

Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan



FINAL REPORT

February 2009

Prepared by:

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Feb. 25, 2009

Ms. Karen Makela
Director
Parks and Recreation Department
City of Elliot Lake
45 Hillside Drive North
Elliot Lake, Ontario
P5A 1X5

Dear Ms. Makela:

Re. Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan

We are pleased to provide our final report concerning the City of Elliot Lake Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan. This study addresses the City's requirements for a wide range of services and provides a number of recommendations that will contribute to an improved parks, recreation, arts and cultural system. The study also recommends a new Multiuse Complex that will provide the City with up-to-date arena, aquatic, multipurpose and library facilities.

It has been a pleasure working with you, other City staff and the members of the Steering Committee on this project. We trust the recommendations will be a useful guide in the City's continuing efforts to provide superior parks and recreation services for the residents of Elliot Lake.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this study.

Sincerely

Jim Morgenstern, MCIP, RPP
Principal

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture will guide municipal Council and staff when making decisions concerning future needs and service provision strategies in Elliot Lake over the next 10 years. The Plan is organized as follows:

- 2.0 Framework for Service Delivery
- 3.0 Program and Delivery System Development Strategy
- 4.0 Parks and Facilities Development Strategy
- 5.0 Implementation

During the initial phases of the master planning process it was determined that a major multipurpose recreation complex was an immediate requirement to be addressed in the City's long term strategies for leisure services. The identification of this project, and the potential to secure funding for it, resulted in some refocusing of the work program and a stronger emphasis on the feasibility of the complex. Consequently, the Master Plan includes a detailed feasibility study for the Multiuse Complex. This report was submitted under separate cover. The feasibility study also included recommendations concerning the relocation of Elliot Lake's public library to the Multiuse Complex. These recommendations focused on library requirements and the compatibility of library and recreation services in a multiuse facility.

In addition to the Multiuse Complex Feasibility Study, the following background reports were prepared and submitted under separate cover. The results are briefly summarized in the report, but the reader is referred to the full reports for a more detailed discussion of factors that support the analysis and recommendations in the Master Plan.

A Technical Background Report, which includes:

- An Environmental Scan.
- The Public Consultation Program Results.

A Needs Assessment Report

1.2 STUDY PROCESS

The Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture was developed in three phases.

Phase One comprised the Environmental Scan of current, and anticipated future, conditions in Elliot Lake with respect to: population; parks, recreation and culture services; and leisure trends and best practices in service provision. It also included a review of the supply and use of parks, and recreation and culture facilities in the City. A Vision and Future Directions Workshop was also held at which City representatives articulated a preferred future for leisure services in Elliot Lake.

Phase Two included the Public Consultation Program, comprising a public meeting, focus groups, a survey of sport and recreation user groups, a survey of arts and culture user groups, a survey of Elliot Lake residents, submissions from volunteer community organizations, meetings with recreation and culture boards, and personal interviews with key informants and municipal staff.

A detailed Needs Assessment was also completed during Phase Two. This assessment determined requirements for future recreation and culture facilities and parks.

Phase Three involved the preparation of the Multiuse Complex Feasibility Study and the Master Plan and their review and revision based on input from the Steering Committee, Council and the community.

1.3 PLANNING CONTEXT SUMMARY

The Environmental Scan, which is contained in the Technical Background Report referred to above, provides detailed information on the planning context for the Master Plan. Discussion in this section therefore is limited to a brief summary of key contextual variables. Relevant information is also presented throughout the document, as it relates to specific recommendations.

1.3.1 POPULATION

In recent years, the City of Elliot Lake's population has fallen dramatically. In 2006 the population was 11,549; a decline from 2001, however the rate of decline has decreased considerably from 12%¹ between 1996 and 2001 (the period immediately following the last mine closure) to its more recent rate of 3.4%. This decrease can be attributed to both a natural stabilization trend after an immediate wave of out-migration and the City's transition to a retirement community. The success of this reorientation can be seen in both the stabilizing population and the noticeable increase in residents over the age of 45 years, and particularly those in the 75+ age group.

¹ Statistics Canada 2006 Highlights Tables –Age and Sex Profile www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/data/highlights/agesex/

Elliot Lake's age structure is significantly different than that of Ontario and Canada. In the 2006 Census², Elliot Lake's population under 19 years of age was 21% of the total compared to Ontario's 26.3% while those over 65 years comprised 32% compared to Ontario's 14% of the population. In relation to communities across Canada, the City of Elliot Lake has the second highest proportion of residents over the age of 65 in Canada with a median age of 54.8 years. Elliot Lake saw the greatest change in median age nationally between 2001 and 2006, with an increase of 5.4 years.

By 2019 the population will increase to approximately 15,000. This population increase will be attributable to further seniors moving into the area and cottage lot developments.

1.3.2 INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE

Based on the 2006 census, 55% of total community income is "unearned" (Government grants, which account for 30% being primarily Canada Pension and Old Age Security payments, and private pensions which account for 25% of this income). This high share of unearned income is unique to Elliot Lake.

Overall income is lower than other similar size communities with 89% of persons earning less than \$50,000 in 2004³. The labor force participation rate is only 38%, less than half the Province's 67%⁴. Elliot Lake also has a higher proportion of residents employed within the services industry than the Province.

1.3.3 EXISTING PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE SERVICES

Elliot Lake is well supplied with parks, open space, trails, recreation and art and culture facilities. This assessment is based both on comparisons to similar-sized communities and the evaluations of those who participated in public consultation activities. While there are some areas requiring improvement, particularly in relation to aging facilities and programming, the community is satisfied with available services and the City's efforts in their provision.

1.3.4 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

The results of the public consultation program are presented in detail in the Technical Background Report. In large part the community expressed satisfaction with the supply of facilities, in most cases identifying the need for the upgrading of various facilities as opposed to the development of new facilities. There was strong support for a new Multiuse Complex that would replace existing outdated facilities in the community. Furthermore, the need for additional programs delivered by the municipality was identified and various adjustments and improvements were suggested in relation to service delivery.

² Statistics Canada 2006 Highlights Tables –Age and Sex Profile www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/data/highlights/agesex/

³ Econometric Research Limited. 2007. The Economy of Elliot Lake: The Challenge of Revival. Report prepared for Elliot Lake Retirement Living

⁴ Statistics Canada 2006 Highlights Tables www12.statcan.ca/English/census06/data/highlights/agesex/index/cfm?Lang=E

1.4 NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS

The following is a summary of conclusions from the Needs Assessment (see background report for additional details).

Major Indoor Sport and Recreation Facilities

The current number of major indoor sport and recreation facilities in Elliot Lake represents an appropriate level of supply. While improvements and replacements may be required, additions to the supply are not required during the term of the Master Plan.

Development of a Multiuse Complex

The re-development of the swimming pool; fitness centre; Collins Hall and the Centennial Arena into a Multiuse Complex is recommended.

Youth Centre Space

Provide a limited amount of dedicated space for a Youth Centre within the Multiuse Complex.

Tennis Courts

Reduce the overall supply of community tennis courts while maintaining opportunities for both membership and unstructured use. Explore options for relocating the current courts.

Ball / Soccer Fields

No additional outdoor soccer or ball fields are required for the period of the Master Plan. Opportunities to decommission fields and/or make better use of existing resources needs to be investigated further.

Basketball Courts

A redevelopment strategy to create a limited number of well designed multipurpose courts is required.

Skateboard Park

Redevelop the existing skateboard park as a permanent, high quality site adjacent to the Multiuse Complex

Playgrounds

There is currently an over-supply of playgrounds and a strategy for future provision that may involve decommissioning is recommended.

Splash Pad

Consideration should be given to providing a City-serving splash pad, in a major park designed to be a destination point for the use of this facility.

Arts and Culture Facilities

The overall supply of facilities in Elliot Lake provides a very solid base for a wide range of arts and cultural activities, events and programs. There are no significant gaps in the supply of facilities and those available will serve the community for the foreseeable future. The primary issue for the Master Plan is the extent to which existing facilities can be enhanced to provide a higher level of service to existing users.

Library

The space requirements associated with a new library for Elliot Lake must be confirmed and options for incorporating new library development with other Master Plan projects should be pursued. (Note – this was the conclusion of the Needs Assessment but subsequent work associated with the Feasibility Study recommended the library relocate to the Multiuse Complex.

Parkland

The current supply of parkland will accommodate current and future needs. Parkland supply standards should be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

Park Improvement Strategy

Notwithstanding the overall adequacy of parkland supply, a park improvement strategy is required that will identify improvements consistent with the socio-demographic characteristics of the community as well as current best practices in park design and development.

Trails

While the supply of trails did not appear to be a problem, a number of issues associated with ongoing management and maintenance, conflicting uses and public access will need to be addressed as part of a long term trail development strategy. The specific needs of an older population should also be considered as part of this strategy.

1.5 MULTIUSE FEASIBILITY STUDY – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed Multiuse Recreation Complex will replace four existing facilities that can no longer adequately serve the community. These four facilities are – the indoor pool, the arena, Collins Hall, and the library. In all cases, the facilities are of an age where ongoing capital repairs and maintenance are escalating and anticipated future costs are not supportable. More importantly however, the facilities no longer meet the needs of the community. This is particularly true for the indoor pool and the library which do not reflect contemporary design standards.

Recommended Facilities

The recommended Multiuse Recreation Complex is a building of approximately 80,000 gross sq. ft. with the following components:

- A 6-lane, 25-metre pool capable of accommodating a range of aquatic programs and activities such as swim instruction, leadership, fitness and competition from beginner to advanced levels;
- A warm water pool for therapeutic and adapted programs, particularly well suited to older adults, and a small wading pool for young children;
- A single, regulation size gymnasium (5,000 net sq. ft.) for active sports and recreation programming; the gym would accommodate both youth and adult activities and includes an area for folding bleachers.
- A large multi-purpose program room (2,000 net sq. ft.) and smaller meeting room (500 net sq. ft.) designed to meet a wide range of possible programs and activities (e.g., sport/recreation, fitness/wellness, social events, presentations, seminars, lectures, meetings, training sessions, visual arts, etc.) with appropriate equipment and amenities.
- A single pad arena with an ice surface of 85 feet x 200 feet; 6 dressing rooms and seating for 500.
- A library of about 8,000 net sq. ft. providing a fully functional design for collections; working and reading areas; and in-library activities; the library will also share the multipurpose programming and meeting space in the Complex;
- A large shared lobby area with food service and space and amenities to serve as a community meeting area; centre for community information; and a general focal point for social interaction in the community.
- A design that ensures Multiuse spaces, divisibility, adequate storage, appropriately located food service areas and administration offices, and physical accessibility.
- A design and construction program that minimizes environmental costs and maximizes financial sustainability.

The facility components and design specifications, including the areas allocated to various components, suggested seating, number of dressing rooms, etc., will need to be explored further during the detailed design process. These are preliminary estimates based on customary facilities of this type and our understanding of program and activity requirements in Elliot Lake. Additional input from users and a better sense of the construction budget will be considerations in finalizing these requirements.

Capital Cost Estimate

The anticipated capital cost for the Multiuse Complex is approximately \$27million. This includes allowances for site development, contingencies, professional fees, disbursements and furniture, fitments and equipment. Construction costs are budgeted at \$300 per sq. ft. and \$170 per sq. ft respectively for the aquatic/gym/library and the arena components. The construction market in Ontario has been volatile for some time and the recent economic downturn makes it even more difficult to accurately forecast capital costs. Consequently, while this is a reasonably and possibly generous estimate of the costs, prices will need to be monitored and confirmed closer to the point of tender.

Operating Costs and Revenues

The net annual operating cost for the Multiuse Complex is projected to be \$435,000. This is based on very conservative assumptions concerning both programming and revenues. We have assumed that existing programs and activities will be transferred to the Complex, but we have likely underestimated new program development. In addition, we have retained current fee structures which are lower than those in other Ontario municipalities. Despite these conservative assumptions, the net operating cost at the new Complex represents a savings of over \$200,000 annually compared to the cost of operating the existing facilities.

2.0 FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes an overall framework for parks, recreation, arts and culture in the City of Elliot Lake by describing Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles and identifying the broad strategies and action plans that will guide the Parks and Recreation Department in the next ten years.

2.2 OUTCOMES AND SERVICE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES

Early in the study process, a series of discussions were held with the Master Plan Steering Committee, members of Council, and other community representatives to broadly define Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles for Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture in the City. The Outcomes described the products or ends of these services while the Service Delivery Principles described the manner in which the municipality would deliver its services. The following were the Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles identified through this process. They have been used to guide the development of strategies and action plans in this report.

Outcomes

- Providing opportunities for social interaction and building stronger, more cohesive and inclusive communities.
- Providing opportunities to attract new businesses and residents by encouraging them to relocate to Elliot Lake to take advantage of superior parks, recreation, arts and culture services.
- Providing opportunities for all residents in Elliot Lake to have active and healthy lifestyles.
- Fostering community development, creating stronger community organizations and community leaders.
- Creating a feeling of civic pride among residents, in that, residents feel that Elliot Lake is a good place to live.
- Providing opportunities for economic development to further enhance the local economy.
- Attracting visitors to Elliot Lake and thereby contributing to the local economy.
- Providing opportunities for all residents to have enjoyable, rewarding leisure time activities.
- Preserving and protecting Elliot Lake's environment.

While all of these outcomes were supported to guide the Master Plan, particular emphasis was placed on the first three outcomes. Opportunities for social interaction and community cohesion/inclusion are particularly important in a community where many residents are new-comers and often older adults. Culture and recreation services were seen as a major contributor to building a strong, cohesive and inclusive community. Similarly, the role that high quality facilities and programs could play in attracting and retaining residents and businesses was emphasized. Elliot Lake's future depends on its continued success in attracting residents and businesses that will make the community their home, as well as retaining existing residents, particularly the community's young people.

Finally, the over-riding importance of health, particularly in a retirement community, was acknowledged as a principal outcome of the parks, recreation, arts and cultural sector.

Service Delivery Principles

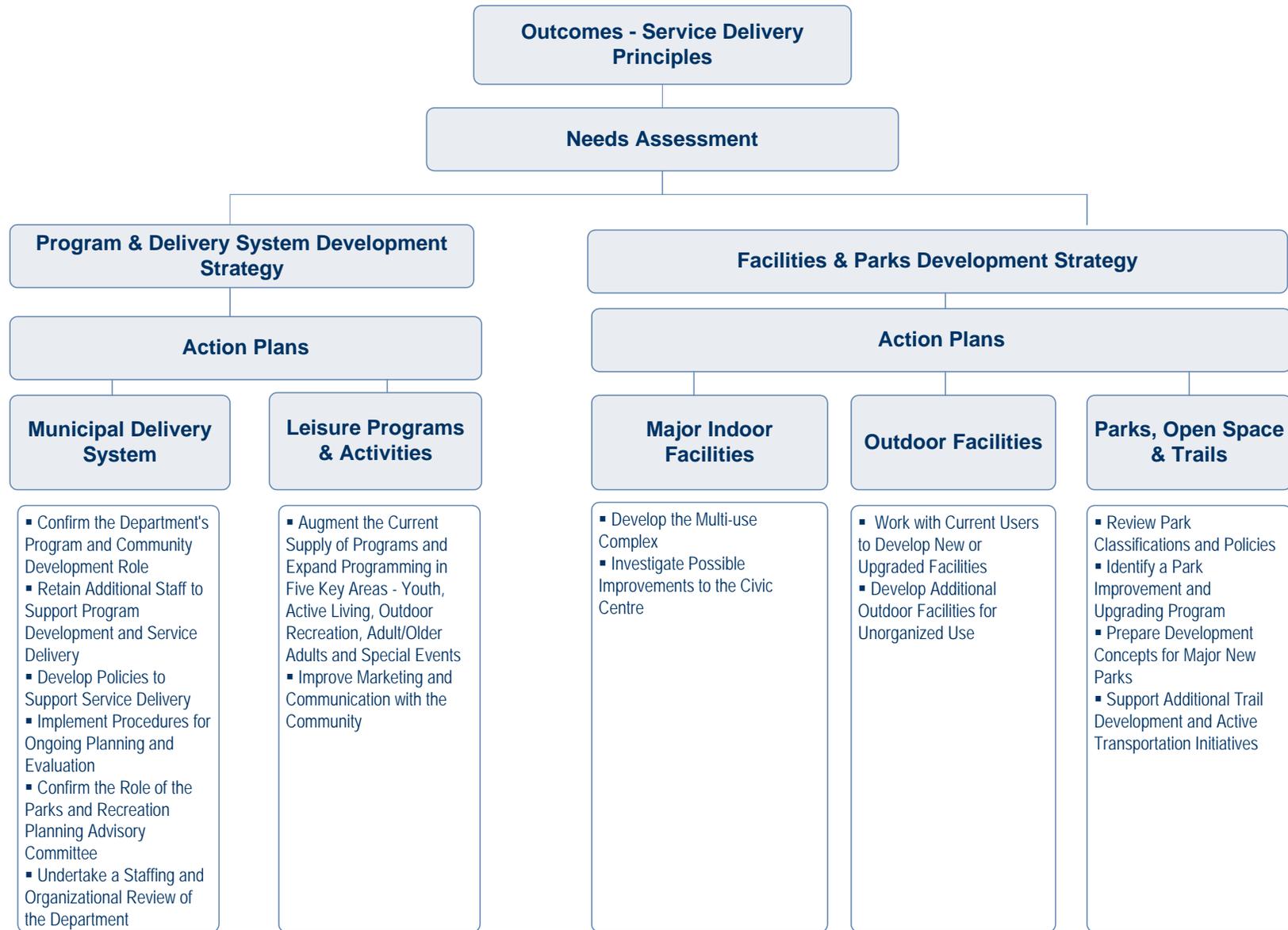
- Developing and promoting program opportunities that are both cost effective for the municipality while remaining affordable to participants
- Ensuring that the Department's services, to the greatest extent possible, represent the full range of interests in the community including those of various ages, incomes and lifestyles.
- Developing and improving public facility buildings' use of resources such as energy, water, space and materials; while reducing the impacts on the community and surrounding area through improved siting, design, construction, operation and maintenance in the future.
- Maintaining close contact and ongoing communication with all community interests and stakeholders.
- Delivering services, to the greatest extent possible, through partnerships with other agencies and organizations.
- Coordinating the development and best use of resources within the community, based on continuous evaluation and long range planning.

These outcomes and service delivery principles are the foundation of the strategies described in the Master Plan. They provide the over-riding rationale for the Master Plan's recommendations and describe the future that is anticipated should the Master Plan be fully implemented.

2.3 NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE SERVICES

As noted earlier, this report builds on the Needs Assessment and identifies a strategy for the future development of parks, recreation and culture services in the City. The strategy encompasses the facility and park needs determined in the assessment but also identifies the municipal initiatives necessary to meet these needs. These initiatives include developing new or improved policies, confirming roles and responsibilities, completing additional planning studies, adding staff, revising operating procedures, and developing the Multiuse Complex. They are captured in two broad strategies: a Program and Delivery System Development Strategy and a Facilities and Parks Development Strategy – which together describe 16 Action Plans.

The Action Plans identified in this report support the Outcomes and Service Delivery Principles noted above. They will be the municipality's focus for the next ten years and largely describe the priority undertakings that must be addressed to maintain high quality services in Elliot Lake. Strategies and Action Plans are summarized in the following figure and discussed in the remainder of the report.



3.0 PROGRAM AND DELIVERY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3.1 OVERVIEW

For the most part, the community is satisfied with the availability, quality and cost of programs. Interest exists, however, in developing additional activities to complement the current supply of organized sports and leisure activities, particularly in the areas of unstructured, casual participation and outdoor recreation. Interest was also expressed in youth programming and developing a youth activity centre to provide Elliot Lake teens with an informal meeting place for socializing and accessing support services. More generally, the City has a greater role to play in expanding programming focused on older adults; healthy, active living; lifestyle advocacy and outdoor recreational activities.

With the exception of the programs offered at the indoor pool and the walking program at Collins Hall, the City does not provide programs directly. The City supports non-municipal agencies and volunteers in developing and operating community leisure programming however there is a need for the City to become more involved with this aspect of program provision and delivery. The municipality's role as program facilitator will continue in the future, however stronger partnerships are required with volunteers and other non-municipal providers in order to meet the program and activity needs in the community. Given the link between social interaction, community vitality and quality of life associated with the quality of recreational activities available to residents, the delivery of such services in a proficient manner is essential to retain residents and attract newcomers to the area. This programming is also particularly important in a community of newcomers with a much older age profile than is customary in other cities. Consequently, there is a need to ensure that the delivery system is increasingly effective in responding to greater community expectations regarding the range and quality of local leisure services. The Master Plan focuses on closing identified "gaps" in the existing supply of programs and activities, capitalizing on available resources to do so, and increasing the capacity of the City to fulfill its role in program delivery.

The provision of the Multiuse Complex is central to the program and activity strategy. While there is a good deal that can be done with existing facilities, ultimately this strategy can only be fully implemented with the proposed Multiuse Complex.

3.1.1 PROGRAM AND DELIVERY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The development strategy for programs and the service delivery system will:

- Clarify the Department's role in programming and community development;
- Enhance service provision through effective partnerships, supported by appropriate Department staff resources, policies and procedures;
- Develop and strengthen existing and new partnerships in service provision;
- Provide the City with the resources and tools to fulfill its role and function in all areas of responsibility for leisure services;

- Focus on program/activity areas that are in keeping with current and potentially future residents interests, that are currently not available, and coincide with evolving initiatives and practices in municipal services; and
- Capitalize on the use of available resources in expanding the program base.

Discussion is presented under the following headings:

- The Municipal Delivery System.
- Leisure Programs and Activities.

3.2 THE MUNICIPAL DELIVERY SYSTEM

Current Status and Identified Needs

- The Department is not currently fulfilling the traditional practices associated with a community development model - including leading and facilitating change. This can be attributed in large part to a limited number of staff. The Department should become more active in these areas to identify priority needs and build community capacity in providing leisure services. Its role as a direct programmer will continue to be secondary, particularly as community development functions are strengthened.
- The Department's role in programming and partnerships can be significantly expanded with access to the proposed Multiuse Complex.
- Delivery system improvements should focus on making delivery more effective by clarifying the Department's roles and responsibilities in service provision and making these explicit in policy. Of particular importance is the need to define the Department's responsibilities in areas such as tourism and social programming. An appropriate role, particularly with respect to social programming, will require more attention to the formation of partnerships with the community, other municipal departments, and other service providers.
- In general, the City's current role as indirect program provider is appropriate and should continue and be further developed. However, it may be necessary, certainly in the early stages of the implementation of the Master Plan, for the Department to become more formally involved in providing new programs to allow the programs to become established prior to being run by volunteer organizations. On the whole the Department's primary programming focus should be on facilitating service delivery and entering into effective program partnerships.
- Policies must be updated, revised and in some cases developed to support these roles.

Recommended Action Plans

Implementing initiatives in the areas of parks, facilities and programs requires a delivery system that has resources and is both coordinated and consistent in its approach to service development and provision. The Master Plan, therefore, focuses on building the required base of policy, human resources and partnerships to ensure that this happens with the following six Action Plans.

Action Plan #1: Confirm the Department's Program and Community Development Role

Action Plan #2: Retain Additional Staff to Support Program Development and Service Delivery

Action Plan #3: Develop Policies to Support Service Delivery

Action Plan #4: Implement Procedures for Ongoing Planning and Evaluation

Action Plan #5: Confirm the Role of the Parks and Recreation Planning Advisory Committee

Action Plan #6: Undertake a Staffing and Organizational Review of the Department

These Action Plans are discussed in the remainder of this section of the report.

Action Plan#1: Confirm the Department's Program and Community Development Role

Community Development

The key to effective community development in the existing service environment is delineating an appropriate and effective role for the municipality in supporting community volunteers. While there are many definitions of community development, it generally implies a pro-active role in facilitating change at the local level and building capacity within new or existing organizations to deliver programs and services. Community development requires staff to take the lead in identifying and responding to needs and issues, to advance support in resolving issues, and to initiate processes and/or practices that will expand the community's capacity to work more effectively in meeting its own needs.

There are limitations with the Department's current community development activities, including:

- **Planning:** As discussed in Action Plan #4 in this section, an ongoing planning process is required to support effective decision-making. Effective planning allows the Department to take the lead in identifying and anticipating needs - both in specific service areas (e.g., wellness, arts, culture) and among various groups in the community (e.g., youth, seniors, new Canadians).
- **Community Outreach:** As a community developer, the Department must have an ongoing, visible presence in volunteer recruitment (for both existing and new areas of interest), promotion/publicity, information-sharing, partnership development etc.

- Training/Transfer of Skills: A strong and regenerative volunteer base is essential to a community development approach. Volunteers and volunteer organizations will increase their capacity to provide more/better leisure services if they are provided with the appropriate skills. As a community developer, the Department is responsible for anticipating needs in this area - and particularly new needs resulting from changes in the service environment - and providing the training necessary to transfer required skills to individual volunteers. In addition the Department will be required to provide volunteers with the tools and knowledge necessary to participate in planning and evaluation activities.
- Facilitating Relations with Other Agencies: On behalf of volunteers or volunteer organizations, the Department should be prepared to liaise with other organizations/agencies, other levels of government etc. for a variety of purposes such as convening meetings, dealing with funding applications, setting up training programs, etc. At the local level, the Public Library and the Board of Education are extremely important partners and the Department must facilitate relationships between these agencies and community groups to expand joint programming initiatives and access to facilities and resources.
- Information Clearing House/Referral: As the local agency with primary responsibility for leisure services, the Department is the preferred "information clearing house" for all matters related to community leisure services, which requires a current information base available to the volunteer sector. Further, the Department has a role to play in ensuring that the volunteer organizations delivering services are aware of new policies and initiatives affecting their programs (e.g. active living; subsidy programs for low income individuals; etc.)
- Program Services: Support with implementing programs is required (e.g. assistance with preparing promotion/publicity material, help in designing and evaluating programs, finding appropriate facilities, etc.), as well as assistance and encouragement to expand programming into new areas or adjust programs to reflect new approaches.

Not all of these functions will be relevant to all volunteers or volunteer organizations, as some will have sufficient resources and experience to handle them independently or they will not be relevant to their programs and services. Further, it is expected that as volunteers develop their services and levels of expertise, they will assume increasing responsibility for these functions, thereby allowing the Department to focus on new initiatives.

In Elliot Lake these community development functions can be captured in four inter-related roles that should be the responsibility of Department staff. In our view, none of these functions have received sufficient attention primarily because of limited staff resources (discussed below). The Department's community development role includes:

Support for Existing Volunteer Organizations – this is a traditional volunteer support and facilitation role that all parks and recreation departments must perform to maintain a healthy and vibrant volunteer sector.

It often focuses on the “program services” function noted above, but will also involve other community development activities. This role should be supported with effective policies, including a volunteer support policy (as discussed elsewhere in this chapter).

Despite overall positive views on the assistance the City now provides, volunteer organizations in Elliot Lake reported a number of concerns, including most frequently the challenge of volunteer recruitment, fundraising difficulties, and problems with marketing and promotion. These are typical issues facing the volunteer sector throughout Ontario. Community interest and trends also clearly indicate the need for more and different types of programming. These considerations suggest the Department should expand its support to existing volunteer organizations.

Volunteer Development and Leadership – this role goes beyond support for existing organizations to focus on expanding the skills and capabilities of existing volunteers and building new volunteer organizations and leadership in the community. This is likely a more important role in Elliot Lake than in other municipalities because of the number of new residents and the reliance on the volunteer. As a retirement community and a community that is actively recruiting new residents, there is a source of volunteer expertise and energy that the community must capitalize upon. This, however, takes a good deal of work to recruit and train volunteers and continue to motivate them to provide services. In addition, Elliot Lake heavily relies on volunteers for a number of valued recreation services, such as the operation of the ski hill. While our community development recommendations if implemented will provide additional support to these volunteers, one should expect that even the most committed volunteer will have to be replaced.

The Department has a role to play in supporting the renewal of the volunteer sector. Finally, to a much greater extent than has been the case in the past, volunteer organizations are being affected by external practices, policies and legislation. Liability insurance is an obvious example, but there are many other provincial and national initiatives affecting sport and recreation that deal with inclusion; access for low income individuals; coaching; physical activity and health benefits, etc. In some cases, these initiatives can be sources of funding or support for skill development. The Department must ensure that volunteers have access to these. However, these initiatives also often speak to new approaches to service delivery that may be resisted by volunteers. In the past decade gender equity in sport is an example of a provincial and national initiative that had consequences for local recreation that were not always enthusiastically embraced. In these cases, the Department has a more challenging (and much more time consuming) task to work with volunteers to introduce change.

Support to Other Agencies/Joint Program Initiatives – the majority of programming in Elliot Lake will be provided through the efforts of volunteers supported by the Department, as discussed above. However, there are sectors of the community that will require special programs and services that would not generally fall within the Department’s leisure services mandate, but where they can provide assistance. In Elliot Lake the most pressing need will be for the frail elderly. Agencies working with the elderly in Elliot Lake were concerned for isolated individuals who generally do not have the capacity, particularly in the winter, to access community programs. Some of those we interviewed suggested that the Department should send staff into seniors’ apartments to organize daily fitness and activity programs.

While this level of direct programming is not realistic, the Department could work with home support agencies serving the elderly to train volunteers in appropriate exercise programs for the frail elderly and these volunteers might offer a service of this type. These types of joint programming or service initiatives, where the Department is not the lead agency but provides a supporting role consistent with their mandate and expertise, seem particularly relevant in Elliot Lake. While the frail elderly would be the largest potential market for these services, other sectors of the community might also be candidates (e.g. it was suggested by key informants in Elliot Lake that the local police, teachers, and recreation staff could design programs for youth at risk and representatives of the health sector frequently pointed to possible joint initiatives with recreation staff around healthy and active lifestyles).

Finally, it should be noted that the potential for joint programming partnerships of the type being discussed here will be significantly expanded when the proposed Multiuse Complex is in place. We should expect a significant expansion in socially focused programs where other agencies take the lead but the Department provides both facilities and program support when the Complex is available to the community.

Support for Tourism and Economic Development - this is not a traditional community development role for municipal parks and recreation departments but is appropriate in Elliot Lake. Tourism falls within the economic development function of the municipality, and primary responsibility for attracting visitors to the area should rest with local and regional tourism authorities. However, in Elliot Lake there is very close connection between local parks, recreation, arts and cultural activities and tourism. The tourism potential of parks, recreation, arts and culture services is considerable and in many cases the same resources can serve both the visitor and the resident. The City has already recognized this connection and has recently transferred a number of services to the Parks and Recreation Department, including responsibility for the Museum, Civic Centre, trails and important outdoor visitor sites such as the Miners' Monument Memorial Park and the Fire Tower Lookout. In addition to the Department's direct responsibility for maintaining and operating these resources, staff should play a community development function in support of tourism and visitor services. The following outlines possible ways in which the Department can pursue the dual objectives of community leisure and tourism service development:

- the City's trails present a major opportunity to attract visitors, through promotion and the provision of amenities to accommodate self-directed trail users (e.g., parking, high quality mapping at trail heads, good directional signage, washrooms, etc.);
- the Civic Centre and Museum represent an important resource for both residents and visitors and staff, in addition to managing the facility, should be playing a much more significant role in supporting arts, culture and heritage program development both at the Civic Centre and Museum and in the community;
- special events offer unique opportunities to serve residents and attract visitors.

These four community development functions will largely define the program and service role of the Parks and Recreation Department. As noted, considerably more effort is required in all of these areas and recommendations in the Master Plan for additional staff, new staff roles and responsibilities and expanded policies will support these functions.

The Department's Direct Programming Role

As noted above, The Department's service delivery model should focus on the four identified community development functions.

There are, however, situations where the Department to assume a direct programming role. In these cases, the Department should assume responsibility for all aspects of a program including design, delivery, staffing and evaluation. While most programs will be provided through community development, direct program delivery would be appropriate if:

- There is an immediate need to respond to continually high levels of community demand and no other provider is available;
- For reasons of liability or required skills the Department is the preferred program provider;
- Programs contribute to important or essential program goals that are not being met through other providers - such as preventative health and wellness, safety or environmental protection (e.g., learn to swim, water safety, life skills, environmental awareness); or
- Through direct program delivery, the City can realize revenues that can be used to offset the cost of programs requiring a subsidy.

Currently, the Department's direct programming is largely focused on the indoor pool and the indoor walking program at Collins Hall. This type of programming is appropriate and should continue. Presently, the Hall is likely an under-utilized community resource and it may be possible to expand direct programming at this location.

When the Multiuse Complex is developed the Department's capacity for direct programming will expand. Aquatics should continue to be a direct program, but there are likely other areas where an expanded supply of direct programming may be possible. Day camp and skill development programs are an example that would be customary in most communities and may be under-represented in Elliot Lake. Consequently, direct programs that meet the criterion noted above should be expanded where possible.

Action Plan #2: Ensure Staff Are Available to Support Program Development and Service Delivery

A detailed assessment of staffing, job responsibilities and workload allocations was not within the scope of the study. We have not undertaken an operational audit as part of our assessment but we have discussed staffing with Department staff, Council members and other corporate staff and volunteer groups. More importantly, the City has recently made a number of significant changes in staff roles and reporting relationships which are consistent with and supportive of the community development functions discussed in Action Plan #1. Most of these changes were made during the period in which the Master Plan was being prepared. Consequently, while the lack of attention to community development functions noted above is an accurate portrayal of the current situation, steps have already been taken to address this situation.

These include:

- The transfer of responsibility for the Civic Centre from a board of management to the Parks and Recreation Department.
- The redefinition of the role of the Arts and Culture Coordinator and establishment of a direct reporting relationship with the Parks and Recreation Director
- Assigning the responsibility for the Museum to the Parks and Recreation Department with staff reporting to the Director
- The re-designation of the former Tourism Manager's job as the Recreation Program Co-ordinator
- The assignment of the half-time staff primarily responsible for trails to the Parks and Recreation Department, reporting to the Director through the Recreation Program Co-ordinator.

These are very recent developments. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Director has 3.5 staff with a direct reporting relationship who can play a role in support of the community development functions noted above. Perhaps more importantly, by creating a direct reporting relationship to the Director, these staff can now receive consistent direction and guidance consistent with the Master Plan relative to their community development functions. We also understand that direct responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Civic Centre and Museum, which would have formerly rested with these staff, has been transferred to the Parks Manager¹. This should allow the staff to focus more directly on their community development and programming roles.

We strongly support this staff reorganization and believe it will contribute significantly to the Department's efforts to fulfill the community development functions noted above. This does however involve some shift in the job responsibilities and priorities of the staff involved. More attention must be paid to community development and the Arts and Culture Coordinator and Museum staff must understand their job responsibilities to extend beyond the Civic Centre to work with the larger community on program development, volunteer support, special events, etc. We understand this is the case and staff job responsibilities have been or are being restructured in this manner. We support this direction.

Finally, all of the positions discussed above involve existing staff. It is too early to determine if these staff will be able to adequately fulfill the full range of community development functions in their new roles and with their new reporting relationships. This appears likely but as noted in Action Plan#1; there is a good deal to be done and considerable potential for new initiatives if the staff are available to undertake them. Consequently, the adequacy of the current staff complement should be monitored and re-evaluated in a year's time.

Furthermore, when the Multiuse Complex is in place, an additional staff position should be created with specific responsibilities for Community Development.

This new position, titled Community Development Coordinator, should assume primary responsibility for the support to existing and new volunteer organizations and tourism related duties (community development functions 1, 2 and 4 in Action Plan#1). This should free time for the existing Recreation Coordinator to

¹ We have discussed the staffing implications for the Parks Department of this and other recent developments in Action Plan 6 in this section of the report.

focus on direct programming, partnerships programs (community development function #3) and general assistance with programming and service delivery at the Complex.

As noted in the implementation discussion for the Multiuse Complex², job roles and responsibilities will be restructured throughout the Department to accommodate the new facility and the proposed Community Development Coordinator's position should be confirmed at that time.

Action Plan #3: Develop Policy to Support Service Delivery

Up-to-date, effective policies are essential to govern the delivery of services in a manner that is consistent with the Department's desired outcomes and to support the community development functions described in Action Plan #1. We have reviewed the Department's existing policies and there are a number of areas where these might be expanded or adjusted to better support the roles and responsibilities noted above. We have discussed these revisions for relevant policies in this section of the Master Plan.

Volunteer Assistance

Policies in support of volunteers are essential to support the Department's community development role. As previously discussed and as noted through the public consultation process additional assistance is required by volunteer organizations.

The Department's activities in this area should be supported by a policy that states the purpose or goals of the Department's volunteer development initiatives, the way in which the Department will provide support to community recreation and culture groups, and specifics on the nature and extent of the support to be provided. In November 2007, the Department adopted "Affiliation Guidelines for Community Groups and Organizations". These guidelines outline procedures by which volunteer groups can affiliate with the Department and the support that will then be available to them. These guidelines provide a reasonable basis for providing volunteer assistance to community associations and should be retained, periodically reviewed with the input of those affected, and revised as warranted.

² See Multiuse Complex Feasibility Study. Final Report. Feb. 2009

Community Funding Policy

The City of Elliot Lake has recently adopted a grants and subsidy policy. It outlines conditions under which financial assistance might be made available to affiliated community organizations. One category of the policy addresses user fees, which we have discussed in a subsequent section of the report. The other categories provide what in most cases would appear to be modest contributions (there are no funding limits outlined in the policy) to subsidize facility rentals, assistance with travel expenditures and provide seed money for program development. There is also a category of operational assistance which is relatively open-ended and could result in assistance with equipment, facilities, staff support or a cash subsidy. Some of these forms of assistance might be captured under typical community development activities.

The Grants/Subsidy policy does not appear to deal with capital costs and provides no firm commitments relative to the resources available or the cost-sharing arrangements. We would suggest that the existing policy be revised to create a Community Funding Policy. This would involve the following adjustments:

- Remove items that are best addressed in the user fee policy.
- Eliminate the requirement for groups to pay 50% of rental fees of municipal facilities when used for fund-raising. In our view, if all raised funds are being re-invested in a legitimate community program (which is presumably guaranteed by the affiliation requirements), the groups should not have to pay facility rental costs.
- Clarify the intent of “operational assistance” and retain the funding for travel and seeding new programs. However, as described in the existing policy, these might be limited to a modest maximum contribution (perhaps \$500-\$1,000) and it would be reasonable to demand cost sharing for travel expenses. If projects involve requests for funds above the noted maximum, they would be governed by the Community Funding Policy guidelines noted below.
- Adopt additional guidelines to support major projects, including cost sharing for capital projects as noted below.

A Community Funding Policy outlines the parameters for project-specific funding to community groups. It does not provide grants or subsidies on an on-going, regular basis to support a basic level of recreation or culture service in the City. The City should continue to support this level of service through its capital and operating contribution to facilities, support for marketing and program development and staffing. The Community Funding Policy will be used in situations where the City is prepared to make a financial investment in a project or program operated by a community group. It is understood that this investment is made with the expectation of a return that benefits the community and justifies the expenditure.

Financial investment from the municipality could be requested for the following reasons:

- To build new or renovate existing facilities for the leisure activities of a group where this investment represents an enhanced level of service and is also financed by the group requesting assistance;
- To assist a new group with start-up costs with the expectation the investment will support a new community service that will be self-sufficient; and
- To directly subsidize the operating costs of a program or service, that would otherwise not be financially viable, because there is a social or economic return to the City as a whole that justifies the investment.

These three cases should be addressed in a Community Funding Policy in a different manner.

A number of municipalities have introduced programs where they financially support community groups wishing to upgrade existing or develop new facilities. In some cases, this is on a cost-sharing basis and in others it is in the form of a no-interest loan. Both types of financial assistance are appropriate and can create very effective partnerships for facility development and upgrades. The following considerations would generally be reflected in these policies:

- Facilities in question must be publicly accessible and serve Elliot Lake residents;
- Funding would only be available to non-profit community organizations (this should likely include groups for whom the affiliation policy would not apply; however, affiliation could continue to be a requirement for the types of assistance covered by the existing grants/subsidy policy);
- All other sources of funding will be investigated before the funding application is considered;
- Requests for funding would have to be submitted in a prescribed fashion and according to a schedule that allows the Department to incorporate these in its annual budgeting process;
- Community organizations would be responsible for demonstrating the need for the facility or desired upgrades and, if a loan is involved, demonstrating financial viability;
- In situations where the City provides a loan, this would be an investment that allows a viable community project to proceed more quickly. The community organization would be expected to contribute financing to the project as well;
- In situations where the City contemplates providing a loan, the community organization should be expected to demonstrate the benefits to the municipality;
- In cost sharing situations, the community organization would be expected to come up with their share of the funds before the municipality made its contribution. This share would be clearly set out in the policy (e.g., 50% of the approved capital expenditure after grants from external sources);
- The decision to cost share or provide a loan would be based on the City's standards concerning core facilities. The municipality must define standards of service for all leisure facilities. This involves both defining what types of facilities are to be provided by the municipality and an acceptable quality or standard of development for the facility. If the request for assistance will result in facilities that meet the City's standards for core facilities, cost sharing would be appropriate. In other cases, the City should consider an interest free loan.

Start-up funding for new organizations should also be considered in the Community Funding Policy (as discussed below for amounts that exceed seed money in the existing grants/subsidy policy).

Start-up funding might be provided for a number of purposes, including purchase of equipment, access to facilities, staff assistance, marketing or organizational assistance and advice. This would be a short-term investment to help establish a self-sufficient program that can serve residents for a number of years. This funding should only be provided in response to a business plan. The business plan would demonstrate the financial viability of the project and the anticipated benefits to the community. Financing would generally be provided for the short term (2-3 years) on a declining basis. The business plan should demonstrate ongoing viability after the start-up period. As with the direct financing noted above, this funding would generally only be available to non-profit community organizations serving a demonstrated need in Elliot Lake.

Municipalities do not normally provide ongoing annual operating grants to community recreation or culture organizations, other than covering the shortfall in the costs of maintaining and developing community facilities that is not covered by user fees, and assuming staff costs for program development, community development and marketing. In special circumstances, however, the City may wish to provide additional assistance. This might be the case, for example, if it can be demonstrated that there are directly related economic benefits that justify the investment. (e.g., an investment in a special event that brings visitors into the community and supports local business). Similarly, a program directed at a special population – such as the frail elderly or youth at risk – might be worthy of a direct investment because of the unique social benefits associated with the program. In these situations, Council should consider a direct operating investment if justified by the anticipated social or economic return for the community. The onus, however, should be on the community organization to demonstrate that their program or facility is directly responsible for economic or social benefits that justify the investment. A business plan or similar assessment should be prepared by community organizations requesting a direct operating subsidy and they might be requested to demonstrate that the anticipated benefits are realized.

A Community Funding Policy of this type, if carefully developed and consistently implemented, could be very beneficial to the City. It is clearly preferable to ad hoc decisions made in the absence of any Council approved policy. More importantly, it provides Council with the opportunity to strategically invest in community projects that might not otherwise proceed, as well as a sound rationale for consistently and equitably rejecting proposals of limited merit. In communities that have adopted these policies, an annual maximum municipal contribution is sometimes established (in one community where we are currently working this was set at \$50,000) and criteria are adopted to set priorities when requests exceed the maximum. Funds not expended in any year are retained for future years. While committees of Council and staff are sometimes formed to review these requests, the intent is to have a Council approved policy that is clear enough to allow staff to administer the program. The purpose is defeated if Council reviews and approves requests on a case by case basis, particularly if exceptions that contradict the policy are granted.

Facility Allocation

A number of municipalities have adopted policies to govern access to facilities in situations where demand exceeds supply. These policies are adopted to ensure facilities are allocated in a manner that is fair and equitable but also that supports desired outcomes. This is not an issue for Elliot Lake because the demand for current and future facilities is unlikely to exceed supply. There are however, three situations in Elliot Lake that should be reviewed and policies adopted as warranted governing facility allocation priorities.

Currently access to tennis courts in the municipality is restricted to those with a membership in the tennis club. Indeed, the City has closed courts that would have been available for casual use and all users are directed to the club courts. Our needs assessment indicates an oversupply of tennis courts and we have recommended that the courts that are currently closed be converted to multi-purpose pads and that the tennis club's courts be redeveloped at a new site adjacent to the Multiuse Complex. These would be the only courts in the community. A policy governing use should be established that provides exclusive access to the courts at specified times for Tennis Club members. However, blocks of time should be available – including some periods that represent prime time for use – when non-members have access to at least one court on a first come-first serve basis. This is standard policy in other communities and appropriate given that all residents should have some access to publicly funded facilities.

Given the oversupply of facilities in Elliot Lake it would be appropriate to adopt policies that ensure the use of existing facilities is maximized in a manner that reduces operating costs. For example, if a revised schedule will allow all ball diamond use to be accommodated on fewer diamonds and consequently some facilities can be decommissioned or at least maintained at a lower (less expensive) standard, this should be done. Staff should review this situation and adopt policies as appropriate.

Finally, when the Multiuse Complex is available it will be a premier facility in the region and the City will attempt to attract tournament use to support its financial performance and contribute to tourism/economic development objectives. This is appropriate; however, guidelines should be adopted to govern the displacement of community uses of the Complex during these events.

Pricing and Fees Policy

While the City has a schedule of fees, it does not have a comprehensive user fee policy or a documented strategy for revenue enhancement. Increasingly, municipal leisure authorities are being asked to provide expanded and improved services without resources from senior levels of government. Capital grants from the Province of Ontario for recreation facility development were commonplace in Ontario for the past 20 years and contributed to the current supply of recreation and culture facilities in most communities. While infrastructure funding is occasionally available, grants specifically for leisure facilities are no longer available. Similarly, operating grants and special program grants are rare and changes in legislation (e.g., the revised Development Charges legislation) make it increasingly difficult to access non-municipal funds for parks, culture and recreation facilities and programs. The full cost of leisure services is increasingly the responsibility of the local municipality. This shift in responsibility is, of course, accompanied by a continued resistance among local taxpayers to increases in their assessments for municipal services.

For municipalities, therefore, the challenge is to generate a larger share of capital and operating funds from sources other than the local tax base without restricting the community's access to essential parks and recreation services. To accomplish this, municipalities require effective user fee policies and a more aggressive approach to securing alternative revenue sources.

An important consideration in the development of an effective pricing and fees policy is to establish the fundamental principles upon which the policy will be based. In our view, the over-riding principle should be affordability. This is an important consideration in Elliot Lake because affordable living is at the root of its marketing and economic development campaigns. Furthermore, as a retirement community with a much higher proportion of older residents, it will be significantly impacted by the customary practice of providing age related subsidies. Elliot Lake currently has high net operating costs for existing facilities relative to other communities. This will be improved somewhat when aging, single purpose facilities are combined in the new Multiuse Complex. However, high net operating costs can in part be attributed to lower user revenues and this should be reviewed. We expect, without abandoning the principle of affordable access, some increase in rental rates and program fees can be justified. Certainly with respect to older adults, there is a growing proportion of retirees where both spouses worked and contributed to excellent pensions. These individuals, who are likely to be an increasing proportion of Elliot Lake's retirement community, have sufficient disposal income to pay for recreational services. Indeed, the literature clearly indicates that the emerging generation of older adults is quite prepared to pay for convenient, high quality services.

We recommend that fees be set to ensure affordable access for the community. An appropriate basis for the policy, therefore, is to maximize user revenues that can be used to support recreational services without unduly restricting access. Of course, a policy based on this principle requires safeguards and procedures to ensure residents in the community that face serious financial constraints are not prohibited from participating. Guidelines to provide support for residents in financial difficulties should be reflected in the policy. A policy framework based on the principle of affordable access, and detailed advice on its implementation is outlined in a document prepared by Parks and Recreation Ontario³.

A key component of the user fee policy should be consistency in its application. Consequently, the policy should apply equally to all indoor and outdoor facilities.

Finally, the Department should adopt a much more aggressive approach to alternative sources of revenue when the Multiuse Complex is established. Opportunities for advertisement, sponsorship and revenues from services available to users (such as food service) should be maximized.

³ Parks and Recreation Ontario. Policy Development Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation Services. 1999. Prepared by dmA Planning and Management Services.

Capital Conservation Policy

Capital conservation deals with repairs and replacement of major building components and systems due to natural aging, facility design, and construction or maintenance problems. Without a capital conservation fund, the City could be faced with major capital repair expenses and no resources to undertake the work. Currently, Elliot Lake does not have policies that require contributions to a capital reserve fund based on anticipated capital costs or stipulate the requirement for an annual contribution of a designated magnitude.

This should be corrected when the Multiuse Complex is developed. The City might establish a reserve for major components of the facility (roof replacement; major mechanical systems; etc.) based on a general guideline of 1% of their replacement cost. This would likely provide sufficient funds for ongoing replacement as the facility ages. The Multiuse Complex will be the City's major recreation complex and consequently a reserve for this facility will cover most future requirements. However, other facilities such as the Civic Centre should also be considered in this policy.

Action Plan #4: Implement Procedures for Ongoing Planning and Evaluation

The Department should establish a database to provide a solid and defensible basis for future planning and decision making. Two streams of planning and evaluation are typically required. The first, dealing with the future provision of facilities, will be less relevant in Elliot Lake because supply is not anticipated to be an issue. However, the simple procedures discussed here would be easily implemented and provide useful information. The second stream involved identifying performance measures to track efficiency, needs and satisfaction associated with service delivery. These are relevant in Elliot Lake and will be especially important when the Multiuse Complex is in place.

For future facility planning the Department should undertake the following activities:

- Annually update the inventory of art, culture and recreation facilities and parkland;
- Identify measures to determine the capacity and use of facilities and ensure that scheduling procedures that are adopted provide data in this format. (e.g., the procedures used to schedule ball diamonds or ice could be simply structured as input to a spreadsheet that would yield data on when facilities are used, the extent to which prime time is fully committed, variations in use during the season, etc.) This data could then be used to ensure all existing resources were at capacity before providing new facilities. Ideally, computer based scheduling software would be used for this purpose;
- As the population increases, update per capita ratios of facility and parkland supply;
- Meet regularly with all user groups and partners to compile information of trends in participation, outstanding demand, new program interests, etc.

Performance measures should also be adopted as part of the ongoing planning process. It would be advisable to develop simple performance measures to track the Department's progress in meeting the objectives of the Master Plan and to track changes in service delivery over time.

Performance measures such as the following might be tracked:

- Number of participants in Department direct or partnered programs;
- Total number of program hours by broad categories of program description (sports, arts, general interest, etc);
- Program hours per capita provided in partnership with non-municipal providers;
- Total number of volunteer organizations affiliated with the Department and staff hours committed to volunteer support;
- Net operating cost per operating hour for major facilities;
- Proportion of cost recovery for selected programs and/or facilities;
- Total funds committed to service improvements from community sources; and
- Proportion of total capital costs for local park or facility improvements contributed by local residents.

The Department could develop all of these measures from an in-house database. With additional information collection (e.g., a simple survey distributed to user groups annually or simple, consistent questions asked of people participating in the Department's programs) additional measures could be developed. The Department should identify a limited number of relevant performance measures to put in place immediately and add to these measures over time as resources permit.

Once data for a number of past performance periods is collected and analyzed, reasonable targets for the future can be established. This type of information can be used to determine where changes to the program/service mix, areas where new marketing strategies are warranted, etc., to improve financial and service-related performance. This type of performance-related data can also be used by the Department to help communicate the benefits of parks and recreation service to Council and to the community.

These tasks will contribute to an ongoing database useful for planning and decision-making. It would also be valuable to occasionally (perhaps every 3 years) collect more broadly based community input on parks, recreation and culture needs. This might be done through such vehicles as community meetings hosted by the Department and questionnaire for user groups or via the City website (similar to those used for the Master Plan).

Action Plan #5: Confirm the Role of the Parks and Recreation Planning Advisory Committee

The City of Elliot Lake has had an active and involved Parks and Recreation Planning Advisory Committee for a number of years. There are a number of City residents who have volunteered their time and expertise to serve on this committee and in so doing have made an important contribution to parks and recreation services. The preparation of the Master Plan is a fitting time to review and confirm the roles and responsibilities of this Committee.

Advisory Committees generally fulfill three key objectives: 1) to adopt an advisory role that supports and complements the perspective brought to parks and recreation issues by Council, and the professional experience and advice offered by staff, 2) to focus broadly on parks and recreation issues in the City and offer an objective, community-wide perspective on issues, and 3) to occasionally serve as a working committee and assist with special projects undertaken by the Department. The following should be reflected in the Committee's mandate and composition:

- The Committee should include a cross section of interests and a capability therefore to provide input on all parks, facility, and program issues;
- The Committee should act in an advisory capacity. Their value is in providing another perspective on parks and recreation issues and on bringing issues to the attention of Council and staff. It is not a decision-making role and Committee members should not be involved in staff functions. For example, while Committee members may help to identify community wide needs and priorities, they are not the author's of the Department's budget. Similarly, while they may comment and provide input to policy directions or planning guidelines, implementation is a staff responsibility. Consequently, for example, a Committee may comment on policy guidelines for determining park dedications but would not visit a site or provide an opinion on whether particular properties should be taken as dedications. The latter is a staff function.
- The Committee should provide input on broad recreational needs, trends, strategies and plans. The Committee might identify community wide needs and opportunities for new program development that could then be pursued by staff or other service providers.
- The Committee could provide assistance and advice to support some of the activities of the staff, such as reviewing and commenting on a recreation brochure; assisting with special events such as volunteer recognition; identifying resources for volunteer training, etc.
- The Committee could serve as a Steering Committee for special projects, such as was the case for the Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan.

The composition of the Parks and Recreation Planning Advisory Committee should reflect their mandate, which suggests members be appointed by Council based on their interest and understanding of parks and recreation issues, their willingness to commit their time and expertise to the Committee and an ability and willingness to adopt a City-wide perspective. Members should be drawn from all Elliot Lake residents, and while we expect members to occasionally be affiliated with sport, recreation or park interests, they would not be appointed to represent those interests specifically. The composition of the Committee should also reflect the broad outcomes associated with leisure services and consequently representatives from the health or tourism sector would be appropriate candidates. Ideally, there will be sufficient interest in the activities of the Committee that membership will change with at least one-third of the Committee members being new appointees in each Council cycle.

Councilors should also serve on the Committee to act as an effective liaison to Council. The Director, or at Council's discretion another Department representative, would attend Committee meetings.

Action Plan #6: Undertake a Staffing and Organizational Review of the Department

There have been a number of changes in the organizational structure, staffing and responsibilities of parks and recreation staff in recent years. As noted above, a number of staff positions formerly associated with the Civic Centre, Museum or Economic Development have been shifted to the Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks Division was moved to Public Works some years ago and only recently returned to the Parks and Recreation Department. Full and part time staff associated with park functions were sharply reduced after the closing of the mines and have not returned to earlier levels as population has returned and operations have expanded. Currently there is one full time position associated with parks. The Parks Division has also assumed responsibility for maintenance and operations at a wider range of municipal facilities. The Civic Centre, Collins Hall, City Hall, the Fire Tower Lookout and Mining Monument Memorial Park are now maintained by the Department. While custodial staff from the Civic Centre were transferred with the facility, there has been a significant increase in responsibility with very little increase in staff.

In addition, the recommendations elsewhere in the Master Plan for a review of park policies and the preparation park development plans as well as ongoing initiatives such as trail development and the Highway 108 corridor, suggest that the Parks Manager will increasingly be called upon to play a management, planning and supervisory role and will have less time for operations and maintenance.

These considerations have two implications for the delivery of parks and recreation services.

First, there is a need for additional full time maintenance staff. At minimum it would appear that one additional person is required. However, this should be reviewed as the job responsibilities become clearer. In the longer term, it would also be desirable to have other skills, such as horticulture, better represented among staff in the Parks Division. One of the challenges in recent years has been to develop and train a committed and experienced labour force because most positions have been seasonal and part-time. This will be corrected as the full time staff complement is expanded.

The second implication is a broader organizational issue. In many departments a second tier of management would be developed to report to the Director. Typically, this second tier would include an individual with overall responsibility for facilities and parks and a second individual with a program and service role. In Elliot Lake for the period of the Master Plan, it seems likely that the program and community development staff that will be in place can continue to report to the Director. However, there may be merit in reviewing the larger organizational structure with respect to operations, particularly when the Multiuse Complex comes on stream. This review, should also consider the roles of staff directly responsible for the pool and the arena. The Multiuse Complex would have an overall facility manager responsible for all building maintenance and operations, and consequently the arena and pool staff functions would be more strongly focused on programming, marketing and customer service. This suggests some restructuring of roles and responsibilities and a different type of organizational structure for the Department. This should be investigated further as part of the implementation associated with the Multiuse Complex.

Summary - Delivery System – Products of the Plan

The following Delivery System products will be available if these Action Plans are implemented:

- A clearly defined role for the Parks and Recreation Department in programming, support for arts and culture, heritage and tourism.
- A significantly expanded role in community development.
- Restructured and additional staff resources to support programming and community development.
- New policies to specifically address volunteer assistance, fees and pricing, facility allocation, community funding and capital conservation.
- A comprehensive process for compiling data and evaluating services on an ongoing basis and a procedure for updating the Master Plan.
- An effective parks and recreation planning advisory body with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- A revised organizational structure with appropriate staffing to fulfill all parks and recreation operational requirements.

3.3 PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Current Status and Identified Needs

- The community generally expressed satisfaction with the number and range of leisure programs.
- The program areas that are deficient in Elliot Lake are a reflection of the need to improve services that parallel trends in activity interests and lifestyle and a more recent, broad emphasis on activity as part of healthy, daily living.
- Support for a youth program/centre was expressed among various sectors of the community.
- The arts sector is better represented and more active in Elliot Lake than in many similar size communities. Consequently, arts programming is relatively well developed here and provides an important resource to build upon for the future.

Recommended Action Plans

The community was largely satisfied with the existing supply of programs, however, some interest in expanded programming was noted and growing demand should be expected given the changing social and demographic characteristics of the community. In addition, the growing emphasis on active living and health promotion suggests an immediate need to expand programming in this area.

Program supply is linked to both the availability of facilities and staff and volunteers initiating, developing and operating individual programs. The absence of modern facilities undoubtedly restricts current programming but will be corrected with the Multiuse Complex.

The recommended Action Plans focus on expanding the supply of currently underrepresented areas of programming/activities and improved marketing.

The following Action Plans should be pursued during the period of the Master Plan.

Action Plan #1: Augment the Current Supply of Programs and Expand Programming in Five Key Areas - Youth, Active Living, Outdoor Recreation, Adult/Older Adult and Special Events.

Action Plan #2: Improve Marketing and Communication with the Community

These Action Plans are discussed in the remainder of this section of the report.

Action Plan #1: Augment the Current Supply of Programming and Expand Programming in Five Key Areas - Youth, Active Living, Outdoor Recreation, Adult/Older Adults and Special Events.

With the exception of the unique needs of a certain segment of the population such as youth and isolated older adults, the public input did not identify major program deficiencies. Few survey respondents reported program restrictions and few users groups reported significant constraints on program expansion. Program expansion in established areas will largely result from the expanded community development activities that were discussed in the previous section of the Master Plan.

While not identified by the public, we believe there are opportunities to expand programming in Elliot Lake in ways that are consistent with desired outcomes, the unique characteristics of the community, trends in other communities, and the future availability of the Multiuse Complex. We have briefly noted areas of possible program expansion below.

Youth Programming

From the public consultation process a need for more programs for youth was identified in addition to the need for the provision of a meeting space/youth centre and the provision of facilities for unstructured activities. As discussed in the needs assessment it is recommended that a space is allocated within the Multiuse Complex as a dedicated area for youth. It has also been recommended that the skateboard park be relocated to the Multiuse Complex and additional multipurpose pads be developed for unstructured youth activities.

Young people have different inclinations and need different activities to build specific interests and skills. Therefore, it is important that a variety of programs are offered to maximize their effectiveness both within the areas of sport and recreation as well as art and culture. Youth programs that provide opportunities to be active, master athletic skills, and participate in team and individual sports are essential. In addition nature trails/ecology, heritage assets and performance spaces for music and theater can all be used to help young people hone their knowledge of essential life skills, acquire critical thinking and reasoning skills and improve their academic performance.

Evidence supports the fact that youth participation in recreation and sport provides a significant benefit to the community through a reduction in vandalism and use of social assistance.

Actively involving youth in recreational and leisure activities also assists in developing a sense of community and enhances social connectedness in communities.⁴

Although the demographics in Elliot Lake reflect an older age structure, programs for youth should be expanded, perhaps directing greater attention to outreach and work with partner groups and agencies, such as the local schools and the Youth Ad Hoc Committee to address issues relevant to youth and recreation in Elliot Lake.

Physical Activity, Healthy Living and Unstructured Programs

The Province's Active 2010 program was launched to encourage municipalities and other community service providers (including health units, school boards, YMCAs, Scouts Canada, hospitals, etc.) to significantly increasing physical activity levels in Ontario. The program is a direct response to alarming increases in health related problems due to child obesity and physical inactivity. Communities are being encouraged to marshal the resources of all relevant agencies to expand physical activity programming through special events (annual walks or fitness challenges); school based programs; seniors walking and fitness programs; social marketing and health promotion (e.g., encouraging residents to walk rather than drive, take the stairs instead of the elevator, etc.), revised policies that remove barriers to physical activity (e.g., financial or scheduling constraints) and selected improvements to infrastructure (e.g., recreational trails development).

Improved health is clearly the Province's priority in the recreation area and one of the very few objectives for which funding is likely to be available. Expanded programming in this area, as partnership initiatives with the health sector, are therefore both needed and potentially eligible for support.

Outdoor Recreational Activities

The increasing demand for outdoor recreational activities is consistent with trends and with the emphasis on active living. In large part, this need will be addressed with facility developments recommended elsewhere in the Plan, including trail development, an increased supply of multipurpose courts, and access to tennis courts, playgrounds, a skateboard park, water play features, and general park improvements. The City, in conjunction with other providers, should explore promotional and programming strategies to increase the appeal and use of these resources.

In addition to the improvement of available outdoor facilities allowing for an increased demand in unstructured outdoor activities, additional structured outdoor recreational programs might be provided. This was a frequent request from the public which was tied to the community's natural attributes. Given Elliot Lake's location and surroundings there are plentiful opportunities for the provision of programs such as kayaking and other water sports; nature courses; hiking; and cross-country skiing programs. Programs such as these appeal to residents of all age groups in addition to visitors and encourage healthy active living. The potential for introducing new programs of this type should be assessed.

⁴ Dr Gina Browne. Making the Case for Youth Recreation Integrated Service Delivery: More Effective and Less. Ideas That Matter, Volume2, Number 3. March 2003

Adult/Older Adult General Interest and Activity Programs

The City's volunteer organizations are primarily focused on meeting the needs of individuals interested in organized sports. Fewer programs, including physical activity programs, are available for adults and more specifically older adults who wish to engage in individual leisure time pursuits. This is and will continue to be one of the most rapidly expanding areas of program demand, in part because of the growing number of healthy older adults with the time and resources to commit to leisure activities. Programs such as yoga and recreational dance, as well as tai chi and a full range of adult fitness programs will be popular. General interest programs, such as photography, arts and crafts, gardening, nature appreciation etc. will also be of interest to adults. Some of these programs are available to older adults through the Renaissance Senior's Centre and using multipurpose space at the Civic Centre. We expect, however, this type of programming could be significantly expanded. In the short term, Collins Hall might be used more extensively for these programs and they will be well accommodated at the Multiuse Complex.

The greatest challenge facing program providers focusing on seniors is that there is evidence to suggest that tomorrow's older adults wish to be part of mainstream programming, within facilities that are integrated and not separate. Therefore, there is a need to provide programs in a more multi-generational fashion, in order to encourage adults of all ages and those older adults who do not frequent the City's Senior Centre to participate. The facilities at the proposed Multiuse Complex are ideal for expanded programming for this new generation of older adults.

Expanded Special Event Programming

There are currently a number of special events of varying scale offered in Elliot Lake, including major events and small fund-raising and community events. The volunteers who operate these special events both acknowledge and appreciate the support they have received from the City. The current supply of events may fully meet the community's interest and volunteer resources for special events. Nonetheless, special event programming continues to be of considerable interest in most communities and is well suited to partnerships. These programs may also support other important objectives, such as tourism, community awareness and fund-raising. Consequently, there may be opportunities to expand programming in these areas.

Action Plan #2: Improved Marketing and Communication

Lack of familiarity with what is available was frequently noted in key informant interviews and was one of the major comments received from residents completing both the web-based survey and the telephone survey. As with many other aspects of leisure service delivery in Elliot Lake this will be corrected in part when programming can be offered from the Multiuse Complex.

Currently, the Department produces the 'Leisure Guide' which advertises some programs; undertakes occasional targeted marketing for specific events; and makes some use of the City's web-site.

The 'Leisure Guide' is fairly comprehensive identifying various clubs and associations, a calendar of community events, places of interest, a town map and a facility program schedule for municipal facilities.

Programs available to residents from other organizations such as Retirement Living or the Renaissance Centre might be better promoted. Many volunteer organizations felt that the City could further assist them with program promotion and opportunities to use the Leisure Guide for this purpose should be explored further.

The guide is available at Collins Hall and City Hall as well as on-line via the City website; but distribution was identified as an issue. Only 13% of residents surveyed use the guide and this suggests that expanded distribution methods may need to be explored. Improvements can also be made to the on-line version, which we should expect to be much more important than print in the future. It has not been produced in a way that it is easily downloadable and consists of a very large file prohibiting potential readers from downloading the information online. The City's web-site generally might be better used to promote arts, culture and recreation programming.

Possible improvements to distribution methods would involve the production of a down sized brochure (therefore reducing costs of production), identifying all the programs available and their details, and making the brochure obtainable from all municipal facilities and attractions. A web-page purely for available programs should also be developed on the City web site, identifying all of the programs available to residents, including times, dates, location, contact details etc as opposed to a downloadable version of the brochure. This then enables residents to go directly to the information they are searching for rather than having to download a large file and then search through it to find program information.

While the publication of a program brochure should be the mainstay of the Departments promotional efforts, other opportunities for targeted marketing, joint promotional efforts with other providers, and participation in relevant programs sponsored by other agencies should be exploited.

Summary Program and Activity – Products of the Plan

The following are the key products of the Plan's Program and Activity Action Plans:

- An expanded supply of programs for youth, physical activity and healthy lifestyles, outdoor recreational opportunities, programs for older adults and special events, supported by appropriate facilities and partnerships within the community; and
- Expanded communication and marketing activities.

4.0 FACILITIES AND PARKS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

4.1 OVERVIEW

Parks and facilities comprise the infrastructure for leisure services, by providing the places at which organized programs are offered or residents can spontaneously engage in recreation. The needs assessment indicated limited requirements for additional parks and facilities in Elliot Lake. Elliot Lake is considerably better supplied with almost all traditional sports and recreation facilities than other Ontario municipalities of comparable size. The community also has a strong supply of arts, culture and heritage facilities, relative to other similar-sized communities, despite less than ideal venues at some facilities. Elliot Lake also has an extensive, trail system - another area in which it has surpassed the level of development in other Ontario communities. The City is also relatively well supplied with parkland, both in terms of acreage and function. While the results of the public consultation program identified interest in new facilities, much of this was related to enhancements of the existing supply or responding to the needs of specific markets. There was strong support, for example, for the proposed Multiuse Complex as a replacement for existing facilities in the community. The Master Plan, therefore, outlines a strategy for replacement and upgrades to existing facilities in line with changing community needs, trends and best practices.

A Feasibility Study for the Multiuse Complex was prepared as part of the study process and submitted under separate cover. The Complex is the major culture and recreation facility project facing the municipality and the priority for the Master Plan. The scope of work for the master plan was adjusted part way through the study to place additional emphasis on the Multiuse Complex. Consequently, the facilities and the parks and open space strategies were not developed in as much detail as the delivery system and program strategies. This is appropriate because it reflects the priority issues facing the City. The Master Plan identifies a number of parks and open space issues requiring further investigation in the future.

4.1.1 FACILITIES AND PARKS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The facilities and parks development strategy is discussed under the following headings:

- Major Indoor Facilities;
- Outdoor Recreation Facilities; and
- Parks, Open Space and Trails.

4.2 MAJOR INDOOR FACILITIES

4.2.1 CURRENT STATUS AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Sports and Recreation

- The supply of existing facilities is sufficient to meet current and future needs during the period of the Master Plan.
- Existing major indoor facilities are aging and do not reflect contemporary standards of design. This limits program potential and the ability to meet resident needs and is particularly constraining for older adults. For example, substantial improvements are required to reduce the limitations of the current pool with regard to access and quality. A new therapeutic/children's pool, a family change room and related ancillary facilities are required to serve the full range of aquatic needs in the community.
- The City should have access to a municipal gymnasium to augment the supply of school gyms, provide daytime access, and provide opportunities for specialized programming. The Collins Hall currently does not provide an adequate space for this function, as it was not purpose built as a gymnasium. Multi-purpose space is also required for program development and to facilitate better distribution of existing facility use.
- There is an apparent lack of facilities available for youth in relation to unstructured recreation, and the consultation process identified a need for the provision of a youth centre.
- The City should provide a new Multiuse Complex to replace existing facilities and provide a modern aquatic facility and arena, a gymnasium, multi-purpose programming space, and specialized program areas (such as areas for youth).

Arts, Culture and Heritage

- Elliot Lake is very well supplied with arts and culture facilities. Limitations have been documented for some facilities, and particularly the theatre which is not ideal for the range and sophistication of programs that could be offered. Nonetheless, existing facilities have provided a base for the development of a vibrant arts community.
- Additional gallery space was identified as a current deficiency by those users involved with art and culture programming and the need was stressed to establish a permanent area dedicated to displaying art and crafts created by local residents.
- The local Museum was seen as a valuable asset by a number of residents.
- An assessment of Library services was not within the scope of the Master Plan. However, library facility requirements were addressed as part of the Multiuse Complex Feasibility Study and a new library was recommended as part of the Complex.

Recommended Action Plans – Indoor Facilities

In the ten-year time frame of this Master Plan, the City's focus for major indoor facilities can be captured in two Action Plans, as noted below.

Action Plan #1: Develop the Multiuse Complex

Action Plan #2: Investigate Possible Improvements to the Civic Centre.

These Action Plans are discussed in the remainder of this section of the report.

Action Plan #1: Develop the Multiuse Complex

The Multiuse Complex is the single most important facility development required to meet current and future needs and support priority outcomes for recreation and culture services. It is also a project that will significantly enhance the City's economic development strategies associated with retirement living and attracting and retaining residents and businesses. It is anticipated that the Complex site will also become the location for a number of outdoor facilities, as discussed elsewhere in the Master Plan.

The development of the library as part of the Complex provides significant benefits to residents. It is a complementary facility and co-location will greatly expand opportunities for social interaction, programming and community information. Experience elsewhere clearly indicates that both library and recreation facilities experience higher levels of use when located together. The library also provides a second venue for cultural programming and would appear to be an opportunity to address other needs, such as those for gallery and display space, that have been identified by the community.

The needs, anticipated benefits and approach to implementation have been described in the Multiuse Complex Feasibility Study. The City has already initiated the process of implementation with a funding application and this should be pursued as a high priority.

Action Plan #2: Investigate Possible Improvements to the Civic Centre.

Arts and culture organizations that use the Civic Centre are very keen to improve the performance venue as it is felt that the capacity and benefits are not fully realized due to design limitations. A September 2007 report¹ suggests marginally increasing the ceiling height of the building and lowering the auditorium and stage floor to improve sightlines. The report also suggests building a new section of stage. The conclusion of the report is that the theatre would be more viable with this reconstruction at a cost of between \$2.5 and \$3 million. The report, however, does not include a business plan or any type of market assessment that supports a return on this investment, either in financial terms or with a significantly expanded range of community programs and events.

¹ Renovation Report was published by The Theatre Consulting Group Limited for the Lester B. Pearson Civic Centre

As discussed in a previous chapter, the Civic Centre has recently come directly under the management of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Arts Coordinator's job responsibilities have been restructured to involve a greater emphasis on community development, marketing and community outreach. These are recent initiatives, the results of which are not yet known.

These activities may lead to different approaches to programming and use of the Civic Centre and well as new priorities for community programming. The future of the Civic Centre theatre should be considered in this context. In addition, as noted above, The Department should prepare a business plan for the theatre. The business plan should re-assess the market for community use and for attracting outside shows and events. The number of events and performances should be determined, including the potential for enhanced revenues. Part of this assessment must answer the question of whether the physical improvements recommended in the 2007 study will significantly impact the number and types of uses and the revenues. A decision to proceed with improvements to the theatre should be made on this basis.

Summary Major Indoor Facilities – Products of the Master Plan

The Major Indoor Facility Action Plans will result in the following products by the end of the planning period:

- The development of a Multiuse Complex and the replacement of existing outdated recreation facilities. ;
- Further enhancements for the Civic Centre if justified by additional financial analysis and business planning.

4.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

4.3.1 CURRENT STATUS AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

- The City is currently oversupplied with both ball diamonds and soccer fields; options for rationalizing current use and potentially decommissioning some of the facilities over the term of the Plan need to be explored, as discussed with respect to the facility allocation policy. No unmet demand emerged for ball diamonds or soccer fields. Generally, ball and soccer fields are underutilized due to their condition, limited demand or restrictive use during prime time.
- The supply of tennis courts is adequate but upgraded facilities have been requested.
- Opportunities for unstructured, unorganized recreational activity should be expanded.
- There are too few opportunities for unscheduled recreational activity in the community and some facilities, such as the skateboard park are sub-standard.
- Elliot Lake is currently over-supplied with playgrounds.

Recommended Action Plans – Outdoor Facilities

In large part the City's supply of outdoor facilities is adequate to meet long term needs. The focus of the Master Plan therefore is on facility improvements and in some cases the redevelopment or decommissioning of these resources, rather than providing new facilities. The outdoor facility strategy can be captured in the following action plans.

Action Plan #1: Work with Current Users to Develop New or Upgraded Facilities

Action Plan #2: Develop Additional Outdoor Facilities for Unorganized Use

These Action Plans are discussed in the remainder of this section of the report.

Action Plan #1: Work with Current Users to Develop New or Upgraded Facilities
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The City has a number of long-standing recreational facilities that will continue to be required to meet future needs but where improvements in infrastructure and/or operations should be implemented during the Master Plan. Four specific projects were identified during the course of the Master Plan. These were:

- The Mount Dufour Ski Area
- The tennis club
- The curling club
- Cross-country ski trails

In all cases, we understand the facilities require improvement and the community volunteers that are currently providing the service require support. We believe the required support can largely be made available through the actions recommended in the previous chapter. Of particular importance are the volunteer support policies and the community funding policy. We have briefly discussed each of these developments below.

The Mount Dufour Ski Area

The ski hill is an extremely important recreational asset run by community volunteers. The facility has a strong membership and volunteer base, generates significant revenues and employs local residents as well as providing a popular recreational activity.

While the facility has been a successful volunteer initiative for many years, additional municipal support is important to maintain and enhance the ski hill. There are immediate issues associated with funding for facility improvements and additional support for the small but dedicated group of volunteers who operate the facility. The ski hill is the type of operation that will benefit from the volunteer support policies that were identified earlier in the Master Plan. Additional operational assistance with managing the facility, recruiting and training staff and marketing would support the efforts of the volunteers. The Community Funding policy is also an appropriate mechanism to support minor capital improvements and equipment repair and replacement on a cost-shared basis.

While the volunteer support and community funding initiatives discussed in the Master Plan are likely sufficient to support the ski hill as a community recreational resource, there is a larger question associated with its tourism and economic development potential. The scope of the master plan and our recommendations do not address the ski hill's potential as a tourism attraction. However, this opportunity has often been recognized.

Many of those interviewed for this study commented on the potential to create a regionally significant attraction with a higher level of investment in the ski hill. These observations echo those in past studies,

including a 1992 Study² that recommended a significant redevelopment of the ski hill itself and user amenities and projected a positive net operating cost even with the servicing of capital debt. This study also noted a considerable direct and indirect economic impact.

Mount Dufour was also identified as a key project in Destination Elliot Lake, the City's tourism development strategy. While these previous studies have not been implemented, many associated with Mount Dufour were of the opinion that the ski hill was the City's next major tourism/economic development project after the revitalization of the golf course. Most recently, the City's draft Strategic Plan (2009) calls for the development of a sustainable long term plan for the ski hill that will investigate capital improvements and the support available to the volunteers responsible for its operation.

The City must determine if an investment in Mount Dufour is a priority as an economic development/tourism project. If this is the case, a more substantial investment in infrastructure and potentially a larger role in operations will be warranted than would be the case if the ski hill remains a community recreational resource. However, even as a community recreational resource, the policies recommended in the Master Plan will benefit the community-based operation of the ski hill.

The Tennis Club

The Tennis Club has suggested disposing of their current property and using the proceeds of the sale to develop a new club house and courts at an alternate location. According to Club members, the current site conditions make it impossible to maintain high quality courts and this has had an adverse impact on their membership and programming. While we have not investigated site conditions or the potential to dispose of existing resources, if the situation is as indicated by the Club, this strategy is a reasonable one.

If the Club is relocated the Multiuse Complex would be an appropriate location. It would likely be possible to design club-house space in a manner that provided an outdoor orientation but was part of the larger building. This would have the advantage of providing tennis members with access to Complex facilities such as change rooms, washrooms and food service and would augment the supply of community programming space in the off-season.

Tennis club representatives have also raised the prospect of an enclosed dome structure to allow for year round use of the courts. This should only be undertaken if additional study demonstrates the financial investment is justified based on anticipated levels of use. Temporary enclosures of this type are widely used for indoor tennis and have merit when the demand justifies initial capital costs, the required replacement of the dome structure (generally on a ten-fifteen year cycle) and high operating costs to heat and light in the winter. In many cases, particularly in small communities and northern climates, these costs are prohibitive and tennis therefore remains a seasonal sport.

Given that participation in tennis is declining to stable in most markets, and there is no indication that membership will grow in Elliot Lake, it is not clear if the number of users and revenues are sufficient to support tennis as a year round activity.

² D.R Matthews & Associates Inc. Mt Dufour Ski Area Study, June 1992.

Curling Club

The Curling Club in Elliot Lake faces a number of challenges that are shared by many community based curling facilities in Ontario and elsewhere. Participation in curling has been declining and despite efforts to attract new users, most clubs are experiencing a loss of membership and revenue. In Elliot Lake, membership has fluctuated but has been relatively stable in the past few years. The financial problems resulting from declining membership are aggravated by the age of most curling facilities. The clubs are generally owned by their members and building and equipment repairs are not municipally funded. This is the case in Elliot Lake and the club has experienced significant costs for repairs in recent years. These circumstances – declining membership and repairs for aging facilities – are challenges the Elliot Lake Club will likely continue to face in the coming years. The Department can assist the Club by working with its executive to support their attempts to develop new programs (particularly for younger age groups) and to promote curling through enhanced marketing efforts. Department staff can also assist with grant applications and the Community Funding policy should be of assistance with respect to minor capital repairs. However, ultimately the viability of the Club will rest on the ability to expand its membership and secure higher levels of participation in curling.

Cross County Ski Trails

We understand that volunteer community groups that have supported cross-country skiing in the past are no longer as active in Elliot Lake. This appears to be an issue associated with both facilities and an active volunteer association and may be an area where community development efforts aimed at forming new groups are required. Department staff should work with community representatives to attempt to revitalize interest in a cross-country skiing club and to address issues of trail development, access to public properties for cross country skiing, including the golf course that was a popular venue in the past, and other assistance that may be required to develop the trails and the volunteer base to support the sport.

Action Plan #2: Develop Additional Outdoor Facilities for Unorganized Use
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The Needs Assessment recommended the following changes to the supply of outdoor recreation facilities for unorganized use (See Needs Assessment Background Report for additional details).

Multipurpose Courts/Basketball Courts

A redevelopment strategy to create a limited number of well designed multipurpose courts is required.

Skateboard Park

Redevelop the existing skateboard park as a permanent, high quality site adjacent to the Multiuse Complex

Splash Pad

Consideration should be given to providing a City-serving splash pad, in a major park designed to be a destination point for the use of this facility.

Playgrounds

There is currently an over-supply of playgrounds and a strategy for future provision that may involve decommissioning is recommended.

These needs will be addressed as part of this Action Plan, as follows:

Multi-Purpose Courts

Most communities are experiencing an increasing demand for multi-purpose courts capable of accommodating 3-on-3 basketball, ball-hockey and other activities such as in-line skating. In Elliot Lake existing underutilized facilities (e.g. basketball courts and tennis courts) should be considered for conversion to multi-purpose courts. The tennis locations that are currently locked and barred from community use would be logical candidates.

The scope of this study did not involve detailed site assessments that would indicate opportunities to upgrade existing resources or convert underutilized facilities to new uses. A site specific examination and assessment should be undertaken by staff and a plan prepared to upgrade and convert facilities to alternative uses, as warranted. A timetable, costs and priorities should be a part of this assessment. Despite Elliot Lake's older age profile, a number of courts within walking/cycling distance of major residential areas should be considered. Likely four courts appropriately located would adequately serve the municipality. One of these courts should be located with the skateboard park at the Multiuse Complex.

Skateboard Park and Major Splash Pad

The existing skateboard park should be replaced with a redesigned, permanent facility, ideally at a site adjacent to the Multiuse Complex. A City-serving splash pad should also be developed.

The size and detailed design of skateboard parks and splash pads/outdoor water features varies considerably from one municipality to the next. We have recommended large facilities that will support the entire community at Elliot Lake. Major facilities are much more attractive to the user, easier to supervise, and in Elliot Lake they would be accessible, particularly if located with other major indoor facilities or at locations that are already drawing a number of residents. This strategy for development must be confirmed, and detailed design standards adopted for the facilities. This should involve professionals involved with the design of these facilities and a full range of options should be explored to balance costs, appeal and programming potential. We understand that communities in Northern Ontario have paid a premium for professionally designed skate parks because designers and contractors have not been available locally. This may be a consideration and if necessary temporary equipment could be provided in the short term if this is a more cost-effective approach.

In addition to appropriate design standards, locations will need to be identified. An appropriate location for these facilities would be adjacent to the Multiuse Complex. Skateboard parks in particular, can be incompatible with other park uses and neighboring residences if poorly designed, managed and sited. Issues such as appropriate buffers, compatible uses, landscaping, and required amenities for users

(benches, sheltered seating areas, etc), should be addressed in the design standards. While the Multiuse Complex is a possible site for the splash pad, others should be considered.

Many municipalities provide major splash pads at locations that are attracting users for a variety of outdoor activities. The City's waterfront parks might be considered for this purpose.

Playgrounds

The City is significantly over-supplied with playgrounds, a legacy of the young families that dominated the population prior to the closing of the mine. The municipality has continued to maintain these facilities and ensure that they meet CSA standards. Because this involves the maintenance and renewal of many older structures which are now both 'out-dated' and 'under-utilized', the wisdom of continuing to invest in neighbourhood level playground structures must be questioned. When Elliot Lake was a family oriented community, it was reasonable to provide a large number of decentralized play structures. The aim was to ensure that structures were within walking distance of most if not all residences. This is no longer necessary or realistic. While children will continue to live in many of Elliot Lake's neighbourhoods and grandparents will take visiting grandchildren to playgrounds, the numbers are such that playgrounds will increasingly be provided on a more centralized basis. Fewer, but better playgrounds should be the City's strategy. For some residents, the playground may be a "drive-to" structure and consequently major sites with a wide variety of junior and senior play equipment should be provided. Major playgrounds should also be located at community parks with other attractions and at locations where children are served, including local school sites. This will however result in fewer playgrounds in the City.

A detailed inventory of all the playgrounds and structures should be compiled, identifying those that are out-dated and under-utilized and not located to best serve children. Candidates for decommissioning should be identified through this process. By decommissioning playgrounds, maintenance costs will be reduced and funds redirected to revitalizing, expanding and modernizing playgrounds at key locations throughout the City. While this should be determined through the recommended assessment process, something in the order of 4 or 5 major playgrounds (similar to the facility recently developed in Westview Park) will likely serve the community. When planning for future play structures, The Department should continue to explore opportunities to enhance accessibility.

Summary of Outdoor Facilities – Products of the Plan

The Outdoor Recreation Facility Action Plans will produce the following products at the end of the planning period:

- The relocation of the skateboard park and tennis courts to the site of the Multiuse Complex (if feasible depending on the site selected).
- Improved and updated playground structures to bring them in line with current uses and decommissioning of those that are underutilized. Fewer playgrounds in the municipal inventory.
- The development of a splash pad either located with the Multiuse Complex or alternatively at another designated park.

4.4 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

4.4.1 CURRENT STATUS AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

- The current supply of municipal parkland is adequate to meet the needs of the community during the term of the Master Plan. The total supply of parkland and open space per 1,000 population is currently approximately 3.4 hectares and certain types of parks fall below the provision levels required, however the Official Plan standards predate Elliot Lake's transition to a retirement community and there is no evidence of outstanding demand.
- There is considerable supply of open space, including open space owned by the municipality and public agencies, which is not included in the municipal park inventory. This land augments the supply of parkland in a manner that is not accounted for in the Official Plan standards.
- In addition to the above, Elliot Lake is surrounded by natural areas that are accessible to the public and that are used for popular recreational activities such as boating, fishing, hunting and hiking.
- The community consultation program did not reveal significant demand for additional parkland; however it did reveal some interest in additional provision of park amenities such as benches, other park furniture and landscaping.
- The trail system in the City comprises over 100km of Multiuse trails of various types and belonging to different agencies. The community is interested in further development of the existing trail system to include trails appropriate for active transport modes: accessible to all, in addition to a maintained cross country ski trail.
- General trends indicate increasing use of parks and open space areas for a variety of active and passive pursuits.

Recommended Action Plans

The supply of parkland and the policies and procedures currently in place for dealing with parkland provision through the development process were generally raised as issues in the municipality. The supply of parks is adequate for the foreseeable future as evidenced by the current levels of supply; community satisfaction; availability of non-municipal open space; and the absence of any need for an expanded land base for new facilities (other than the Multiuse Complex, which will not be accommodated in an existing park).

The municipality should continue to focus on the development of its trail system, which is an extremely valuable, high quality asset for the City and its residents.

The Parks and Open Space Action Plans are as follows:

Action Plan #1: Review Park Classifications and Policies

Action Plan #2: Identify a Park Improvement and Upgrading Program

Action Plan #3: Prepare Development Concepts for Major New Parks

Action Plan #4: Support Additional Trail Development and Active Transportation Initiatives

These Action Plans are discussed in the remainder of this section of the report.

Action Plan #1: Review Park Classifications, Policies and Design Standards

The demographic shift from young families to older adults and retirees in Elliot Lake has significant implications for the parks and open space system. As with many other elements of the municipal recreation system, parks and open space have been designed with families and children in mind. The neighbourhood park, with minor sports fields and playgrounds is indicative of this focus and clearly has limited appeal to the older adult/adult market. Similarly, major community parks with full size, high quality sports fields may have less interest for the older adult.

While there is clearly a continuing need for neighbourhood and community parkland, revised standards of provision and design standards are likely warranted to better serve an adult/older adult market. It is not within the scope of this study to review current parks policies. We expect significant changes may be warranted. For example, provision standards might be changed to result in fewer neighbourhood parks and an expanded supply of community parks, special event parks, and linked open space to better serve the adult/older adult market. Trends point to growing interest in performing arts, exploring other cultures, and intergenerational activities such as festivals and special events. The City's parks classification system may need to include "special event parks" to accommodate these types of activities. The City's minimum size for a typical community park may have to be re-visited to accommodate larger multi-purpose facilities and larger community-focused parks with a number of amenities to serve the growing needs of the older adult market. These developments would suggest a major restructuring of the parks and open space system guided by new Official Plan policies and revised park standards.

In addition to a new park classification system and provision standards, revised design standards are likely required to provide more and different features and amenities to meet the needs of the older adult segment of the population. This may include more shade features, accessible pathways, more seating/social areas, accessible washrooms, etc. Features which appeal to adults such as Green Gym® equipment³ could be added to complement (or replace) traditional playground equipment.

Action Plan #2: Identify a Park Improvement and Upgrading Program

The City's current parks are generally well maintained and appropriately equipped with park furniture, signage and user amenities.

The public was generally satisfied with the quality and maintenance of parkland. However, as noted above, the changing needs of the community as well as ongoing requirements for upgrades suggest that a park improvement program should be put in place.

³ Green gyms are outdoor fitness equipment that is robust, weatherproof and colourful. The equipment is inviting, designed for adults and older adults and an increasingly popular approach to fitness and healthy active living for all age groups. A number of major manufacturers carry the equipment

Existing parks need to be included in a regular, planned updating process that reviews existing facilities for current regulations and safety and identifies when existing facilities are no longer functioning effectively. In addition, there needs to be a regular review of parks for upgrading and repurposing, in line with the revised park policies and design standards emerging from Action Plan #1.

Action Plan #3: Prepare Development Concepts for Major New Parks

When the Multiuse Complex is developed, the existing arena and Collins Hall will no longer be required for community recreational uses and two large park parcels will become available (this assumes that the land/buildings are not sold or donated to another user but demolished and the land returned to parkland). Both sites are large and well located. Future development of these sites, if they are to be retained as parkland, should be guided by a design concept prepared by a qualified landscape architect.

Action Plan #4: Support Additional Trail Development and Active Transportation Initiatives

Elliot Lake has a generous supply of trails, and although the consultation process identified no requirements for additional supply, there was support for the continued development of recreational trails in the community. This is an ongoing initiative and a trails committee with this purpose is in place. As noted elsewhere in the Master Plan, there is a need to revitalize a volunteer organization to promote and support cross-country skiing in Elliot Lake and this objective should be pursued through the recommended community development activities.

While Elliot Lake has excellent recreational trails, the opportunities for walking and cycling within the built up area of the City are less well developed. Many communities are preparing active transportation plans to improve sidewalks, pedestrian and cycle routes, and non-motorized links between key destination points. Elliot Lake has projects such as the walking trail adjacent to Highway 108 that are consistent with these directions. The City draft Strategic Plan also includes a number of action plans designed to enhance intra-city mobility. These active transportation initiatives are strongly supported and will contribute to the outcomes identified for the Parks, Recreation, Arts and Culture Master Plan as well as improving the City's transportation infrastructure.

Summary of Parks, Open Spaces and Trails – Products of the Plan

The Parks, Open Space and Trails Action Plans will produce the following products at the end of the planning period:

- Revised park classification and design standards to better reflect the needs of a retirement community with an older age profile;
- A planned program for the updating and rejuvenation of existing parks;
- Concept plans for new parks where facilities were relocated to the Multiuse Complex;
- The continued development of a recreational trails network with added emphasis on active transportation initiatives that will improve walking and cycling opportunities in the urban area.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Table 5.1 outlines an implementation strategy for the Master Plan. For each Action Plan, the table lists key directions, priorities and where relevant and feasible, estimated capital and operating costs.

As indicated, much of this work is identified as a staff cost, which emphasizes the need for sufficient staff resources to pursue the action plans.

Tables 5.1 also indicates general priorities for the key directions. Those that address an immediate need or correct a current problem are high priorities (H) and should be acted upon immediately. Medium (M) priorities should be addressed in the next two to three years. Low (L) priorities deal with long-range needs or are policy issues that can be addressed over time. While these recommendations should be addressed in the next ten years, it is possible that they will not be fully implemented within the 10-year time frame of the Master Plan. In a few cases, the recommendations involve ongoing planning or monitoring activities that will continue through the Master Plan and beyond. These are not assigned a priority but are identified as Ongoing (O).

The cost estimates are very general estimates to be confirmed with further study. Land acquisition costs are not included in these estimates. All costs exclude grants, community fund-raising or other contributions.

Table 5.1

ACTION PLANS	Estimated Cost and Priority		Comments
DELIVERY SYSTEM			
ACTION PLAN #1: CONFIRM THE DEPARTMENT'S PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ROLE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document a program role consistent with the community development functions noted in the Master Plan/Confirm that the Department will continue to have a limited role in direct programming 	Staff Cost	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This action plan is critical because it confirms the basic principles that will guide the Department's role in future service delivery and programming. The directions recommended are consistent with recent initiatives by the Department and should be continued by staff and supported by Council
ACTION PLAN #2: ENSURE STAFF ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide an additional Community Development Position to coincide with the opening of the Multiuse Complex 	\$60,000/yr	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The requirement for this additional staff position should be monitored but put in place no later than the opening of the Multiuse Complex. Salary to be confirmed when the job description is developed.
ACTION PLAN #3: DEVELOP POLICIES TO SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop new or revise policies associated with volunteer assistance, community funding, facility allocation; pricing and user fees; and capital conservation 	\$10-15,000	H/M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primarily a staff cost; small budget for external assistance for research or consulting support ▪ High priorities are volunteer assistance and community funding; all policies should be revised as soon as possible
ACTION PLAN #4: IMPLEMENT PROCEDURES FOR ONGOING PLANNING AND EVALUATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop performance measures and on-going data base for planning and evaluation of services 	Staff Cost	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is the responsibility of the Director and should be acted upon as soon as possible, but within the next 3 years. The approach to performance measurement should be coordinated with any City wide initiatives in this respect.
ACTION PLAN #5: CONFIRM ROLE OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document revised role and operating procedures for the Committee 	Staff Cost	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be undertaken by Parks and Recreation Director in consultation with Council and the CAO. Should be undertaken as soon as possible.
ACTION PLAN #6: UNDERTAKEN A STAFFING AND ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare operational review 	\$20,000	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To coincide with operational planning for Multiuse Complex ▪ Budget to support consulting assistance, if required

Table 5.1

ACTION PLANS	Estimated Cost and Priority		Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add full time operations staff to the Parks Division 	\$TBD	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least one additional operational staff should be added immediately. Overall staffing requirements to be determined as part of the recommended operational review and to coincide with adjustments made to accommodate the Multiuse Complex.
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES			
ACTION PLAN #1: AUGMENT CURRENT SUPPLY OF PROGRAMS AND EXPAND PROGRAMMING IN FIVE AREAS – YOUTH, ACTIVE LIVING, ADULT/OLDERADULT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION AND SPECIAL EVENTS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand programming as recommended 	Staff Cost	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of staff - assumes that program and community development staff are available to support new program development
ACTION PLAN #2: IMPROVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve Leisure Guide and distribution methods and adopt expanded target marketing 	Cost to be determined	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff to investigate opportunities to improve the Leisure Guide and expand target marketing. Depending on approaches selected, modest budgets may be required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make greater use of website for marketing 	Staff Cost	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be explored by staff.
MAJOR INDOOR FACILITIES			
ACTION PLAN #1: DEVELOP MULTIUSE COMPLEX			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement recommendations of the Feasibility study 		H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See Feasibility Study Report for Capital and Operating Costs
ACTION PLAN #2: INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CIVIC CENTRE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore program and event markets and prepare business plan to project revenues relative to capital investments determined previously 	\$25,000	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget if required for consultants; other wise a staff cost.
OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES			
ACTION PLAN #1: WORK WITH CURRENT USERS TO DEVELOP NEW/UPGRADED FACILITIES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide support to volunteers for marketing, membership development, training, identification of grants, etc. 	Staff Cost	H/O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional volunteer support is a staff responsibility. High priority should be directed to groups identified in the Master Plan as requiring immediate assistance. This is however an ongoing responsibility of the Department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide capital for small capital upgrades and equipment 	Costs to be determined	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funded through Community Funding Policy

Table 5.1

ACTION PLANS	Estimated Cost and Priority		Comments
ACTION PLAN #2: DEVELOP ADDITIONAL OUTDOOR FACILITIES FOR UNORGANIZED USE			
▪ Provide multipurpose courts	\$50,000	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost to be confirmed. Costs will depend on number of new locations required. ▪ Some installations to be provided through conversion of existing sites (under-used tennis locations; outdoor basketball courts in disrepair, etc.)
▪ Provide major splash pad	\$250,000 - \$400,000	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost will vary with the size and sophistication of the installation. This is a major city-serving facility and will require a significant investment.
▪ Provide major skate park	\$250,000- \$300,000	M/L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replacement for existing temporary facilities with a permanent skate park. Cost to be confirmed; higher budgets may be required in north if qualified designers/contractors are not available.
▪ Prepare assessment of playgrounds and decommission or replace some sites	\$350- 500,000	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing replacement based on assessment of existing conditions and community specific needs ▪ Budget assumes a minimum of 3 new major installations; developments might be phased over the period of the Master Plan
PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS			
ACTION PLAN #1: REVIEW PARK CLASSIFICATIONS AND POLICIES			
▪ Preparation of a study to review park classification system, OP standards, policies and design guidelines for parks in retirement community	\$25,000- \$30,000	M/L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This would involve research on the needs of an adult/older adult community; community consultation; and specific recommendations to revise existing policies and practices. ▪ Given the adequate overall supply of parkland and the relatively limited growth in population, there is not an immediate need to undertake the study
ACTION PLAN #2: IDENTIFY A PARK IMPROVEMENT AND UPGRADING PROGRAM.			
▪ Identify specific upgrades on a park by park basis and budget for improvements	\$50,000/yr	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assumes an annual allocation of \$50,000 for park upgrades. Specific projects on a park by park basis to be identified by staff and included in annual budgets.
ACTION PLAN #3: PREPARE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS FOR MAJOR PARKS			
▪ Prepare park plans for sites vacated by Collins Hall and arena when Multiuse Complex is built	\$50,000	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consulting budget, assumes two concepts, prepared concurrently as one tender
ACTION PLAN #4: TRAIL DEVELOPMENT			
▪ Explore active transportation initiatives	Staff Cost	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be done in conjunction with urban planning and infrastructure renewal