



June 2022

Township of Muskoka Lakes Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is the core document which sets out the Township Strategy for service delivery, asset management and new directions in recreation and parks. It comprises:

- ❑ Vision and Mission
- ❑ Guiding Principles
- ❑ Service Directions
- ❑ Recommendations

Once approved, this will be complemented by an implementation plan prepared under the direction of the Director of Public Works. The transition from a comprehensive planning exercise to implementation specifics is one of priority-setting. Flexibility in implementation is important for budgeting purposes (capital and operating) but is also a reality – the need to revisit priorities in light of changing circumstances.

In order to meet the goals of a broad-based plan that addresses the full range of challenges and opportunities, priority projects should speak to the guiding principles as a whole.

Eight broad and sustainable guiding principles are articulated through three (3) service directions:

- ❑ To Enhance Program Offerings and Partnerships;
- ❑ To Rethink Facilities in terms of needs and solutions; and
- ❑ To enable translation of the Plan into annual capital and operating budgets and long-term capital forecasts.

As a 10 Year Plan, progressive success in implementation will necessitate immediate work on those elements that are foundational to a number of other elements of the plan. As an example, in Year 1, a detailed investigation of the future sustainability of the Township’s arenas is required to inform other policy options including those that are not directly related to the arenas themselves (e.g. support for community halls; partnerships; the role of the Township in program delivery, and departmental organization).

YEAR 1: RESOURCING THE PLAN

Key Recommendations to set the plan up for success, will include:

- Grant Applications (those for parks design, feasibility and other works)
- Commence process of assessment of arena futures (including feasibility study terms of reference, steering committee formation, consultant selection).
- Establish a Full-Time Parks and Recreation Manager to oversee all aspects of recreation service delivery including, by way of example, the following:
 - Organizational support of Community Centres including committee meeting attendance and preparation of agendas, minutes, action items, requests for capital support, etc.
 - Management of vendors relevant to recreation services

- Inter-departmental liaison and inter-municipal recreation officer liaison
- Volunteer Strategy development
- Partnerships development
- Program development, community outreach, maintenance of a CRM (Customer relationship management) approach and administration
- Administering booking and associated reporting
- Marketing and development of consolidated online and hard copy recreation guide
- Development and management of internal budgets
- Input to capital projects in recreation (parks and facilities) working with other Township staff

YEAR 2: UNDERTAKE DUE DILIGENCE

Across all service directions, staff and consulting time is required to undertake key facility-related work programs:

- Complete Multi-Use Community Recreation Complex Feasibility Assessment

- Complete Adaptive Re-Use assessments of existing arenas
- Retain all community halls; review governance
- Designate 4 Community Centres as Hubs (primary locations for new programs, building expansion and investment in staffing)
- Develop a Township Volunteering Training and Opportunities Program
- Explore School Partnerships
- Parks Enhancement Planning

YEAR 3-10 ONWARD: ACTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN ACROSS ALL SERVICE DIRECTIONS

- Balanced approach to capital budgeting and operational requirements
- Township Staff to determine scale of recommendations included in each year
- Commitment to multi-year funding of recommendations as required
- Track degree of implementation of plan – formal review by 2026

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1. VISION & MISSION

Vision:

To create sustainable recreation that promotes healthy communities, and embraces the strengths of our natural environment and small town character.

Mission:

Through innovative, recreational planning and strategic partnerships, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will inform future investment to increase usage of the Township's recreation infrastructure.

1. VISION & MISSION

VISION:

To create sustainable recreation that promotes healthy communities, and embraces the strengths of our natural environment and small town character.

MISSION:

Through innovative, recreational planning and strategic partnerships, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will inform future investment to increase usage of the Township's recreation infrastructure.



DRIVERS OF THE PLAN

Parks & Recreation Master Plan is a policy document that assists in determining parks, trails and recreation requirements for the Township and together with other policy documents informs future investment.

This actionable Parks & Recreation Master Plan contributes to implementing the Township's strategic goals and aims to improve community and visitor usage of the Township's recreation infrastructure, parks, and trails. The Plan contributes to the Township's strategic goals.

In its 2021-2024 Strategic Plan the Muskoka Lakes community has identified four strategic goals to guide the development of strategic plans, successful service delivery and future budget priorities:

This plan advances the implementation of the Township's Strategic Goals 2021-2024:

- ❖ Preserve, protect, and promote the natural and cultural environment;
- ❖ Enhance and sustain public services and infrastructure;
- ❖ Strengthen and diversify Muskoka Lakes' economy; and
- ❖ Strengthen key relationships across all municipal and government sectors.

**STRENGTHS OF THE TOWNSHIP & DRIVERS OF THIS PLAN
INCLUDE:**

- Unique characteristics of the Township –
its history, communities, permanent and seasonal resident base

- Changing population and growth dynamics regionally

- History of volunteerism to sustain and grow

- Effective Asset Management

- Opportunities to leverage partnerships in facilities and programming

- The need for a plan that effects change not status quo

- Community Support



Winter Fun
MUSKOKA LAKES



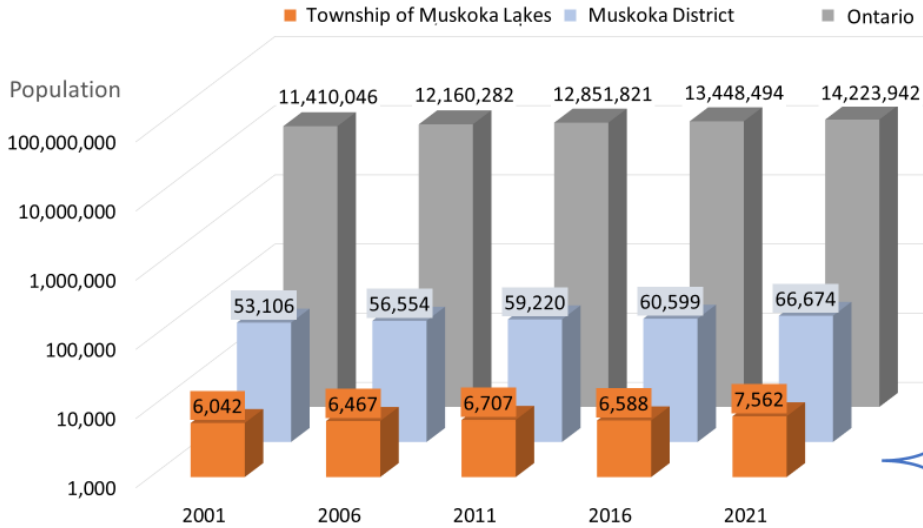
2.

Societal Trends

SOCIETAL TRENDS

A GROWING & CHANGING TOWNSHIP

Population Change, 2001-2021



Population and Housing: Changes 2016 – 2021

Permanent Population Increased

16.2%



2021 Township Permanent Population: 7,562

Second-Home population: 27,300 (2016 Estimate)

Population Increase 2016-2021, Comparison



Township of Muskoka Lakes	2006	2011	2016
Average household size	2.4	2.4	2.2

Number of Dwellings increased between 2011 and 2021

	2006	2011	2016	2021
Private dwellings occupied by usual residents	2,679	2,631	2,914	3,529
Change in the number of private dwellings		-2%	11%	21%

Number of Dwellings Increased

21.1%



2021 Number of Dwellings – 3,529

Second-Homes: 7,200 (2016 Estimate)

Township of Muskoka Lakes, 2016



98% live in single detached dwellings

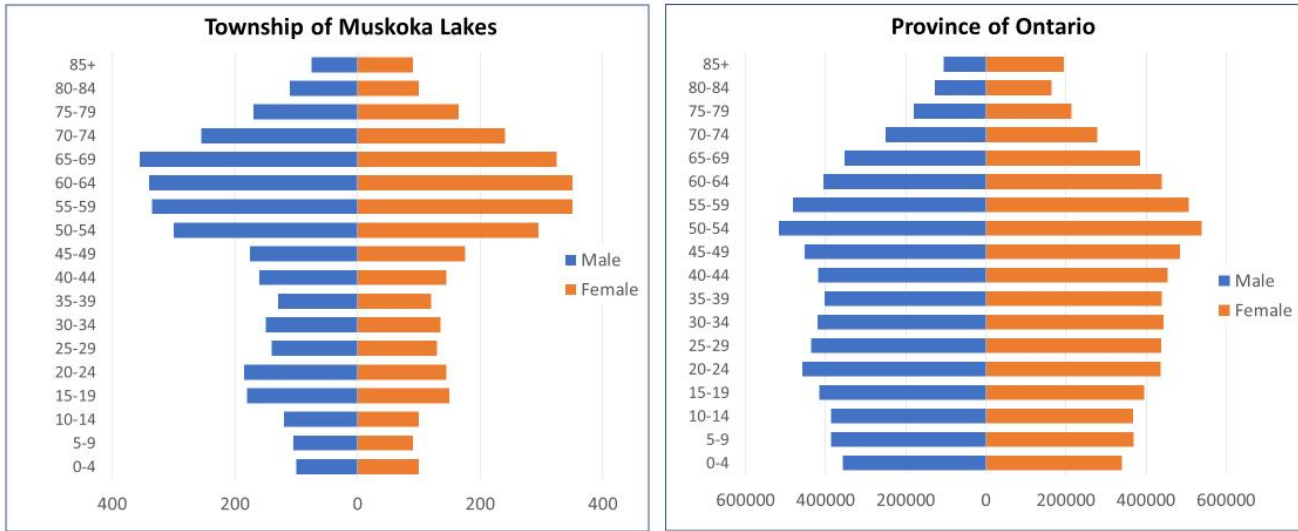
Muskoka Lakes, District, 2016



83% live in single detached dwellings

Emerging societal trends – Age Structure

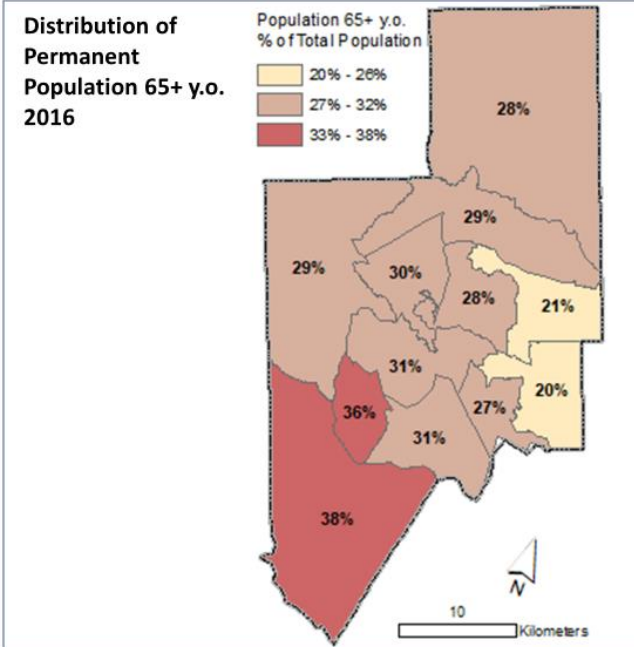
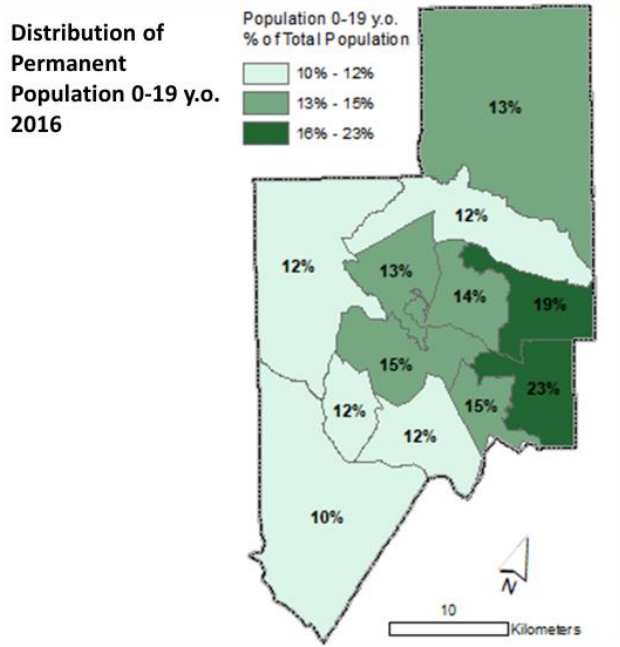
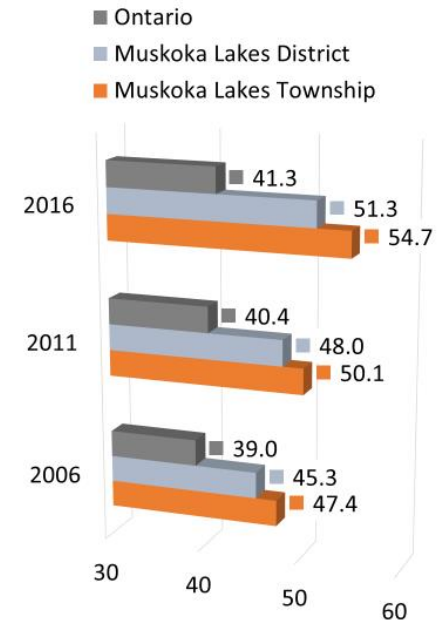
Permanent Population by Age Group Comparison, 2016



The share of 55+ population in the Township is larger than in Ontario.

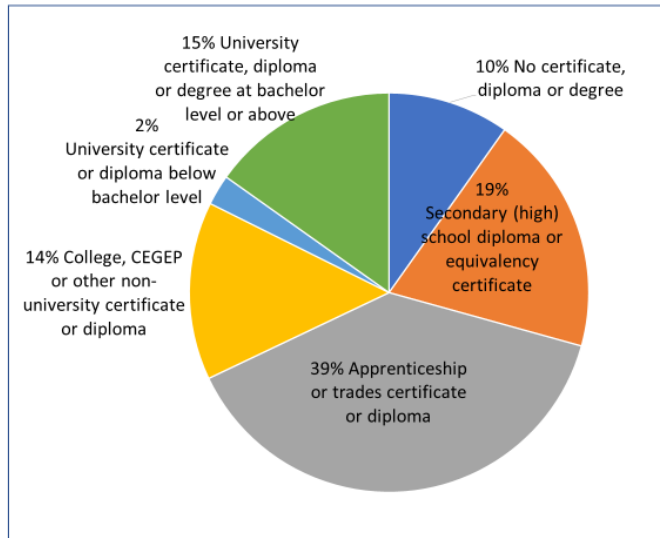
Median age is increasing in the Township faster than in the District and Province.

Median Age, comparison

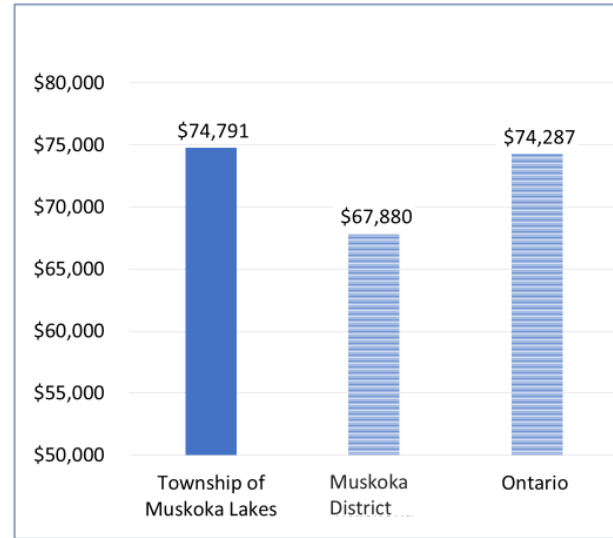


Emerging societal trends – Education & Income

Highest Educational Attainment Level, Township of Muskoka Lakes, 2016

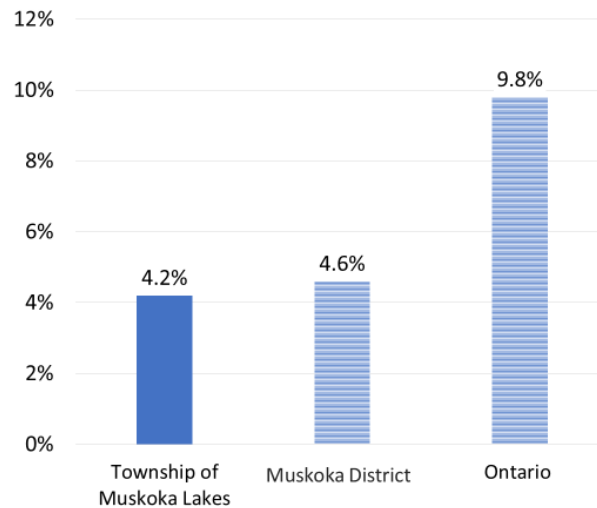


Median Total Household Income, Township of Muskoka Lakes, 2016

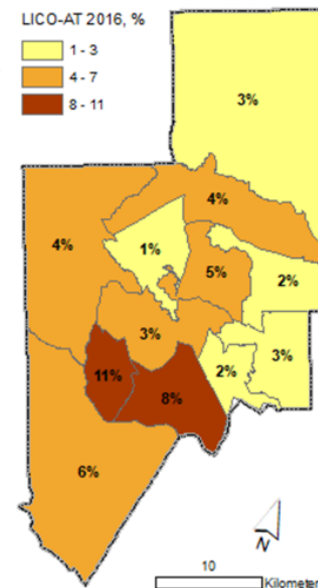


Average household income in the Township is higher than in the District and the Province

Prevalence of Low-Income, based on LICO, after tax (%), 2016



Prevalence of Low-Income based on LICO After Tax prevalence (%) by Dissemination Area, 2016



Low-Income prevalence is Lower than in the District and in Ontario

Low income prevalence is higher in the Central and Western Dissemination Areas



3.

Consultation and Key Themes

3. CONSULTATION AND KEY THEMES

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Dedicated project webpage
- ✓ Social media presence and outreach
- ✓ Online public survey (357 responses)
- ✓ User Groups Survey (56 responses)
- ✓ Internal stakeholder sessions (Council, Township Staff and Volunteers)
- ✓ External stakeholder interviews (recreation providers, educators, regulatory authorities)

THEMES – ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

- Theme 1:** Arenas – general satisfaction but the facilities are ageing
- Theme 2:** More outdoor facilities needed + greater range of programming
- Theme 3:** Support for Community Centres
- Theme 4:** The idea of indoor space that is not an arena or community hall
- Theme 5:** Top priority is re-investment in arenas and outdoor spaces

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Indoor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Centres are important –spaces for community use and programming • Facilities for different ages • Accessibility / sustainability • Indoor sports fields / courts • Arenas / Ice pads • Indoor / outdoor aquatics facilities • Gym / fitness
Parkland / Outdoor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickleball courts; • Skateboard parks; • Additional neighbourhood / community parks; • Additional amenities (shade structures, washrooms, splashpads); • Well-maintained sports courts & fields • More trails for walking, hiking, cycling; snowshoeing, skiing and other activities in all seasons; • Year-round outdoor activities for all ages • Water activities: swimming, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, etc. • Winter activities: cross-country skiing snowmobiling, ice fishing, etc.
Programming / Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickleball • Flexible multi-use, multi-generational programs • Accessibility • Unstructured sports and activities • Flexible parkland for variety of passive and active opportunities • Programs for all ages • Year-round activities and recreation

EMERGING TRENDS AND THEMES IN RECREATION

Indoor Recreation

- **Flexible multi-use, multi-generational** – Increasing focus on creating flexible multi-use “destination” facilities as recreation, entertainment and family centres and community hubs.
- **Sport tourism** – Throughout Canada, sport tourism represents a growing market and providing facilities to accommodate this is an important consideration.
- **Aquatics** – Emerging aquatic facility designs (fitness and leisure swimming, therapeutic programs for seniors, and splash pads/water parks for children).
- **Sustainability** – Increasing focus on the overall sustainability of a facility (e.g., net zero/carbon neutral).
- **Accessibility** – making indoor and outdoor facilities accessible for people of all ages and abilities. Indoor facilities must comply with the provincial Accessibility regulations (AODA). Encouraging cycling and walking to access facilities.

Outdoor Recreation

Emerging outdoor recreational activities that are gaining in popularity and becoming more widely programmed by municipalities across Ontario include:

- Pickleball,
- Tennis (established but growing in demand),
- Skateboard parks, BMX / Pump Tracks,
- Basketball (established but growing in demand),
- 3v3 Basketball,
- Mountain biking, snowmobiling
- Cricket (established but growing in demand),
- Unstructured and self-guided activities, including hiking, cycling, jogging, skating, snowshoeing, skiing, yoga and fitness in parks, / unorganized sports: soccer, hockey, etc.
- Active Transportation (e.g. walking, cycling, using non-motorized mobility devices) for commute and recreation – improves safety and accessibility.

Parkland & Open Spaces

Accessible Design Standards - Many municipalities have created their own Accessibility Guidelines for development that exceed the minimum Ontario standards to optimize inclusivity and eliminate barriers for individuals with a wide range of disabilities.

Age-Friendly Approach - Parks and open spaces are increasingly designed as inclusive spaces for example by providing multi-generational amenities.

Equity and Inclusivity - The amenities and services provided within parks and open spaces should be accessible to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or physical and cognitive abilities.

Sustainable Design Strategies - The inclusion of Low Impact Development (LID) site design strategies aim to improve storm water management quality.

Active and Passive Parkland - Open space areas that include or are suitable for the development of more structured and less structured recreational facilities and activities, respectively

Programming & Events

Trends & shifts in recreation participation are being observed at the national & provincial level, including:

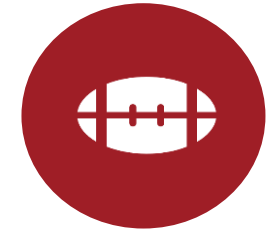
- Promoting and fostering participation in physical activity for all ages and various abilities;
- Promoting active recreation and transportation;
- The need to (re)assess opportunities diversify the suite of program options to address changes in preferences for participation;
- The decline in sport participation in favour of unorganized and/or self-directed leisure activity;
- Effective monitoring systems help inform municipal responses to parks and recreation program demand.

Local Influences & Trends in Recreation & Sport Participation

- Preserving and promoting local heritage through signage and interpretive plaques/panels.
- Further improving wayfinding, e.g. signage, maps, website information and applications to improve access to the recreation facilities in the Township.
- More space for outdoor activities year-round.
- Integrate indigenous and local history/educational opportunities.

KEY EMERGING THEMES

Abundant supply of recreation infrastructure
Access to community, health, wellness and physical activity facilities, programs and services for all communities (based on geographic distribution)



Age-friendly, accessible & inclusive recreation
Accessible (barrier-free) infrastructure
Investment in infrastructure based on Muskoka’s unique requirements: urban and rural
Regional co-ordination (developing support structures)



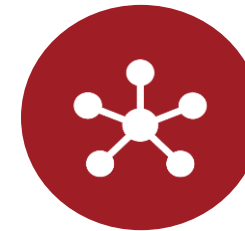
Investment in multi-use for the broadest range of access to recreation (adaptability)



Risk mitigation and business planning approach(es) to facility investment

Defining and refining partnerships (e.g. with schools; bolstering volunteer capacity in Community Centres)

Strengthening the Township role as a tourism destination and regional recreation centre/service area.





4.

Recreation Facilities, Parks and Trails

4. RECREATION FACILITIES, PARKS AND TRAILS

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN SCOPE

Indoor Recreation

Examples include:

Community Centres & Halls | Arenas | Gymnasias | Indoor Pools

Outdoor Recreation

Examples include:

Sports Fields & Courts | Playgrounds | Outdoor Ice Rinks | Community Gardens

Parkland & Open Space

Water Amenities

Active Transportation & Recreation Network (ATR)

Service Delivery & Programs

Examples include:

Child & Family Programs | Youth Programs | Senior Adults Programs | Swimming Programs | Community Events

COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Township has thirteen (13) community centres.

Twelve (12) community centres and halls offer community spaces and programs.

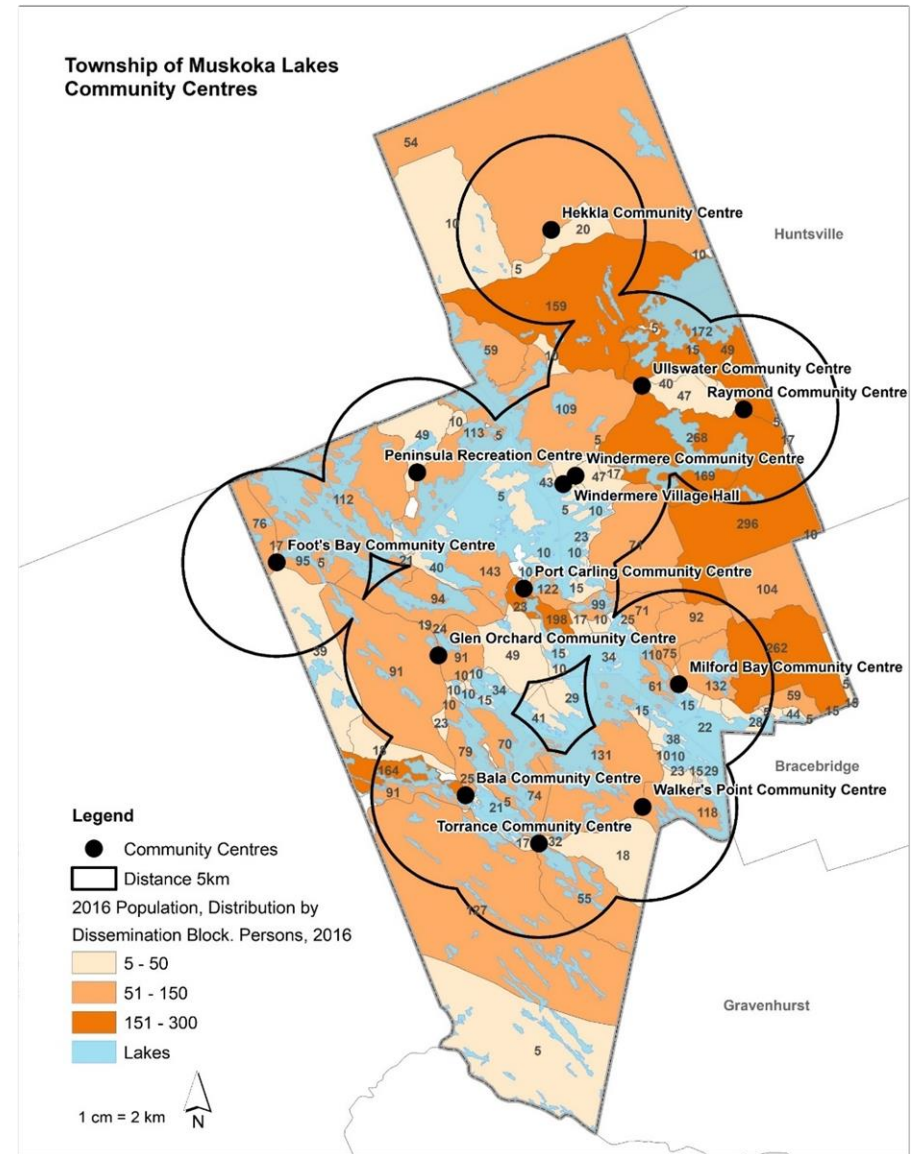
Glen Orchard community centre currently hosts a Food Bank.

Community centres scattered around the Township differ in size and programming options.

Community Centres represent long history of serving individual communities.

Challenges include:

- General condition
- Older buildings, some in need of upgrades
- Need for more investment in some community centres
- Compliance with accessibility requirements





Port Carling Community Centre



Hekla Community Centre



Foot's Bay Community Centre

Community Centres are important community assets that

- Provide much needed community space
- Offer a range of programs
- Maintain social ties
- Celebrate history
- Generate volunteerism

The Future:

Often referred to as a “Hub & Spoke Model”, sustaining community centres in Muskoka Lakes will involve a dual commitment:

1. Retaining, maintaining and maximizing the use of each centre. This ensures all areas of the Township continue to benefit from localized services;
2. Expand the role, range and depth of services, and focus expansion plans, on several key locations. This ensures maximum value for money and community impact

ARENAS – INDOOR ICE

Arenas - Municipal Supply: 2

Arenas constructed in the 1970s

- Bala Arena
- Port Carling Arena

Observed Standard:

2021: 1 ice pad per 3,826 residents

2016: 1 ice pad per 3,300 residents

Typical Rural Standards:

1 ice pad 1 per 5,000–10,000 residents (or 1 per 450-700 participants)

Arenas are important as

- Historic community assets
- Significant key locations in Port Carling and Bala
- Serve important recreational role

Observations:

Significant supply of indoor ice exists.

Age is a concern. Facilities are increasingly less functional and in need of accessibility and other improvements.

Capital costs to improve are significant.

AQUATIC FACILITIES

Indoor Pools - Regional Supply: 3

- Canada Summit Centre Indoor Pool, Huntsville
- Bracebridge Sportsplex Indoor Pool
- Gravenhurst YMCA Indoor Pool, Gravenhurst

Observed Regional Standard:

1 per 26,400 regional population

Typical Rural Standard:

1 per 20,000 to 35,000 +/- regional population

Swimming Programs (Summer):

- Swimming Sessions
- Preschool
- Children's Program – Swim Kids
- Lifesaving Program

Observations:

Significant supply of regional aquatic facilities exists.

The Township is 20 minutes away from existing indoor pools and residents have access to the swimming program and lakes in the summer.

The Township swimming program is popular but not well-utilized.

SPORT FIELDS & BALL DIAMONDS

The Municipality has a limited number of active sports fields which reflects, likely with accuracy, the preference of users to participate in organized field sports outside of the Township. The opportunity exists to consider a modest addition to the inventory of fields

Municipal Supply:

- 1 Baseball Diamond – Milford Bay CC
- 1 Softball Field – Torrance CC
- 2 Soccer Fields

Non-municipal supply: Ball diamond at the Lion’s Club

Field Type	Observed Township Standards	Typical small-urban / rural standards
Ball Diamonds	1 per 3,781 residents	1 per 2,000 - 4,000 residents
Rectangular Fields	1 per 3,781 residents	1 per 1,500 - 3,000 residents

Future Factors of Influence:

- Growth of permanent population with school age children;
- Minor field sports are organized on a sub-regional scale;
- Limited demand for fields in TML by organized sport;
- Increasing demand for self-organized sport activities such as soccer;
- Developing rectangular fields in multi-field configurations (clusters) to create hubs for field sports to accommodate the future need for rectangular fields.

SPORT COURTS

Future directions include: Monitoring demand for outdoor activities, fields and courts; maintaining these facilities in good condition for community use; and optimizing the use of fields and courts.

Municipal Supply:

- 4 Tennis / Pickleball Courts
- 2 Basketball Courts
- 1 Beach Volleyball Courts

Court Type	Observed Township Standards	Typical rural standards
Tennis / Pickleball	1 per 1,890 residents	1 per 4,000-5,000 residents
Basketball	1 per 280 youth (age 10-19)	1 per 900 youth (10-19)
Beach Volleyball	1 per 7,652 residents	--

Trends in court-based sports:

- Pickleball is a growing sport;
- Basketball is gaining in popularity among youth;
- Multi-purpose courts for multi-use play;
- Increasing demand for self-organized sports e.g. basketball among youth and pickleball among adults.

PARKLAND SUPPLY & CLASSIFICATION

Parks and Open Spaces are essential community assets. While they do represent physical capital, their true value is realized across the wide range of benefits they provide to a community, including - physical, mental, social / cultural, environmental, conservation and economic.

Township of Muskoka Lakes offers

- ❑ 18 Parks of Various Types
- ❑ 55 hectares of parkland
- ❑ 7 ha per 1,000 residents of parks and parkland
- ❑ Milford Manor Golf Course

For comparison, typical Standard is *minimum of 4 ha per 1,000 residents.*

Active and Passive Parkland

Active Parkland: Open space areas that include or are suitable for the development of recreation facilities that promote participation in physical activities such as organized sports and unorganized play – uses may include sports fields / diamonds, sports courts, playgrounds and specialty areas.

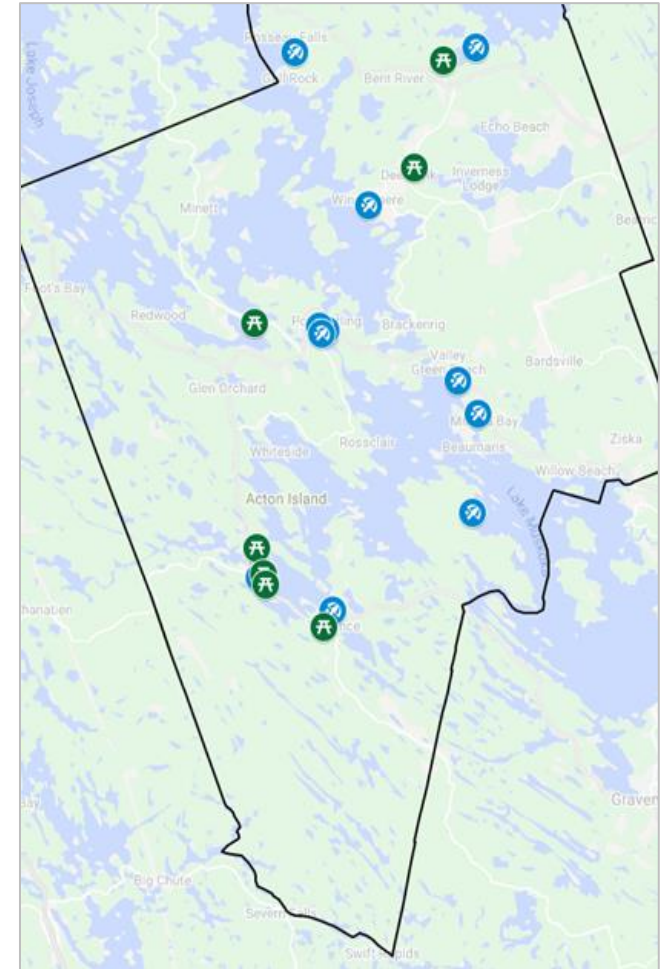
Passive Parkland: Open space areas that include or are suitable for the development of recreational facilities that promote participation in less structured activities that are passive in nature – uses may include walking / hiking / running and the enjoyment of natural areas.

Township Owned Parks

- Bala Falls
- Cenotaph Park
- Jaspen Park
- Windsor Park
- Baycliffe Park
- Valley Green Beach
- Archdekin Park
- Muskoka Lakes Sports Park
- Hanna Park
- Indian Crescent Park
- Port Sandfield Park
- Sunset Park
- Torrance Ball Field
- Dee Bank Park
- Fish Hatchery Park
- Skeleton Lake Park
- Four Mile Point Park
- Windermere Park
- Walker’s Point Beach

Non-Township owned parks

- Bluff Road Park
- Lion’s Park



Parks and Beaches Township of Muskoka Lakes

Connecting with nature, playing, being active

ACTIVE PARK AMENITIES

- Playgrounds – 7** Approach to planning:
General equitable distribution of open space across Township;
Located within walkable distance from residencies (500-800 meters)

- Outdoor Ice Rinks – 1** Observed Standard:
1 per 7,652 residents
Typical Rural Standard:
1 ice rink per 4,000–5,000 residents

- View the Lakes Chair Tour** A unique self-guided Muskoka Chair Tour:
9 Muskoka Chairs located to guide visitors highlighting the top views across Muskoka Lakes

- Skateboard Park - 1** Muskoka Lakes Sports Park (Bala) features a skateboard park
Skateparks / pump tracks are important among youth

- Off-leash Dog Park** **Currently no dedicated off-leash dog park**
Observations:
Torrance softball diamond is used as a dog-park

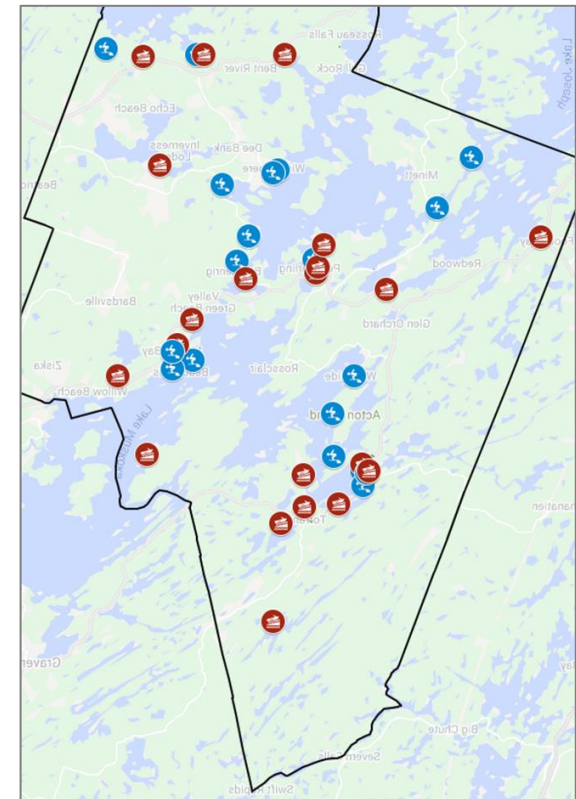
- Winter activities** Approach to planning winter activities:
General equitable distribution of parks, open space and trails across the Township to support winter activities

Muskoka’s many lakes are a unique natural resource. The Township offers municipal docks, boat launches, and lake access points for all residents and visitors to enjoy water activities and Muskoka views.

WATER AMENITIES

- Lake Access Boat Launches** Municipal docks, boat launches, and lake access points

- Beaches & Picnic Tables** Muskoka parks and open spaces offer beaches for swimming and picnic areas for a variety of activities



Docks & Boat Launches

PROPOSED PARKLAND HIERARCHY

Park Classification	Service Area	Optimal Size	Facilities
Destination/ Regional Parks	Municipal/regional/provincially significant destinations.	Varies	Active and/or passive recreation opportunities that meet both the needs of Township residents but are also of interest to visitors / tourists . Often related to the provision of major recreation or leisure activities and may include significant natural or historic elements.
Community Parks	Municipal: Serve more than one neighbourhood within the township but are not intended to serve the Township as a whole.	Min. 5.0 hectares	Active and/or passive uses. Include more intensive recreational uses such as sports fields, sports courts, playgrounds, water play , amenity/support buildings and on-site parking (adequate for the uses the park provides).
Neighbourhood Parks	Local: Cater to the recreation needs of residents who live in the general vicinity and can easily walk/bike to the park.	Min. 1.0 hectares	Combination of active and passive recreation opportunities. Include minor sports fields, multi-purpose sports courts, playgrounds, and informal play areas .
Parkettes	Local: They are generally located in urban or residential areas, providing connections to larger parks and open spaces.	Less than 1.0 hectares	Small open spaces that have no or limited recreational facilities. Passive programming such as opportunities for seating (rest) and temporary gathering.
General Open Spaces	Municipal/local: undeveloped lands accessible to the public.	Varies	Active and passive recreation activities. These spaces may include pedestrian pathways, bicycle trails, community gardens, open lawn areas and remnant parcels of open land.
Natural Open Spaces	Regional/municipal/local: undeveloped lands accessible to the public that contain significant natural features (e.g., woodlots, wetlands, watercourses, wildlife habitat).	Varies	These spaces may include passive recreation activities that do not negatively impact ecological and biological functions of their natural surroundings.

TRAILS

Why Are Trails Important? Why do we need More?

- ❑ Trails are an essential part of the Township’s active recreation network - destinations in their own right and key tourism opportunities.
- ❑ Trails are connectors – linking parks, open space and water.
- ❑ Maintaining and expanding the trail network requires ongoing partnership.
- ❑ Establishing a range of trails to suit the varied needs of the public is good public policy.

Township of Muskoka Lakes offers

- ❑ **48.6 kilometers** of Trails
- ❑ **8 Township Trails**
- ❑ **2 Provincial Trails**

Winter: The Township in partnership with local volunteers offers

- ❑ 1 km groomed cross-country ski trail at the Milford Manor Golf Course
- ❑ Hanna Park Skating & Walking Trails
- ❑ Bala Sports Park Walking Trail

Walking, Hiking, Cycling, Snowmobiling and many other activities



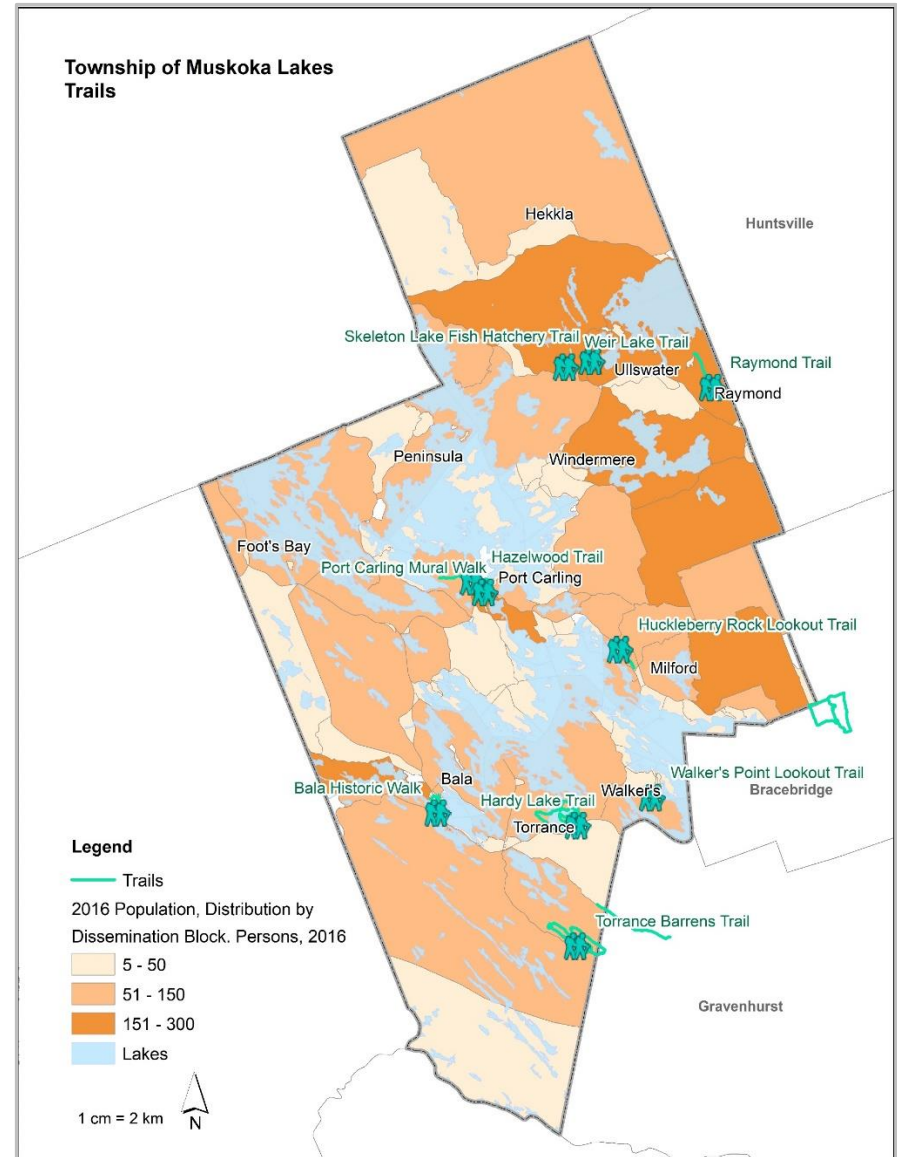
Connecting people, nature and places & being active places year-round

Township Trails:

- Huckleberry Rock Lookout Trail
- Walker’s Point Lookout Trail
- Hazelwood Trail
- Skeleton Lake Fish Hatchery Trail
- Raymond Trail
- Port Carling Mural Walk
- Bala Historic Walk
- Weir Lake Trail

Provincial Trails:

- Hardy Lake Trails Torrance
- Barrens Trails



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION & RECREATION (ATR)

Active Transportation & Recreation (ATR) Network:

An ATR network is an essential community asset that provides key connections that allow for a municipality to be unified into a comprehensive, safe, and integrated system.

ATR Network supports active recreation and transportation that is safe, equitable, and accessible to residents and visitors.

Supply:

Limited supply of walking and cycling infrastructure (bicycle parking and bicycle lanes) connecting parks, trails and other recreation facilities.

Benefits Include:

- Active lifestyle,
- Sustainability & equity,
- Accessibility & inclusivity,
- Economic prosperity,
- Affordability,
- Access to outdoor and indoor recreation facilities
- Providing alternative forms & recreation & transportation to reduce sedentary activities such as driving

Connections:

- Connecting Communities
- Linking Community Facilities
- Connecting people and nature
- Connecting people and facilities
- Providing accessible and equitable recreation & safer transportation options year-round for people of all ages & abilities

Support for AT Planning:

- ❑ Infrastructure Canada provides funding to regions and municipalities to create AT plans and build active transportation infrastructure, including bicycle lanes, trails and pathways;
- ❑ Both Canada and Ontario AT Strategies encourage promotion of active transportation and development of AT infrastructure.

Future Directions:

- ❑ Township's ATR plan - explore opportunities to fund the AT plan development such as Infrastructure Canada Fund, Ontario and other sources.
- ❑ Coordinate recreation and transportation plans to promote active transportation & recreation options in the Township for residents and visitors;
- ❑ Implement connections to trails, parks, lakes, recreation facilities and regional AT networks (e.g. bike lanes and bicycle parking) to encourage active travel to recreation facilities, parks and trails.



4.

Guiding Principles

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1 Strategic investment in recreation infrastructure

2 Recognize and Leverage Partnerships

3 Accessibility for All

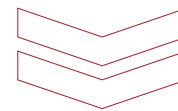
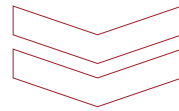
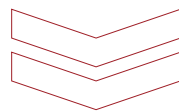
4 Support Adjusted Community Centre Model

5 Sustain and Grow the Community Development model of Recreation

6 Plan for Success: Organizational Capacity to Plan, Manage and Execute the PRMP

7 Integrated PRMP and Asset Management Planning

8 Enhance Regional Co-operation



Service Directions:

1. Enhance Offerings Programing and Partnerships

2. Rethink Facilities

3. Create an Effective Recreation Organization/ Administration



Photo credit - Robert Taylor

5.

Service Directions

5. SERVICE DIRECTIONS

1. Enhance Program Offerings and Partnerships

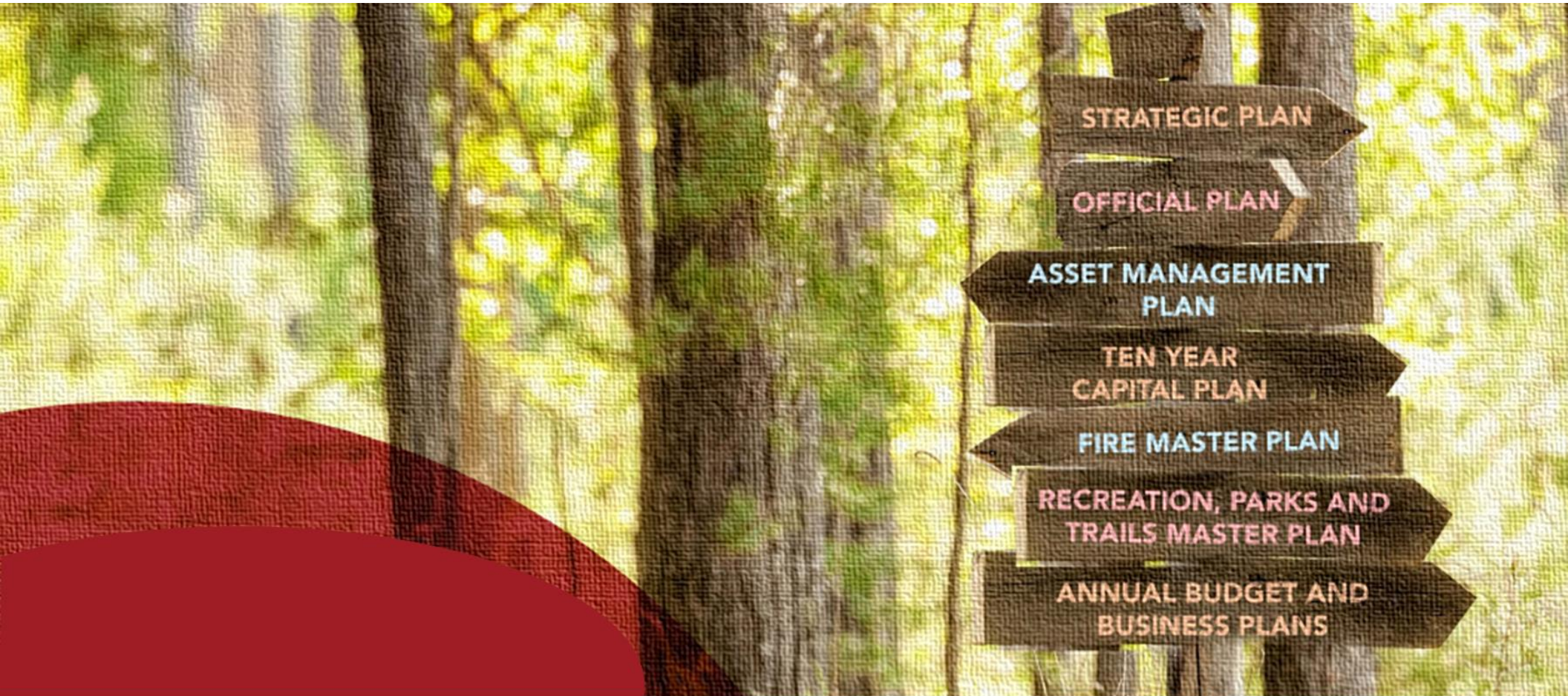
- 1.1 Embrace Public Private Partnerships for Investments in Recreation
- 1.2 Expand Township Role in Recreational Programming
- 1.3 Expand Outdoor Passive Recreation Opportunities Throughout the Township
- 1.4 Improve Outdoor Active Recreation Offerings Throughout the Township
- 1.5 Support Water Access for Active and Passive Water Recreation

2. Rethinking Facilities

- 2.1 Develop a Progressive Plan for Arena Replacement
- 2.2 Explore Feasibility of Moving to a Single Arena
- 2.3 Explore Feasibility of Adding a Modern Dry Use Space to the Inventory
- 2.4 Explore Feasibility of Adopting a Hub and Spoke Model for Community Centre Operation
- 2.5 Enhance Accessibility of Facilities

3. Create an Effective Recreation Organization/ Administration

- 3.1 Proactively Plan Future Parks Trails and Open Space
- 3.2 Align Community Needs With Asset Management Policies
- 3.3 Improve Communications With and Outreach to Residents
- 3.4 Expand Staff Resources to Support Recreation Throughout the Township
- 3.5 Improve Financial Sustainability of Recreational Activities



6.

Recommendations

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships Recommendations	
Embrace Public and Private Partnerships	
1	Build capacity for serving the needs of the higher seasonal population, including the potential for tourism, sport tourism, and related hosting capacity through leveraging municipal partnerships. This includes the District of Muskoka, as a recipient of significant annual property tax revenues from the Township, but also other lower tier municipalities adjacent to the Township. The presence of Township-owned facilities on its boundaries should inform the potential for inter-municipal service agreements. (The DMM and Area Municipalities currently have a number of DMM-Area (and lower tier Area to Area) Municipal Shared Services including several germane to recreation and leisure services.
2	Pursue the full range of partnership possibilities in the implementation of this plan. This should include appropriate collaboration including the potential for public-public, public-not-for-profit, and public-private partnerships. The Township should develop supporting municipal policy to guide partnerships which include fundraising, naming rights, sponsorship opportunities.
3	Continue to maintain strong relationship with Ontario Parks in planning for the effective access to, and management of, the Provincial Park and the Conservation Reserve within the township. Make it a priority of this plan to ensure demonstrable results in developing trail links, improved off-road parking, signage and comfort amenities for visitors to encourage visitation to the PPs.
4	As private, resort style residential development is further developed (and redeveloped) within the Township, actively consider the opportunities for shared recreational assets (membership-based or otherwise) that can reduce the need for duplication of recreation assets. An example of such development is the development at the Cleveland House property in Minett. Examples of assets can include indoor and outdoor aquatics, as well as outdoor courts, and a range of other outdoor activities.

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

5	Develop a Municipal Service Policy to address unplanned, new, and emerging, outdoor facility requests as they are brought forward. This should include a set of criteria for evaluating community-based project proposals (i.e., consideration as to whether the level of facility development is scaled appropriately to the level of community benefit and demonstrated sustainable operating model).
6	Continue to invest in reciprocal use opportunities with the two elementary schools in the Township, including the potential associated with school board-municipal partnership in the planning for a new multi-use community recreation complex.
7	Prioritize the sustained involvement of the local and regional service clubs in the Township and in each of the individual communities that comprise Muskoka Lakes. Emphasis should be placed on supporting the development of volunteers and the programs of outreach to meet the needs of year-round residents for a greater array of recreation and cultural pursuits, access to trails, and access to the water. Continue to support the efforts of the local clubs in event development, utilizing the built and other assets of the Township (such as the Hanna Park Skating Trail).
8	Develop a Township Volunteering Training and Opportunities Program; research best practices in this regard across Ontario; commit budget, staff time and develop metrics to measure success of a volunteer capacity building project. Canvass local user groups for their specific needs, including the volunteer Boards of the Community Centres; Develop online, public-facing information to attract, retain and celebrate local volunteers in recreation and community development.
Municipal Programming	
9	Recreation programming should continue to be implemented by the volunteers and other providers operating in the Township facilities under agreement with the Township. A priority for the Township should be to advocate for programs, better use of the existing facilities and over time undertake direct programming.
10	Program development should continue to represent a partnership between local providers and the Township as building owner. Over the course of the plan period, the Township should facilitate programming opportunities that reflect the community's needs, based in part on outreach to residents, and the effective use of the annual guide.

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

11	Continue to work with partner groups to identify and facilitate structured and non-structured recreation programming in public spaces that align with community and neighbourhood needs.
12	Support this approach with a review of the municipal user fee model and cost recovery targets for the Community Halls and Arenas. Cost recovery targets should be approached as guidelines and indicators of the desired outcome in financial terms from the provision of recreation services. However, it is critical that the use of cost recovery targets is only put in place following the development of a municipal recreation subsidy and user fee policy [we have undertaken a few and can share] that considers the service outputs (benefits) associated with public funding. Some facilities are the preserve of the public sector (e.g., parks) and some services can be provided by the private or not-for-profit sector. The role of the Township in service provision by type is addressed in this policy review. As a result, the Township should adopt an “Enterprise Model” of recreation services management which balances subsidization, revenue generation (fees), efficiency of delivery in public recreation services, and public (community) benefits.
13	Align service standards to the nature of the Township as having a significant seasonal population, an increasing number of semi-permanent (multi-season) seasonal residents, and a permanent population that is expected to change significantly over the plan period. Accordingly, review the findings of the 2021 Census of Canada at a regional, township, and community level, and commission regular profile updates of the township population. In this way, adopt a dynamic approach to measuring recreation and cultural service needs in the Township.
14	Recognize that recreation facilities and services in Muskoka Lakes operate on a broader regional scale with facilities and sport organizations located in surrounding towns. In addition, seasonal residents represent only a partial demand for recreation facilities in the Township. Given this, it is not appropriate to adopt traditional service standards (based on population or activity participation ratios relative to the supply of facilities in a given municipality). In Muskoka Lakes service standards should reflect a balanced approach between provision and demonstrated utilization, as well as the geographic distribution of facilities.
15	Undertake an annual review of population change within the Township, commencing with the results of the 2021 Census and subsequent review of housing starts and other published estimates of residential growth in the Township over the Plan period.

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

Outdoor Active Recreation Facilities	
	Preamble: The Municipality has a limited number of active sports fields which reflects, likely with accuracy, the preference of users to participate in organized field sports outside of the Township. However, the opportunity exists to consider a modest addition to the inventory of fields as part of a new multi-use recreation complex of the future.
16	In the short term, undertake community engagement to consider the future use of the Torrance softball Diamond. This can include improvements to the existing diamond based on the observations of the field review, or a community-decision to decommission the field in favour of alternative use. The recommendations do not apply to the privately owned sports park.
17	In the long term, consider the potential for the development of a field complex (primarily serving local needs) comprising one senior soccer field and one senior softball diamond. This site should be of an appropriate size to accommodate the long term level of service forecast for ball diamonds with the potential for the development of additional or complementary recreational amenities in the future. The location should be referenced against any decision to consider a new multi-use recreation complex.
18	Maintain existing tennis / pickleball courts in good condition for community use, undertaking general maintenance and improvements as required.
19	Monitor utilization and demand for existing tennis / pickleball courts as growth in the demand for pickleball in particular increases. This can be achieved via an annual User Group Meeting, to determine each group's needs and other requirements.
20	Optimizing existing tennis/pickleball courts in the Township should be considered prior to developing new courts and can be achieved by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changing the culture of use of existing courts in a way that utilizes all available hours in a week. ▪ The addition of lighting to currently unlit courts to increase the hours that courts are available in the evenings for play.

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

21	<p>Monitor the demand and usage of the tennis / pickleball courts to appropriately determine future need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This may include the provision of dedicated tennis and pickleball court facilities. ▪ Facilities distribution to be planned based on the community’s needs. ▪ Facilities should be developed through partnership with defined user groups.
22	<p>Maintain existing basketball courts in good condition for community use, undertaking general maintenance and strategic improvements as required.</p>
23	<p>Optimizing existing basketball courts in the Township should be considered prior to developing new courts and can be achieved through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changing the culture of use of existing courts in a way that utilizes all available hours in a week. ▪ The addition of lighting to currently unlit courts to increase the hours that courts are available in the evenings for play.
24	<p>Monitor the demand and usage of the basketball courts to appropriately determine future need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilities distribution to be planned based on the community’s needs. ▪ Facilities should be developed through partnership with defined user groups.
25	<p>Adopt a standard of provision of one playground location per 825 residents. The inclusion of playgrounds within larger park parcels and collocated with other recreational amenities is preferred over locating them on smaller land parcels to reduce operational requirements in the future.</p>
26	<p>Develop a replacement program for existing playgrounds as part of the Township’s ongoing asset management planning. Replacement priorities to be confirmed based on asset management data relating to remaining life of park assets.</p>
27	<p>Prepare standards for playground design (for both new construction and replacement) including a list of key requirements - evaluation of play value, accessibility, thermal comfort, etc.</p>

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

28	As new Community Parks are developed or existing Community Parks are redeveloped, the Township should consider the inclusion of a splash or spray pads in the park design. [This can be a numeric service standard discussion]
29	Maintain existing skate / scooter park (Muskoka Lakes Sports Park) in good condition for community use, undertaking general maintenance and strategic improvements as required.
30	As new Community Parks are developed or existing Community Parks are redeveloped, the Township should consider the inclusion of a skate / scooter facility in the park design.
31	As new Neighbourhood Parks are developed or existing Neighbourhood Parks are redeveloped, the Township should consider the inclusion of a skate dots / features in the park design.
32	As new Community Parks are developed or existing Community Parks are redeveloped, the Township should consider the inclusion of a pump track / recreational bike facility in the park design.
33	Update the current Volunteer Outdoor Community Ice Rink Policy (2013) to ensure it adequately meets the desired division of responsibilities related to maintenance and operation of natural ice rinks in the Township. [Is this an example of potential focus for winter programming given COVID-19]
34	Designate a formal dog park in the municipality and consider the addition of others based on principles of geographic service areas.
35	Consider new and emerging types of active and passive outdoor recreation facilities with priority to community-based proposals.

Service Direction: Facilities, Programming, Partnerships | Recommendations

Boat Launches, Docks and Role of Private Marinas (70-74 need to be discussed)	
36	Unlike some other recreation facilities, marinas and launches represent services that are provided by both the private and public sectors. Undertake an assessment of the role of public launches (motorized and non-motorized craft) as well as private marinas to determine/confirm/plan the role of the Township in enabling boat launch services.
37	Undertake a strategic review of water and land-side operations at town-owned boat launches. This review should assess the potential for improvements to high demand locations regarding off-street parking for day and overnight use, as well as a determination of the potential for additional amenities and trail connections. This review should focus on those municipal launches that are identified as high demand.
38	Commence a condition assessment of existing boat launches and docks as part of the ongoing Asset Management planning.
39	Support for the development of an active transportation plan to serve the Township, with an emphasis on the connections between recreation assets offered by the Town, as well as natural areas (beaches, trails, and the provincial parks system).

Service Direction: Re-thinking Facilities | Recommendations

	Arenas and Modern Dry-Floor Use Space
	<i>Adopt a Progressive Plan for Arena Replacement</i>
	<p>Preamble: The current community and council discussions regarding the future of the Bala Arena as an indoor ice venue should not prevent the master plan from providing clear guidance regarding the process to objectively assess a township ice strategy. Failure to address the options open to the Township would be a missed opportunity. At best, it would delay the consideration of a major decision point for the Township until much later in the Master Plan period, undoubtedly leading to forced investment in the physical plan of the existing arenas; at worst it would result in decisions regarding ice that are divorced from the Master Plan rendering the plan irrelevant. Removing the arena question from the master plan is a non-option because of the significance of the issue.</p>
40	As an immediate priority, undertake a feasibility assessment of a new multi-use community recreation complex to potentially replace both the arenas in Bala and Port Carling. Address the question of site location and acquisition strategy as part of a comprehensive assessment that includes consultation, market demand/community needs, concept design, capital cost, site selection, business case and funding strategy.
41	Contingent on feasibility assessment, undertake the planning for a new multi-use community recreation facility at an appropriate location within the Township that meets the following criteria: a) sited with reference to the communities of Bala and Port Carling; b) a site which is accessible by regional highway; c) a site large enough to enable future expansion in-situ; d) potentially capable of accommodating outdoor parkland and sports field amenities. Subject to necessary feasibility assessment to confirm the proposed uses, the facility should include a single ice pad and a double gymnasium as core uses, with other potential uses considered through feasibility assessment [Example – Minden].
42	In the short term, minimize capital expenditures on the buildings where feasible, to that which is necessary to maintain building occupancy capacity, health and safety and structural integrity.

Service Direction: Re-thinking Facilities | Recommendations

43	Immediately undertake an adaptive re-use assessment for both the Bala and Port Carling arena complexes separately. In the case of Bala, this should include reference to the potential rejuvenation of the entire campus of public uses including the arena, community centre and library, Legion Hall and grounds, and township owned parking lot. This study should address technical engineering, recreation needs, capital costs and business case for a range of options including renovation or site redevelopment for new recreation uses.
44	Should the township decide to develop a new multi-use recreation facility, upon completion and commissioning of the new facility, decommission the Port Carling Arena and Bala Arena for ice use.
45	Based on the results of the adaptive re-use assessment for the two existing arenas, determine a potential future course of action for each location should the Township subsequently decide to develop a new recreation complex. [Note: the level of effort involved in achieving a future plan for legacy venues such as the village arenas, can be considerable. Sequencing is imperative. The process toward change should commence with a viability assessment for replacement as a value proposition. Ideally, the decision to decommission or repurpose the existing facility(ies) should only occur once the replacement is approved and funded. This translates into a requirement for the Township to be proactive in its consideration of the potential of a new facility and assess the funding opportunities as soon as possible. Failing to do so will result in further delay regarding decisions over required capital improvements to the existing facilities and create the possibility of unnecessary incremental capital expenditure.]
<i>Adopt a Progressive Pan for Arena Replacement</i>	
46	As part of a prospective new multi-use recreation complex, consider the development of a double gymnasium to provide the Township with a highly flexible, programmable, and year-round facility to serve all residents, including target groups of youth and seniors. Such a facility is not readily achievable at the existing community centres and would be best located as part of a modern recreation facility which includes not only ice, but gymnasium, other multipurpose space, winter-ready facilities such as an indoor walking track, and potentially a range of outdoor space to meet emerging opportunities for unstructured recreation (splash and spray pads, skate park/spots, pump track. Note: ALTERNATIVES: A) alternative option for outdoor sports park in another location or B) alternative option for decentralized model of incremental improvement in supply of outdoor amenities, centred on core community centres.

Service Direction: Re-thinking Facilities | Recommendations

	Community Centres
	<i>The development of a hub and spoke model for municipal planning</i>
	<p>Preamble: Strong support exists for the retention of the existing community halls; as a sunk capital cost, with rich history and strong community service mandate of each, community centres represent a strength in planning for future recreation, cultural and community support services. Their value in providing for community wellbeing needs to be matched by a commitment to their sustainability through careful asset management, effective operational management and maximized use. In several cases, the community centres are strong examples of rural multi-use indoor and outdoor recreation centres. The development of a hub and spoke model for municipal planning should be considered.</p>
47	Retain all current Community Centres (excluding Glen Orchard which is not designated as a Community Centre) as municipally owned and operated; with immediate review of governance and operations of the Halls (details in separate recommendation)
48	Establish a long-term plan for the entire portfolio that ensures the fiscal, operational and community value of each centre. To this end:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with the Community Centre Boards/operating groups to expand community use of the stand-alone community centres for Township-run programming, and as viable and affordable locations for events and programming rentals, to improve utilization. Monitor utilization and demand of the community centres to maximize use and revenue generation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designate the following community centres as Hubs - priority locations for any additional building footprint, major outdoor recreation expansion or major renovation: Port Carling; Milford Bay; Walkers Point and Bala
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus municipal programming efforts in these locations to maximize value to all TML residents (recognizing that municipal programming in the medium term relates to a “Community Development Model” of municipal facilitation of programming delivered by third parties).

Service Direction: Re-thinking Facilities | Recommendations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In year 5 of the plan undertake a comprehensive "health check" assessment of each community centre. For each, the assessment should address the current and expected future needs of the volunteer board; annual utilization and range of programs, financial performance, and short to medium term capital expenditure needs (building and property lifecycle costs).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore opportunities and create a path forward for a community centre in the north end including consolidation and coordination with the school.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Given the intent (of this plan) to ensure a long-term replacement strategy for the arenas as well as potentially the addition of other facility components, the locational strategy for a new multi-use centre should consider the location of existing community centres and the potential or otherwise for consolidation of the function of one community centre at the new complex [not likely to be achievable in the short term].
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-Reference to Asset Management: conduct appropriate planning for capital improvements (focused on AODA where appropriate) at each venue. It is recommended to focus on the most utilized venues within the early years of the plan.
	<p>Preamble: By-Law 2019-062 sets out a comprehensive and well written governance structure for the community centres including the responsibilities of both the Township and the volunteer board for each centre. This includes municipal responsibility for operations of the buildings and grounds, rate setting, scheduling, fee collection, maintenance and administration of AGMs and meetings. The purpose of the following recommendations is to bring further clarity to the governance structure to assist in effective management of each centre and to ensure their ongoing success.</p>
49	<p>Maintain the existing approach to governance and operational control including confirmation of the role of the Hall Boards as Advisory Committees rather than as Operational Committees. Adjust the governance bylaw to clarify that (a) the municipality has a primary responsibility for identifying community programming needs and implementing solutions and b) clarify the role of the board treasurer given that it is the municipality that is responsible for financial budgeting, accounting and reporting.</p>

Service Direction: Re-thinking Facilities | Recommendations

50	As an alternative, consider a new model of governance specifically for those centres designated as Hubs, with municipal management oversight and responsibility for program development and implementation (currently, the role of the boards is in part to set "needs" for programming). [There are dangers in adopting a different model for some centres, even if differing only by degree, but in practical terms, the forward success of the existing community centre model rests squarely on the municipality investing the resources to manage these to greatest success. Hence the reality that a Hub model for greater municipal involvement is warranted].
51	As a related matter, the potential advent of a new multi-use recreation centre will necessitate a municipal recreation staffing model that lends itself to the emergence of a departmental model, initially under Public Works but eventually under separate administration, potentially combining with Communications and Economic Development/Tourism/Culture.
Other Municipal Facilities	
<i>Coordinate with other municipal service initiatives that will continue to evolve through a master planning process (Fire Master Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Space Optimization study), Port Carling and Bala Campus, Administrative and Recreation Functions, Coordination with Fire Hall and Public Works Operations Centres)</i>	
52	The planning for a new multi-use community recreation complex should include consideration at the feasibility assessment stage of co-location advantages with other municipal functions.
53	Investigate the potential for hosting other required functions that could form the basis of a civic campus including any needs related to public services such as medical/clinical, childcare, District or Provincial-related services.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

Effective Organization	
54	Continue to monitor the impact of internal and external pressures on Public Works Department (DPW) staffing requirements to maintain, grow and maximise the use of recreation and parks facilities and deliver high quality services.
55	Consider the establishment of a full-time Parks and Recreation Manager (PRM) within the Township's internal organizational structure to oversee recreation facilities, municipal parks and trails - including the management of Community Halls, Parks Planning and Development, and Parks Operations and Maintenance. This management role would report to the Director of Public Works (DPW), and would, over time, be supported by additional staff resources dedicated to community development and program support. This new position should focus on the provision of services, development of programs, and co-ordination.
56	Encourage collaboration and enhanced integration between DPW (PRM) and other Township departments to support 1) community-level recreation opportunities and 2) develop sport tourism opportunities.
57	Develop clear internal processes to ensure that DPW (PRM) staff have appropriate and timely input to decisions related to 1) parkland acquisition/CIL being made by the Planning Division and 2) development standards for parks and urban realm. PRM should oversee development of trail connections and open space requirements as part of subdivision agreements, site plan or other development agreements.
Communications and Outreach	
58	Maintain the Community Guide as a primary means of online and hard copy communication of programs, services, venues and events (ongoing- resume); consider digitizing online versions direct to program registration and venue rental booking system (medium term).

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

59	Deepen the effectiveness of online program registration through an enhanced booking software as a means to enable more varied programming supplied by instructors in a range of activities at the Community Halls. Similarly, develop online rental registration which provides for real-time confirmations of availability, price and permitting. These changes are designed to improve customer relations management (CRM), reduce staff time dedicated to bookings management, and enhance revenue incrementally.
60	As a primary role for an FTE Parks and Recreation Manager, invest in the promotion and development of an effective four-season approach to recreation, arts and culture programming utilizing the breadth of TOWNSHIP-OWNED assets available for indoor and outdoor seasonal programming. This can and should include the Township owned and operated trail system, parks, lakes and river launches.
Aligning Community Needs with Effective Asset Management Policies	
61	Update existing asset management plans, including estimates of future lifecycle capital expenditure based on the findings of the Building Condition Observations Report Prepared by WGD Architects. As needed, commission further assessment of items listed as in need of replacement or nearing the end of service life.
62	Prepare a Multi-Year Accessibility Improvement Plan for municipal recreation buildings including the community centres and both arenas. The strategy should itemize priorities for improvements across the portfolio of buildings and develop a short, medium and long term (10 year) forecast of required expenditure.
63	For existing outdoor spaces (parks, open space, sport fields) that are not subject to significant upgrade as outlined elsewhere in the is plan, develop an annual state of good repair (SOGR) budget to address deferred maintenance and lifecycle replacement for existing amenities.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

Cost Recovery	
64	As part of a comprehensive approach to developing metrics to assess the operational performance of the Arenas and Community Halls, the Township should consider establishing a series of cost recovery targets for specific facilities. This should represent a soft policy of better alignment between how a facility is used and the associated net costs. It is important to note that financial performance of the arenas is not to be assessed on the same basis as the community centres. We also do not recommend including parks or trails in operating cost recovery given the nature of those assets as public open space. The adoption of cost recovery ranges for the arenas represents a commitment to a level of service in financial terms. This, alongside the forecast capital costs associated with maintaining the original functionality of the building, can help identify the "whole of life" costs associated with the option of retaining versus replacing the arena(s).
Proactive Planning for Parkland, Open Space and Trails	
65	Adopt a parkland service level of a minimum of 2.0 hectares of parkland per 1,000 new residents to ensure an appropriate level of provision of parkland and open space over the Plan period and beyond.
66	Adopt the Parkland Classification System in the PRMP to delineate a wider range of park and open space types, as a basis for planning and acquiring, designing, developing, maintaining and programming parkland.
67	Continue to update the Township's parks GIS inventory tools, working within the DMM shared services agreement governing GIS services, through the documentation of municipal parks and open space properties such as provided in the supporting materials to this Master Plan.
68	The Township Council Policy pertaining to use of parks is dated (2007) and focuses on commercial activities in parks. The Township does not have a comprehensive parks by-law. Accordingly, the Township should develop a comprehensive parks policy and implementing by-law which addresses park development standards, replacement of facilities, standards of conduct in public parks, commercial services in parks, and the hierarchy of parks established by the Town.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

69	Evaluate opportunities, as it relates to alternative acquisition strategies, to advance the principles and targets of the PRMP through the purchase of surplus non-municipal lands with a focus on gaps in parkland found within geographic areas of the Township.
70	Consider the acquisition of undevelopable natural open space areas, through the development process and other means of securement to provide opportunities for enhanced conservation, compatible public access and linkages to parks and open spaces.
71	Create a Disposition Policy for municipally owned properties based on best practice and to consider other Township uses of surplus / underused parkland properties. This is a fundamental step that requires a full appreciation of the municipal land ownership issues in the Township.
72	As additional residential development occurs in the Township and at a variety of densities, the Township should develop a parks dedication and cash in lieu of parkland dedication by-law (and associated policy) to apply common principles and practices as it relates to whether to require dedication of land versus cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication. Given the intent to develop parkland more strategically, the use of CIL may be beneficial for the development of parkland acquisition capital reserves.
73	Consider future use of agreements providing for Development Charge credits in exchange for developer-built parks as a strategy to advance the timing of development of parks in new development areas. Developer-built parks must adhere to the Township's guidelines and standards for park design and development, as per the recommendations of this Master Plan. This may be of particular significance in the development of mixed tenure, master planned resort communities, as well as traditional residential subdivisions.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

74	<p>Create a Parks Design Standards Manual for the purpose of providing baseline construction details and facility layout requirements to guide the development of parks and open spaces. The manual should include (but not be limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Park Accessibility and Inclusive Design Standards. ▪ Park Identification and Wayfinding Standards. ▪ Sports Fields Standards ▪ Sports Courts Standards ▪ Playground Standards ▪ Splash Pad / Water Play Standards ▪ Site Furnishing, Fencing and Structures Standards ▪ Planting Standards (including an approved species list) ▪ Drainage and Earthworks Standards
75	<p>In conjunction with appropriate asset management practices, continually monitor and document participation/usage levels of park assets to assess opportunities to re-purpose existing facilities in parks that are under-utilized.</p>
76	<p>Develop strategies that clearly define municipal processes and policies for / standards for Community Engagement / Stakeholder Engagement as it relates to park design, development, and renewal projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This includes obtaining public input during the planning and design process, fostering partnerships and joint ventures in park development/renewal, and promoting awareness of park projects and initiatives through effective public communications.
77	<p>Implement park identification, wayfinding and warning signage standards at key locations within existing Township parks and open spaces.</p>
78	<p>In coordination with the Parkland Classification System, undertake a review of maintenance and operations inputs / requirements to assess existing parks operations service levels and identify areas for improvement.</p>

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

79	<p>Develop a Parks Maintenance Strategy to review and assess current Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as it relates to parks maintenance and assess strategies for the reduction of inputs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the use of technology to track maintenance inputs / activities as a means of enhancing data inputs related to maintenance costs. ▪ Consider the outsourcing of certain maintenance practices / services / activities.
80	<p>Develop park specific Tree Management Plans to review and assess current tree canopy issues and identify strategies for management (maintenance, removals, replacement, enhancement).</p>
81	<p>Adopt the Trail Classification System in the PRMP to delineate a wider range of trail types, as a basis for planning and acquiring, designing, developing, maintaining and regulating the use of trails.</p>
82	<p>Continue to update the Township’s trails GIS inventory tools, working within the DMM shared services agreement governing GIS services, through the documentation of municipal trail properties.</p>
83	<p>As part of the Parkland Dedication and Cash-in-Lieu By-law and accompanying Parkland Dedication and Cash-in-Lieu Policy, include provision for trail lands as part of the dedications, as well as potential for cash-in-lieu funding for future trail additions and amenities.</p>
84	<p>Evaluate opportunities, as it relates to alternative acquisition strategies, to advance the principles and targets of the PRMP through the purchase of surplus non-municipal lands with a focus on gaps within the existing trail network found within geographic areas of the Township.</p>
85	<p>Consider the acquisition of undevelopable natural open space areas, through the development process and other means of securement to provide opportunities for enhanced conservation, compatible public access and linkages to municipal trails.</p>
86	<p>Work with landowners, the development community, and local authorities to explore opportunities to increase connectivity, create linkages and expand opportunities to enhance recreational trail networks, including linkages to municipal destinations, community hubs, parks and open spaces, schools / institutions, residential and employment areas.</p>

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

87	Update the Official Plan of the Township of Muskoka Lakes to reflect the aim and intent of this master plan with respect to facilities, open space and trails, with special regard for the development of parkland dedication policies and developer contributions to parks development.
88	Consider future use of agreements providing for Development Charge credits in exchange for developer-built trails as a strategy to advance the timing of development of trails in new development areas. Developer-built trails must adhere to the Township's guidelines and standards for trail design and development, as per the recommendations of this Master Plan.
89	<p>Create a Trails and Cycling Network Master Plan to assist with communication and decision making associated with options and priorities for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The maintenance of existing trails ▪ The development of new trails ▪ The identification of key connections, linkages and crossings ▪ Land acquisition
90	<p>Create a Trail Network Design Standards Manual for the purpose of providing baseline construction details and requirements to guide the development of trails. The manual should include (but not be limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trail Accessibility and Inclusive Design Standards. ▪ Trail Identification and Wayfinding Standards. ▪ Site Furnishing, Fencing and Structures Standards ▪ Drainage and Earthworks Standards
91	Ensure that implementation of the Townships' Active Transportation Network is reflected as a high priority through the appropriate allocation of capital funding and resources.
92	<p>Develop strategies that clearly define municipal processes and policies for / standards for Community Engagement / Stakeholder Engagement as it relates to trail design, development, and renewal projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This includes obtaining public input during the planning and design process, fostering partnerships and joint ventures in trail development/renewal, and promoting awareness of trail projects and initiatives through effective public communications.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

93	Continue efforts to improve the quality and quantity of signage (identification, wayfinding, warning and environmental education), mapping and promotional materials associated with existing Township recreational trails.
94	Consider opportunities for the construction of paved, barrier free trails / trail sections within the existing trail network.
95	Consider the expansion of winter uses for trails - snowmobile, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing - including associated support infrastructure, policies, marketing and promotion.
96	Review existing trail-road crossings to ensure that they are appropriately signed, safe, and integrated with vehicular routes.
97	Consider the development of an interactive web application (or partnership with an existing web application) that would allow residents and visitors to easily locate their position on Township trails to assist with wayfinding and the communication of important trail information.
98	Undertake a detailed conditions review of parking and vehicular access for existing trails / trail heads. The review should include an assessment of peak uses needs, parking layout (including opportunities to increase efficiency), opportunities for parking expansion, potential overflow / secondary parking locations.
99	In coordination with the Trail Classification System, undertake a review of maintenance and operations inputs / requirements to assess existing trails operations service levels and identify areas for improvement.
100	Adopt a Trail Management Plan outlining maintenance standards and guidelines for each of the trail types identified in the Classification System.
101	<p>Develop a Trails Maintenance Strategy to review and assess current Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as it relates to trails maintenance and assess strategies for the reduction of inputs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the use of technology to track maintenance inputs / activities as a means of enhancing data inputs related to maintenance costs. • Consider the outsourcing of certain maintenance practices / services / activities.

Service Direction: Organizational/Administrative | Recommendations

102	Develop trail specific Tree Management Plans to review and assess current tree canopy issues and identify strategies for management (maintenance, removals, replacement, enhancement).
103	Develop a comprehensive long-term plan to pro-actively address ongoing bank erosion issues through the review, assessment and implementation of repairs, remediation and enhancements to shoreline treatments and structures.
104	Assess and plan for the development of addition activities in the Port Carling Waterfront in the vicinity of the Muskoka Lakes Museum. Undertake a master planning exercise for the Port Carling Waterfront assets in public ownership.

Service Direction: Implementation | Recommendations

	Monitoring and Updating
105	Any updates to the Township’s Official Plan, as it relates to parks, open space, trails and/or community facilities, should have regard for the recommendations of the Parkland and Recreation Master Plan.
	Staffing
106	Bolster internal professional capacity within the Township in the areas of parkland operational supervisory services and parks planning. See specific recommendations earlier.
	Funding and Financing
107	Continually seek out and utilize all relevant funding sources from upper levels of government and other relevant sources to reduce the burden on the Township’s tax base.
108	The recommendations contained within this Master Plan should form the basis for updating the recreation component of the Development Charges (DC) Background Study as and when this is next undertaken. When subsequent updates to the DC study are undertaken, review of the average level of service (cost per sq. ft.) for recreation should be completed based on the achievement of new capital investment in recreation at the time of DC review. Similarly, any future update to the Parkland and Recreation Master Plan extending capital projects beyond 2031 should inform future Development Charges Background Reviews.
109	Evaluate and update the Township’s 10-Year Capital Plan to reflect priorities of this Master Plan. Decisions regarding the annual implementation of projects and the allocation of funds to these projects are subject to Council approval through the Township’s annual budget process.
110	When considering major new construction, the Township should adopt the practice of developing a 3 to 5-year operation plan for all new municipally owned recreation facilities outlining likely operating costs and revenues. Approval for capital expenditure on new recreational facilities should rest, in part, on achieving an operational plan that is approved by the Township.

Service Direction: Implementation | Recommendations

111	<p>For all new build facilities, a capital reserve should be established as a line item cost associated with the facility. In some instances (e.g., fields) a consolidated capital reserve contribution for multiple locations together may be more appropriate. The Township should determine the appropriate approach to derivation and accounting for capital reserve transfers. Annual capital reserve schedules and amounts should accurately reflect expected lifecycle considerations of the facilities to which they are applied. Capital reserve contributions should be built into the business plan and annual operational expense budgets for these facilities.</p>
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