may provide a fitness experience comparable to private-sector businesses. With the presence of regional equipment-based fitness centres located within driving distance to Zorra, entry into full-service fitness is not recommended.

The recommended strategy is for the Township to continue its current approach in the provision of fitness activities, which is to accommodate light impact, studio-based active living programs within its existing spaces with its community partners to complement the private fitness providers currently in the Township (e.g., For the Love of Fitness, Fung Loy Kok Taoist Tai Chi, etc.). This is the most fiscally sustainable approach given that these spaces are currently underutilized. To bolster these underutilized spaces, the Township should continue to encourage the use of these spaces for active living fitness programs and work with the community providers to explore strategies to increase program participation.

Outdoor Fitness Space

Leading municipalities have been integrating outdoor fitness equipment within parks in response to trends throughout North America that are showing demand for exercise opportunities in the outdoors. While outdoor fitness equipment has existed in Europe and parts of the United States for many years, more Canadian municipalities have begun to introduce fitness equipment designed to withstand extreme weather conditions. These park-based amenities allow people to participate in free outdoor fitness activities and engage people in the public realm. The provision of outdoor fitness equipment is more affordable to provide compared to traditional indoor equipment-based fitness centres.

Recognizing these benefits, the Township should seek opportunities to integrate a small scale outdoor fitness equipment at selected a park(s). Potential locations to consider include parks with other complementary active recreation facilities, along walking trails and pathways, or in a neighbourhood with concentrations of lower income households and/or older adults and seniors. As a test site, the Thamesford District Recreation Centre is a logical choice for outdoor fitness equipment with this Master Plan recommending a concept plan be prepared for the park as well as a separate recommendation for an internal trail route that outdoor fitness

equipment could be located along. The Embro Zorra Community Centre site is an alternative if the Thamesford site is not deemed to be appropriate through a conceptual planning process.

Indoor Walking Track

Many modern recreation facilities incorporate a walking track in some shape or fashion. Indoor walking tracks are gaining popularity, particularly in Canadian communities with varied climatic conditions, as they provide residents with a safe and controlled walking environment. The most common forms are an elevated walking track encircling an arena or gymnasium, or one that is integrated with circulation areas (e.g., walkways, fitness centres, etc.). While indoor walking tracks generally do not generate revenue, municipalities may impose a nominal fee for their use. In municipalities that offer indoor walking tracks, a steady volume of use is viewed as an achievement in promoting physical activity, while increasing the foot traffic of a community as a whole.

While it is recognized that there were a number of public requests for a walking track, there are no new recreation facilities proposed in this Master Plan that could include a walking track as a part of the design, nor are there any opportunities to integrate a walking track within an existing facility. As much as possible, the Township should look to accommodate walking opportunities within the circulation areas of Zorra’s existing recreation facilities. The Master Plan identifies the potential to consider the repurposing of one of the Township’s ice pads which, if a gymnasium were one such use, a walking track could be considered for integration into the design.

Recommendations – Fitness Space
<p>15. Continue to accommodate light impact, studio-based active living programs within its existing spaces with its community partners. The Township should continue to work with its community providers to explore strategies to increase program participation.</p>
<p>16. Integrate small scale outdoor fitness equipment as part of an internal trail loop at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre or, alternatively at the Embro Zorra Community Centre pending confirmation through a concept planning process (per Recommendations 3 and 5).</p>
<p>17. Where possible, create walking loops/areas within existing community centres to accommodate walking for exercise. This should be investigated at the time any major capital works takes place (such as facility renewal or repurposing).</p>

6.6 Dedicated Youth Space

There are currently no dedicated youth spaces offered in the Township.

There are approximately 1,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 19 living in the Township, making up 12% of the population. The provision of dedicated community space for youth in these age groups offers a number of benefits, particularly given that they are often considered as under-represented segments of the population. Youth and teens have specific needs and desires, resulting in the need to ensure that youth spaces are designed to respond and adapt to a variety of interests. Research has revealed that youth prefer unorganized and self-structured activities, prompting the emergence of drop-in youth spaces that allow users to engage in their desired activities on their own schedule. These spaces also function as a safe environment to facilitate positive reinforcement to combat concerns surrounding mental and physical health among youth. However, it is recognized that Zorra's teens attend high school in adjacent communities which likely influences their participation locally since a desire to participate with school friends can draw them back into those adjacent communities to meet many of their programming needs.

The Online Community Survey indicated that 20% of youth participated in organized teen programs in the past 12 months, which ranked 17th out of 26 activities. 83% of respondents supported Township investment in space for youth programs, ranking third out of 22 facility types. This suggests that this facility type is a high priority among respondents. Suggested activities by youth included drop-in hockey/skating, ball hockey, and fitness, as well as other pre-teen programs.

Needs Assessment

There are no specific service targets for the development of dedicated youth space as the need for these spaces are based on the ability to be co-located with other complementary facilities to leverage potential cross-programming opportunities. The ability to provide recreation opportunities for local youth in Zorra is difficult due to a number of key factors. The Township's small population base and distribution across a large geographic area results in a limited number of youth to support the provision of dedicated space, and the lack of a high school in the Township resulting in youth pursuing recreation activities/programs outside of Zorra.



Additionally, the Fusion Youth Centre in Ingersoll (located approximately 10 minutes from Thamesford) is a draw for youth across the County, including local youth from Zorra. Since opening in 2006, the Fusion Youth Centre has received high praise for its approach to engaging local Ingersoll and

surrounding area youth in a range of organized and drop-in after-school programs. Given the Fusion Youth Centre’s proximity to the southern areas of Zorra Township, the fact that it is recognized as the centre for youth in Oxford County, and that its membership already consists of Zorra youth, the Township’ establishment of a competing youth centre is not recommended. The preferred approach is to engage the Fusion Youth Centre to collaboratively pursue opportunities that would increase the ability of Zorra’s youth to make use of that facility. Discussions with the Centre indicate that they have capacity to accommodate new members and while they currently only offer programming within Ingersoll, they may be open to working with area municipalities to engage youth in surrounding areas.

To augment space for youth, the Township should continue to engage this age group regularly to explore opportunities to better meet its needs. The Township currently does this through holding some Council meetings at elementary schools and having student delegations. This can be further enhanced by establishing a Youth Council, which is consistent with the Township’s Strategic Plan, to advocate for youth issues.

Recommendations – Dedicated Youth Space
<p>18. Engage the Fusion Youth Centre and the Town of Ingersoll to discuss strategies through which to increase opportunities to meet the needs of youth in Zorra (through transportation services, outreach programs, or other strategies).</p>
<p>19. Create a Youth Council to ensure that youth are heard and considered as a part of future planning, facility and parkland design/renovations, and policy decisions. Potential responsibilities may include regularly engaging youth to identify issues, encouraging the Township to become more Youth Friendly by meeting the criteria established by Play Works Partnership, and other responsibilities identified by the Township.</p>

6.7 Dedicated Older Adult Space

The Township directs community-based programs for older adults and seniors through its community facilities; for example, the Friendship Club occasionally meets at the Beaty Room (located in the Thamesford Public Library) to participate in various social activities.

Nearly one-in-three Zorra residents are over the age of 55. Aging trends suggest that the proportion of older adults and seniors will continue to increase over the next ten years due to the aging baby boomer demographic. It will be important to ensure that parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities are available in the Township to respond to the needs of this population group.

Spaces for older adults and seniors have become desirable as they offer holistic health benefits that focus on improving the mental, physical, and social aspects of this growing demographic. Research has shown that activities that take place within these spaces (e.g., card games, discussion groups, etc.) stimulates mental cognition, which helps combat the onset of chronic diseases such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. These spaces ensure that older adults and seniors continue to engage in low impact, physical activities well into their retirement years, while balancing more traditional seniors activities. Older adult and seniors spaces also offer locations for residents to gather, socialize, and share common interests.

The Online Community Survey found that 6% of respondents participated in organized seniors programs in the past 12 months, ranking second last out of 26 activities. 80% of respondents supported Township spending for dedicated older adult and seniors programming, suggesting that there is support for investment in this area. A number of older adult and seniors programs were suggested during consultations including, but not limited to, woodworking, cards, shuffleboard, a horse shoe league, and gardening.

Needs Assessment

Similar to dedicated youth spaces, there are no specific service targets for the development of older adult space. These spaces are ideally co-located with other complementary facilities to leverage potential cross-programming opportunities. While there are no dedicated older adult spaces in the Township, a small group of seniors (known as the Friendship Club) gather at the Beaty Room once a month to engage in activities. This approach is ideal as the Beaty Room is underutilized and its location adjacent to the Oxford County Library provides complementary opportunities for older adults and seniors. With this in mind, the Township should continue with this strategy to provide convenient location for older adults and seniors to gather and engage in recreation activities. Consideration should also be given to encouraging the establishment of similar Friendship Clubs in other villages as there are a number of underutilized multi-purpose and meeting spaces in the Township such as Embro Town Hall (or Embro Zorra Community Centre) and Harrington Town Hall.

To further enhance opportunities for older adults and seniors it is recommended that the Township engage Ingersoll Services for Seniors to collaboratively explore strategies to make use of this facility. Ingersoll Services for Seniors is an established community organization that boasts over 650 members and serves older adults and seniors across Oxford County. The organization offers a variety of programs that appeal to many interests and services including transportation, meals on wheels, health clinics, and more. Through dialogue with Ingersoll Services for Seniors, the potential to develop outreach programs and services in Zorra using existing municipal spaces should also be investigated.

As the Township’s residents continue to age, there will be an increasing demand for parks, recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities/activities. The Township should engage in regular dialogue with local older adults and seniors to understand their needs and challenges, and to collectively identify potential solutions. Opportunities also exist to identify how the Township can become more “age friendly”. From a facility perspective, this may include designing facilities to be well lit, comfortable, inviting, and with ample seating. Parks can also be assessed from a safety and comfort perspective to ensure that they have signage, benches, shade, and are physically accessible so they can better serve the needs of this aging population.

- | Recommendations – Dedicated Older Adult Space |
|---|
| <p>20. Explore the potential to increase use of underutilized multi-purpose and meeting spaces at Embro Town Hall (or Embro Zorra Community Centre) and Harrington Town Hall to establish meeting space for older adults and seniors.</p> |
| <p>21. Engage the Ingersoll Services for Seniors to collaboratively explore strategies to meet the needs of older adults and seniors (e.g., transportation, outreach programs and services, etc.).</p> |
| <p>22. Maintain regular dialogue with older adults and seniors to understand needs, challenges, and to collectively identify potential solutions. These discussions should also consider how to make the Township more “age friendly”, with consideration given to accessibility, comfort amenities, gaps in programs and services, and more.</p> |

6.8 Aquatics

The Township operates the Thamesford Area Swimming Pool. Constructed in 1972, the facility is a 25 metre tank with six lanes with supporting amenities including change rooms, office space, and a diving board. The Township recently received \$100,000 through the Ontario 150 Community Capital program that largely was directed toward replacing the deck and certain mechanical upgrades.

Pools are highly sought public facilities due to their ability to accommodate a wide range of programs for many ages, interests, and abilities. Learning to swim is an essential life skill that all residents can benefit from. Residents are fortunate to have access to an outdoor pool which will soon be complemented with the provision of a proposed spray pad project that is currently being led by the Zorra Water and Wheels (a Committee of Council). The spray pad is planned to be located in Lions South Park in Thamesford with anticipated completion for Fall 2018.

Thamesford Area Swimming Pool



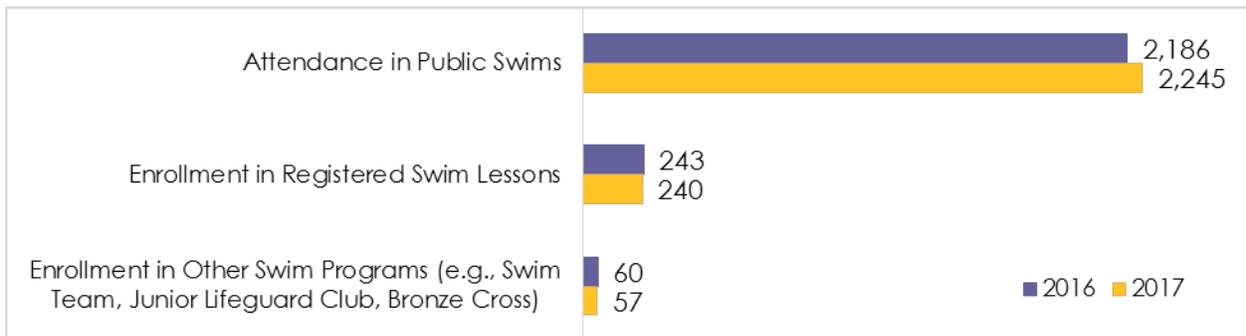
The consultation process revealed that the Thamesford Area Swimming Pool is highly valued in the community. The Online Community Survey revealed that 55% of respondents participated in recreational swimming, which was the fifth most popular activity in the past 12 months. Instructional swimming and aquafit was the 13th most popular activity, with 34% of respondents participating in this activity in the past year. When respondents were questioned about future spending, 76% and 74% of respondents supported the Township investing in spray pads and outdoor pools, respectively. These facilities ranked sixth and eighth out of 22 facility types, suggesting that investment in these facilities is a priority for respondents.

Usage Profile

Participation data shows that the outdoor pool is very well utilized. The Township offers three categories of programming – registered swim, other swim programs, and public swim sessions. The following is a summary of participation in each program category between 2016 and 2017 (Figure 20).

- Attendance in **public swim sessions** experienced the most growth in the past two years, increasing from 2,186 to 2,245 participants. Much of this growth is attributed to an increase in afternoon public swims. By contrast, attendance in lane/aquafit classes declined from 206 to 72 participants in the past two years. Township staff reported that this decline is due to the colder weather experienced in 2017.
- **Registered swim lessons** included the Red Cross and camp programs. Registration in these programs declined marginally from 243 to 240 participants. The decline was primarily due to 33 fewer daytime participants, although total registration was bolstered by 35 camp swimmers.
- **Other swim programs** included usage by the Thamesford Tiger Sharks, Junior Lifeguard Club, and Bronze Cross participants. Registration in these programs declined marginally from 60 to 57 participants.

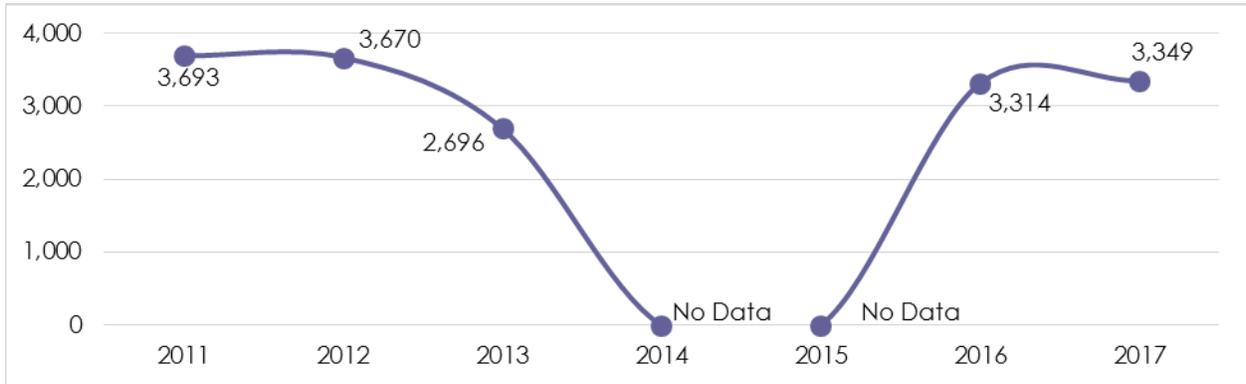
Figure 20: Attendance and Enrollment in Swim Programs, Township of Zorra



Source: Township of Zorra

To provide insight into outdoor pool usage over an extended time period, Figure 21 summarizes the total bather loads between 2011 and 2017. It should be noted that the number of bathers in the pool may not all be unique individuals. The data indicates that over the past seven years, the number of pool users declined modestly by 9%, which may be due to factors such as weather or the use of private pools. It should be noted that no data was available for 2014 and 2015.

Figure 21: Total Outdoor Pool Bather Load, Township of Zorra



Source: Township of Zorra

Needs Assessment

Outdoor Pools

Municipalities are not constructing outdoor pools to the same extent seen in the 1960s to 1980s. This is driven by factors such as the cost for construction and operations and, coupled with a short operating season. The growing prevalence of indoor aquatic centres, which offer year-round experiences that are unaffected by weather, and increased affordability of backyard pools has also affected demand for municipally-operated outdoor pools.

As mentioned earlier, use of the Thamesford Area Swimming Pool has remained steady. Over the 45 years that the pool has been serving the community, the Township has developed a strong understanding of pool operations and the costs involved. The Township has continued to reinforce its commitment to offer swimming opportunities in Zorra at the existing location through investing in various upgrades to extend the life of the pool and to enhance the user experience. Based on Zorra’s projected population growth, the Thamesford Area Swimming Pool is expected to be sufficient to meet the needs of Township residents over the planning period.

Spray Pads

Spray pads are popular among young families seeking affordable and accessible opportunities to cool down on a hot summer day. Spray pads can be integrated into most parks and they have proven to be more cost effective than outdoor pools and wading pools as they are less expensive to construct and do not require regular staffing (although monitoring of filtration equipment may be required). Spray pads can be developed in a

wide variety of stimulating designs with a range of apparatuses that provide an enhanced aquatic experience for residents and visitors of all ages.

It is expected that, once complete, the spray pad at Lions South Park will satisfy needs for this facility type in Thamesford and the surrounding area. Recognizing Zorra’s dispersed villages and rural areas, as well as the public supported investment in spray pads, there is merit in providing a smaller-scale spray pad in Embro. While the 2016 Census did not report population figures for Embro, it is estimated that there are approximately 800 people residing in the village. Applying the Township-wide proportion of children (12%) suggests that there are 100 children living in Embro. While this may represent a small segment of the Embro population, providing families with young children with convenient access to a spray pad would be positive for the community and would also (like the proposed Thamesford facility) likely draw from other parts of the Township.

With this in mind, the Township should continue to support the provision of a spray pad in Thamesford as well as the provision of a smaller-scale spray pad in Embro. It is recommended that the Township establish a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee to lead fundraising efforts for the Embro spray pad. A funding structure similar to that of the Thamesford spray pad project is recommended. Potential locations for a spray pad may include the Embro Zorra Community Centre Park given that it has access to change rooms and washrooms, or a more central location such as Memorial Park.

Recommendations – Aquatics
23. Establish a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee to lead fundraising efforts for a small scale spray pad in Embro. Consideration should be given to a funding structure similar to that of the Thamesford spray pad project. Potential locations include Embro Zorra Community Centre Park, Memorial Park, or another park to be determined through the planning process.

6.9 Soccer Fields

Soccer fields can be found at the following municipal parks:

- **Robert Fisher Soccer Fields** are located adjacent to the Thamesford District Recreation Centre in Thamesford. One full size soccer field is located at this site, is often subdivided into two smaller fields to facilitate simultaneous games.
- A full size soccer field is located at **Embro Zorra Community Centre Park**. This field is being replaced by another full size field in another location of the park (resulting in no net change in supply), which is expected to be completed in 2018. In addition to this soccer field,

it is known that the Embro Minor Soccer Club erects five other soccer fields at this location in order to meet their needs.

The Township's soccer fields are complemented by a number of non-municipal soccer fields, which are utilized by the Township's user groups. These fields include:

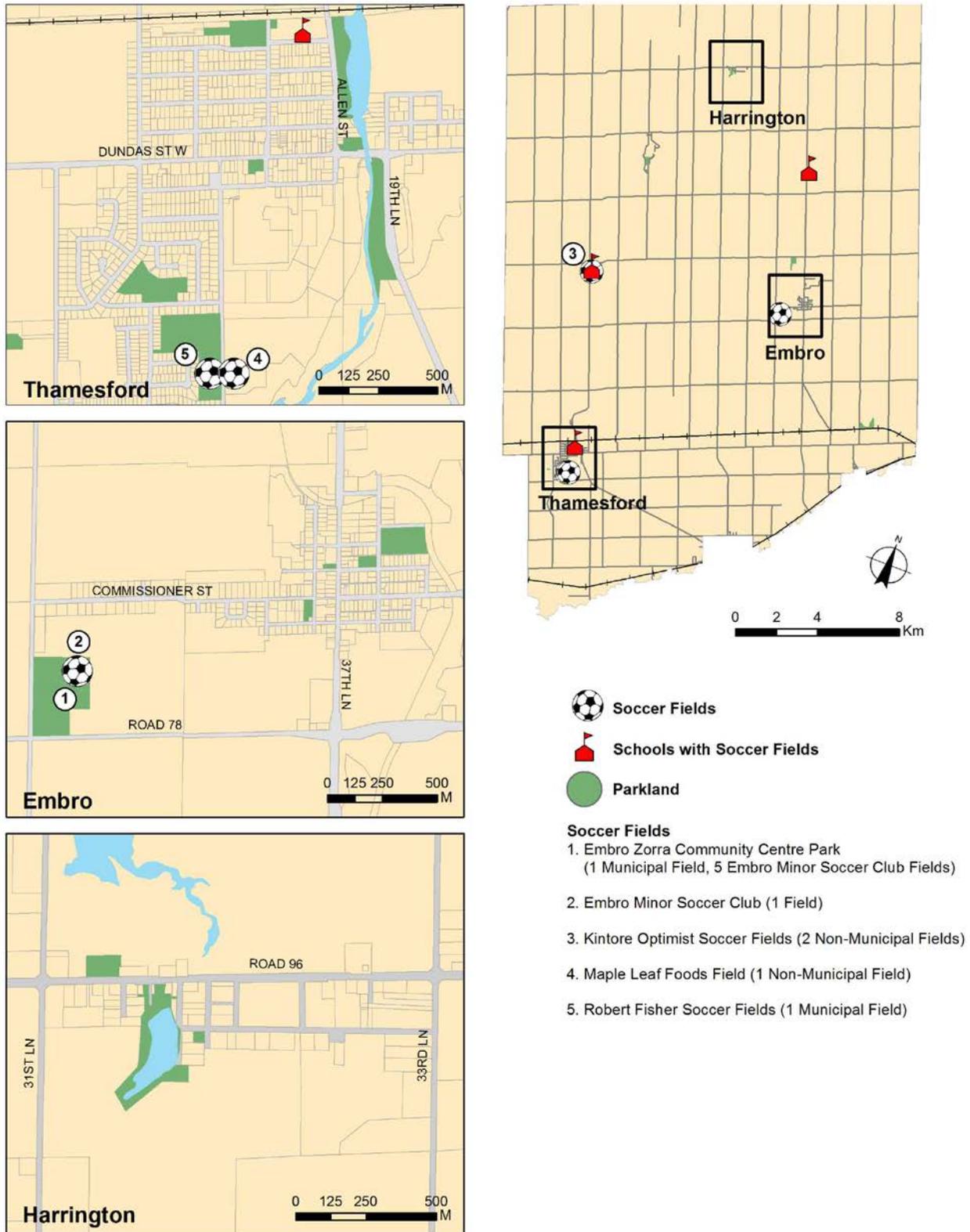
- A soccer field, which is owned by **Maple Leaf Foods**, is located adjacent to the Robert Fisher Soccer Fields in Thamesford
- Two soccer fields are located at the **Kintore Optimist Soccer Fields**, are located on lands that are leased from a private landowner.
- The **Embro Minor Soccer Club** is involved in a lease agreement to use land adjacent to the Embro Zorra Community Centre Park to erect a full size soccer field. This field is expected to be available for use by the group in 2018, thus it is included in the supply.

In total, there are eleven unlit equivalent soccer fields available in Zorra that are offered by the Township and soccer groups. In addition to this supply, soccer fields are located at school sites.

Soccer experienced enormous growth in participation and popularity during the 1990s when it overtook baseball and hockey as the most popular organized sport among Canadian youth. Coupling this trend with its worldwide appeal, high fitness quotient, and relatively low cost to participate, soccer fields are in high demand in many municipalities. According to the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), participation in the sport peaked in 2007 with 385,000 participants. Since this time, registration levels among sanctioned clubs declined by 12% due to factors such as demographic shifts and the emergence of clubs that are not affiliated with the OSA. Locally, Zorra's soccer organizations reported a combined total of 475 participants for 2017.

The Online Community Survey found that 37% of respondents participated in soccer in the past 12 months, which ranked 11th among 26 activities. 68% of respondents supported additional investment to improve existing or build new soccer fields, ranking tenth out of 22 facility types. Soccer organizations that participated in the focus group for the Master Plan expressed the desire for enhanced and more consistent field maintenance.

Figure 22: Distribution of Soccer Fields



Usage Profile

The following is a summary of soccer field usage for each community soccer organization during a regular playing season:

- The **Thamesford Minor Soccer Club** utilizes the Robert Fisher Soccer Fields for 1.5 to 2 hours per day between Monday and Thursday. For tournament games, the Club utilizes the soccer field located on the Maple Leaf Food lands and erects a temporary soccer field at the rear of the Thamesford District Recreation Centre.
- The **Embro Minor Soccer Club** utilizes the soccer field at the Embro Zorra Community Centre for 1.5 hours per day between Monday to Thursday, as well as on Sunday.
- The **Kintore Optimist Minor Soccer Club** utilizes non-municipal soccer fields located on lands leased from a private landowner, as well as the fields at AJ Baker Public School.

Embro Zorra Community Centre Park



Needs Assessment

A participant-based service target is the preferred method for identifying soccer field needs. Comparable municipalities typically utilize a service target of one soccer field per 80 participants, which considers participation levels, general standards of play, and field capacities.

The Township’s soccer organizations have a combined membership of 475 participants, which represents approximately 31% of children and youth between the ages of 5 to 19. Assuming that the proportion of children and youth soccer players remains unchanged, there will be an estimated 518 players by the end of the planning period. Based on a service level of one soccer field per 80 participants, there will be a demand for 6 to 7 soccer fields. With a combined supply of ten unlit equivalent soccer fields (municipal and non-municipal fields), the current supply would appear to be sufficient. However, soccer field distribution and recognition of 3 key soccer organization providing soccer programs in the Township, a closer look by organization needs to also be considered.

The **Kintore Optimist Soccer Association** has exclusive use of two unlit equivalent fields that are privately owned as well as the fields located at AJ Baker Public School. With 125 players, the group is using fields at a rate of one field per 63 players. As it is understood that their membership base is relatively stable, it is expected that these two fields will be sufficient to serve this group’s needs over the planning period.

The **Embro Minor Soccer Club** uses the soccer field at Embro Zorra Community Centre Park (currently being replaced with a new field at the existing site) and erects five other fields on Township land to meet their needs. The Club is currently developing a second full size soccer field on leased land (available in 2018) to accommodate the group's older participants and to facilitate tournaments. With seven available fields and 150 players, the group is using fields at a rate of one field per 21 players. With ample capacity to accommodate additional participants, it is anticipated that this group's existing soccer field supply is sufficient for this planning period. From a long-term planning perspective, it is recommended that the Township maintain open dialogue with the Club to ensure that their needs are being met during the planning period, particularly if their lease agreement with the private land owner is terminated.

The **Thamesford Minor Soccer Association** has exclusive use of the Robert Fisher Soccer Fields in Thamesford, as well as the field located on lands owned by Maple Leaf Foods. With a membership of 200 participants, the group is using soccer fields at a rate of one field per 100 players, which is lower than the recommended target of one field per 80 players. The group is able to use fields at a lower standard as it normally programs Robert Fisher Soccer Fields as two fields, which is augmented by use of the Maple Leaf Foods field as well as the use of portable nets. Through the public consultation process, the Association expressed concerns about losing access to the Maple Leaf Foods field, which would hinder the group's program schedule. The group also expressed the desire for an additional field to order to continue growing its membership base, particularly with future residential growth in Thamesford. To provide flexibility in how the Association programs its fields, it is recommended that a new full size soccer field be developed at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. The design and location of this field should be incorporated through the renewed concept for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre recommended in section 4.3 of this Master Plan.

Recommendations – Soccer Fields

- 24. Develop a new full size soccer field at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. The design and location of this field should be incorporated through the renewed concept for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre (per Recommendation #3).

6.10 Ball Diamonds

The Township provides five ball diamonds. Three diamonds are lit to accommodate extended playing periods. Lit ball diamonds are generally considered to be equivalent to 1.5 unlit diamonds, yielding an effective supply of 6.5 unlit equivalent ball diamonds. The Township's ball diamonds can be found at the following parks. The distribution of ball diamonds is illustrated in Figure 23.

- **Lit diamonds:** Matheson Park, North Park, Harrington Community Park
- **Unlit diamonds:** Lions South Park, North Park

The Township's ball diamonds are generally in good condition, with the exception of the ball diamond at Harrington Community Park, which appears to be maintained for more informal usage. Supporting amenities can be found at each location including, but not limited to, parking, fencing, and seating. In addition, ball diamonds that support neighbourhood level play can be found at school sites throughout Zorra.

Provincially, Baseball Ontario identifies that participation in the sport increased by 22% over the past decade. The popularity of baseball is driven by a number of factors such as greater focus in skill development and grassroots programs that engage children and youth at a young age to participate in the sport. Also, the popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays is likely a contributing factor. Regionally, participation in baseball is inverse to provincial trends as player registration over the past ten years have declined by 15%. At the local level, participation in the sport is regaining traction after experiencing declining participation. Based on participation figures reported by the ball organizations and estimates provided by the Township, there are approximately 356 minor and adult players for the current year.

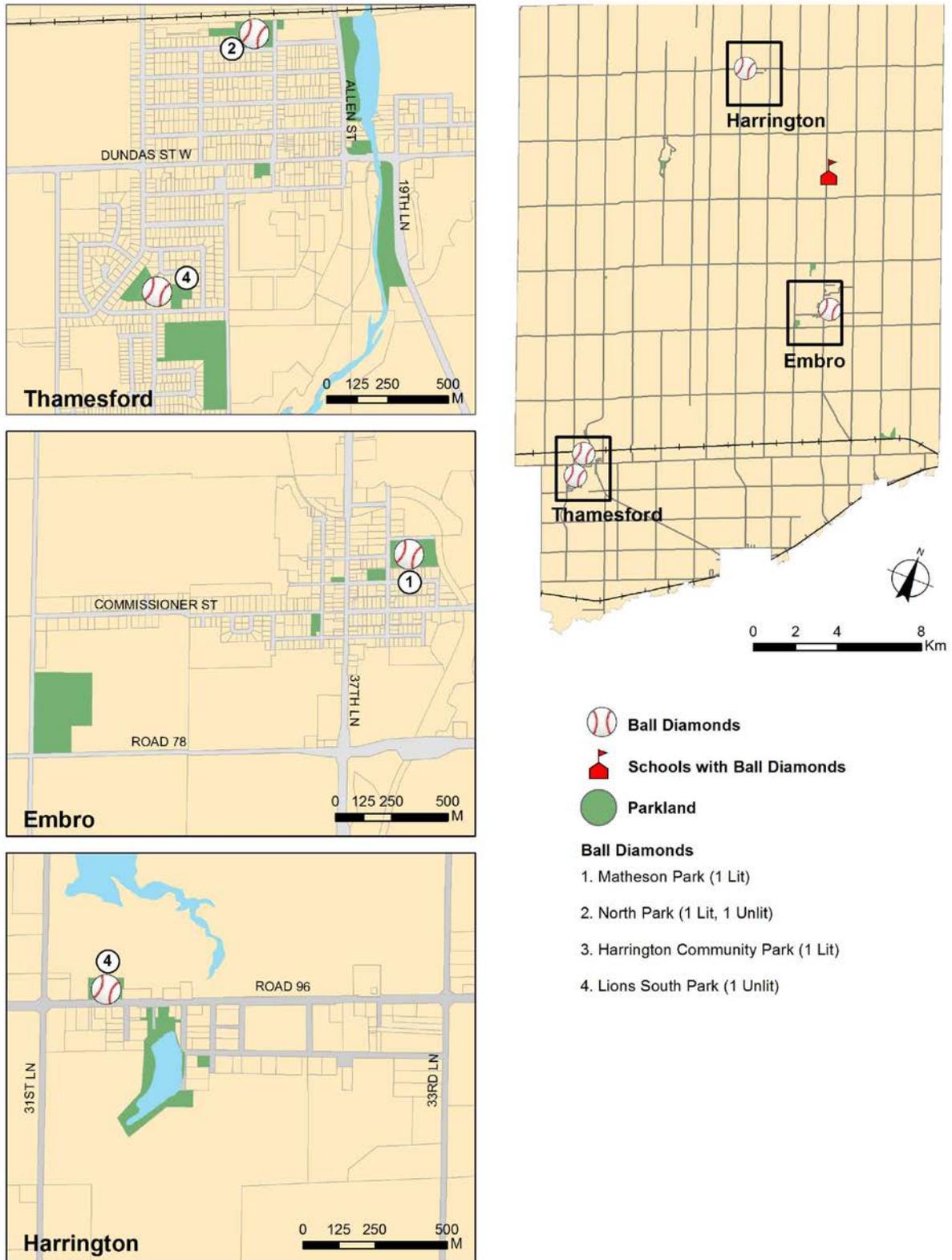
The Online Community Survey revealed that 39% of respondents participated in ball diamond sports, which was the tenth most popular activity. 63% of respondents also supported additional spending to improve existing or build new ball diamonds, which ranked 15th out of 22 facility types.

Ball diamond organizations that participated in the focus groups for the Master Plan expressed the need for additional ball diamonds in Thamesford and Embro. The desire for multi-diamond sites was identified as this was noted as the most suitable template to host tournaments.

Matheson Park



Figure 23: Distribution of Ball Diamonds



Usage Profile

Usage data for the Township's ball diamonds was not available. Based on discussions with Township staff, there is capacity to accommodate additional usage at existing ball diamond locations. However, as was noted in the analysis of ice pads, there is a need for improved collection of utilization data and monitoring of facility bookings.

Needs Assessment

A participant-based target is the preferred method to evaluate ball diamond needs. Municipalities similar to Zorra use a service target of one ball diamond per 100 players, which is recommended for the Township as it considers participation rates, standards of play, and ball diamond usage levels.

The Township's ball diamond groups have a combined membership of 356 participants, which includes both minor and adult players. This membership base represents 4% of the current population. Assuming that the level of participation remains stable, it is estimated that there will be approximately 363 players by the end of the planning period. Applying the recommended service target to the projected number of participants suggests a demand for three unlit equivalent ball diamonds over the next ten years, suggesting that the Township will not require any additional ball diamonds over the planning period.

In addition to evaluating the supply of ball diamonds, however, the type and distribution of ball diamonds must also be considered. Through the consultation process, Thamesford Men's Slo-Pitch reported that their participation is growing and indicated a need for a second adult ball diamond to support simultaneous games and tournaments. There is currently one lit diamond located in Thamesford at North Park that is suitable for adult play. A ball diamond is located at Lions South Park in Thamesford, however, it is undersized for adult play and conversion to an appropriate size is not possible due to the adjacent residential land uses. It is noted that a lit adult-size ball diamond exists in Embro at Matheson Park, which is currently being underutilized.

It is recommended that the Township direct pent-up demand for an adult-size ball diamonds to Matheson Park in Embro to relieve pressures of Thamesford Men's Slo-Pitch. Embro and Thamesford are located within a 15 minute drive, which is a common travel time between ball diamonds within many municipalities. This is the preferred approach in order to maximize the use of existing ball diamonds as there is currently insufficient rationale to construct a new adult ball diamond, which may cost up to \$500,000. The Township should continue to monitor ball diamond usage and participation levels. Should there be demonstrated demand for an additional ball diamond, the Thamesford District Recreation Centre would appear to be a suitable candidate for an adult-size ball diamond.

Recommendations – Ball Diamonds

25. Maximize the use of existing ball diamonds by directing pent-up demand for an adult-size ball diamond to Matheson Park in Embro to relieve pressures of Thamesford Men’s Slo-Pitch. The Township should monitor ball diamond usage and participation. Should there be demonstrated demand for an additional ball diamond, the Thamesford District Recreation Centre would appear to be a suitable candidate for an adult-size ball diamond; the design of which should be guided by a concept plan for the site (per Recommendation #3).

6.11 Outdoor Racquet Courts

There are currently no outdoor racquet courts (e.g., tennis or pickleball courts) available within Township parks.

Research reveals that tennis is experiencing a resurgence. According to Tennis Canada, participation in the sport has been growing year over year, which is largely attributed to emphasis on grassroots programming for children under the age of 12. In 2016, Tennis Canada reported that nearly 160,000 children under the age of 12 played tennis on a regular basis, which is an increase of 8% from 2015.¹¹ Tennis Canada believes that engaging children early on will lead to a lifetime of participation in the sport.

Growth in participation in the sport is also driven by the success of professional tennis players such as Milos Raonic and Eugenie Bouchard, who rank among some of the top tennis players in the world. Additionally, some communities are experiencing pressures for tennis courts due to the growing segment of baby boomers that seek social, low impact activities such as tennis. Increasing participation among baby boomers has also driven the rising popularity of pickleball, which is a similar racquet sport as tennis but played on a smaller scale.

Consultation

The Online Community Survey reported that 4% of respondents participated in tennis in the past 12 months, which was the least popular sport among 26 activity types. This low rate of participation may be due to the fact that there are no tennis court opportunities in the Township. 59% of respondents supported spending for tennis (or pickleball courts), ranking 16th out of 22 facility types. This may suggest that investment in this facility type is not a high priority.

Needs Assessment

An outdoor tennis court was once located in Thamesford, although Township staff indicate that it was removed due to low demand. Provision

¹¹ Tennis Canada. 2016 Annual Report. Retrieved from <http://annualreport2016.tenniscanada.com/>

of outdoor playing courts is supported by renewed interest in the sport and a desire for a broad range of unstructured recreation activities, in general.

However, limited requests for outdoor racquet courts were received from the public consultation process. This suggests that outdoor racquet courts are not currently warranted. This is also supported by the fact that the Township offered an indoor pickleball program that was unsuccessful due to a lack of interest. The need for outdoor racquet courts should be re-evaluated during the next Master Plan update or at a time when quantifiable community demand warrants further investigation.

Recommendations – Outdoor Racquet Courts

In the absence of quantifiable needs, the provision of outdoor racquet courts are not recommended at this time.

6.12 Outdoor Basketball Courts

The Township currently provides an outdoor basketball court at Memorial Park in Embro and a small basketball pad at Harrington Community Park (Figure 24). In addition, outdoor basketball courts are located at school sites, which are available to be used by the public outside of school hours.

Outdoor basketball courts are flexible outdoor recreation facilities as they can accommodate many informal and unstructured activities that require a large, hard surface. Research reveals that outdoor basketball courts are primarily used by male youth and the sport continues to be a popular pastime activity due to its national appeal and low barriers to participation. Compared to other sports such as hockey, basketball is easy to learn, safe, affordable to play, and can be played with one person or in small groups.

The Online Community Survey revealed that 13% of respondents used a basketball court in the past 12 months, which was the seventh least popular activity among 26 facility types. 56% of respondents supported additional Township spending for basketball courts, ranking 17th out of 22 facility types.

Needs Assessment

Outdoor basketball court needs are evaluated based on geographic distribution. Consideration is also given to where youth are located, given that outdoor basketball courts are primarily used by this age group and the fact that youth tend to be limited in the distance that they can travel.

With only one municipal basketball court located at Memorial Park in Embro, the Township has largely relied on access to the outdoor courts located at school sites. A visual scan of outdoor basketball courts in Zorra suggests that there are opportunities to construct a new court in Thamesford to ensure that youth have improved access to these recreation facilities.

With this in mind, the only basketball court in Thamesford is currently located along the northern boundary of the village at the Thamesford Public School, which is about a 20 minute walk from the south end and requires crossing a major road. Statistics Canada’s 2016 Census also reports that 10% of Thamesford’s population are youth and it is expected that this segment of the community will grow as 14% of the population in Thamesford are children (under the age of 9) who will continue to age over the coming years. Future residential development in the south portion of Thamesford will also continue to draw young families, highlighting the need for recreation facilities that appeal to youth.

As such, it is recommended that an outdoor basketball court be developed at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre given that it is centrally located in the south end of Thamesford and that it is complementary to other outdoor recreation facilities currently on site including the sports fields, volleyball courts and the future skateboard park.

Future outdoor basketball courts should be designed to be full size with an asphalt surface, two basketball posts and nets, and painted markings. It is noted that the existing basketball court at Memorial Park is a half court. At the time of replacement, this court should be expanded to a full size court to provide an enhanced playing experience. Outdoor basketball courts should also be designed to be multi-use to accommodate a broad range of uses. This may involve the application of multiple painted markings to support other sports such as ball hockey.

Recommendations – Outdoor Basketball Courts

- 26. Construct a new outdoor basketball court at Thamesford District Recreation Centre. The new court should be designed to be multi-purpose to support a range of activities that require a hard surface. At a minimum, the new court (and future court renewal) should be full size with an asphalt surface, two basketball posts and nets, and painted markings that support basketball and other activities such as ball hockey.

Figure 24: Distribution of Basketball Courts

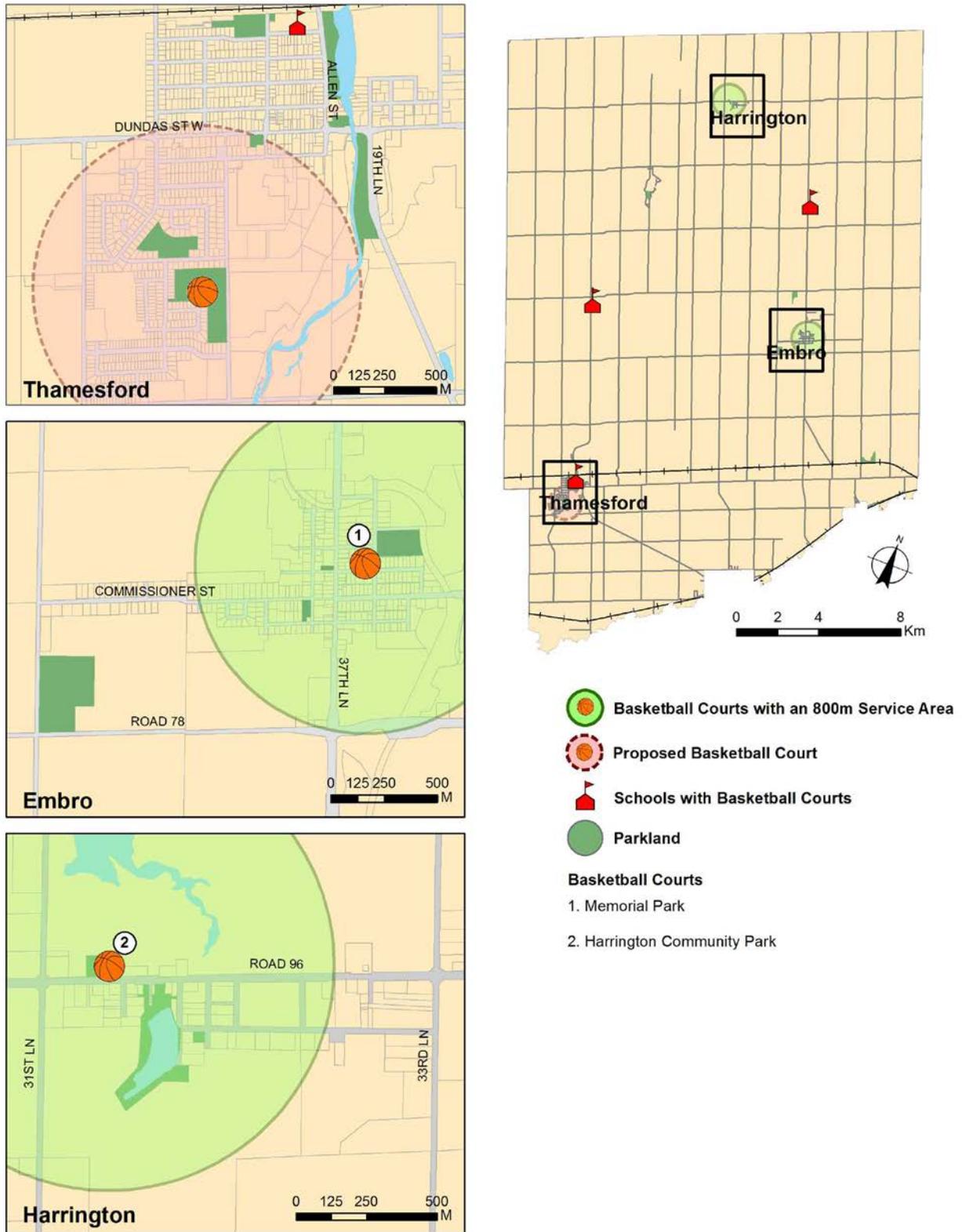
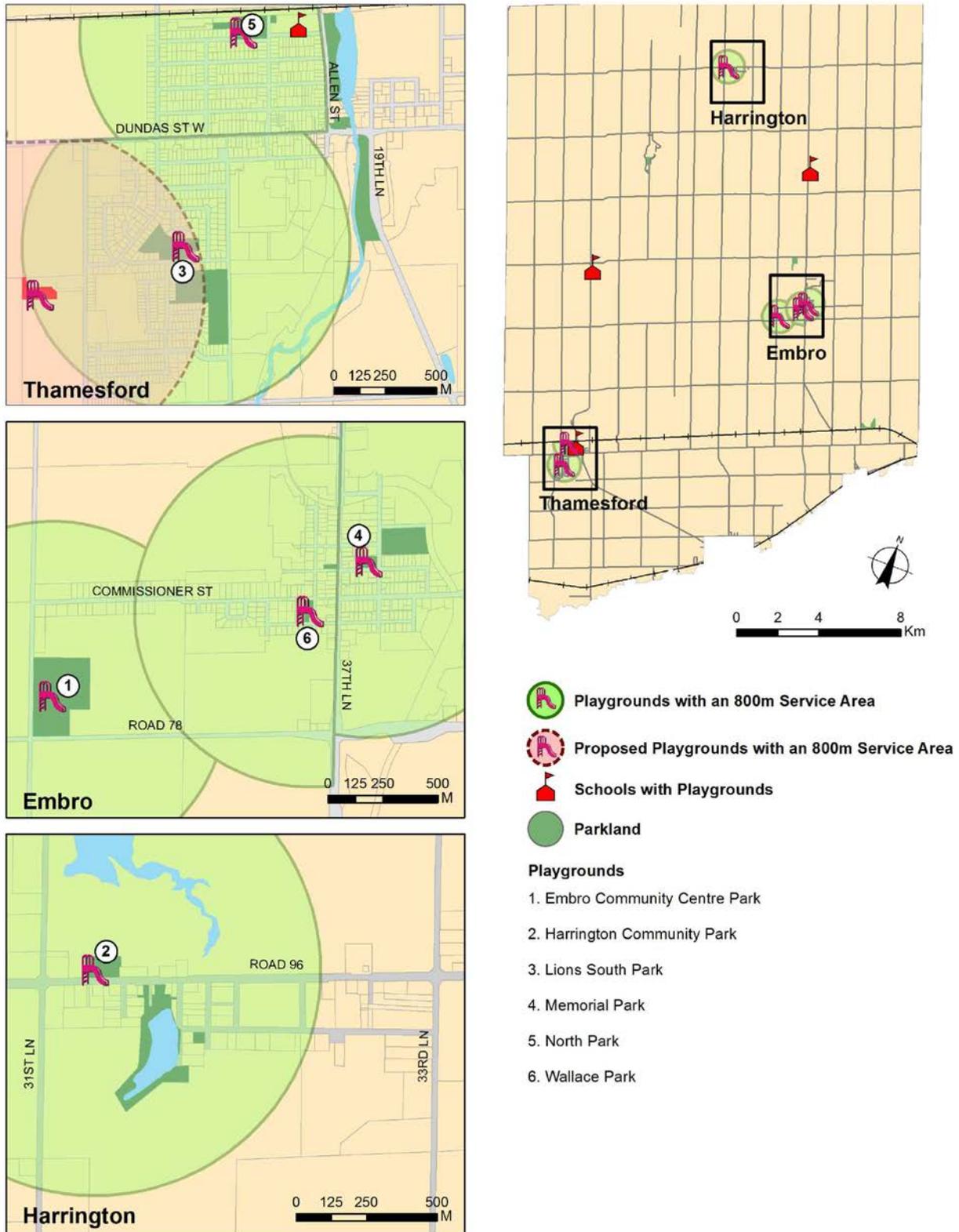


Figure 25: Distribution of Playgrounds



6.13 Playgrounds

The Township provides playgrounds at six locations. This supply includes two in Thamesford, three in Embro, and one in Harrington. Playgrounds can be found at the parks below, and are illustrated in Figure 25.

- Embro Zorra Community Centre Park
- Harrington Community Park
- Lions South Park
- Memoria Park
- North Park
- Wallace Park

Playgrounds serve as neighbourhood-level amenities that benefit early childhood development and fosters cognitive and social skills, and physical activity. Playgrounds are typically provided within a reasonable walking distance of built-up residential areas, without having to cross major barriers such as arterial roads, railways, and waterbodies.

Risky play and outdoor playgrounds are becoming more popular encouraging children and youth to take more risks through climbing, exploring, moving vigorously, and creating their own activities using their imagination. These styles of play are popular in the U.K. and U.S.A., and are gaining traction in Canada. This may be beneficial for children across the County, particularly given that the most recent ParticipACTION report card identified that the over-protection of children (due to the perceived need to ensure that they are healthy and safe) is negatively impacting their ability to be physically active and develop valuable skills.

The Online Community Survey reported that 54% of respondents have used a playground, which was the sixth most popular facility type used in the past 12 months. 84% of respondents supported additional investment in playgrounds, which was the second most popular facility type. This suggests that investment in playgrounds is a high priority among respondents.

Needs Assessment

Playground needs are evaluated based on geography as these facilities are primarily used by families with children. Playgrounds are best suited in neighbourhood parks that are within walking distance of residential areas to maximize access, particularly as children and some young families may not have access to a vehicle. According to best practices, playgrounds should be located within 800 metres of all residential areas, which generally equates to a 10 minute walk. This service area should not be intersected by major barriers such as waterbodies, major roads, or railways. Application of this service area in Zorra reveals service gaps in the following areas:

Northeast corner of Thamesford, east of the Thames River and north of Dundas Street – While there is a small residential neighbourhood in this area that is currently not served by a playground within walking distance, there are currently no parks in this area and no future residential development is expected to occur in this area. As

such, the provision of a playground in this area does not appear feasible.

Southwest corner of Thamesford, west of 15th Line – It is recognized that this area is planned for residential development, which is expected to be completed during the planning period. Based on the draft plan of subdivision, a park is proposed to be located within the future development and as such, a playground should be developed at this park to serve this area.

The condition and type of playground are also important aspects to success. While some playgrounds are in good condition (e.g., Lions South Park), visual observations of Zorra’s playgrounds reveals that a number of other playground locations are aging and in need of replacement such as at Wallace Park and Harrington Park. Playgrounds generally have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years before replacement is required. Ensuring that they are replaced in a timely manner ensures that they offer users safe and engaging experiences. It is recommended that the Township develop a playground replacement program to guide this task. Playground replacement should be consistent with the A.O.D.A. (2005), which requires that the design of new and redeveloping playgrounds incorporate accessible playground features such as using a firm and stable surface. Consideration should be given to the creating unique playground structures at each location, as well as integrating risky and natural play features through the use of ropes, higher heights, boulders, wood, stones, and more.

Recommendations – Playgrounds

- 27. Construct a playground at a future park in the proposed residential subdivision in the southwest corner of Thamesford, west of 15th Line.
- 28. Develop a playground replacement program to renew aging playground structures. The design of new and redeveloped playgrounds should be consistent with the A.O.D.A. (2005) by incorporating accessible playground features such as using a firm and stable surface. Unique playgrounds should also be considered as well as integrating risky and natural play features including ropes, higher heights, boulders, wood, stones, and more.

6.14 Skateboard Parks

A skateboard park is currently being planned in Thamesford, which is being spearheaded by Zorra Water and Wheels Committee. The skateboard park is proposed to be located in Terry Fox Park and is currently expected to be completed by Fall 2018.

Research shows that youth are gravitating towards more unstructured, unscheduled, and low-cost activities. Skateboarding is one of these pursuits that has become increasingly popular in many municipalities. Once considered a fad, skateboarding has demonstrated sustained longevity, many municipalities recognize that skateboard parks can function as positive places that provide safe and accessible venues for youth to engage in physical activities, while socializing with others that share a common interest.

Similar to other recreation facilities that facilitate informal and spontaneous active play, skateboard parks allow for the development of unique skating experiences. Skateboard parks can be designed on a large plaza scale or smaller skate zones using concrete with a variety of basic or challenging components such as rails, stairs, bowls, and jumps. In some communities, modular components have been utilized allowing components to be moved or reoriented as needed. Mobile skateboard parks, which can be moved from one location to another, have also been used in communities where youth populations are dispersed across large geographical areas. While skateboard parks may create increased noise levels, similar to other outdoor recreation facilities, its impacts may be mitigated with appropriate site selection and buffering/screening from adjacent land uses.



Consultation

The Online Community Survey revealed that 7% of respondents participated in skateboarding in the past 7 months, which was the fourth least popular sport. 54% of respondents also supported Township investment in skateboard parks, which was the fifth least supported facility type. This suggests it is not a priority among survey respondents.

Needs Assessment

Youth are commonly considered to be a vulnerable age group in many communities, and from a municipal perspective the provision of skateboard parks provides an opportunity for this segment of the community to engage in physical activities. The distribution of youth is an important consideration in determining skateboard park needs due to the spatial separation of Zorra's villages, combined with the fact that youth are

limited in the distance they can travel. With this in mind, the Township should focus on providing skateboard parks in villages based on highest priority need, with an emphasis placed on where most youth are located.

It is anticipated that the location of a skateboard park planned for Terry Fox Park will satisfy skateboard facility needs in Thamesford and the surrounding area. As this sport is relatively new in the Township, consideration should be given to designing the skateboard park with expansion potential in order to balance the ability to accommodate both new users and more advanced skaters.

Youth in Embro would also benefit from having a local skateboard opportunity, given the geographic distance between these two villages. Once the Thamesford skateboard park is completed, it is recommended that the Township monitor usage over a five year period and evaluate the need for a second skateboard park in Embro to enhance geographically accessible recreation opportunities for local youth. Recognizing that Embro has fewer youth compared to Thamesford, a small scale skateboard park (or “skate zone”) is appropriate to consider. Skate zones are characterized by one or two basic features, such as a rail or curb, which tend to be integrated fairly easily within a designated space within a park. Should there be sufficient demand for a second skateboard park to be located in Embro, the Township should establish a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee to lead fundraising efforts. A funding strategy similar to the structure used for the Thamesford skateboard park is recommended.

Recommendations – Skateboard Parks
<p>29. Once the skateboard park at Terry Fox Park is completed, monitor usage over a five year period and evaluate the need for a small scale skateboard park in Embro. Should there be sufficient demand, a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee should be established to lead fundraising efforts. A funding strategy similar to the structure used for the Thamesford skateboard park is recommended.</p>

6.15 Beach Volleyball Courts

The Township offers two beach volleyball courts, which are located to the rear of the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. These volleyball courts are operated and maintained by the Thamesford Volleyball League.

Beach volleyball has become a popular warm weather activity in many communities. The Thamesford Volleyball League is responsible for fundraising and soliciting donations and through consistent promotion and marketing, the League has flourished in participation. Since its inception over five years ago, the League has grown to 125 participants.

The Online Community Survey found that over the past 12 months, 20% of respondents participated in volleyball, which ranked 18th out of 26 activities. The Student Survey found that volleyball was commonly played by respondents, although it is likely that the activity was primarily participated in school (likely within gymnasium space). The popularity of the sport may also be due to the fact that some schools may have organized volleyball teams.

Thamesford Beach Volleyball Courts



With two volleyball courts, the Thamesford Volleyball League indicate that they are at capacity and are no longer able to accommodate new participants. A request was made for lighting the courts to attract and accommodate new participants and to extend playing times into the evening. The group indicated that they are open to making a financial contribution to undertaken these upgrades.

Needs Assessment

There is no standard provision target for beach volleyball courts as these facilities are generally provided based on local needs. While beach volleyball courts typically facilitate unstructured activities, it is recognized that there is a strong organized presence in Zorra that has expressed the desire to enhance the existing courts to accommodate more participants.

To maintain growth of the sport, it is recommended that the Township explore options to enhance the supply of volleyball courts at the Thamesford District Recreation Complex. The following two options are proposed. It is recommended that the Township undertake with the organization a costing exercise of each to identify a preferred option. Discussions regarding supporting amenities (e.g., seating and portable washrooms) and financial contributions from the organization should also be undertaken.

Option #1 – Install lighting at the existing beach volleyball courts was identified as the preferred option by the organization. Given that beach volleyball is a social sport, lighting the courts would allow the organization to play into the evening. However, the potential impact of lighting the beach volleyball courts on the adjacent residential dwellings would need to be considered, although there are new lighting technologies that minimize light pollution.

Option #2 – Construct one additional beach volleyball court and monitor usage - to allow the organization to facilitate simultaneous games. This option would result in a total of three beach volleyball courts at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. Once

completed, the Township should monitor its beach volleyball court usage and develop additional courts, should demand necessitate.

Recommendations – Beach Volleyball Courts

- 30. Working with the Thamesford Beach Volleyball League, explore the cost/benefit of the following options to enhance the supply of beach volleyball courts at the Thamesford District Recreation Complex:
 - a. Install lighting at the existing beach volleyball courts.
 - b. Construct one or more new beach volleyball courts.

6.16 Other Specialty Recreation Facilities

The Township provides a number of specialty recreation facilities such as leash-free dog parks and lawn bowling greens. There are no generally accepted service targets for these types of facilities as there are a number of factors that need to be considered including, but not limited to, market demand, partnership opportunities, and available resources.

Over time, the Township may also receive requests for recreation facilities that are not currently offered in Zorra. It is recommended that unsolicited proposals from established organizations be supported by a proponent-led assessment that demonstrates the risks, benefits of the Township becoming involved, as well as a business plan and funding strategy.

Recommendations – Other Specialty Recreation Facilities

- 31. Unsolicited proposals from established organizations shall be supported by a proponent-led assessment that demonstrates the risks and benefits of the Township, as well as a business plan and funding strategy.

Leash-Free Dog Parks

The Township’s leash free dog park is located at Grace Patterson Park in Thamesford. With municipal by-laws regulating the use of leashes, off-leash dog parks provide pet owners with the opportunity to exercise and socialize their dogs in a controlled area. That said, dog parks should be not viewed strictly for pets, as observations in locations across the province suggest that they are also beneficial for residents and community interaction, and help to engage residents living in isolation.

Leash free areas have become common across the Province over the past decade, particularly in urban areas with medium and high density residential dwellings. There are no measurable provision standards for the development of these types of facilities as they are generally based on qualitative factors. Grace Patterson Park is located within walking distance of many residents in Thamesford; however, these facilities are generally not

viewed as walk-to neighbourhood amenities. It is expected that most dog owners drive to leash free areas. Based on the feedback received through the public consultation process, there is limited support to warrant the development of a second leash free area in Zorra at this time.

Lawn Bowling Greens

There are two lawn bowling greens in the Township. The Thamesford Lawn Bowling Club operates its own facility. The Embro Lawn Bowling Club operates a facility that is owned by the Township, which is located at the Embro Zorra Community Centre.

Lawn bowling is primarily played by older adults and seniors, although there have been efforts to market the sport to youth players to generate interest among younger demographics and thereby maintain or grow the sport. The Ontario Lawn Bowling Association encourages Clubs to initiate a "Bowls Buddy", which partners experienced veterans with younger or entry-level players. The Association also holds a youth tournament across Ontario and the winner receives a Youth Bowler of the Year award.

The Ontario Lawn Bowling Association estimates that there are nearly 9,000 members and 155 clubs across the Province.¹² Locally, the Township's two lawn bowling clubs have a combined membership of 60 participants. Through focus group consultations, it was identified that local participation in the sport is stable or declining.

Experience in other municipalities indicated that lawn bowling is not a growth sport, which was reaffirmed through the consultation process. The Township's lawn bowling organizations have made efforts to increase participation, such as marketing the sport to youth, families, and persons with disabilities, with limited degrees of success. The Township's aging population has the potential to increase participation in the sport, however, there is no evidence that suggests that these aging baby boomers will take an active interest in the sport. With a combined membership of 60 participants, it is expected that the Township's two existing lawn bowling facilities will be sufficient to serve the needs over the planning period even if successful in achieving some interest and participation by younger residents of the Township.

Community Gardens

The Township does not currently provide any community gardens. A community garden can be administered by a municipality, local organization, place of worship, or community group free of charge or for a nominal fee. The popularity and interest in community gardens is on the rise, which is driven by factors such as food security, healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and providing a sustainable food source.

¹² Bowls Club. Bowls Canada Boulingrin. Retrieved from <http://bowlsclub.org>

The popularity of these facilities are increasing across the Province, particularly in more urban communities with medium and high density residential dwellings with limited gardening opportunities. While gardening is a natural complement to the agricultural roots in rural communities, they are less commonly found in Township's such as Zorra given that most residents tend to have sufficient private space for their own garden.

Gardening opportunities were suggested through the Student Survey and the Recreational Needs Survey that the Township conducted in 2014 revealed that gardening was one of the most popular activities undertaken by respondents. It is also recognized that at a Council meeting in January 2017, students from the Zorra Highland Park Public School suggested the creation of a community garden and greenhouse at the Embro Zorra Community Centre. Township staff encouraged the school to engage local organizations that would be willing to establishing a community garden and be responsible for monitoring and maintenance. This direction is consistent with the community development approach recommended in this Master Plan, which encourages organizations to provide quality programs and services, with the assistance of the Township (discussed further in section 7.2).



Harrington Dam and Conservation Area

7.0 Arts and Cultural Opportunities

This section provides a high level examination of arts and cultural opportunities in the Township.

7.1 Defining Arts and Culture

Arts and cultural opportunities are vital components of achieving a high quality of life, bringing in a wide range of benefits to individuals and communities. For the purposes of this Master Plan, arts and culture is broadly defined as the industries and resources that support artistic talent, expression, built and natural heritage, museum and archives, libraries, events, and festivals. Activities may include, but not be limited to, painting, creating sculptures, singing, dancing, theatre, drama, arts and crafts, attending a cultural or heritage event, visiting a museum or historical site, using the library, visiting an art gallery or exhibit, attending a musical or theatrical performance, and more. It is these arts and cultural resources that form the backbone of the Township's creative industries, cultural spaces, the natural heritage system, and the delivery of municipal and community-based programs and activities.

Municipalities such as Zorra have long recognized the importance of a vibrant arts and cultural community. During the consultation process for this Master Plan, there was recognition that arts and culture are a vital component of Zorra's identity.

7.2 Benefits of Arts and Culture

In recent years, trends reveal that there is a greater desire for non-sport opportunities and a desire for other activities such as arts and culture. The benefits of arts and culture in a community, both intrinsic and extrinsic, have been widely heralded through numerous studies and include: encouragement of social interaction, stimulation of creativity and personal thought, contributions to economic development and tourism, the facilitation of healthy lifestyles, and more. The Township and its community partners provide many quality festivals and special events and their contributions to quality of life are many, and include (but are not limited to):

- Creating a sense of local pride through community building, place-making, and providing quality experiences.
- Offering a greater variety of leisure-time activities for residents to pursue.

- Generating economic multipliers, particularly with events increasingly being marketed outside of communities to draw tourists to capitalize on the success of established local events thus forming an important element of broader tourism strategies.
- Encouraging social interaction by encouraging residents to get involved in the community, and providing venues where new residents to the Township can understand what makes the Township unique (and interact with established residents).

7.3 Strengthening Arts and Cultural Policy

In 2006, a report prepared for the Government of Canada identified that culture is one of the five pillars of community sustainability. Observations in communities across Canada and around the world demonstrate the multi-faceted benefits that a thriving arts and culture sector can bring. Although the sector is commonly associated with performing arts centres, museums, galleries, and theatres, arts and culture at its core is about shared experiences between people that connects a community.

Municipalities approached arts and cultural planning in a strategic manner. Arts and culture has become a greater part of municipal land use planning, economic development, community improvement, and revitalization processes. Arts and culture also promotes place-making and quality of place through planning policies.

The County of Oxford Official Plan encourages that where possible, the protection, promotion, and education of natural and cultural heritage features is encouraged. Specific policies regarding natural and cultural resources are contained in Section 3.3 of the Official Plan, which contains a range of policies regarding the preservation and development of natural heritage. The Township's Strategic Plan also recognizes that Zorra has a rich cultural background – which is celebrated through annual festivals, events, performing arts, etc. – however it does not articulate any actions to continue advancing the arts and cultural sector. To recognize the importance of arts and culture within these strategic guiding documents, it is recommended that the Township examine strategies to strengthen appropriate areas of the Strategic Plan and Official Plan (in collaboration with Oxford County and area municipalities) during the next review period.

The Township does not currently have any policies that deal specifically with arts and cultural programs, facilities, installations, spending, etc., although it is recognized that where possible, the Township has used various municipal spaces to showcase and display local arts and culture work. An example of a specific policy could deal with public outdoor art, paintings or other visual art displayed within Township-owned and operated facilities, commissioned murals on the side of Township facilities, etc. Some Municipalities across Ontario have developed public art policies that outline the benefits of public art, contain provisions for public art as

elements of municipal spaces, defines a process through which public art is selected, and articulates the importance of recognizing local artists. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Township develop a public art policy, as it also formalizes a process of community-building with the local arts and culture community and in turn creates opportunities to recognize, support, and celebrate local artisans and cultural groups.

To make policies implementable, the Township will need to support them with tools such as funding strategies that target investment in the creative industries. A sustainable funding strategy can help maintain and expand the cultural infrastructure through initiatives such as supporting community organizations, the provision and maintenance of public art, and more. Historically, federal and provincial-level funding has been available to support communities in the pursuit of raising the public profile of arts and culture.

In 2017, the Creative Canada Policy Framework was completed to support and guide the development of Canada’s creative industry. Several key directions were identified in this policy framework, including investment in the Canada Council for the Arts, which provides financial support for developing artistic skills, program development, and more. There are other external funding sources that may be available through the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport. In collaboration with the arts and cultural community, the Township is encouraged to create a funding strategy to increase investment in local creative industries.

Recommendations – Strengthening Arts and Cultural Policy
<p>32. Create a Public Art Policy that outlines the benefits of public art, a process through which public art is selected, and the importance of recognizing local artists and cultural groups.</p>
<p>33. Examine strategies to strengthen appropriate areas of the Strategic Plan and Official Plan (in collaboration with Oxford County and area municipalities) during the next review period to further recognize the importance of the arts and culture sector.</p>

7.4 Arts and Cultural Assets

The following arts and cultural facilities are found in the Township. These facilities may be owned by the Township, partially-owned by the Township in partnership with another organization, or are non-municipally owned.

Beachville District Museum

Owned through a partnership between the Townships of South-West Oxford and Zorra, and the Beachville District Historical Society, the Beachville District Museum houses a selection of historical artifacts from the surrounding area. The museum, which is located in Beachville, offers a

number of educational events for children and families. The facility space can be booked for weddings and other gatherings.

Oxford County Library

Oxford County Library offers three public library branches in Zorra located in Thamesford, Embro, and Harrington. The largest library branch, located in Thamesford, is partially owned by the Township. The two smaller library branches are provided in municipal spaces at Embro Town Hall and Harrington Hall. The Oxford County Library offers various library programs at each location, such as technology classes, reading groups, chess, writing, and music.

Thistle Theatre

The Thistle Theatre is a production group that utilizes space at the Embro Town Hall. The organization was formed in 1994 and produces one to two plays per year. Recently, installation of a lift at the Embro Town Hall, achieved with funding assistance from the Ontario 150 Community Capital Program, has improved accessibility of the facility.

Places of Worship

Places of worship located throughout the Township offer facility spaces, programs, and services for recreation, arts and cultural opportunities, although not all spaces are available for such purposes. Places of worship in the Township include, but are not limited to the following:

- Brooksdale United Church
- Chalmers United Church
- Christ Anglican Church
- Crossroads Alliance Church
- East Nissouri United Church
- Knox Presbyterian Church
- Knox United Church
- Maple Grove Christian Retreat
- St. John's Anglican Church
- Truth Community Church
- Westminster United Church

Mapping Arts and Cultural Assets

Presently, there is no formalized inventory of arts and cultural organizations and services in the Township, with the exception of those that are promoted through the Zorra Now community guide. However, the community guide does not speak to private arts and cultural providers that do not use the community facilities that are described in this section, such as home-operated businesses or other privately-owned spaces. The process of inventorying all arts and cultural opportunities, known as "cultural mapping" could be undertaken to determine all providers in the Township. Cultural mapping builds on the premise that no one organization can fully

meet the needs of the community and that working together ground helps to share and maximize limited resources with a common goal in mind.

A cultural mapping exercise supports directions contained in the Township’s Strategic Plan to inventory Zorra’s cultural assets for the purposes of preserving and promoting the local arts and cultural sector. Understanding what community-based arts and cultural assets are currently available is one of the first steps to long range cultural planning. Once the cultural mapping process is completed, the Township can leverage this information to identify potential partnerships, as well as further explore policies and strategies to bolster the municipal arts and cultural sector.

Recommendations – Arts and Cultural Assets

34. Inventory and map all local arts and cultural providers, programs, and services available in the Township with a view of promoting opportunities and addressing gaps in service provision. The information gleaned from this task should be used to identify potential partnerships, policies, and strategies to bolster the municipal arts and cultural sector.



Embro Town Hall, Thistle Theatre, and Library

7.5 Arts and Cultural Space

The theatre at the Embro Town Hall is the Township’s sole arts and cultural space, which is used by the Thistle Theatre. The Township’s multi-purpose spaces are used for a variety of arts and cultural opportunities such as the Embro Fair Dinner Theatre, Highland Games, Harrington Hall Dances, and other special events that are important in celebrating local history and traditions. Site visits to these facilities suggest that these spaces have the potential to accommodate arts and culture-based activities as they are equipped with amenities that are typically desired such as full kitchens, lighting, storage space, and more. Following the completion of the cultural mapping exercise, it is recommended that the Township engage local arts and cultural groups to explore opportunities to make use of municipal spaces, which are currently underutilized.

With respect to outdoor facilities, special events and festivals that are held in Zorra all benefit from the Township’s parks and recreation system that offer scenic, inspirational, and opportune locations for arts and cultural activities. Future park development, renewal, and rejuvenation processes, particularly at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre and Embro Zorra Community Centre Park, should continue to consider the integration of arts and cultural infrastructure and amenities. For example, spaces such as outdoor amphitheatres, stages, art venues, dance areas, etc. can accommodate programmed and non-programmed usage, and could effectively complement the Township’s natural areas.

Ensuring appropriate servicing exists within appropriate parks and recreation facilities (e.g., water and electricity) can be useful for encouraging arts and cultural uses to take place within public spaces. In this regard, continued engagement of Zorra’s arts and cultural groups is appropriate during the parks and recreation design phase in order to understand how the Township’s indoor and outdoor facilities may better facilitate organized and unstructured arts and cultural activities. Encouraging community-based programming in public spaces (such as arts and drama classes) will also serve to increase awareness of the Township’s parks and recreation system, offer interesting experiences, and can provide a dual benefit of promoting physical activity and cultural expression.

Recommendations – Arts and Cultural Space
35. Engage local arts and cultural groups to explore opportunities to make use of municipal spaces once a cultural mapping exercise is completed.
36. Guided by consultation with the Township’s arts and cultural groups, the planning and design of parks and recreation facility development, renewal, and rejuvenation should consider the integration of appropriate arts and cultural infrastructure and

Recommendations – Arts and Cultural Space

amenities that can facilitate a range of structured and spontaneous activities and events.

7.6 Greater Coordination in Arts and Culture

In a time of constrained budgets, the Township cannot solely meet the arts and cultural needs of its residents. Fortunately, the Township has a strong cultural support system made up of dedicated community organizations that assist with fulfilling this role. If provided with the appropriate support, the community-based delivery model has a greater ability to provide quality services, as well as generate internal growth and stability. The Township and the community can also collaborate with other agencies and levels of government to maximize delivery potential if the means to communicate and share ideas can be effectively implemented.

It is to the great advantage of the Township and its arts and cultural community to work together in facilitating and coordinating the development of local cultural resources and creative activities, in order to holistically represent the wide variety of interests and better define a collective sense of place through the arts and cultural sector. At minimum, annual roundtable discussions between the Township and providers of arts and cultural programs, services, special events, and festivals should be convened to identify and discuss issues and gaps, brainstorm strategies and solutions, and other matters with a view of strengthening the coordination of arts and cultural offerings in the Township.

Recommendations – Greater Coordination in Arts and Culture

37. Convene regular roundtable meetings (at minimum once each year) with the arts and culture sector to identify discuss issues and gaps, strategies, solutions and other matters with a view of strengthening relationships and coordination of the arts and cultural offerings in the Township.

7.7 Marketing and Promoting Arts and Culture

Awareness of arts and cultural programs, special events, and festivals must be developed in a manner that reaches residents (and visitors), particularly as the lack or absence of information is commonly identified as a barrier to participation. Special events and festivals that occur within Zorra are advertised through the Zorra Now magazine, which is available in hardcopy and online. During the focus groups, stakeholders identified that special events and festivals are also promoted on individual websites; however, they believe that the majority of information is spread through word of mouth. Guided by the cultural mapping exercise and in collaboration with community stakeholders, efforts should be made to

explore strategies to enhance the marketing and promotion of arts and cultural programs, services, festivals, and events in Zorra, such as improving online presence, cross-promotion among groups, or other strategies identified by the Township and stakeholders.

One of the key local identities that Zorra has to offer is its festivals and special events, which are typically built upon partnerships between various levels of government, the community, and the private sector. Improved marketing and visibility, for both local and non-local audiences, is needed in order for these festivals and special events to reach their full potential, particularly as these events are vital economic generators that allow organizations to continue operating and providing events each year. These special events are important to celebrate local history and traditions and as a result, the success of these events is necessary.

The creation of a strategy specifically dealing with local festivals and special events is recommended to better assist with the coordination and delivery of these activities. This strategy should address key areas such as establishing the vision, goals, and objectives for all special events and festivals operated by the Township and its community partners, the roles and responsibilities for all parties involved, funding and resource support, and other relevant matters.

Recommendations – Marketing and Promoting the Arts and Cultural Sector

- 38. Guided by cultural mapping, work with the Township’s stakeholders to explore strategies to enhance the marketing and promotion of local arts and cultural opportunities in Zorra, such as improving the online presence of providers of programs, special events, and festivals, or other strategies identified by the Township or community partners.
- 39. Undertake a Special Events and Festivals Strategy to establish the goals, objectives, and directions required to facilitate longevity, quality, and vitality of special events and festivals offered in Zorra.

8.0 Service Delivery

This section contains a high level review of the Township's service delivery model to identify areas of high performance and opportunities for improvement.

8.1 2011 Recreation Department Organizational and Operation Review

The Township has been proactive in improving the delivery of recreation facilities, programs, and services. In 2011, the Township undertook a Recreation Department Organizational and Operation Review to determine if the organizational structure of the Recreation Department and operations was sufficient or if improvements were warranted to create more effective and efficient systems. As a result of the Review, 15 recommendations were developed, which spoke to staff training, user fees, canteen sales, the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee, business planning, and more. According to a follow-up staff report in 2014, all recommendations have been implemented or are in progress. The 2011 Review is augmented by the service delivery recommendations identified in this Master Plan (described in the forthcoming sections).

8.2 Township's Role in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture

Generally speaking, municipal recreation departments operate under two models – direct and indirect service delivery:

- Direct service delivery is where municipalities are the providers of physical space as well as the programs that take place within them. This delivery model is often utilized by larger municipalities that possess sufficient resources to provide this level of service.
- Indirect service delivery is typically used in municipalities with limited financial and human resources and as such, the municipality's primary role is to provide physical space, while programming and activities that occur within these spaces are operated by local organizations and community groups.

Zorra's Recreation Department currently utilizes a blend of these two approaches as a provider of space with some municipal programming that is augmented by programs and services provided by local organizations. This practice has proven to be successful and as the Township continues to grow or evolve, it will be important to build on the successes achieved by all parties. For the Township, this means a continued emphasis on providing high quality spaces that are adequately supported by staff and financial

resources, which in turn enable community partners to deliver high quality services.

It is recommended that the Township formally adopt a “community development” approach to provide community organizations with the resources (financial or otherwise) in order to enable these groups to deliver programs and services over the long-term. Community development focuses on the strength and capacity of local residents who are invested in their communities. The community development approach means that the first priority for the Township is to explore ways to allow groups to sustain and enhance their level of service. Based on community development model, the following service delivery responsibilities for the Township are proposed:

- Understand local and regional demographics, community issues, and emerging trends to consider all aspects of the population.
- Determine gaps and needed improvements (with an emphasis on community and individual health improvements).
- Build and foster partnerships with key providers and stakeholders in the delivery of services.
- Support community groups, volunteers, and partners.
- Provide facilities where gaps exist or the capacity is not present in the community (rationalized by justifiable need).
- Support or facilitate social activities that promote community interaction, vibrancy, and cohesion.
- Educate about and promote the benefits of physical activity, community services, etc.
- Develop meaningful policies and procedures that enhance accountability and transparency.
- Advance opportunities for parks, recreation, arts, and culture.
- Provide exceptional customer service.
- Engage the community in meaningful participation through planning, decision-making, and service delivery.

Recognizing that the Township does not currently have a formalized mandate for the Recreation Department, it is recommended that one be created that focuses on providing quality facilities, while supporting community partners in delivering quality programs and services. With this in mind, the following mandate should be considered, which aligns with the Township’s Strategic Plan and the Strategic Directions identified in this Master Plan.

“ The Recreation Department works with community partners to provide a broad range of parks, facilities, programs, and services that are safe, affordable, and inclusive of all residents. ”

The Township is encouraged to adopt a mandate to guide the Recreation Department over the foreseeable future. The mandate should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving provision of parks, recreation, arts, and cultural opportunities, as necessary.

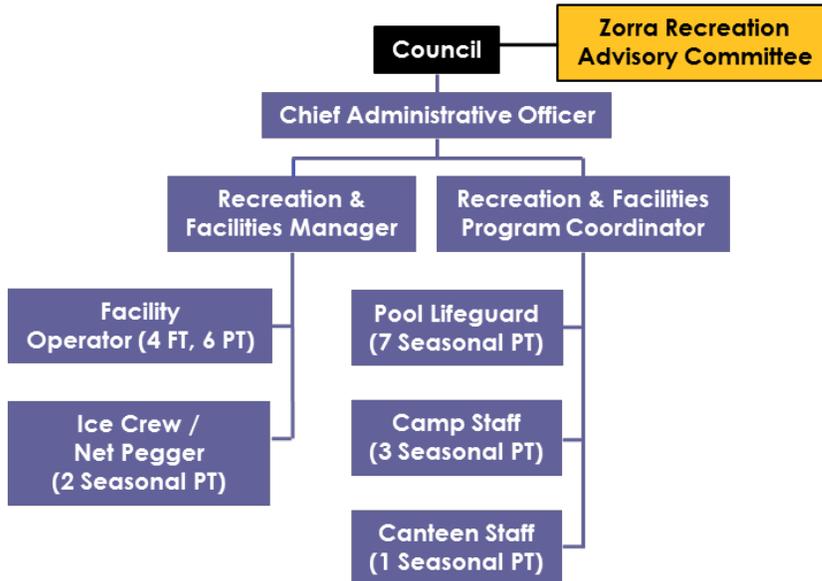
Recommendations – Township’s Role in Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Culture
40. Adopt a mandate to guide the Recreation Department in providing quality facilities, while supporting community partners in the delivery of programs and services

8.3 Organizational Structure

A high level review of the organizational structure of the Township’s Recreation Department was undertaken, which is summarized in Figure 26. From an operational perspective, the structure is working well given the emphasis on providing and maintaining physical indoor and outdoor space (including parks).

To assist the Township in making informed recreation decisions, the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee (ZRAC) is a key resource. The purpose of this group is to advise Council on all matters related to the provision of leisure and recreation services in the Township and to promote and maintain communication with the public on parks and recreation needs.¹³

Figure 26: Recreation Department Organizational Structure

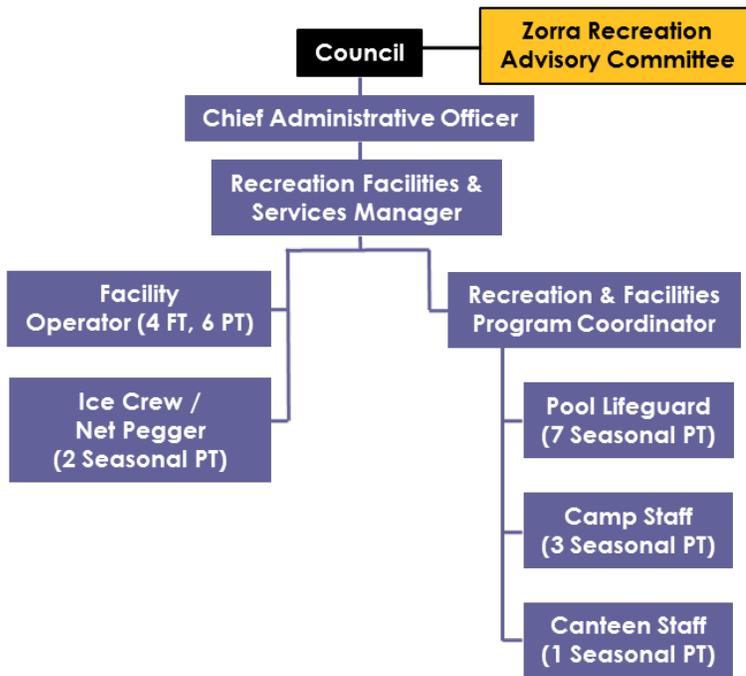


¹³ Township of Zorra. Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee Terms of Reference.

A recent addition to the Township’s Recreation Department is the Recreation & Facilities Program Coordinator. This staff position is a positive move forward in reconfirming the Township’s commitment to providing quality parks and recreation experiences, maximizing the use of municipal facilities, and supporting community groups in providing community-based activities, services, events, and more.

The Township’s Recreation & Facilities Manager position will be vacated in 2018. Generally speaking, the role of the Recreation & Facilities Manager is to manage the operations and administration of all recreation facilities in the Township. This is a very critical role to ensure that Zorra’s recreation facilities function appropriately and that they are positioned to meet the needs of residents. As the Township will be required to fill this role, there is an opportunity to evaluate its staffing structure to optimize internal operations.

Figure 27: Recommended Organizational Structure



At present, the Recreation & Facilities Manager and the Recreation & Facilities Program Coordinator share various departmental responsibilities and both report to the CAO. In most municipalities, the recreation department is led by a single staff position (e.g. a Manager or Director) to allow for greater coordination, decision-making, and oversight within the recreation department. A single manager position also provides one point of contact with the CAO to ensure that information is conveyed consistently and with clarity. Over time and based on community input during the Master Plan process, there will be greater expectations for quality parks, recreation, arts, and culture experiences in Zorra. To ensure these expectations are met, the Township will require strong leadership within the recreation department. As a result, a Recreation Facilities & Services

Manager position should be established to oversee all aspects of the recreation department. Responsibilities of this position should include all existing responsibilities should include expanding the role of the soon to be vacated Recreation & Facilities Manager position to work closely with the Recreation & Facilities Program Coordinator to oversee and provide direction on the development of recreation programs, services, and community development. Figure 27 illustrates the recommended organizational structure, which is similar to staffing structures used in other municipalities.

In small rural municipalities, it is also common for staff members to fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities, emphasizing the need to ensure that staff are cross-trained in multiple areas of expertise (which will be discussed in the next section). A broad review of staff duties reveals that there are some similarities in staff responsibilities, such as liaising with the public and managing facility contracts and bookings. To maximize internal capacity and efficiency, as well as eliminate redundant responsibilities, the Township should periodically review, revise, and update the roles and responsibilities of each staff member.

Recommendations – Organizational Structure
<p>41. Develop a Recreation Facilities & Services Manager position to oversee all aspects of the Recreation Department. The position should include existing responsibilities of the Recreation & Facilities Manager, and working closely with the Recreation & Facilities Program Coordinator to oversee and provide direction on the development of programs, services, and community development.</p>
<p>42. Periodically review, revise, and update the roles and responsibilities of each staff member within the Department to maximize internal capacity and efficiency, and to eliminate duplication of duties.</p>

8.4 Continuous Professional Development

Experience in other municipalities has revealed that consumers of public parks, recreation, arts, and culture services are more demanding than ever before. As a result, the Township is faced with enhanced expectations for high quality customer service as its population continues to grow and evolve, particularly as new residents come from urbanized areas who seek small town charm, but desire the same level of customer service, programming, and facilities that they have become accustomed to.

A well-managed, quality-focused staffing complement within the Recreation Department is considered to be one of the fundamental components of an effective service delivery system. Top performing municipal departments acknowledge this by allocating sufficient resources to ensure that their staff are well trained to fulfill the service expectations of their customers. The way in which a customer is treated by staff is often

perceived to be just as important as the quality of the facility, program, or service that they are using. Consequently, progressive organizations are placing greater emphasis on their ability to meet the expectations of their users, while also realizing that the consistent delivery of quality customer service is a planned activity that must be carefully managed and effectively coordinated.

At present, the Township ensures that its staff members are trained according to appropriate regulations including WHIMIS and accessible customer service standards, among other necessary training in order to fulfill certain roles and responsibilities. A staff development and training plan is recommended to ensure that the Township’s facilities and services are delivered by a qualified and high performing staff team. In support of this, consideration should be given to proper succession planning (in support of the Township’s Strategic Plan) to preserve knowledge and expertise as the staffing team changes.

The Township should continually explore and invest in professional development opportunities ranging from on-the-job training, seminars, conferences, etc. to ensure that staff are armed with the appropriate skills, tools, and resources to deliver a high quality parks, recreation, arts, and cultural experience. This may include cross-training staff, training for mechanical equipment and pool operations, etc. Financial resources required for professional training and development should be incorporated through the annual budgeting process, as necessary.

Recommendations – Continuous Professional Development
<p>43. Prepare a staff development and training plan, with consideration given to proper succession planning to preserve knowledge and expertise as the staffing team changes.</p> <p>44. Regularly explore and invest in professional development opportunities to continually deliver high quality community services. This process should be incorporated through the annual budgeting process, as necessary.</p>

8.5 Programs and Activities

The availability of quality programs that are convenient, accessible, affordable, and relevant are essential for fostering a healthy and active community. The Township currently provides some direct recreation programs, which are augmented by community-led programs offered by the Oxford County Library, places of worship, sports organizations, and other community groups. The addition of a Recreation and Facilities Program Coordinator has demonstrated the Township’s commitment to ensure that residents are engaged in a variety of parks, recreation, arts, and culture activities and developing new opportunities to maximize the use of the Township’s facilities.

The Township's core focus of programming is currently public skating and swimming, which are akin to activities that are typically offered in municipalities. More recently, the Township has offered new programs such as shinny, pickleball, and summer camp. It is recognized there is presently a duplicate summer camp program offered by a non-municipal group and that efforts have been made to collaborate together on future camp projects. Where possible, continuing to work together to build upon these summer camp programs is recommended.

It is recommended that the Township continue to explore new program opportunities that appeal to all age groups. Emphasis should be placed on providing complementary programs that are provided by the non-municipal sector and consistent with the community development approach, efforts should be made to support community groups in developing and providing community-based programs. This approach offers benefits in sharing roles, responsibilities, and resources, while minimizing program duplication and competition for a finite number of participants.

Through the public consultation process undertaken for this Master Plan, participants suggested a number of potential parks, recreation, arts, and culture programs that they would like to see offered in the Township. Many of the suggestions were non-sport activities such as fitness, arts and crafts (e.g., painting, music, etc.), and cooking, which is a common trend observed in other communities, highlighting the need to offer balanced programming that appeals to all interests. With ample multi-use and meeting spaces available, the Township should explore (either alone or in partnership with local organizations) offering the suggested programs identified by residents on a trial basis to evaluate program demand. The Township should monitor participation levels to identify programs that should be implemented on a regular basis.

Recommendations – Programs and Activities
<p>45. Either alone or in partnership with a local organization, explore opportunities to offer the parks, recreation, arts, and culture programs suggested by residents in this Master Plan on a trial basis to evaluate program demand. Participation levels should be monitored to identify programs that should be implemented on a regular basis.</p>
<p>46. Program duplication should be discouraged. Where possible, duplicated programs should be combined to enhance program efficiency and the use of resources.</p>

8.6 Rates and Fees Scan

The Township provides a comprehensive fee structure for facility rentals, which are based on the type of facility, renter, and time of day (prime or non-prime time). The Township’s rates and fees were compared with surrounding municipalities including Thames Centre, Ingersoll, Woodstock, Tavistock, and St. Marys. A high level summary comparing the Township’s rates and fees with the benchmark municipalities is summarized in Table 14. A detailed comparison of benchmark municipalities can be found in **Appendix F**.

It should be noted that this rates and fee review had certain limitations as direct comparison to certain facilities (such as multi-purpose spaces) is challenged by the various sizes, configurations, and rate structures of each community. Direct comparison to outdoor sports facilities also had limitations in that the approach to each facility type may differ substantial by municipality. Where possible, certain assumptions were made to identify a common comparator such as an hourly rate for hall rentals or a game rate (e.g., one hour per soccer game and two hours per ball game).

Generally speaking and as noted on the following page, the Township’s rates and fees are below the benchmarked average. The Township was above the benchmarked average in two areas. Non-prime time ice for adults is slightly higher compared to the benchmarked average given that Ingersoll and St. Marys both have notably lower comparable rates. Soccer rates in Zorra were also higher compared to the benchmarked average due to the fact that the City of Woodstock has much lower soccer game fees.

It is recognized that the Township has expressed the desire to review its recreation user fees to ensure that they are affordable for residents, while also ensuring that they are appropriate in recovering a sustainable portion of the cost to operate the municipal facilities. The Township’s first step in this process must be to determine the cost (direct and indirect) that is required to deliver each type of facility. Once this is understood, the Township can then identify the desired level of cost recovery to determine if adjustments to the Township’s rates and fees are needed.

Recommendations – Rates and Fees Scan

47. The Township should identify the direct and indirect costs required to deliver each type of facility and/or program. From there, a desired level of cost recovery (and benchmarked comparison) can be determined for the Township’s rates and fees.

Table 14: Summary of Facility Rental Fees

Facility / Program Rates and Fees	Township of Zorra Rate	Benchmarked Average	Township of Zorra Above / Below Average
Arenas (Per Hour)			
Minor Prime	\$136	\$154.15	Below
Minor Non-Prime	\$105	\$104.65	On Par
Adult Prime	\$173	\$181.69	Below
Adult Non-Prime	\$136	\$131.63	Above
Public Skate (Per Person / Family)			
Family	\$5.00	\$9.08	Below
Senior	No rate offered	\$3.75	-
Adult	\$2.00	\$3.75	Below
Children / Youth	\$2.00	\$2.90	Below
Pre-School	Free	\$3.00	Below
Shinny	\$2.00	\$5.50	Below
Public Swimming (Per Person / Family)			
Family Pass	\$9.00	\$9.90	Below
Senior	No rate offered	\$3.63	-
Adult	\$3.00	\$4.15	Below
Children / Youth	\$2.00	\$2.93	Below
Pre-School	Free	\$3.22	Below
Swim Programs	\$42.00 - \$58.00	Varies	-
Private Swim Lessons	\$15.00 - \$21.00	Varies	-
Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms (Per Hour)			
Community Meeting Room	Free	\$31.06	Below
Public Meeting Room Rental	\$28 - \$158	Varies	-
Hall (Weekend Prime Rate)	\$537.00	\$540.40	Below
Soccer Fields (Per Game)			
Minor	\$12.35	\$29.91	Below
Adult	\$51.01	\$40.56	Above
Ball Diamonds (Per Game)			
Minor Unlit	\$22.60	\$25.43	Below
Minor Lit	-	\$33.84	-
Adult Unlit	\$41.00	\$44.24	Below
Adult Lit	\$53.00	\$57.19	Below

Multi-purpose and meeting room rates vary depending on the type of function. Community groups have free use of certain meeting rooms. Certain assumptions were made for soccer and ball diamond rates (e.g., one hour per soccer game, two hours per ball game, approximately 12 weeks (minor) to 18 weeks (adult) per season, etc.). Soccer field rates may vary based on the number of games played per season.

8.7 Pursuing Partnership Opportunities

Part of implementing a community development approach is formally working with groups and individuals to deliver parks, recreation, arts, and culture services. There may be instances where no one party is able to provide a program, service, or facility on its own, or where the risk is too great for any one party to overcome. In this instance, the creation of a partnership can be a great benefit in addressing identified needs or service gaps. As described in this Master Plan, there are a number of community and sports organizations that are vital partners in the delivery of essential programs, services, and events in the Zorra.

Examples of potential partners include, at a minimum:

- Upper tiers of government (e.g., Oxford County, Ministry of Natural Resources, etc.).
- Adjacent Municipalities (e.g., Ingersoll, Thames Centre, etc.).
- Environmentally-focused organizations (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, etc.).
- Educational institutions (Thames Valley District School Board).
- Other public sector organizations (Oxford County Library, Oxford Public Health, etc.).

Partnerships can be an excellent means in which to ensure that a broad range of services and facilities are available to serve the public. Not all partnerships are the same and thus careful consideration must be undertaken to manage risks, while clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of each party. Due diligence is required to ensure that any entity partnering with the Township has the ability to deliver on its promises, so that the Township is not left in a position to take over operations and/or financial commitments if a partner no longer participates.

It is important that all partnerships are treated equally. A transparent, carefully thought-out partnership evaluation framework is needed so that the Township can demonstrate its decision-making process and justify why it believes that some requests to partner are acceptable, while others should not be pursued with public sector involvement. The Township should create a partnership evaluation policy that specifically identifies:

- Whether, first and foremost, the proposed partnership is consistent with the municipal mandate and philosophy.
- If there is a role for the Township to play in providing the program or service.
- Whether there is a quantifiable or justified need for the service in the community.

- That the service can be sustainably accommodated within the Township’s long-term capital and/or operating resources.
- Whether the partner is sufficiently capable/qualified (e.g., financially, staffing, internal expertise, etc.) to be able to deliver the service over the long-term, and in compliance with legislated policies and municipal standards.
- The level of risk (e.g., financial liability, etc.) and how this will be managed by the partner or the Township.
- Whether the partner can provide the service on a sole source basis.
- Agreeing upon terms, conditions, standards, and responsibilities for all parties involved.

Recommendations – Pursuing Partnership Opportunities

48. Pursue potential partnership opportunities that are consistent with the Department’s mandate in order to reduce the reliance on municipal resources. A standardized partnership process or framework for evaluating and responding to requests should be developed, with a view of maximizing public interests.

8.8 Leveraging Technology

The use of technology has transformed how municipalities interact with residents and stakeholders. The use of the Zorra Now magazine, social media, and the Township’s website has required new levels of expertise and some very creative thinking. Innovative departments are willing to devote resources into ensuring that they understand the needs of their staff, users, and non-users and develop technology based solutions, while maintaining traditional resources for less tech-savvy residents. Some examples of how technology can enhance the Township’s Recreation Department include:

Promotion and the use of Social Media

Continuous efforts to promote the Township’s parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities and its benefits is an ongoing necessity in keeping residents informed. The use of Zorra Now, the Township’s website, digital signs, and social media, are excellent communication mechanisms. An annual communication strategy to explore additional mechanisms, such as cross promoting activities with other providers, would also assist with increasing the number and frequency of communication impressions.

Recreation Facility Management Software

The Township schedules its ice time using spreadsheet software and its multi-use and meeting rooms using Google Calendar. The Township also does not maintain a schedule for its outdoor sports field users. As the Township continues to grow or evolves, there is

merit in investing in recreation facility management software. Using appropriate software management tools can improve the accuracy of maintaining and tracking facility usage, and allow user groups and residents to review scheduling, register, or making bookings online. Additionally, improving how the Township tracks facility usage will better inform future facility needs. There are several software applications available at varying price points and it is recommended that each option be evaluated to identify the preferred software that is reflective of the Township’s needs.

Recommendations – Leveraging Technology
49. Explore new technologies to enhance education, awareness, and promotion of the Township’s parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities, including the use of social media, recreation facility management software, and other technologies identified by the Township or as they become available.

8.9 Enhancing Volunteer Opportunities

The Township is limited by the staff and financial resources that are available. As a result, Zorra cannot meet all parks, recreation, arts, and cultural needs of residents without the assistance of dedicated community service providers. Fortunately, many of the Township stakeholders are leading the charge to ensure that the community is engaged in a range of activities. If provided with the appropriate supports, the community-based delivery model has a greater ability to provide quality services and generate internal growth and stability. The Township and its community providers can also collaborate with other agencies and levels of government to maximize delivery potential.

The Township’s volunteers are essential to the operation of many parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities, particularly with delivering programs, services, and special events. As a result, it is important for both the Township and its community groups to maintain a strong profile of volunteers. While volunteerism in the Township is strong among some organizations, other organizations are challenged with recruiting and retaining enough volunteers.

Efforts to recruit volunteers are being pursued through word of mouth, social media, and advertising through media such as the Zorra Now magazine. This should be augmented by other strategies such as establishing a dedicated volunteer section on the Township’s website and hosting a broad volunteer recruitment fair to bring community groups together to promote their organizations and volunteer opportunities. The amalgamation of community groups may also be necessary to maximize available volunteers and other community resources.

It is imperative that volunteers are appropriately trained and qualified as some positions require certain skills or knowledge, such as coaching. From a community development perspective, the Township may intercept this challenge by assisting groups with appropriate volunteer training. This may involve organizing workshop sessions with group representatives to disseminate resources to assist groups with training, coaching, recruitment, retention, and more. If necessary, the Township may also leverage the external expertise of professional training consultants to facilitate these sessions.

Recognizing the hard work and dedication of volunteers is crucial to ensure that they feel appreciated. Acknowledging their efforts provides volunteers with positive re-enforcement and encourages them to continue offering their time in future opportunities. To appreciate community volunteers, municipalities will often hold regular appreciation dinners and an award ceremony. Directed by the Township's Strategic Plan, an annual Volunteer & Seniors breakfast is held by the Township and its local organizations to recognize the contributions of volunteers and seniors.

Recommendations – Enhancing Volunteer Opportunities

- 50. Explore strategies to promote volunteer opportunities such as establishing a dedicated section on the Township's website, volunteer recruitment fair, or other strategies identified by the Township.
- 51. Coordinate a workshop with community group representatives to disseminate resources to assist groups with training, coaching, recruitment, retention, and more. If necessary, the Township may also leverage the external expertise of professional training consultants to facilitate these sessions.



North Park

9.0 Implementation

This section contains a framework for reviewing and updating the Master Plan. The recommendations put forth within this Master Plan are summarized, along with their suggested priority for implementation.

9.1 Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan

The Township should regularly review, assess, and periodically revise the recommendations of the Master Plan in order to ensure that they continue to be reflective of local conditions and responsive to community needs. This will require monitoring activity patterns and facility utilization, tracking user participation and satisfaction levels, dialogue with community organizations and surrounding municipalities and service providers, annual reporting on implementation and short term work plans, and undertaking a detailed ten year update to the Master Plan. Through these mechanisms – or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustment of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Master Plan may be required.

Reviewing the Master Plan requires commitment from Township staff, Council, and the public. An appropriate time for this is prior to the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an annual review of the Master Plan:

- Review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success / failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, etc.).
- Review the Master Plan to identify short term projects and priorities based on staff review and consideration (e.g., financial limitations, public input, partnership / funding potential, etc.).
- Identification of issues or constraints anticipated for the coming year.
- Communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects, and upcoming projects.
- Budget requests / revisions as necessary.

Recommendations – Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan

52. Establish a system for regular implementation, monitoring, and review of the Master Plan, including the creation of an annual work plan.

Recommendations – Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan

53. Undertake an annual review of the Master Plan, with a detailed update in 2028, to identify accomplishments and to identify priorities for the coming year.

9.2 Funding Considerations

It is recognized that the Township has limited resources and cannot afford to do everything that the community desires. This is one of the primary reasons for undertaking a master planning process as it prioritizes projects over a phased implementation period. Nevertheless, it is in the Township’s best interest to make every reasonable effort to implement the recommendations contained in this Master Plan through a variety of appropriate and acceptable means. This will require the Township to pursue the use of development charges, fundraising, partnerships, user fees, financing, and other alternative funding models identified by the Township.

Application for provincial and federal funding grant programs is particularly helpful to offset the cost of capital projects. As grant programs typically favour “shovel ready” projects, this Master Plan positions the Township to respond accordingly to these funding programs and other opportunities as they emerge. In collaboration with community partners, the Township has benefitted from these programs in the past to construct or improve its recreation facilities. Moving forward, the Township should continue to pursue non-municipal funding programs as they become available during the planning period. At present, the following funding opportunities are available to the Township and its community groups:

- Celebrate Ontario
- Community Futures Oxford
- Federal Gas Tax
- Healthy Communities Fund
- Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund
- Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Foundation
- Ontario Trillium Foundation

Recommendations – Funding Considerations

54. In addition to municipal funding sources, the Township should pursue external funding sources to implement the recommendations contained in the Master Plan. This may require working with community partners, regularly exploring grant opportunities as they become available, and other funding sources identified by the Township.

9.3 Implementation Strategy

Throughout this Master Plan, recommendations have been identified at the end of each sub-section. This is not intended to be a definitive list of recommendations for the Township of Zorra or the Recreation Department, as ongoing capital projects/repairs, operating expenditures, and other initiatives beyond the scope of this Master Plan may be identified and prioritized by staff and Council on a case-by-case basis. By approving this Master Plan as a guiding document, the Township is not bound to implementing every recommendation; rather, this Master Plan provides guidance on community priorities and sets a general course for meeting community needs as they are presently defined.

The recommendations contained in this Master Plan are based on what is needed and not what is financially achievable by the Township. The proposed priority of each recommendation has been determined based on an assessment of need, as identified throughout the planning process (including community engagement, trends and demographics, facility assessments, etc.), and is based on ideal circumstances. Budget pressures, changes in participation rates or demographics, availability of volunteer resources, and other factors may impact implementation of these recommendations. The pursuit of external funding and partnerships may also be a contributing factor to the timing of implementation.

For ease of reference, all recommendations contained in this Master Plan are summarized in this section and are numbered according to the order in which they are presented in the Master Plan. The order of priority in which each recommendation should be implemented is identified, in addition to estimated capital costs and other resource considerations. The higher the priority, the sooner the recommendation should be implemented. The priority of recommendations is organized into the following categories:

- Short Term Priority (1 – 3 Years)
- Medium Term Priority (4 – 6 Years)
- Long Term Priority (7 – 10+ Years)

Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Resource/ Considerations
Zorra's Supply of Parkland		
1. Provide parks within 800 metres of all residential areas (about a 10 minute walk), unobstructed by barriers such as major roads, railways, and waterbodies.	Ongoing	Staff Time
2. Continue to maximize parkland dedication requirements through the subdivision approval process to effectively service parkland needs during the planning period.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recommendations	Priority	Resource/ Considerations
<p>3. Prepare a new conceptual design plan for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre Park to serve as a vision for the park and to guide future development. The design should incorporate the recommended outdoor recreation facilities for this site including a full size soccer field, adult size ball diamond, basketball court, beach volleyball courts, trail routes, and outdoor fitness equipment. The placement and potential relocation of existing recreation facilities on site should also be considered. Should it be determined that some or all of the outdoor recreation facilities cannot be accommodated, alternative site locations should be identified as a part of the concept plan development process.</p>	Short	Cost for Park Design Consultant
Enhancing Trails in Zorra		
<p>4. Continue to implement Zorra-specific elements of the County of Oxford Trails Master Plan, with a priority on connecting existing parks, recreation facilities and other community destinations.</p>	Ongoing	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
<p>5. Through planning and detailed design, explore the feasibility of implementing the park-based trail routes recommended in the Recreation, Arts & Culture Master Plan in order to enhance walkability, connectivity and linkages throughout the Township.</p>	Ongoing	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
<p>6. As necessary, undertaken revisions to the proposed trail routes to respond to physical geography and constraints, new development, and gap areas.</p>	Ongoing	Staff Time
<p>7. Undertake a review of the Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee’s capacity and Terms of Reference to include oversight of the Township’s trails system (including coordinating with the Oxford County Trails Council) versus establishing a separate Trails Committee altogether. In any event, there should be a committee that provides trails-related advice to Township Council and is an advocate for Zorra’s trails system.</p>	Short	Staff Time
<p>8. Utilize the trail design considerations contained in this Master Plan, augmented by design guidelines and standards described in the County of Oxford Trails Master Plan and other relevant documents in the planning, design, and construction of trail infrastructure in the Township.</p>	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recreation Facilities Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
Ice Pads		
9. In the near-term, explore strategies to bolster ice usage and optimize ice pad operations, which may include 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. Consideration may also be given to implementing blackout periods in coordination with ice users to minimize scheduling impacts which may require transferring ice bookings from one ice pad to the other to create blocks of ice that are unscheduled.	Short	Staff Time
10. Initiate a process to explore alternative uses for one of the Township’s ice pads, including recreational use(s), other Township indoor space needs, development of a community hub, etc.	Medium to Long	Staff Time
11. Over the next 3 to 5 years, the Township should continue to monitor the Town of Ingersoll’s plans and timing to construct a new Town arena. During this time, the Township should improve tracking/collection of accurate arena usage data (i.e. actual hours available and used), and track registration levels in local ice sport organizations to determine participation trends and their effect on arena needs.	Medium	Staff Time
Gymnasiums		
12. Continue to engage the Thames Valley District School Board to formalize a reciprocal use agreement in order to secure future access to gymnasium space (and other spaces as necessary).	Short	Staff Time
13. Explore opportunities to provide indoor recreation programs within existing underutilized municipal spaces.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms		
14. Continue to promote and encourage the use of the Township’s multi-purpose and meeting rooms to facilitate a broad range of uses. Strategies to maximize the use of existing space include continuing to identify opportunities to modernize and update spaces, ensuring that facility users are fully aware of the opportunities that are available, working with community providers to develop programs within the Township’s spaces, working with the business community to promote use for corporate functions and meetings, or other strategies identified by the Township.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Fitness Space		
15. Continue to accommodate light impact, studio-based active living programs within its existing spaces with its community	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
partners. The Township should continue to work with its community providers to explore strategies to increase program participation.		
16. Integrate small scale outdoor fitness equipment as part of an internal trail loop at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre or, alternatively at the Embro Zorra Community Centre pending confirmation through a concept planning process (per Recommendations 3 and 5).	Medium	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
17. Where possible, create walking loops/areas within existing community centres to accommodate walking for exercise. This should be investigated at the time any major capital works takes place (such as facility renewal or repurposing).	Ongoing	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
Dedicated Youth Space		
18. Engage the Fusion Youth Centre and the Town of Ingersoll to discuss strategies through which to increase opportunities to meet the needs of youth in Zorra (through transportation services, outreach programs, or other strategies).	Short	Staff Time
19. Create a Youth Council to ensure that youth are heard and considered as a part of future planning, facility and parkland design/renovations, and policy decisions. Potential responsibilities may include regularly engaging youth to identify issues, encouraging the Township to become more Youth Friendly by meeting the criteria established by Play Works Partnership, and other responsibilities identified by the Township.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Dedicated Older Adult Space		
20. Explore the potential to increase use of underutilized multi-purpose and meeting spaces at Embro Town Hall (or Embro Zorra Community Centre) and Harrington Town Hall to establish meeting space for older adults and seniors.	Ongoing	Staff Time
21. Engage the Ingersoll Services for Seniors to collaboratively explore strategies to meet the needs of older adults and seniors (e.g., transportation, outreach programs and services, etc.).	Short	Staff Time
22. Maintain regular dialogue with older adults and seniors to understand needs, challenges, and to collectively identify potential solutions. These discussions should also consider how to make the Township more “age friendly”, with consideration given to accessibility, comfort amenities, gaps in programs and services, and more.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
Aquatics		
<p>23. Establish a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee to lead fundraising efforts for a small scale spray pad in Embro. Consideration should be given to a funding structure similar to that of the Thamesford spray pad project. Potential locations include Embro Zorra Community Centre Park, Memorial Park, or another park to be determined through the planning process.</p>	Medium	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
Soccer Fields		
<p>24. Develop a new full size soccer field at the Thamesford District Recreation Centre. The design and location of this field should be incorporated through the renewed concept for the Thamesford District Recreation Centre (per Recommendation #3).</p>	Medium to Long	\$200,000 per unlit soccer field
Ball Diamonds		
<p>25. Maximize the use of existing ball diamonds by directing pent-up demand for an adult-size ball diamond to Matheson Park in Embro to relieve pressures of Thamesford Men’s Slo-Pitch. The Township should monitor ball diamond usage and participation. Should there be demonstrated demand for an additional ball diamond, the Thamesford District Recreation Centre would appear to be a suitable candidate for an adult-size ball diamond; the design of which should be guided by a concept plan for the site (per Recommendation #3).</p>	Medium	Staff Time
Outdoor Basketball Courts		
<p>26. Construct a new outdoor basketball court at Thamesford District Recreation Centre. The new court should be designed to be multi-purpose to support a range of activities that require a hard surface. At a minimum, the new court (and future court renewal) should be full size with an asphalt surface, two basketball posts and nets, and painted markings that support basketball and other activities such as ball hockey.</p>	Medium	\$100,000 per full court
Playgrounds		
<p>27. Construct a playground at a future park in the proposed residential subdivision in the southwest corner of Thamesford, west of 15th Line.</p>	Medium	\$50,000 - \$100,000 per location
<p>28. Develop a playground replacement program to renew aging playground structures. The design of new and redeveloped playgrounds should be consistent with the A.O.D.A. (2005) by incorporating accessible playground features such as using a firm and stable surface. Unique playgrounds should also be considered as well as integrating risky and natural play</p>	Short	To be determined on a project-specific basis.

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
features including ropes, higher heights, boulders, wood, stones, and more.		
Skateboard Parks		
29. Once the skateboard park at Terry Fox Park is completed, monitor usage over a five year period and evaluate the need for a small scale skateboard park in Embro. Should there be sufficient demand, a committee similar to the Zorra Water and Wheels Committee should be established to lead fundraising efforts. A funding strategy similar to the structure used for the Thamesford skateboard park is recommended.	Medium	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
Beach Volleyball Courts		
30. Working with the Thamesford Beach Volleyball League, explore the cost/benefit of the following options to enhance the supply of beach volleyball courts at the Thamesford District Recreation Complex: a. Install lighting at the existing beach volleyball courts. b. Construct one or more new beach volleyball courts.	Short	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
Other Specialty Recreation Facilities		
31. Unsolicited proposals from established organizations shall be supported by a proponent-led assessment that demonstrates the risks and benefits of the Township, as well as a business plan and funding strategy.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Arts and Cultural Opportunities Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
Strengthening Arts and Cultural Policy		
32. Create a Public Art Policy that outlines the benefits of public art, a process through which public art is selected, and the importance of recognizing local artists and cultural groups.	Medium	Staff Time
33. Examine strategies to strengthen appropriate areas of the Strategic Plan and Official Plan (in collaboration with Oxford County and area municipalities) during the next review period to further recognize the importance of the arts and culture sector.	Medium	Staff Time
Arts and Cultural Assets		
34. Inventory and map all local arts and cultural providers, programs, and services available in the Township with a view of promoting opportunities and addressing gaps in service provision. The information gleaned from this task should be used to identify potential partnerships, policies, and strategies to bolster the municipal arts and cultural sector.	Short to Medium	Staff Time
Arts and Cultural Space		
35. Engage local arts and cultural groups to explore opportunities to make use of municipal spaces once a cultural mapping exercise is completed.	Medium	Staff Time
36. Guided by consultation with the Township’s arts and cultural groups, the planning and design of parks and recreation facility development, renewal, and rejuvenation should consider the integration of appropriate arts and cultural infrastructure and amenities that can facilitate a range of structured and spontaneous activities and events.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Greater Communication in Arts and Culture		
37. Convene regular roundtable meetings (at minimum once each year) with the arts and culture sector to identify discuss issues and gaps, strategies, solutions and other matters with a view of strengthening relationships and coordination of the arts and cultural offerings in the Township.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Marketing and Promoting Arts and Culture		
38. Guided by cultural mapping, work with the Township’s stakeholders to explore strategies to enhance the marketing and promotion of local arts and cultural opportunities in Zorra, such as improving the online presence of providers of programs, special events, and festivals, or other strategies identified by the Township or community partners.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
39. Undertake a Special Events and Festivals Strategy to establish the goals, objectives, and directions required to facilitate longevity, quality, and vitality of special events and festivals offered in Zorra.	Medium	Staff Time

Service Delivery Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
Township’s Role in Recreation, Arts, and Culture		
40. Adopt a mandate to guide the Recreation Department in providing quality facilities, while supporting community partners in the delivery of programs and services	Short	Staff Time
Organizational Structure		
41. Develop a Recreation Facilities & Services Manager position to oversee all aspects of the Recreation Department. The position should include existing responsibilities of the Recreation & Facilities Manager, and working closely with the Recreation & Facilities Program Coordinator to oversee and provide direction on the development of programs, services, and community development.	Short	Staff Time
42. Periodically review, revise, and update the roles and responsibilities of each staff member within the Department to maximize internal capacity and efficiency, and to eliminate duplication of duties.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Continuous Professional Development		
43. Prepare a staff development and training plan, with consideration given to proper succession planning to preserve knowledge and expertise as the staffing team changes.	Short	Staff Time
44. Regularly explore and invest in professional development opportunities to continually deliver high quality community services. This process should be incorporated through the annual budgeting process, as necessary.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Programs and Activities		
45. Either alone or in partnership with a local organization, explore opportunities to offer the parks, recreation, arts, and culture programs suggested by residents in this Master Plan on a trial basis to evaluate program demand. Participation levels should be monitored to identify programs that should be implemented on a regular basis.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
46. Program duplication should be discouraged. Where possible, duplicated programs should be combined to enhance program efficiency and the use of resources.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Rates and Fees Scan		
47. The Township should identify the direct and indirect costs required to deliver each type of facility and/or program. From there, a desired level of cost recovery (and benchmarked comparison) can be determined for the Township's rates and fees.	Short	Staff Time
Pursuing Partnership Opportunities		
48. Pursue potential partnership opportunities that are consistent with the Department's mandate in order to reduce the reliance on municipal resources. A standardized partnership process or framework for evaluating and responding to requests should be developed, with a view of maximizing public interests.	Ongoing	Staff Time
Leveraging Technology		
49. Explore new technologies to enhance education, awareness, and promotion of the Township's parks, recreation, arts, and culture opportunities, including the use of social media, recreation facility management software, and other technologies identified by the Township or as they become available.	Ongoing	To be determined on a project-specific basis.
Enhancing Volunteer Opportunities		
50. Explore strategies to promote volunteer opportunities such as establishing a dedicated section on the Township's website, volunteer recruitment fair, or other strategies identified by the Township.	Ongoing	Staff Time
51. Coordinate a workshop with community group representatives to disseminate resources to assist groups with training, coaching, recruitment, retention, and more. If necessary, the Township may also leverage the external expertise of professional training consultants to facilitate these sessions.	Ongoing	Staff Time, Professional Training Costs

Implementation Recommendations

Recommendations	Priority	Estimated Capital Cost / Resource Considerations
Monitoring and Updating the Master Plan		
52. Establish a system for regular implementation, monitoring, and review of the Master Plan, including the creation of an annual work plan.	Long	Staff Time
53. Undertake an annual review of the Master Plan, with a detailed update in 2028, to identify accomplishments and to identify priorities for the coming year.	Long	Staff Time, Professional Consulting Services (\$60,000)
Funding Considerations		
54. In addition to municipal funding sources, the Township should pursue external funding sources to implement the recommendations contained in the Master Plan. This may require working with community partners, regularly exploring grant opportunities as they become available, and other funding sources identified by the Township.	Ongoing	Staff Time

Appendix A: Background Documents Reviewed

Strategic Policy Documents

- Oxford County 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan (2015)
- Oxford County Official Plan (2008)
- Township of Zorra 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan (2015)

Recreation, Arts, and Cultural Documents

- Guidelines for Sport Field Use During Events
- Ice Allocation Policy and Booking Schedules (2015)
- Thamesford Park Master Plan (1999)
- Township of Zorra Embro Parks Study (2010)
- Township of Zorra Recreational Needs Survey (2014)
- Recreation Department Organizational and Operation Review (2011 and 2014)
- Recreation Facility Rental Rates (2013)

Other Supporting Documents

- Oxford County 2018 Budget Survey (2018)
- Oxford County Approaches to the Provision of Healthier Food Options in Oxford County (2015) and A Healthier Recreation Concession Pilot Project Evaluation for the Township of Zorra (2016)
- Oxford County Community Wellbeing Survey and Addendum (2016)
- Oxford County Development Charges Background Study (2014)
- Oxford County Framework for Affordable and Accessible Recreation in Oxford County (2015)
- Oxford County Population Household and Employment Forecasts and Employment Lands Study (2014)
- Oxford Health Matters Survey Report #9: Built Environment (2015)
- Oxford United Way. Woodstock Youth Speak Out About Places & Spaces (2017)
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2014 – 2019 (2013)
- Town of Ingersoll Multi-Use Recreation Centre Report (2017)
- Spaces to go and people who know – Improving mental health and wellbeing in Woodstock (2017)
- Various Council Agendas and Staff Reports

Appendix B: Public Open Houses Summary

Please note: “(#)” denotes the number of mentions

Living and Playing in Zorra

- Nature
 - Parks (3)
 - Nature trails (2)
 - Harrington Pond (1)
 - Green Space (1)
 - Clean (1)
 - Waterways (1)
- Facilities
 - Hockey (4)
 - Pool (4)
 - Baseball (3)
 - Facilities close to home (2)
 - Volleyball (2)
 - School (1)
 - Library (1)
 - Arena (1)
 - Sparks (1)
- Community (3)
 - The people (3)
 - Council engagement with residents (2)
 - Community spirit (1)
- Location (1)
 - Quiet (1)
 - Safe (1)
- Opportunities (1)
 - Youth staying fit (1)
 - Long-term planning (2)
 - Local involvement (1)

Improving Indoor Recreation Facilities

- Facilities
 - Gym/fitness club (9)
 - Walking/running track (4)
 - Stick and puck (3)
 - Indoor volleyball (2)
 - Youth activities (2)
 - Indoor pool (1)
 - Ball hockey (1)
 - Tennis (1)

- Yoga (1)
 - Public skating (1)
 - Skate park (1)
- Usage (1)
 - More use for Harrington Hall (2)
 - Encourage youth participation (1)
- Maintenance (2)
 - Upgrading (2)
 - Arenas (1)
 - Fans in Embro arena (1)
- Affordability (2)
 - Free public skating (2)
 - Community halls rent free for community/non-profit groups (2)
 - Free yoga (1)
 - Decrease costs of facilities (1)
- Accessibility (1)
 - Sidewalks (2)

Improving Outdoor Recreation Facilities

- Facilities
 - Outdoor skating rink (5)
 - Tennis courts (2)
 - New Ballpark in Thamesford (1)
 - Play Equipment (1)
 - Tennis courts (1)
 - Karate (1)
 - Drive in Movies (1)
 - Gym (1)
 - Skate park (1)
- Nature
 - Biking trails (2)
 - Walking trails (2)
 - More park space (1)
- Upgrading
 - South Park (2)
 - North Park (1)
 - Playground at Harrington Park (1)
 - More electric power ECC (1)
 - Light Embro CC parking to minimize light pollution (1)
 - Field maintenance (1)
 - Ballpark (1)
 - Harrington ball park (1)
- Usage
 - More older age teams (1)
 - Encourage more youth engagement (1)

- Multi-user friendly (1)
- Availability
 - More recreation space in the North End (1)
 - Washrooms (1)
 - Wi-Fi in park spaces (1)
- Employment
 - Employ more workers (1)
- More planning (1)

Improving Parks and Open Spaces

- Events
 - Christmas decorating in park (1)
- Usability
 - Hiking trails (10)
 - Walking paths (6)
 - Biking trails (6)
 - Washrooms (5)
 - Risky play equipment (2)
 - More use for Harrington Ball Park (1)
 - More inviting open space (1)
 - Continue financial support to associations (1)
- Usage
 - Better use of North Park space (1)
 - Harrington Grist Mill and Pond as educational resource (1)
 - Preserve natural habitats (1)
 - Harrington Pond (1)
 - Harrington Ball Park (1)
- Upgrading
 - Park (1)
 - Play equipment (1)
 - Trails (1)
- Facilities
 - Play equipment (2)
 - Outdoor skating rink (1)
 - Rides for kids (1)
- Consultation
 - User group meetings to discuss decisions (1)
 - More communication (1)
- Build less neighbourhoods (1)

Improving Arts and Culture

- Community
 - Senior and youth fusion (1)
 - Invite other municipalities to share facilities (1)
 - Seniors club (1)
 - Complex for seniors (1)
 - Youth council (1)
 - Staff engage with volunteers (1)
- Activities
 - Painting (3)
 - Cooking classes (2)
 - Craft classes (2)
 - Family movie nights in park (2)
 - Music (2)
 - Drama programs (1)
 - Performing arts (1)
 - Educational sessions (2)
 - Seniors classes (1)
 - Local market (1)
 - Day care program (1)
- Support
 - Local initiatives (3)
 - New initiatives (1)
 - Encourage library use (1)
 - Harrington museum (1)
 - Current opportunities (1)
 - Artistic activities in Banner Church (1)
 - Beachville museum (1)
 - Living museum concept (1)
- Heritage
 - Promote and protect history (3)
 - Heritage committee for the Township (2)
 - Designate buildings as landmarks (1)

Appendix C: Online Community Survey Summary

1. In the past 12 months, which of the following activities have you or anyone in your household participated in, in Zorra or elsewhere? By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participate (which does not include attending an event or watching others), either at home or in public. (select all that apply).

Activity	#	%	Activity	#	%
1. Enjoying Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas	141	75%	14. Performance Arts	57	30%
2. Attending special events	131	70%	15. Running or Jogging	57	30%
3. Walking or Hiking for Leisure	125	66%	16. Visual Arts	43	23%
4. Hockey, Ringette, Figure Skating, or Ice Skating	110	59%	17. Organized Teen Programs	38	20%
5. Swimming (Recreational)	104	55%	18. Volleyball	37	20%
6. Use of Playground Equipment	102	54%	19. Pre-School or Children's Programs	35	19%
7. Dog Walking (on or off leash)	80	43%	20. Basketball	25	13%
8. Aerobics, Yoga, Fitness, or Weight-training	77	41%	21. Gymnastics	19	10%
9. Cycling or Mountain Biking	76	40%	22. Curling	14	7%
10. Baseball or Softball (or other forms)	73	39%	23. Skateboarding	13	7%
11. Soccer	70	37%	24. Pickleball	12	6%
12. Use of Splash Pad	65	35%	25. Organized Seniors Programs	11	6%
13. Swimming (Instructional or Aquafit)	64	34%	26. Tennis	8	4%
Total Respondents				188	

2. Are you and members of your household able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like (e.g. sports, fitness, outdoor play, etc.)?

Response	#	%
Yes	97	56%
No	77	44%
Total Respondents	174	

3. Why are you and members of your household NOT able to participate in parks and recreation activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

Response	#	%
1. Lack of personal time / Too busy	52	70%
2. Lack of desired facilities or programs	45	61%
3. Program not offered at a convenient time	26	35%
4. Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	23	31%
5. Lack of money / Too expensive	14	19%
6. Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	6	8%
7. Health problems / Disability / Age	5	7%
8. Other	3	4%
9. Lack of Child Care	2	3%
Total Respondents	74	

4. Are you and members of your household able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as you would like (e.g. arts and crafts classes, special events, etc.)?

Response	#	%
Yes	95	60%
No	64	40%
Total Respondents	159	

5. Why are you and members of your household NOT able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as you would like? (select up to 3 responses)

Response	#	%
1. Lack of personal time / Too busy	37	60%
2. Lack of desired facilities or programs	35	56%
3. Lack of information / Unaware of opportunities	29	47%
4. Program not offered at a convenient time	20	32%
5. Lack of money / Too expensive	10	16%
6. Lack of Child Care	4	6%
7. Lack of transportation / Facility too far away	3	5%
Total Respondents	62	

6. Generally, what proportion of your household's parks and recreation needs are met within the Township of Zorra?

Response	#	%
All (100%)	7	4%
Most (67-99%)	47	26%
About Half (34-66%)	67	37%
Some (1-33%)	51	28%
None (0%)	8	4%
Total Respondents	180	

7. What is the most popular parks and recreation activity you or members of your household typically participate in outside of the Township of Zorra?

Top 10 Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimming / Aquafit Hockey / Skating / Ringette Fitness Programs Walking / Hiking Splash Pad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dance Classes Soccer Baseball / Softball Cycling Curling

8. Where do you primarily participate in this activity?

Response	#	%
Ingersoll	46	30%
Woodstock	41	26%
London	21	14%
Thames Centre (Dorchester / Thorndale)	18	12%
St. Marys	14	9%
Stratford	11	7%
Tavistock	5	3%
Total Respondents	155	

9. What is the second most popular parks and recreation activity you or members of your household typically participate in outside of the Township of Zorra?

Top Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimming Baseball / Softball Fitness Splash Pad Cycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking / Hiking Dance Classes Volleyball Gymnastics Hockey / Skating / Ringette

10. Where do you primarily participate in this activity?

Response	#	%
Ingersoll	37	30%
London	29	24%
Woodstock	26	21%
St. Marys	15	12%
Stratford	8	7%
Thames Centre (Dorchester / Thorndale)	7	6%
Total Respondents	122	

11. Why does your household participate in these activities outside of the Township of Zorra?
(select up to 3 responses)

Response	#	%
1. Facility/program is not available in the Township	117	75%
2. Quality of facility/program is superior	45	29%
3. "Connected" to other community/used to live there	27	17%
4. Facility/program not available at the preferred time	18	11%
5. Tournaments / special events / travel teams	16	10%
6. Closer to home	15	10%
7. Closer to work or school	8	5%
8. Less expensive	8	5%
Total Respondents	157	

12. Generally, what proportion of your household's arts and cultural needs are met within the Township of Zorra?

Response	#	%
All (100%)	15	10%
Most (67-99%)	29	19%
About Half (34-66%)	32	21%
Some (1-33%)	59	39%
None (0%)	17	11%
Total Respondents	152	

13. What is the most popular arts and cultural activity you or members of your household typically participate in outside of the Township of Zorra?

Top Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre • Visual Art Classes (e.g., painting, pottery, crafts, woodworking, etc.) • Special Events and Festivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Festivals / Concerts • Dance Classes • Museums • Music Lessons

14. Where do you primarily participate in this activity?

Response	#	%
London	38	37%
Stratford	29	28%
Woodstock	21	20%
Ingersoll	12	12%
Thames Centre (Dorchester / Thorndale)	3	3%
St. Marys	1	1%
Total Respondents		104

15. What is the second most popular arts and cultural activity you or members of your household typically participate in outside of the Township of Zorra?

Top Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Art Classes (e.g., painting, pottery, etc.) • Music Lessons • Theatre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerts • Festivals • Museums • Special Events

16. Where do you primarily participate in this activity?

Response	#	%
London	25	40%
Woodstock	13	21%
Ingersoll	12	19%
Stratford	9	15%
Thames Centre (Dorchester / Thorndale)	3	5%
Total Respondents		62

17. Why does your household participate in these activities outside of the Township of Zorra? (select up to 3 responses)

Response	#	%
1. Facility/program is not available in the Township	84	58%
2. Quality of facility/program is superior	32	22%
3. Special events	24	17%
4. Facility/program not available at the preferred time	16	11%
5. "Connected" to other community/used to live there	14	10%
6. Closer to work or school	8	6%
7. Less expensive	4	3%
8. Closer to home	1	1%
Total Respondents		144

18. Are there any parks and recreation activities that you or members of your household would like to see offered in the Township of Zorra that are NOT currently available?

Response	#	%
Yes	100	79%
No	27	21%
Total Respondents	127	

19. What parks and recreation activities would you like to see offered?

Top Responses (Facilities)	Top Responses (Programs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splash Pad • Walking Trails • Cycling Trails • Gymnasium • Skateboard Park • Indoor Walking Track • Fitness Centre • Indoor Pool • Tennis Courts • Baseball Diamonds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga / Zumba • Fitness Classes • Pre-Teen Programs (e.g., reading, science, fitness, hockey, etc.) • Dance / Gymnastics Classes • Karate Classes • Ball Hockey • Youth Baseball • Recreation Soccer Leagues • Arts and Crafts Programs • Drop-in Hockey Leagues

20. In your opinion, which of the following organizations should provide these new programs/activities?

Response	#	%
A combination of the above providers	61	66%
Township of Zorra	29	32%
Community / volunteer organization	1	1%
Private sector	1	1%
Total Respondents	92	

21. Are there any arts and cultural activities that you or members of your household would like to see offered in the Township of Zorra that are NOT currently available?

Response	#	%
Yes	38	42%
No	52	58%
Total Respondents	90	

22. What arts and cultural activities would you like to see offered?

Top Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Classes (painting, pottery, sculpture, writing, knitting, etc.) • Performing Arts Classes (e.g., singing, drama, music, dance, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Events (e.g., farmers markets, fairs, art festivals, etc.) • Theatre • Museums

23. In your opinion, which of the following organizations should provide these new programs/activities?

Response	#	%
A combination of the above providers	27	75%
Community / volunteer organization	4	11%
Township of Zorra	3	8%
Private sector	2	6%
Total Respondents	36	

24. In general, how important are the following items to your household?

Response	Not Important		Neutral		Important		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Indoor Recreation facilities such as arenas and community halls	5	3%	7	5%	137	92%	149
Park pathways such as paved and/or nature trails	6	4%	8	5%	134	91%	148
Outdoor Recreation facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds, and pavilions	5	3%	8	5%	135	91%	148
Passive Parks that preserve natural areas and open space	7	5%	18	12%	120	83%	145
Arts facilities such as visual and performing arts spaces	19	13%	35	24%	89	62%	143
Cultural facilities such as theatres, historic sights, and museums	20	14%	43	30%	80	56%	143

25. Thinking about those facilities that currently exist in the Township of Zorra, what is your level of satisfaction with the following?

Response	Not Satisfied		Neutral		Satisfied		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Outdoor Recreation facilities such as sports fields, playgrounds, and pavilions	32	22%	20	14%	91	64%	143
Indoor Recreation facilities such as arenas and community halls	35	25%	28	20%	78	55%	141
Passive Parks that preserve natural areas and open space	28	21%	39	30%	65	49%	132
Park pathways such as paved and/or nature trails	59	42%	35	25%	45	32%	139
Cultural facilities such as theatres, historic sights, and museums	21	19%	57	51%	34	30%	112
Arts facilities such as visual and performing arts spaces	26	22%	57	49%	34	29%	117

26. What is your level of satisfaction with the parks and recreation in the Township of Zorra for the following age groups?

Response	Not Satisfied		Neutral		Satisfied		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre-School (Under 5 years)	22	27%	17	21%	43	52%	82
Children (5-12 years)	35	37%	19	20%	40	43%	94
Teens (13-18 years)	38	45%	21	25%	25	30%	84
Adults (19-54 years)	45	35%	30	23%	53	41%	128
Older Adults (55-69 years)	20	31%	25	38%	20	31%	65
Seniors (70+)	22	42%	18	35%	12	23%	52

27. What is your level of satisfaction with the arts and culture in the Township of Zorra for the following age groups?

Response	Not Satisfied		Neutral		Satisfied		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Preschool (Under 5 years)	14	21%	35	51%	19	28%	68
Children (5-12 years)	24	30%	32	41%	23	29%	79
Teens (13-18 years)	24	36%	29	43%	14	21%	67
Adults (19-54 years)	30	30%	42	42%	28	28%	100
Older Adults (55-69 years)	15	24%	29	47%	18	29%	62
Seniors (70+)	10	20%	26	52%	14	28%	50

28. To what degree do you oppose or support the Township spending additional public funds to improve or provide additional facilities, as listed below?

Response	Oppose		Neutral		Support		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1. Nature Trails	6	4%	14	10%	122	86%	142
2. Playgrounds	5	4%	17	12%	119	84%	141
3. Space for Youth Programs	4	3%	19	14%	116	83%	139
4. Space for Seniors Programs	5	4%	20	16%	103	80%	128
5. Paved Multi-Use Trails	12	9%	16	12%	111	80%	139
6. Splash Pads	16	12%	17	13%	102	76%	135
7. Space for Special Events	9	6%	26	18%	107	75%	142
8. Swimming Pools (outdoor)	16	11%	21	15%	104	74%	141
9. Arenas	23	16%	20	14%	100	70%	143
10. Soccer Fields	14	10%	29	21%	93	68%	136
11. Acquisition of Parks and Open Space	19	13%	29	20%	96	67%	144
12. Fitness Centres	16	11%	31	22%	94	67%	141
13. Gymnasium	16	11%	34	24%	90	64%	140
14. Community Halls	13	9%	39	27%	93	64%	145
15. Baseball or Softball Diamonds	20	14%	32	23%	87	63%	139
16. Tennis and Pickleball Courts	11	8%	44	33%	78	59%	133
17. Basketball Courts (outdoor)	13	10%	46	34%	76	56%	135
18. Skateboard Parks	21	16%	40	30%	73	54%	134
19. Performing Arts Spaces (e.g., theatre)	21	16%	48	36%	66	49%	135
20. Visual Arts Spaces (e.g., arts studio, display space)	20	15%	51	38%	62	47%	133
21. Off-Leash Dog Parks	35	27%	40	31%	55	42%	130
22. Cultural Heritage Sights (e.g., Museums)	25	18%	60	43%	54	39%	139

29. Volunteers are important to delivering high quality recreation, arts, and culture activities that the Township can be proud of. What is your level of agreement with the following statements about volunteering in the community?

Response	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
The work that volunteers are asked to do is significant and meaningful.	2	1%	5	4%	132	95%	139
It is getting harder to attract and retain volunteers.	1	1%	15	12%	108	87%	124
I am aware of the volunteer opportunities available in Zorra.	32	23%	17	12%	89	64%	138
Volunteers receive appropriate support from the Township.	22	20%	35	32%	51	47%	108
Volunteers are sufficiently trained for the tasks they are assigned.	18	19%	45	47%	33	34%	96

30. Have you or members of your household volunteered in any Zorra events or activities in the past year?

Response	#	%
Yes	101	71%
No	41	29%
Total Respondents	142	

31. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about parks and recreation in the Township.

Response	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Parks and recreation services should be a high priority for Township Council.	3	2%	25	18%	109	80%	137
The Township's parks and recreation facilities are well maintained.	23	17%	18	13%	94	70%	135
The Township's parks and recreation programs are affordable.	11	9%	28	23%	83	68%	122
My household is satisfied with the geographic distribution of parks and recreation facilities in the Township.	30	23%	18	14%	85	64%	133
My household feels well informed about local parks and recreation events and activities.	34	25%	31	23%	72	53%	137
The Township's parks and recreation facility rentals are affordable.	25	25%	24	24%	50	51%	99

32. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about arts and culture in the Township.

Response	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Arts and culture opportunities should be a high priority for Township Council.	15	13%	41	36%	58	51%	114
The Township's arts and cultural opportunities are affordable.	8	10%	40	48%	35	42%	83
The Township's arts and cultural facilities are well maintained.	13	15%	41	49%	30	36%	84
My household is satisfied with the geographic distribution of arts and cultural facilities in the Township.	21	21%	47	47%	33	33%	101
My household feels well informed about the arts and cultural events and activities.	42	39%	33	31%	32	30%	107
There are sufficient arts and cultural opportunities in the Township.	33	34%	40	42%	23	24%	96

33. Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding recreation, arts, and culture opportunities in the Township of Zorra (maximum 100 words)

Due to the open ended nature of this question, the responses have not been included. However, the input expressed by respondents have been considered as a part of this Master Plan.

34. How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

Response	#	Number of Persons
1 Person	9	9
2 Persons	33	66
3 Persons	21	63
4 Persons	48	192
5 Persons	23	115
6 Persons	8	48
Total Number of Persons		493
Total Respondents		142
Average Household Size		3.5

35. Please indicate the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories.

Response	Number of Persons	Proportion of Total Survey Sample	2016 Census	Difference
Under 10 years	116	24%	12%	+24%
10-19 years	88	18%	12%	+6%
20-34 years	73	15%	16%	-1%
35-54 years	163	33%	27%	+6%
55-69 years	36	7%	21%	-14%
70 years and over	17	3%	10%	-7%
Total Number of Persons	493	100%	100%	

36. In what year were you born?

Response	#	%
1940 to 1949 (68 to 77 years)	9	7%
1950 to 1959 (58 to 67 years)	15	12%
1960 to 1969 (48 to 57 years)	17	13%
1970 to 1979 (38 to 47 years)	48	37%
1980 or later (16 to 37 years)	41	32%
Total Respondents		130
Average (Median) Age		45 (41)

37. Are you a resident of the Township of Zorra?

Response	#	%
Yes	133	95%
No	7	5%
Total Respondents	140	

38. You indicated that you are NOT a resident of the Township of Zorra. In which municipality do you reside?

Top Responses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodstock • Ingersoll • East Zorra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London • Southwest Oxford

39. Why does your household participate in recreation, arts, and cultural activities in the Township of Zorra? (select up to 3 responses)

Response	#	%
"Connected" to the Township/used to live here	7	88%
Special events	7	88%
I/We work in the Township of Zorra	3	38%
Facility/program is not available in my municipality	2	25%
Facility/program not available at the preferred time in my municipality	1	13%
Less expensive	1	13%
Total Respondents	8	

40. Which community do you live closest to?

Response	#	%
Thamesford	76	57%
Embro	34	26%
Harrington	13	10%
Kintore	8	6%
Prefer not to say	2	2%
Total Respondents	133	

41. How did you hear about this survey?

Response	#	%
Township of Zorra Social Media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	60	43%
Recreation / Sports / Community Organization	25	18%
From a Councillor	14	10%
Word of Mouth	13	9%
Schools	7	5%
Township of Zorra Website	6	4%
Local Newsletter (Zorra Now)	4	3%
Poster at a Community Facility	3	2%
Total Respondents	140	

Appendix D: Student Survey Summary

Please note: “: #” denotes the number of mentions

What Students Like to Do (Number of Mentions)

Activity	Grade 3 – 6	Grade 7 – 8
Arts and crafts (e.g., painting)	60	29
Attending special events (e.g. Embro Fair, etc.)	48	29
Baseball or Softball	41	23
Basketball	35	33
Curling	11	4
Biking	63	52
Dance, music, drama, and theatre	40	26
Dog Walking	38	28
Enjoying Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas	50	42
Fitness	22	27
Gymnastics	33	8
Hockey, Ringette, Figure Skating, or Ice Skating	50	38
Preschool or Children's Programs (e.g. camp)	18	7
Running or Jogging	56	34
Skateboarding/Bike Park	38	28
Soccer	50	36
Swimming	79	46
Teen Programs (e.g. camps, clubs, etc.)	9	21
Tennis	29	22
Use of Playground Equipment	50	28
Use of Splash Pad	42	13
Volleyball	30	38
Walking or Hiking	61	38
Total Number of Responses	953	650

What Indoor Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities Students Would Like To Do

Grade 3 – 6		Grade 7 – 8	
4-square: 1	Minecraft: 1	Arcades: 2	Swimming: 16
Arts and Crafts: 40	Movies: 1	Arts and Crafts: 21	Tag: 1
Baking: 2	Parachute: 2	Badminton: 1	Talent show: 1
Ball Hockey: 1	Pickleball: 2	Baking: 1	Talking with friends: 1
Baseball: 7	Planting: 1	Baseball: 3	Tennis: 9
Basketball: 12	Play with toys: 1	Basketball: 18	Trampoline: 5
Biking: 2	Playing games: 2	Biking: 1	TV/Video Games: 2
Board games and Cards: 3	Playing with friends: 1	Bowling: 1	Video games: 1
Building: 3	Pottery: 1	Cards: 1	Volleyball: 18
Bumper cars: 4	Reading: 9	Carpet games: 1	Watching TV: 1
Capture the ball: 1	Researching: 1	Chromebook: 1	
Climbing: 1	Rock climbing: 4	Colouring: 1	
Collecting rocks and shells: 1	roller blading: 1	Cooking: 1	
Colouring: 1	Running and Jogging: 8	Dance, music, drama: 16	
Computers: 1	Singing: 1	DIYs: 3	
Container ball: 1	Sleeping: 2	Dodgeball: 5	
Curling: 2	Soccer: 17	European handball: 1	
Dance, music, drama: 40	Super hoops: 1	Events: 1	
Decorating: 1	Swimming: 38	Fitness: 9	
Dodgeball: 5	Tag games: 1	Floor Hockey: 5	
Dog walking: 2	Tennis: 4	Gaga-ball: 1	
Feeding fish: 1	Trampoline: 1	Gaming: 1	
Filming: 1	Typing: 1	Gymnastics: 2	
Fitness: 3	Video games and technology: 14	Hockey: 15	
Floor hockey: 2	Volleyball: 15	Linguistics: 1	
Football or Rugby: 2	Walking and hiking: 5	Math: 1	
Friends and family: 1	Watching TV: 3	Museum: 1	
Games: 1	Watching videos: 1	Nerf: 1	
Go Karts: 2	Yoga: 2	Paintball: 1	
Gymnastics: 17		Ping pong: 1	
Hockey/Ringette: 30		Playing games: 1	
Hot wheels: 1		Playing with animals: 1	
Karate: 3		RC Track: 1	
Knitting: 1		Reading: 2	
Lacrosse: 1		Rock climbing: 2	
Lego: 14		Running and jogging: 3	
Manhunt: 2		Skateboard Park: 8	
Martial Arts: 1		Skating: 8	
Math: 2		Soccer: 5	
Memes: 1		Super cross: 1	

What Outdoor Recreation, Arts, and Culture Activities Students Would Like To Do

Grade 3 – 6		Grade 7 – 8	
4-square: 1	Kick ball: 1	Archery: 1	Tennis: 5
Arts and Crafts: 5	Lego: 1	Baseball: 14	Trampoline: 1
ATV: 4	Manhunt: 7	Basketball: 11	Volleyball: 16
Badminton: 1	Mini golf: 1	Biking: 18	Walking and Hiking: 14
Baseball: 20	Parachute: 1	Camping: 4	
Basketball: 9	Parks: 1	Dirt biking: 3	
Biking: 35	Petting zoo: 2	Dodgeball: 1	
Boating: 1	Picking flowers: 1	Dog walking: 7	
Bubble soccer: 1	Pickleball: 1	Drag races: 1	
Building forts: 1	Picnics	Egg drop race: 1	
Building: 2	Planting	Enjoying parks and	
Bumper cars: 1	trees/gardening: 4	nature: 7	
Camping: 2	Playground: 13	Fair: 1	
Capture the flag: 2	Playing with cats or	Fitness: 1	
Children’s programs: 1	dogs: 2	Food trucks: 1	
Climbing trees: 6	Road hockey: 2	Football: 2	
Dancing, music, drama: 6	Rock climbing/Climbing	Frisbee: 1	
Dirt Biking: 1	trees: 3	Girl Guides: 1	
Dodgeball: 1	Roller coasters: 1	Go Karts: 1	
Dog walking: 6	Rollerblading: 1	Help with daycare: 1	
Dolphins: 1	Running and Jogging:	Hockey: 8	
Driving RC cars, airplanes,	20	Kickball: 3	
drones: 5	Shooting my gun: 1	Manhunt: 4	
Eco team: 1	Skateboarding: 9	Mudding: 1	
Enjoying parks and nature: 9	Snowboarding: 1	Paintball: 2	
Fair: 5	Soccer: 37	Playground equipment:	
Farming: 2	Splash Pad: 8	2	
Fishing: 1	Swimming: 35	Rip stick: 1	
Fitness: 2	Talking: 1	Road hockey: 5	
Floor hockey: 1	Tanning: 1	Rock climbing: 1	
Football: 5	Tennis: 9	Running and jogging: 10	
Golf: 1	Terry fox day: 2	Shooting: 1	
Gym: 1	Tic Tac Toe: 1	Skateboard Park: 9	
Gymnastics: 11	Toys/games: 2	Skiing: 1	
Hockey: 9	Track and field: 1	Soccer: 17	
Horseback riding: 4	Trampoline: 8	Special events: 2	
Hunting for coins: 1	Vacations: 1	Splash pad: 3	
Hunting/angling: 2	Video games: 1	Strategy games: 1	
Ice skating: 2	Volleyball: 10	Swimming: 19	
	Walking and hiking: 21		

Appendix E: Focus Group Participants

Outdoor Sports Focus Groups

- Embro Minor Baseball Association
- Embro Minor Soccer Association
- Embro Zorra Lawn Bowling
- Kintore Optimist Soccer Association
- Thamesford Beach Volleyball
- Thamesford Lawn Bowling Club
- Thamesford Men's Slo-Pitch
- Thamesford Minor Soccer Association
- Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee
- Zorra Water and Wheels

Schools, Libraries, and Church Focus Groups

- A.J. Baker Public School
- Oxford County Library
- Thamesford Library
- Thamesford Public School
- Westminster United Church
- Zorra Recreational Advisory Committee

Service Clubs and Arts and Culture Stakeholders

- 1st Kintore / Thamesford Scouts
- Embro Agricultural Society
- Harrington Area Community Association
- Oxford 4H
- Oxford Women's Institute
- Thamesford Lions Club
- Thistle Theatre
- Zorra Caledonian Society
- Zorra Recreational Advisory Committee

Indoor Sports Focus Groups

- Embro Minor Hockey Association
- Thamesford Minor Hockey
- Thamesford NBC Hockey League
- Thamesford Skating Club
- Thamesford Trojans Junior C Hockey
- West-Oxford Girls Hockey Association
- Zorra Skating Club

Appendix F: Rates and Fees Scan

Facility / Program Rates and Fees	Township of Zorra Rate	Town of Ingersoll Rate	Municipality of Thames Centre Rate	City of Woodstock Rate	Town of St. Marys Rate	Town of Tavistock Rate	Benchmarked Average	Township of Zorra Above / Below Average
Arenas (Per Hour)								
Minor Prime	\$136	\$137.30	\$182.79	\$182.00	\$148.79	\$138.00	\$154.15	Below
Minor Non-Prime	\$105	\$92.50	\$90.49	\$134.00	\$93.89	\$112.00	\$104.65	On Par
Adult Prime	\$173	\$172.20	\$196.71	\$186.00	\$181.22	\$181.00	\$181.69	Below
Adult Non-Prime	\$136	\$112.10	\$167.09	\$140.00	\$117.59	\$117.00	\$131.63	Above
Public Skate (Per Person / Family)								
Family	\$5.00	-	-	Free	\$13.25	\$9.00	\$9.08	Below
Senior	No rate offered	\$3.75	\$3.00	Free	\$4.50	n/a	\$3.75	-
Adult	\$2.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	Free	\$4.75	\$3.00	\$3.75	Below
Children / Youth	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	Free	\$3.50	\$3.00	\$2.90	Below
Pre-School	Free	\$3.00	\$3.00	Free	n/a	Free	\$3.00	Below
Shinny	\$2.00	\$6.50	\$8.00	Free	n/a	n/a	\$5.50	Below
Public Swimming (Per Person / Family)								
Family Pass	\$9.00	\$9.25	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$13.25	n/a	\$9.90	Below
Senior	No rate offered	\$3.75	\$3.00	\$3.25	\$4.50	n/a	\$3.63	-
Adult	\$3.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$4.00	\$4.75	n/a	\$4.15	Below
Children / Youth	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$3.40	\$2.75	\$3.50	n/a	\$2.93	Below
Pre-School	Free	Free	\$3.40	\$2.75	\$3.50	n/a	\$3.22	Below
Swim Programs	\$42.00 - \$58.00	\$30.00 - \$56.00	\$58.00 - \$65.00	\$65.00 - \$70.00	\$52.00 - \$70.00	n/a	Varies	-
Private Swim Lessons	\$15.00 - \$21.00	\$20.00	\$15.00 - \$21.00	\$22.00	\$17.00	n/a	Varies	-
Multi-Purpose and Meeting Rooms (Per Hour)								
Community Meeting Room	Free	-	\$31.06	Annual Fee	Free	-	\$31.06	Below
Public Meeting Room Rental	\$28.00 - \$158.00	\$30.00 - \$56.00	\$58.00 - \$65.00	\$65.00 - \$70.00	\$52.00 - \$70.00	n/a	Varies	-
Hall (Weekend Prime Rate)	\$537.00	\$420.00	\$508.49	\$500.00	\$741.89	\$535.00	\$540.40	Below
Soccer Fields (Per Game)								
Minor	\$12.35	No soccer fields	\$38.73	\$9.85	\$7.19 per player	Permitted by sports groups	\$29.91	Below
Adult	\$51.01	No soccer fields	\$47.12	\$23.55	-	Permitted by sports groups	\$40.56	Above
Ball Diamonds (Per Game)								
Minor Unlit	\$22.60	\$5 per player	\$36.14	\$13.00	\$29.98	Permitted by sports groups	\$25.43	Below
Minor Lit	-	-	\$53.68	\$14.00	-	Permitted by sports groups	\$33.84	-
Adult Unlit	\$41.00	\$486 per team per season	\$56.00	\$35.00	\$44.97	Permitted by sports groups	\$44.24	Below
Adult Lit	\$53.00	-	\$73.56	\$45.00	-	Permitted by sports groups	\$57.19	Below

Multi-Purpose and Meeting Room rates varies depending on type of function and locations. Community groups have use of certain meeting rooms at no charge. Certain assumptions were made for soccer and ball diamond rates (e.g., one hour per soccer game, two hours per ball game, approximately 12 weeks (minor) to 18 weeks (adult) per season, etc.). Soccer rates may vary based on the number of games played per season.