Sarnia
ONTARIO

GERMAIN PARK MASTER PLAN

January 2023

Monteith • Brown
planning consultants

RON KOUDYS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS INC

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City of Sarnia

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Limitations

This report was prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. and Ron Koudys Landscape Architects Inc. (herein referred to as "the Consulting Team") for the account of the City of Sarnia. The material in this report reflects the Consulting Team's best judgment in light of the information available to it at the time of preparation. Any use which a third party makes of this report, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of such third parties. The Consulting Team accepts no responsibility for damages, if any, suffered by a third party as a result of decisions made or actions based on this report.

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Acknowledgements

Residents And Stakeholders

The Germain Park Master Plan has been inspired and strengthened by the participation of many citizens and stakeholders representing a wide range of interests across the City. The City of Sarnia would like to thank the individuals and organizations who participated and shared their vision and ideas for the future of Germain Park.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples, referred to collectively as the Anishinaabeg, inhabited the lands within Sarnia at the time of transfer to the Crown by treaty. Sarnia was part of the Huron Tract Purchase, which was transferred under Treaty #29 in 1827, and also includes lands associated with the Sombra Township Purchase transferred under Treaty #7 in 1796, and Long Woods Purchase transferred under Treaty #21 in 1819. We also acknowledge the earlier Indigenous people who travelled these lands in the time of the Wampum treaties.

We acknowledge that we are all treaty people, with our own set of rights and responsibilities. Treaties are a foundational part of our society, and the settlement of Sarnia within a treaty area was made possible through the treaty process. The existence of treaties is proof that the first settlers of what is now Canada acknowledged First Nations as sovereign people and negotiated Nation to Nation. By understanding the colonial history of Canada, we can renew our relationships with each other and move towards meaningful reconciliation.

Further, it is through the connection of the Anishinaabeg with the spirit of the land, water and air that we recognize their unique cultures, traditions, and values. Today, we are part of this same land that sustains all life, and it is the sacred responsibility of all people to ensure that the environment remains protected. Finally, we acknowledge that the inherent languages of the Anishinaabeg preclude any English or French meaning.

City Project Team

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

Germain Park is one of the largest parks in Sarnia – encompassing an area of 24.9 hectares (61.6 acres) – and serves as a central park that has been a key piece of the community since 1951. The park contains several recreation and community amenities, including sports fields and courts, play areas, community gardens, public art, monuments, performance spaces, and more. An existing multi-use path also runs throughout the park, connecting it to the Strangway Community Centre and surrounding neighbourhood.

This Master Plan for Germain Park establishes a framework for the future of the park, addressing current challenges while also identifying opportunities to consider new features and programming that are needed by the community. Guided by a robust community engagement plan and targeted research, the Master Plan includes a phased 20-year concept plan and order of magnitude implementation costs.

Additionally, this plan examines the Strangway Community Centre's operating model in light of the planned gymnasium addition. Throughout the work undertaken on the City's Indoor Multi-Use Recreation Facility Feasibility Study, the public has consistently expressed the importance of recreation activities, including their support for the addition of a gymnasium to the municipal inventory. The Master Plan will ensure that Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre will be redesigned and advanced in the most efficient way possible, while maximizing the utilization of facilities and exploring emerging programming opportunities.

This Master Plan accomplishes five key tasks, with the goal of ensuring that the park remains a safe, attractive and responsive destination for all Sarnia residents and visitors:

1. Directs the long-term planning, management and redevelopment of Germain Park;
2. Assesses the renewal and re-arrangement of existing park amenities;
3. Considers the introduction of new amenities to the park;
4. Develops concept plans and a prioritized phased plan for the park; and
5. Establishes an operating strategy for an expanded Strangway Community Centre.

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1.2 Study Drivers

Germain Park is a key component of the Sarnia community and is heavily programmed. However, due to its age, much of the Park's infrastructure has become dated and is in need of re-investment. The City's 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the need for a Master Plan for Germain Park. While the City has established long-term budget estimates, additional guidance and public input is needed to inform the Park's phased improvement.

Some of the specific challenges and opportunities examined in this report include:

a) Aging recreational amenities and increasing maintenance challenges;

b) Under- and over-used amenities;

c) Community requests for new amenities and activities;

d) Concerns over parking and site security;

e) Consideration of new and emerging needs arising from our evolving use of parks during the COVID-19 pandemic;

f) A desire for updated comfort amenities (shade, seating, washrooms, etc.) and barrier-free compliance;

g) Greater variety of activities for people of all ages to maximize the Park's potential as a community hub;

h) Improvements to pedestrian connectivity and wayfinding;

i) Improved connections with the facility block at the Park's western edge (including the Strangway Community Centre), surrounding properties and neighbourhoods;

j) Consideration for the re-use of spaces now vacant due to the removal of Jackson Pool and Germain Park Arena;

k) Opportunities made possible by the successful Federal/Provincial grant applications to add a gymnasium onto the Strangway Community Centre and to replace Jackson Pool with an outdoor water amenity; and more.

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1.3 Study Process

A four-phase project plan was devised to respond to the City's terms of reference, with public and stakeholder consultation at key points in the process (see Section 3 for more information on the community engagement program).



A Consulting Team consisting of Monteith Brown Planning Consultants and Ron Koudys Landscape Architects was retained by the City of Sarnia to lead this study, with guidance from a Project Team of City staff.

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2. Planning Context

There are a wide variety of factors that can influence the City's approach to renewing and enhancing Germain Park. This section examines a number of high-level considerations that will set the stage for the analysis to come in subsequent sections, including the benefits of parks, trends in park use and design, socio-demographic characteristics and growth, and policy directions from municipal documents.

2.1 Benefits of Parks

Parks are essential public infrastructure and are vital to improving and sustaining the health of individuals, the community, environment and economy. Well-planned parks provide extensive benefits to individuals and communities and can attract investments in tourism, business, industry and housing. They also provide places of respite, improved air quality, venues for physical activity, and conservation of natural and cultural heritage landscapes. Many studies and land development trends suggest that proximity to parks and open spaces can increase property values.

Depending upon size, location and functional characteristics, parks have multiple applications and can act as:

- Facilitators of "placemaking" and high-quality community design;
- Catalysts for community improvement and revitalization;
- Hubs for special events and social interaction;
- Venues for programmed or spontaneous forms of physical activity;
- Educators and stewards of the natural environment; and
- Spaces for gathering and relaxation.

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The following points – which have been excerpted from "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space" from The Trust for Public Land – summarize the many ways that parks contribute to personal and community wellness:

Health Benefits "Parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work." "Strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. Regular physical activity has been shown to increase health and reduce the risk of a wide range of diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes. Physical activity also relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety, improves mood, and enhances psychological well-being. Beyond the benefits of exercise, a growing body of research shows that contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health."	**Social Benefits** "Parks also produce important social and community development benefits. They make inner-city neighbourhoods more livable; they offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth, low-income children, and low-income families; and they provide places in low-income neighbourhoods where people can feel a sense of community. Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and, in particular, to reduced juvenile delinquency." "Parks contribute to neighbourhood character and identity acting as gateways and landmarks. They can also enhance neighbourhood and community aesthetics by providing visual relief and landscape variation within the urban framework."
Economic Benefits "Numerous studies have shown that parks and open space increase the value of neighbouring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit on commercial property value. The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality-of-life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well-educated individuals choosing a place to live."	**Environmental Benefits** "Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental benefits. Trees reduce air pollution and water pollution, they help keep cities cooler, and they are a more effective and less expensive way to manage stormwater runoff than building systems of concrete sewers and drainage ditches."

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2.2 Trends Influencing the Use and Design of Parks and Recreation Spaces

Effective planning requires an understanding of existing and emerging trends and best practices that may affect park renewal. Discussed below are several high-level trends and promising practices that may shape the future of Germain Park.

1. Parks and Recreation are Essential Services
2. Rising Use of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
3. Popularity of Unstructured, Self-Directed Activities and Free Play
4. Pandemic Impacts on Community Sport
5. Emerging Recreational Activities and Sports
6. Making Parks and Recreation Accessible for All
7. Comfort and Safety Make Parks Inclusive for Everyone
8. Increasing Focus on Environmental Design and Climate Change
9. Rationalizing and Addressing Aging Infrastructure
10. Park Activation and Year-Round Programming
11. Designing Parks to be Tournament and Sport-Friendly
12. New Technologies and Digital Infrastructure

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Parks and Recreation are Essential Services

The evidence is clear – communities are increasingly viewing parks and recreation as essential services and believe that these spaces and services will be a critical contributor to our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. There is strong public support for this sector and this should be reflected in the municipality's policy and funding decisions. The large majority (87%) of Canadians support increased spending within parks in particular[1].

The pandemic impacted personal levels of stress and anxiety and caused challenges associated with work/life balance for many. Recreation services play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens – particularly those living in urban environments – and play an equally important role in community economic revival. The large majority (82%) of Canadians said that parks and outdoor

[1] Park People. COVID-19 and Parks Survey. July 2020. https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys

spaces have become more important to their mental health during COVID-19 and 70% indicated that their appreciation for parks and green spaces had increased during the pandemic[2]. Access to public spaces and programs is a fundamental service for Canadians and we are living in a time where we need more public space, not less.

Rising Use of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Communities witnessed increased demand for unstructured outdoor recreation activities within parks and trails during the COVID-19 pandemic as people found or rediscovered new ways to remain active and connected. Park usage has continued to climb during the pandemic – 55% of city residents said they spent more time in parks in 2021 than in 2020, and 58% indicate that they would like to spend even more time in parks.[3] Although this created some operational challenges, it has largely been viewed positively as it has strengthened residents' connections with their community and nature, and introduced many people to new activities – often within their local neighbourhood.

As a result of this renewed interest, residents expect more from their parks in terms of amenities and quality. Many communities are reimagining existing spaces in creative ways, enhancing them to support creative programming and community interaction (e.g., outdoor workout areas, Wi-Fi in parks, increased seating options, creation of new activity zones, etc.). Public demand is especially strong for year-round washrooms in parks and natural areas.

Popularity of Unstructured, Self-Directed Activities and Free Play

Participation is gradually shifting away from structured programs and set schedules as people are demonstrating a desire for more drop-in, unstructured and self-directed participation options. This is compounded by changes in demand for prime-time access – more adults and seniors are seeking activities during the evening, a shift from traditional daytime (seniors programing) or late-evening provision (in the case of many adult sports).

A lack of free time is commonly identified as a barrier to participation. Activities such as organized sports, particularly at competitive levels, often require considerable time commitment for training, practices, travel and other league activities. With increasingly busy lifestyles, competing interests, and

[2] Ibid.
[3] Park People. The Canadian Parks Report: Nurturing Relationships & Reciprocity. 2022.

inability for people to commit to structured activities, unstructured activities can help to fill the void as many do not require advanced registration and can be self-scheduled.

Further, a majority (57%) of Canadian parents believe that children these days spend too much time in organized activities, and not enough time just playing. [4] Lifestyles are also changing, with a growing prevalence of insecurity and parental risk aversion, as well as the increasing role played by technology and sedentary activities in our lives. Play is vital to children's holistic development, but is often seen as an activity confined to playgrounds or schools. Communities are increasingly looking for ways to design public spaces to support play and learning opportunities for children, including the introduction of more natural play features, challenging or risky play activities, loose toys/tools for imaginative play, and nature-based programming.

Pandemic Impacts on Community Sport

Prior to the pandemic, about 75% of Canadian children age 5 to 17 years participated in organized sport[5] and participation increased from 2005 to 2016[6]. Rates of sport participation are largely the same for girls and boys, but participation decreases with age – 70% of teens aged 13–19 reported participating in sport, compared with 83% of youth aged 5–12.[7] Participation is consistently lowest in lower-income and other marginalized groups, indicating that more can be done to include all persons in affordable and accessible sport opportunities.

Amongst adults, just over one-quarter (27%) participate in sport, a figure that has varied little over the years. Men are nearly twice as likely to participate in sport as women, and participation generally declines with age (from 44% of people aged 18 to 24 years, to 16% of adults aged 65 years or older). Those with higher levels of income and educational attainment are also significantly more likely to

[4] Ipsos. One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year. 2018. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/back-to-school-2018
[5] Canadian Heritage. (2013). Sport Participation 2010. Ottawa, Canada: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada.
[6] Barnes, J. D. & Tremblay, M. S. Changes in indicators of child and youth physical activity in Canada, 2005–2016. Can. J. Public Health Rev. Can. Santé Publique 107, e586–e589 (2016).
[7] Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute. Kids CAN PLAY! Bulletin 2: Participation in organized physical activity and sport. 2018. https://cflri.ca/sites/default/files/node/1671/files/CPLY%202014-2016%20Bulletin%202%20-%20Organized_EN.pdf

participate in sport. However, a lower rate of sport participation was observed among immigrants (21%) compared to Canadians overall.[8]

More recently, sport participation has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to public health restrictions and facility closures. A report from 2022 indicates that one-half (49%) of parents say the number of organized sports their child participates in has declined and 45% say that their child is not longer playing sports.[9] Most children ages 6 to 12 playing a team sport quit by age 11, and since the pandemic, three in 10 children who previously played say they are no longer interested in playing again.[10]

Parents are noticing adverse effects of this on their children. 74% of Canadian parents indicated that their children feel isolated and lonely, 69% indicated that their children are showing signs of decreased physical fitness and 64% said their children are finding it difficult to reduce their stress and anxiety.[11] A return to activity is critical for children and youth to once again achieve the many positive benefits of participation.

Emerging Recreational Activities and Sports

The popularity of recreation and sport activities changes with time and can be affected by several factors, most notably socio-economic characteristics, lifestyle trends, and the exposure and accessibility of the activity. National registration figures indicate that, where once ice hockey and baseball were dominant, soccer has taken rise since the 1990s. More recently, a national study found that interest in children's activities was beginning to shift away from these sports towards other less formal extracurricular activities, such as music lessons, dance lessons, language classes, and drama classes.[12]

[8] CFLRI. 2019-2021 Physical Activity Monitor.
[9] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. March 2022.
[10] Dolesh, Richard. Top Trends in Parks and Recreation for 2022. Parks & Recreation. January 2022.
[11] Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. Jumpstart State of Sport Report. 2021. https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/Jumpstart_State_of_Sport_Report_March_2021.pdf?v=1616793836
[12] Ipsos. One in Three (32%) Families Going into Debt to Fund their Children's Extra-Curricular Activities, Up 5 Points from Last Year. 2018. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/back-to-school-2018

Additionally, the once popular sports of curling, racquetball, and aerobics – though still prevalent in some areas – have generally given way to new and emerging activities such as pickleball, disc golf, skateboarding and BMX biking, outdoor fitness and new forms of body weight training, cricket, year-round indoor athletic training, challenge courses and adventure play, plus other sports that are established but growing such as basketball and tennis.

The pandemic and rising interest in outdoor activities has led to increased requests in many communities for spaces that support individual or small group usage, such as splash pads, off-leash dog parks, multi-use trails, sport courts (tennis, basketball, pickleball), community gardens, outdoor classrooms, outdoor skating rinks, unstructured spaces, and digital infrastructure.

Making Parks and Recreation Accessible for All

The pandemic has intensified social inequities and negatively impacted vulnerable populations such as lower-income households, ethnic minorities, Indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities. The research is clear that marginalized populations have been disproportionately impacted and finding it harder to remain active. Intentional decisions and meaningful action are required to improve equity in resource provision and access to recreation services for all populations.

Older parks and facilities were designed to the standards of the day and many lack full barrier-free accessibility, which creates challenges for some users; one in five Canadians aged 15 years and over have one or more disabilities relating to physical, sensory, cognitive or mental health[13]. Play and exercise are essential for one's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development and access to the outdoors can also be valuable in providing therapeutic relief. All new and redeveloped parks must be designed with accessibility at the forefront. For example, many communities are beginning to incorporate spaces that directly benefit persons with disabilities, such as sensory gardens, quiet areas, raised garden beds, and autism-friendly play areas.

In addition, all communities have a role to play in recognizing the importance of Indigenous voices in parks, recreation, and sport. Some municipalities are showcasing Indigenous history through public art and plaques in community centres and parks, along with exploring sports programs and ceremonial

[13] Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability. 2017. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181128/dq181128a-eng.htm

events that deepen our understanding of these cultures. Reconciliation is an ongoing process that must occur in a respectful manner recognizing Indigenous cultural traditions and practices.

Comfort and Safety Make Parks Inclusive for Everyone

Ensuring that parks provide attractive and comfortable experiences is paramount to encouraging high levels of appropriate use. Multiple elements go into contributing to user safety, comfort and convenience, such as signage, comfort amenities, lighting, seating, shade, washrooms, and parking. Park projects should be designed with user safety in mind through the application of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and other contemporary design principles. High volume areas should be well lit, low visibility areas should be limited, and local parks should be configured so that surrounding residents and streets have “eyes on the park”, thus discouraging undesirable activities. The presence of consistent and effective signage is also an important element in promoting recognition and stewardship in the community.

Increasing Focus on Environmental Design and Climate Change

There is an increasing need to reduce our impact on the environment to be more sustainable and resilient to climate change. The way in which we design and operate our parks and recreation facilities and services can help us meet our environmental objectives. Increasingly, municipalities are designing facilities to meet “net zero” and “carbon neutral” targets through the use of technologies that enhance energy efficiency, reduce waste, and lower our greenhouse gas emissions. Although these enhancements often come with a higher initial capital cost, this must be balanced against improved sustainability, resiliency, and potentially longer-term operational savings.

Already thought of as “green infrastructure”, parks are being positioned to be more environmentally sustainable through reducing grass cutting and naturalization initiatives, planting of native species, tree canopy targets, and programs that educate about local natural heritage features (e.g., outdoor classrooms or interpretive signage). More communities are also experimenting by piloting new approaches in parks, such as bioswales, rain gardens, pollinator gardens, habitat restoration, and biodiversity initiatives. Green infrastructure strategies that include directions for parks are becoming more common and helping to ensure these practices become standard.

Fortunately, the many environmental benefits of parks and public spaces – such as reducing the urban heat island effect, mitigating flooding, and improving air quality – illustrate the critical importance of their role as public infrastructure and lend support for further investment. As noted by the City Parks Alliance, “urban parks are not luxuries – they make cities more livable, environmentally resilient, attract

business and jobs, increase economic competitiveness, and create new revenue streams – all while saving billions on traditional infrastructure costs."[14]

Rationalizing and Addressing Aging Infrastructure

The 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card found that approximately one-third of Canada's sports and recreation facilities (including arenas and pools) were considered to be in fair to very poor condition (ranking only behind bridges and roads) and in need of revitalization and expensive repairs.[15] Many of these facilities were built in the 1970s or earlier and, due to the era of construction, have various design and age-related deficiencies that are impacting their operational efficiency and ability to adequately serve their patrons.

Facility and park renewal and reinvestment projects have been a focus for local governments for some time, often requiring alternative funding sources such as senior government grants, naming rights, operating partnerships, land swaps, and more. Due to the current economic situation and resultant cost escalations, many communities will require increased financial commitments from all levels of government to facilitate the redesign, development and retrofitting of parks and recreation facilities. The infrastructure deficit provides an opportunity not only to modernize facilities by making them more multi-use, but also to consider options that accommodate emerging activities.

Park Activation and Year-Round Programming

Municipalities across Canada are experiencing increased demand for "activation" and programming in parks, such as social gatherings, community events, art displays, movie nights and more. During the pandemic, we have seen many indoor events moved outdoors. Viewing parks as "outdoor living rooms" helps to expand the scope of use and engages a broader range of residents and visitors, leading to experiential learning, participation and community mobilization. Non-programmed facilities oriented to social interaction and gathering can also draw people from their homes and into the park setting.

[14] City Parks Alliance. Infrastructure Principles: Parks are Infrastructure. 2020. https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/infrastructure-principles-1.pdf
[15] Monitoring the State of Canada's Core Public Infrastructure: The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card 2019. http://canadianinfrastructure.ca/downloads/canadian-infrastructure-report-card-2019.pdf

Designing Parks to be Tournament and Sport-Friendly

In evaluating the needs of sport in the design/redevelopment of recreation facilities, municipalities must factor in existing and future demand, as well as opportunities for sport tourism. Sport tourism offers a number of economic benefits, supporting amenities such as hotels, restaurants, and parking, among other things. “Tourna-cations” – families of athletes scheduling family vacations to coincide with athletic tournaments – is a recent trend and means that facilities must consider the needs of both participants and spectators (e.g., Wi-Fi, charging stations, higher-end concessions, family entertainment options, wayfinding kiosks, pet-friendly public spaces, etc.).

New Technologies and Digital Infrastructure

Digital technology is becoming pervasive in the public realm, enhancing client experiences beyond the walls of community facilities. In a recent study of the Government of Canada’s Smart Cities Challenge[16], many applications to the Round One award pool proposed using some kind of digital technology in public spaces, such as:

- Public Wi-Fi / hot spots
- Device charging stations / hubs
- Digital screens / kiosks
- Smart transportation infrastructure (e.g., smart traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, smart sidewalks, parking sensors)
- Smart street furniture (e.g., smart lamp posts, smart benches)
- Digital public art
- Digital wayfinding

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[16] Lenarcic Biss, Danielle and Pamela Robinson. Parks and Open Spaces: Challenges and Opportunities of Smart Technologies. February 2021.

2.3 Community Profile and Growth

Sarnia is located in the western portion of Lambton County on the shores of Lake Huron. The city offers a wide variety of leisure opportunities, and being the largest city in Lambton County, it draws users and visitors from adjacent municipalities including Plympton-Wyoming, Petrolia and St. Clair.

Over the next twenty-five years, Sarnia's population is projected to increase by 20.1% from 72,047 people in 2021 to 86,950 residents in 2046[17]. With potential population growth also in the Lambton County regional market, there may be pressure on the City's parks and recreation facilities to meet new demands and respond to emerging interests and activities.

The growing population – something that Sarnia has not seen in several decades – means a larger market for leisure activities, a greater user and tax base to support these activities, and new funding opportunities (e.g., development charges, etc.). Furthermore, the growing number of children and youth suggests a need to target activities aimed at this age groups, with opportunities to serve the large number of seniors that have increased in recent years.

In terms of diversity, the 2021 Census reported that 12% of Sarnia's residents are immigrants, which is less than half of the provincial measure of 30%. Canada's immigration policy suggests that greater ethnic diversity can be expected in the future. Traditionally, large urban centres have been a destination for new immigrants; however, this is changing as many immigrants are drawn to communities based on economic opportunity and affordability, attributes that Sarnia offers. This may lead to greater demand for a wider range of recreational activities, including those sports that are played on a global scale, such as soccer, cricket, basketball, etc.

While Sarnia has an aging population, it is also growing at other age groups. Between 2011 and 2021, Sarnia's median age increased from 44.5 years to 46.0 years, which is similar to Lambton County (46.4 years) but notably higher than the Province (41.6 years.). Age cohort forecasts for the city indicate that:

- the greatest increases will be seen in the age group that is aged **75 years and older** which is projected to increase by 66% between 2021 and 2046;

[17] City of Sarnia. Official Plan. July 2022.

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- all age groups will increase in total numbers, except for those aged **55-74 years**, which will decrease by 12% over the next 25 years, with fluctuations in intervening years as the baby boom generation ages out of this cohort;
- the **0 to 19 year** age cohort – the primary market for most recreation activities and predominant user of sports amenities within Germain Park – is projected to increase steadily throughout the next 25 years, growing by 20% (2,943 persons);
- the young adult population (aged **20 to 34 years**) will increase at a rate (6%) slower than the overall population, with most of these gains attributed to the latter half of the project period; and
- adults aged **35-54 years** are projected to increase by 36%, with the most notably increase being within the 2021 to 2031 period.

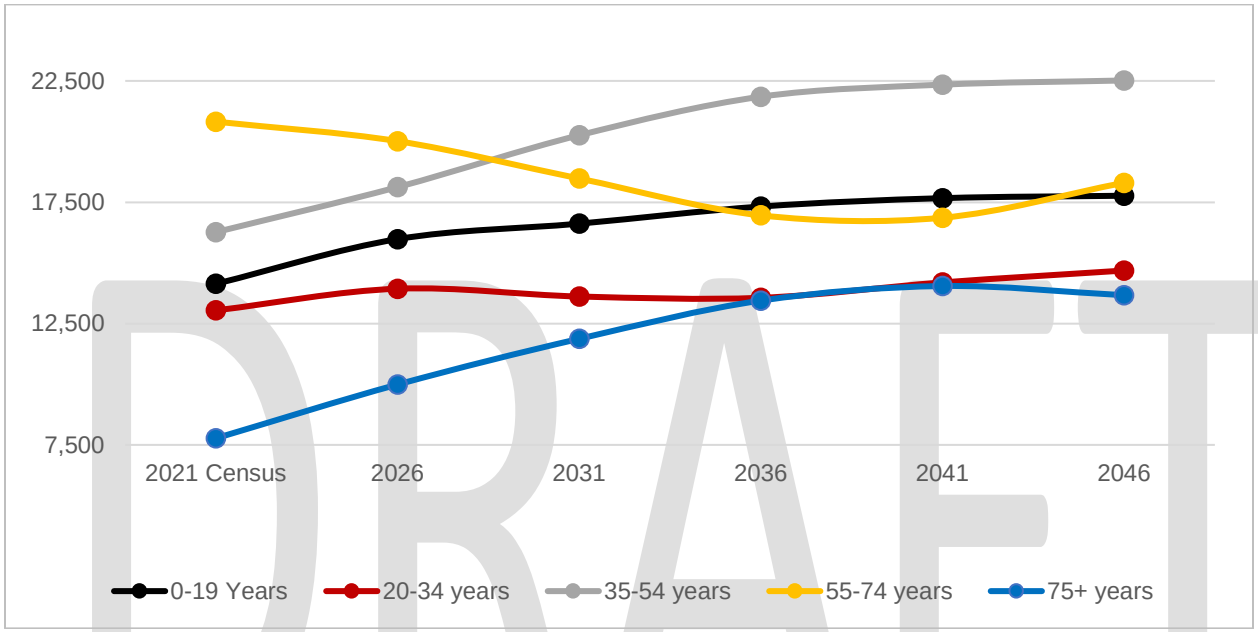
Table 1: Age Cohort Projections, City of Sarnia (2021-2046)

Age Cohort	2021 (Census)	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046	Change (2021-2046)	
0-19 Years	14,140	15,981	16,618	17,323	17,668	17,768	**2,943**	**20%**
20-34 years	13,045	13,936	13,615	13,562	14,196	14,686	**856**	**6%**
35-54 years	16,270	18,124	20,261	21,850	22,346	22,518	**5,972**	**36%**
55-74 years	20,820	20,018	18,477	16,960	16,862	18,303	**-2,558**	**-12%**
75+ years	7,775	9,989	11,872	13,446	14,046	13,669	**5,418**	**65%**
Total	72,050	**78,048**	**80,843**	**83,141**	**85,118**	**86,944**	**12,631**	**17%**

Sources: Statistics Canada 2021 Census; Growth Management Recommendations Report. urbanmetrics. May 2020. (metroeconomics, February 2021)

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Figure 1: Age Cohort Projections, City of Sarnia (2021-2046)



Sources: Statistics Canada 2021 Census; Growth Management Recommendations Report. urbanmetrics. May 2020. (metroeconomics, February 2021)

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2.4 Supporting Documents

Supporting documentation has been reviewed for use throughout the planning process to provide contextual information, past achievements, and ensure alignment with key directions. Relevant information contained within these documents has been considered and, where appropriate, has been incorporated into this study. Key documents are highlighted below.

City of Sarnia Official Plan (2022)

In July 2022, City Council adopted a new Official Plan for the City of Sarnia. This Official Plan provides a long-range framework to guide decision-making and manage change for all lands within the city. Among its many objectives, the Plan supports a robust parks and open space network as part of complete communities and promotes the provision of parks within a 5-minute walk from all residents. It is a goal of the Plan to maintain parks for the purpose of increasing the opportunities for recreation and general enjoyment of the community. There are policies supporting park designs that promote accessibility, connectivity, use by cyclists and pedestrians, adequate parking, and environmental sustainability.

A parkland classification system is included within the Official Plan, with Germain Park serving as a regional and/or community park. As per Section 5.8.3.4.d, permitted recreational facilities within parks include:

- Playgrounds with play equipment;
- Playing fields for soccer, football, baseball, softball, and track and field;
- Hard surfaced areas for basketball, volleyball, shuffleboard or tennis;
- Passive areas, landscaped open space or natural areas supplied with benches or picnic tables;
- Sleigh and toboggan slopes (topography permitting);
- Bicycle paths; and,
- Service buildings.

Climate Change Action Plan & Implementation Strategy (2021)

In 2019, Sarnia City Council acknowledged the threat of climate change by declaring a climate emergency. This action encourages the City to view all policies and opportunities through a climate lens, and to seek ways to mitigate risks associated with climate change, including reducing the City's own carbon footprint.

Climate change can impact outdoor recreation in many ways, from hotter summer days (creating a need for shade and access to water, as well as concerns over habitat loss) to more major rainfall and wind events (resulting in field closures and maintenance challenges) to more extreme winter weather conditions (creating challenges for winter park use).

Parks, open and green spaces, and natural and protected areas are an integral part of the City's green infrastructure that can assist in mitigating the negative impacts of climate change. For example, increasing tree planting and tree canopy is one way to mitigate the increase in areas susceptible to the Heat Island Effect. Planting plans for naturalized areas should consider pollinators, migratory birds, and other native wildlife, and include supportive species that are tolerant to seasonal variability. In addition, the implementation of sustainability considerations for new development such as Low Impact Development and passive cooling techniques will provide long-term benefits towards a more resilient community.

In 2021, the City adopted a Climate Change Action Plan & Implementation Strategy. This report is the product of a collaborative effort to identify and provide practical solutions to the risks and challenges that climate change poses to the City. The report identifies four key community pillars containing objectives and action Items that create a foundation for a more resilient Sarnia into the future. The pillars include:

- Natural Environment – Parks, Open Spaces, Natural & Protected Areas
- Flooding – Stormwater Management, Overland & Erosion
- Emergency Preparedness & Response
- GHG Emissions – Buildings, Energy, Transportation & Waste Diversion

Relevant objectives include:

- Enhance and maintain green infrastructure, including natural urban areas, parks, and open spaces to bolster resilience, support biodiversity, and to protect this critical community infrastructure from climate change impacts
- Protect, restore, expand and link where possible the natural heritage systems within the City, to support biodiversity and improve the resiliency to climate change impacts.
- Promote and provide opportunities to participate in Environmental Stewardship and Education initiatives across our community.
- Reduce emissions and consumption by improving and expanding opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Multi-Use Recreation Facility Feasibility Study (2022)

In 2022, the City completed an Indoor Multi-use Recreation Facility (MURF) Feasibility Study to inform the future development of a community hub capable of supporting a wide variety of recreation and leisure activities for all age groups. Two building options were identified for further consideration, each containing core components that included an indoor turf field, indoor track for community use, batting cages, and multi-use activity spaces.

A comprehensive site evaluation process was completed, leading to three primary sites being advanced for further study: Lottie Neely Park, Western Research Park lands, and Germain Park. Additional due diligence on each of these sites is anticipated to be undertaken in 2023. Should Germain Park be selected as the preferred site for the MURF, this may result in the loss of sports fields or other existing amenities – this alternative is considered further through this Germain Park Master Plan.

The study also assessed community demand for a municipal gymnasium and found support for the expansion of the Strangway Community Centre. Community interest was also expressed for indoor tennis courts and, although not proposed as part of the MURF, a preferred provision model that leverages existing outdoor tennis courts (i.e., winter air-supported dome) be explored further in partnership with community tennis clubs.

Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, 2018 – 2033 (2019)

A Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (not adopted by Council) was completed in 2019 to guide decision making on community leisure facilities, programs and services over a ten to fifteen year period. The Master Plan is guided by a vision of “A community that collectively offers to all its residents, a diverse array of quality parks, recreation and culture opportunities and experiences.”

The Master Plan supported the development of an overall site master plan and park management plan to identify and prioritize accessibility and other future improvements, asset management and maintenance/operations, opportunities for additional multi-use trail loops and connections and signage/wayfinding to link park features, special events and tourism integration, community-based programming and outdoor education and stewardship initiatives.

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The following table highlights additional recommendations that have relevance to this Study.

Table 2: Relevant Recommendations from the 2019 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

Recommendation	Action
Recommendation 4.7 – Multi-use & Sport Courts and Greens	• That the City of Sarnia continue to work with the Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club to sustain the quality and condition of existing greens and facilities at Germain Park and to maximize access to and participation in lawn bowling, bocce and related activities.
Recommendation 4.8 – Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities	• That the City of Sarnia … plan for the development of up to three new community splash pads over the next ten years … including consideration of … Germain Park… The splash/spray/waterplay locations should be selected based on proximity to market (primarily young children) within a short walking distance for smaller neighbourhood/community facilities and in drive-to destination parks for larger facilities, multi-use parks, with access to washroom/change facilities required water services and adequate drainage and sanitary services, and based on a sustainable operational model / partnership. • That the City of Sarnia maintain the existing dog park / off-leash area in Germain Park. If water services are readily available to the area, consideration should be given to a water bottle refill station and dog drinking fountain.
Recommendation 5.1 – Recreation Programs	• That the City of Sarnia more actively pursue opportunities and marketing initiatives to intensify the utilization of its arenas, community centres, Strangway Community Centre and other programs and operations in order to maximize utilization, revenue generation and support evolving new programs.
Recommendation 5.6 – Municipal Gymnasiums and Community Centres	• That the City of Sarnia undertake a feasibility study / business plan for the development of a possible gymnasium at the Strangway Community Centre or within the Germain Arena Repurposing Project to enhance both older adult and community-based programs and services, considering the development of a double gymnasium with ancillary services and support areas using the Business Plan template in Section 3 of the Master Plan.
Recommendation 5.7 – Aquatics Facilities	• That the City of Sarnia decommission the Jackson Outdoor Pool with the City undertaking the development of up to three community splash pads over the next ten years in the north and west areas of the City as outlined in Section 4 of the Master Plan.

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3. Community Engagement

The community engagement program for this study allowed for Sarnia residents and stakeholders to provide input and insights into the future of Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre. Throughout the study, we heard from nearly 900 households (through the community survey and pop-up consultations).

A variety of in-person and virtual community engagement tools were utilized to solicit input at key points in the planning process. Each engagement tool was designed to maximize community involvement and tailored to respond to a variety of audiences, including members of the public, stakeholder groups, City Staff and Council.

Key consultation tactics for this study have included:

- Community Survey (online and hard-copy) – 816 responses
- In-Park Pop-up Consultations (2 session) – 75 engaged participants
- Stakeholder Workshops and Interviews – 10 organizations and individuals participating
- Public Information Session on Draft Study (to be completed)
- Solicitation of Written Submissions
- Regular meetings with the City Project Team consisting of Municipal Staff

Below is a summary of what we heard from the public and stakeholders regarding the future of Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre. A record of community input received can be found in **Appendix A**.

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3.1 Pop-up Consultations – Make Your Mark on Germain Park!

Two open house sessions were held in Germain Park in the summer to gather input from park users:

- August 17, 2022 (weekday evening) – 40 engaged participants
- August 20, 2022 (weekend morning) – 35 engaged participants

Each pop-up event consisted of information boards detailing the study scope and process, as well as interactive voting stations to identify park priorities. Additionally, commenting stations were available to gather qualitative input regarding Germain Park's strengths and challenges, as well as future opportunities for the Strangway Community Centre. The sessions were promoted through the City's website, social media accounts, and traditional media. A record of public input can be found in **Appendix A**.



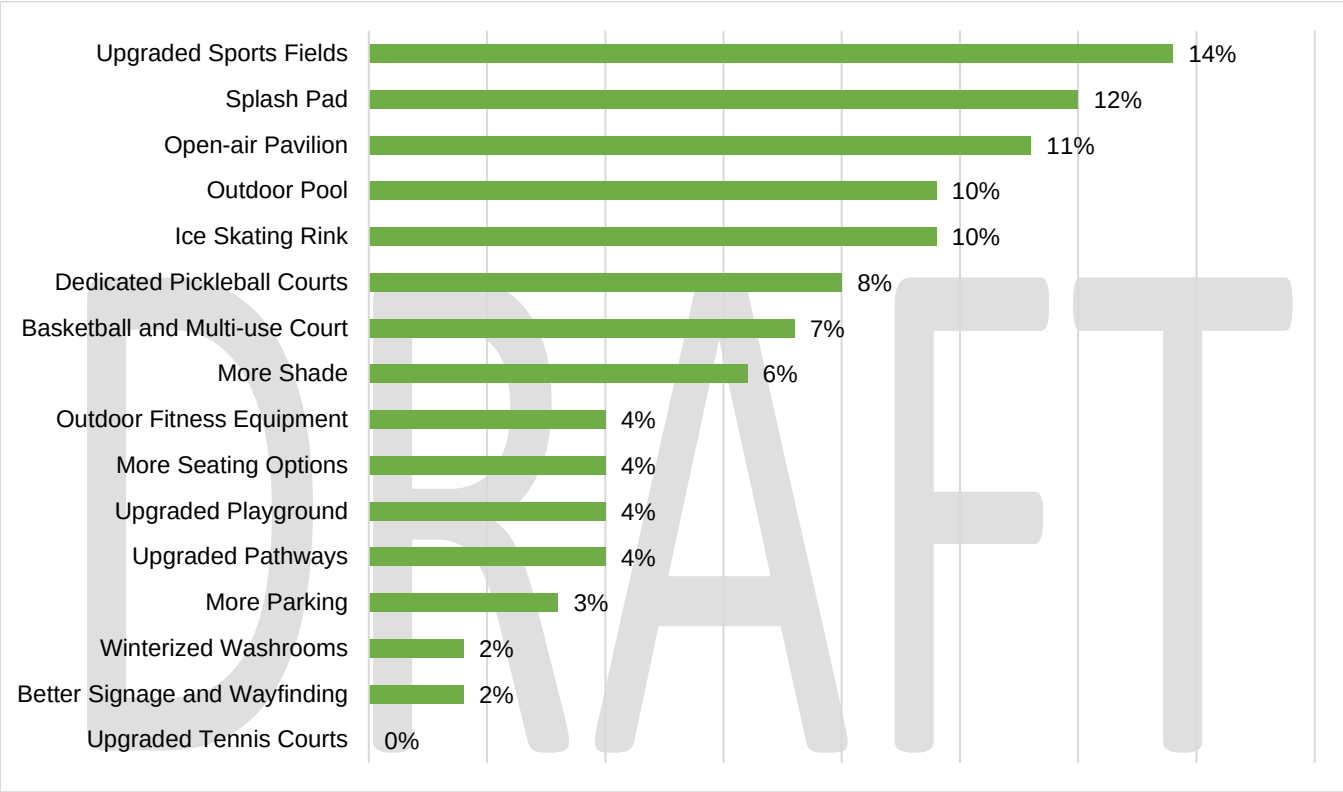
The following chart identifies the priorities that participants placed on selected park renewal options. Between the voting and open-ended comments, support was generally greatest for:

- Adding pavilion or shade structure to serve the sports fields
- Installing as splash pad
- Improving the existing sports fields (e.g., drainage on diamonds, adding a batting cage, etc.)
- Improving the existing community gardens (e.g., tool storage, restricted access, tables, etc.)



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Figure 2: Priorities for Park Improvements from In-Park Consultations



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3.2 Community Survey

There was a strong response from the community to the online survey for this project. Through both online and hard copy surveys, 816 completed responses were received. This represents 2,600 Sarnia residents – approximately 3.5% of the city's population.

To solicit resident input into this Master Plan, a community survey was available for four weeks on the City's website and in facilities such as the Strangway Community Centre. The survey included questions designed to gather information on park and facility usage, recommended improvements, support for investment, and level of agreement with various statements. The survey was promoted extensively by the Town (traditional and social media, email networks, signs in parks and facilities, etc.). A total of **816 unique responses** were received. Being a voluntary, self-directed survey, response rates varied by question.

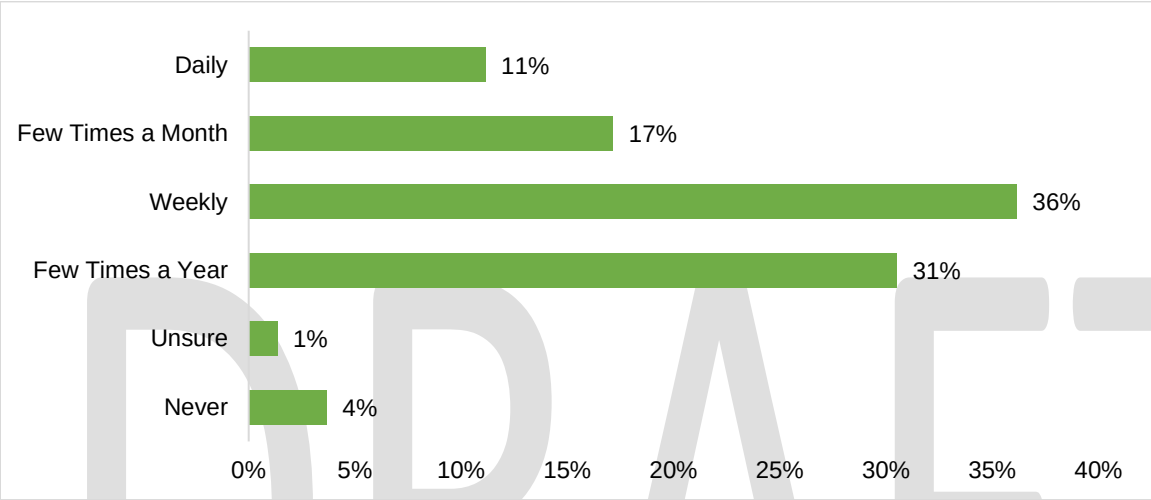
Each survey question is summarized below. Detailed survey results can be found in **Appendix A.**

<u>Usage of Germain Park</u>

Nearly all (95%) survey respondents have visited Germain Park, with nearly half (47%) visiting the park on a daily or weekly basis. These responses suggest that there is a varying level of engagement at Germain Park amongst respondents and their households. This may be a reflection of the activities offered at Germain Park and the proximity of many respondents to the park.

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Figure 3: How often do you or members of your household visit Germain Park? (n =816)



The majority (71%) of respondents typically use a vehicle to travel to Germain Park, while 22% most frequently walk to the park. This suggests that the park serves both local functions for those living in proximity to the park, as well as serving as a destination for city-wide users. Improvements to both existing parking lots and pathways were common themes in the consultation.

Additionally, two in three (67%) users are able to travel 10 minutes or less to access the park and the majority (72%) of respondents typically stay between 30 minutes and 2 hours when visiting Germain Park. Frequent users of Germain Park are more likely to have children and live nearby, with many walking to the park but staying for a shorter period of time.

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Figure 4 : How do you typically travel to Germain Park? (n =782)

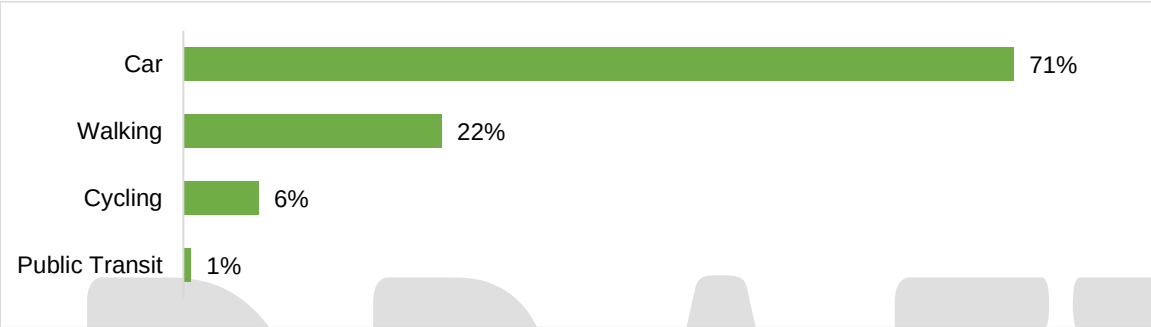


Figure 5: How long does it take you to travel to Germain Park? (n =783)

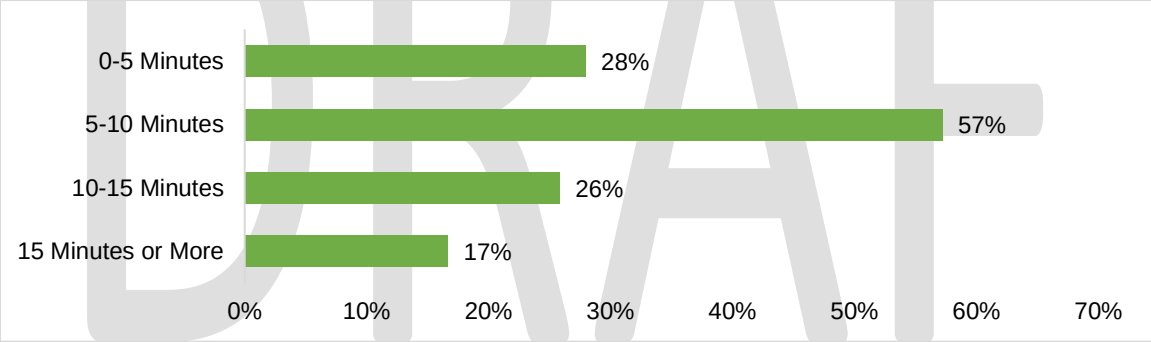
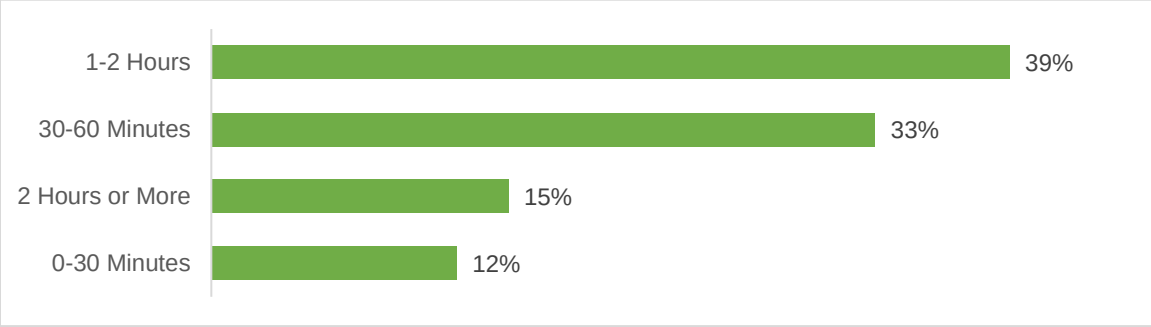


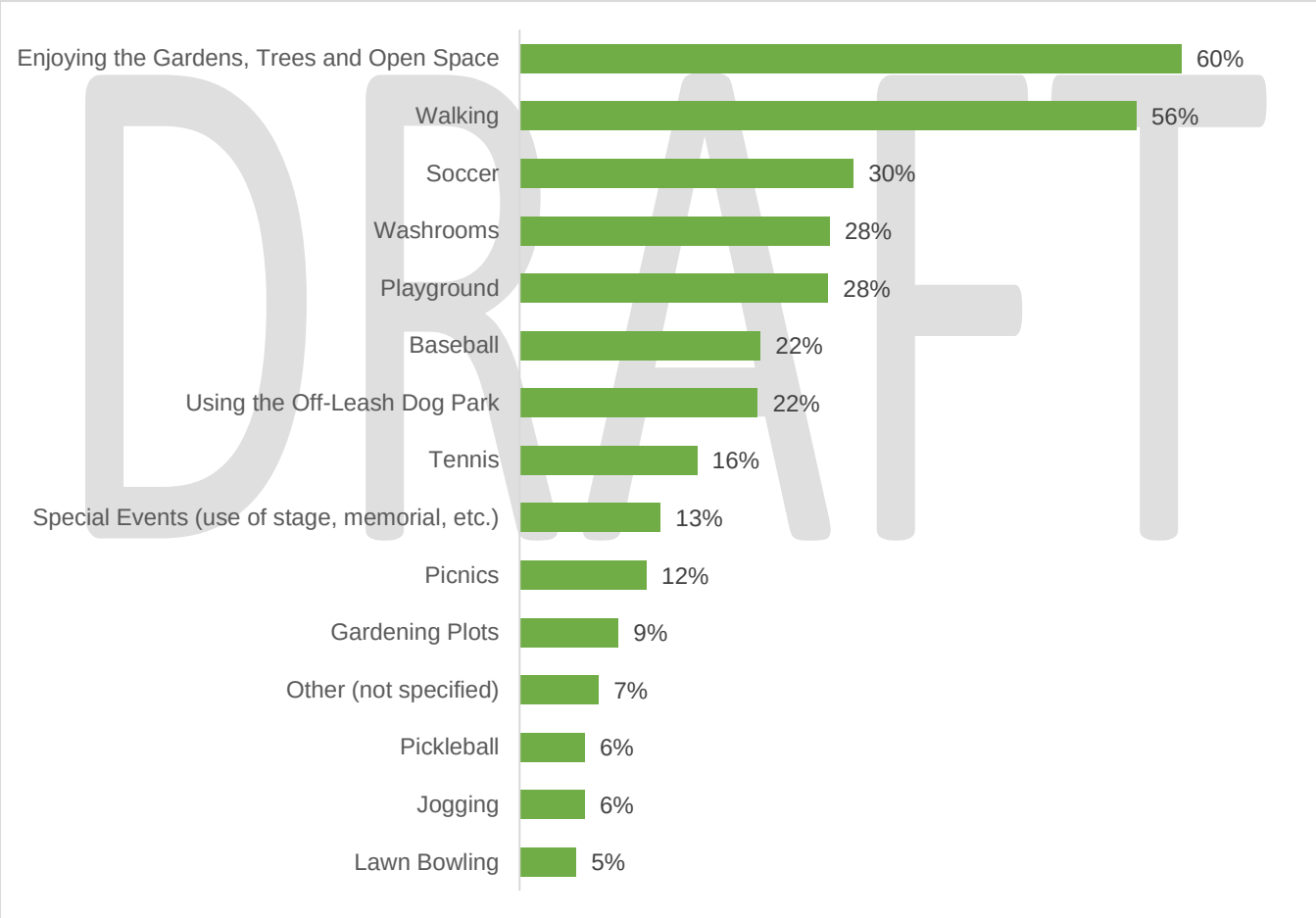
Figure 6: When you visit Germain Park, typically how long do you stay? (n =784)



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More than half of respondents typically use Germain Park for enjoying the gardens, trees, and open space (60%) and walking (56%). Other common park uses include soccer (30%), washrooms (28%), playgrounds (28%), ball diamonds (22%), and the off-leash dog park (22%). Frequent users of Germain Park are more likely to use sports fields (baseball, soccer), off-leash dog area, playgrounds, and washrooms. Infrequent Park users are more likely to visit for the gardens, trees and open space.

Figure 7: What do you typically use Germain Park for? (n=780)



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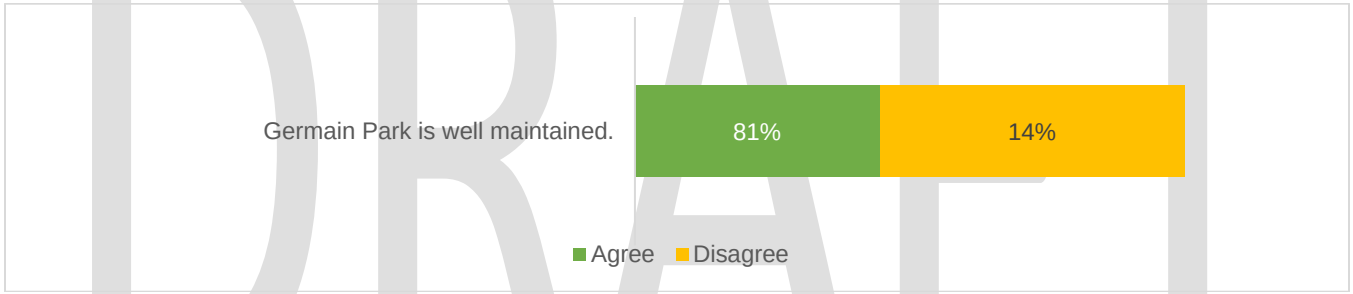
Satisfaction with Germain Park

Most respondents agree that Germain Park is well maintained (81%) and indicate that they feel safe in Germain Park (73%). One out of five respondents (20%) do not feel safe in the park

"There needs to be more lit areas at night. Germain Park can be a bit dim at night to walk through and may not feel safe for all users."

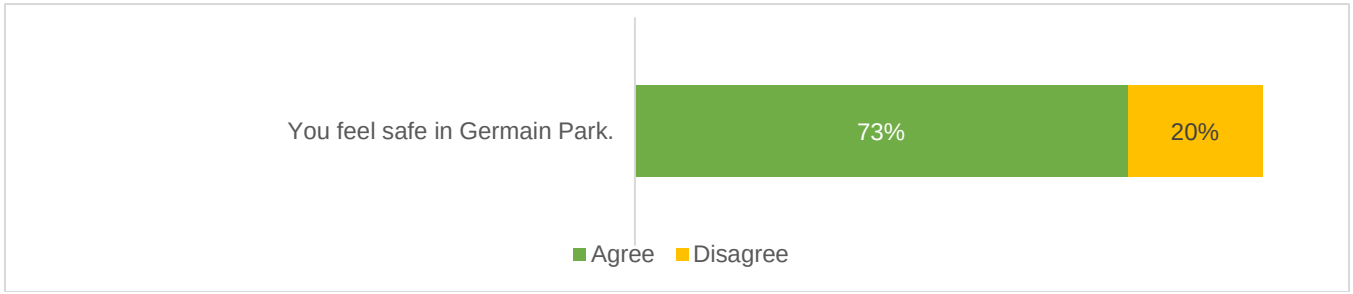
- Survey respondent

Figure 8: Germain Park is well maintained. (n=802)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

Figure 9: You feel safe in Germain Park. (n=789)



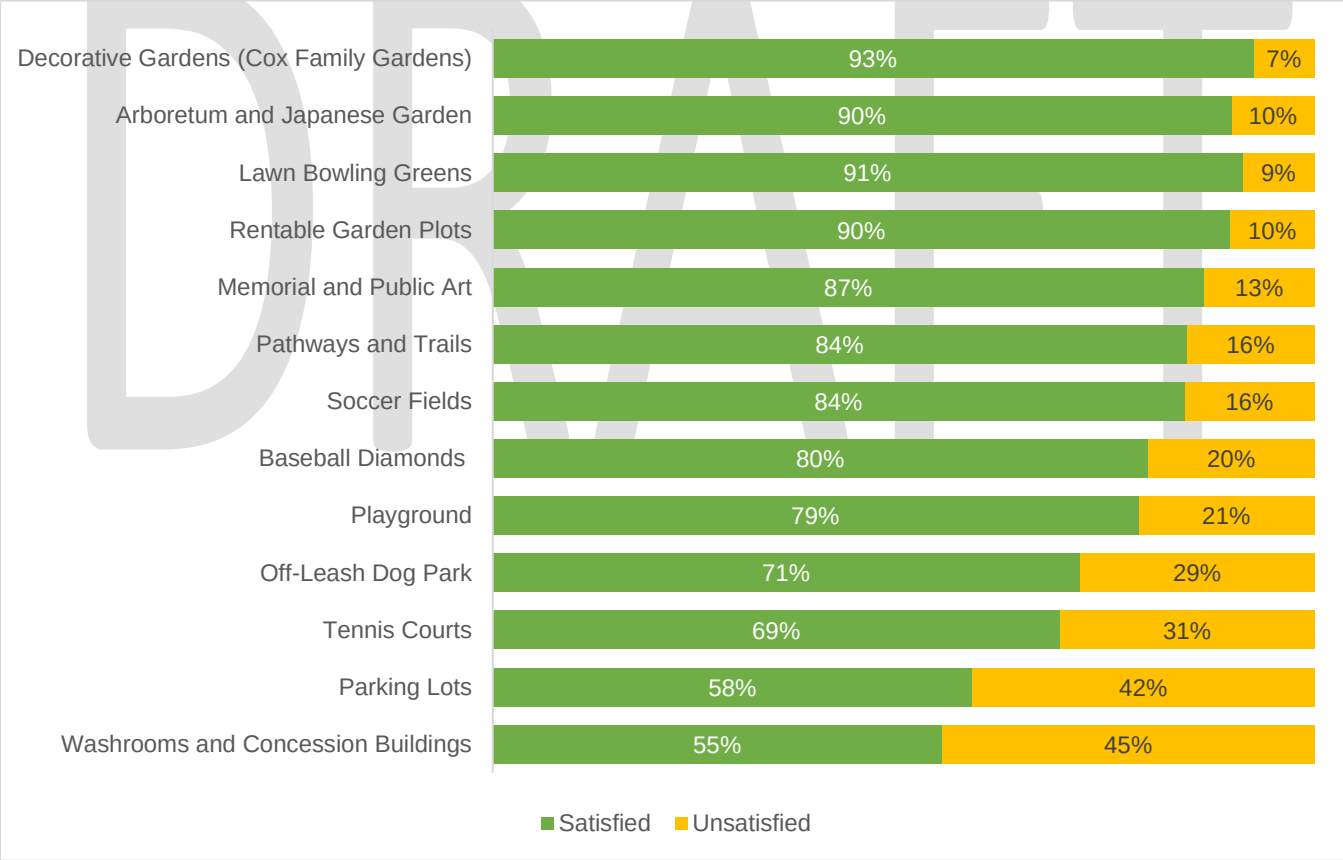
"Unsure" responses not shown.

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Survey respondents are most satisfied with the Cox Family Gardens (93%), Germain Park's lawn bowling greens (91%), the arboretum and Japanese garden (91%), the rentable garden plots (90%), and memorial and public art (87%).

Respondents were most unsatisfied with the park's washrooms and concession buildings (45% unsatisfied) and parking lots (42% unsatisfied); these opinions were most prevalent amongst frequent users of Germain Park. In relative terms, the levels of dissatisfaction were next highest for the tennis courts (31%) and off-leash dog park (29%).

Figure 10: How satisfied are you with the current features in Germain Park? (n=753 > 788)

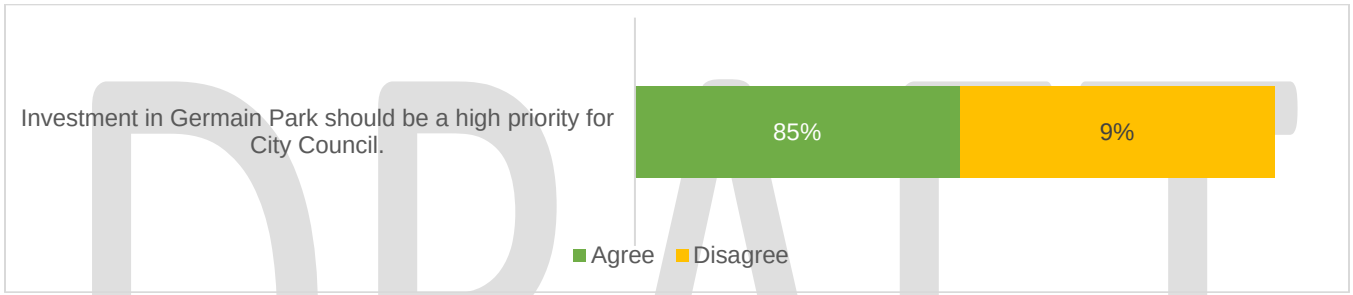


"Unsure" responses have been removed.

Germain Park Improvements

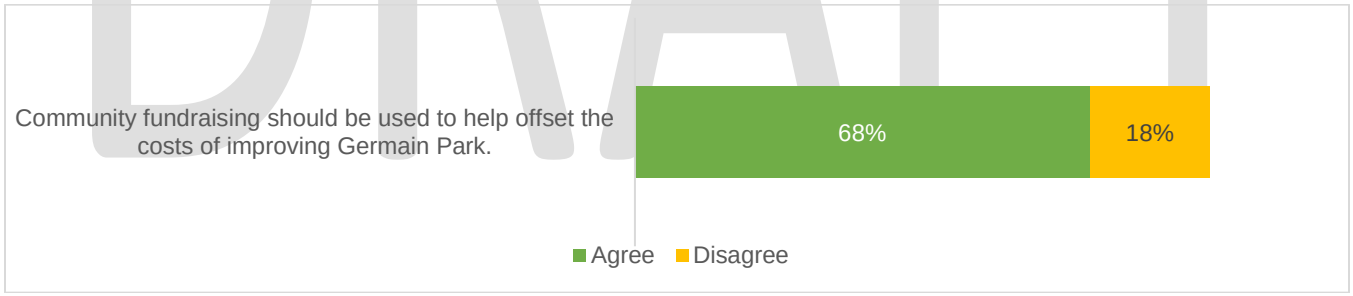
The large majority of respondents (85%) agree that investment in Germain Park should be a high priority for City Council, with two out of three (68%) supporting the use of community fundraising to offset these costs.

Figure 11: Investment in Germain Park should be a high priority for City Council. (n=802)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

Figure 12: Community fundraising should be used to offset the costs of improving Germain Park. (n=792)

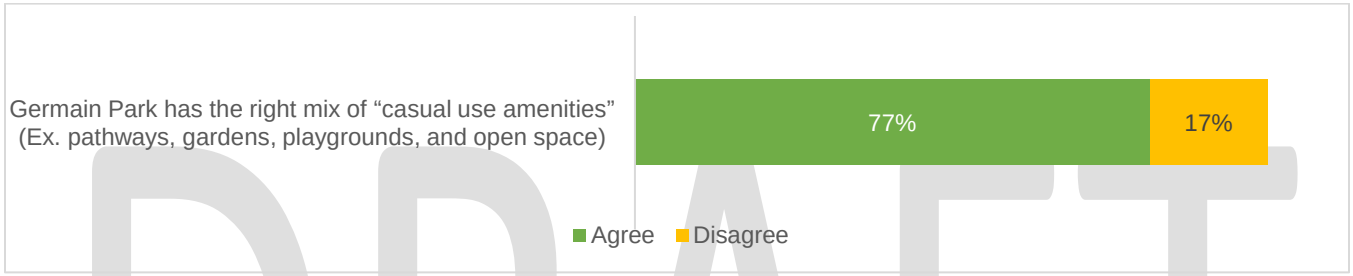


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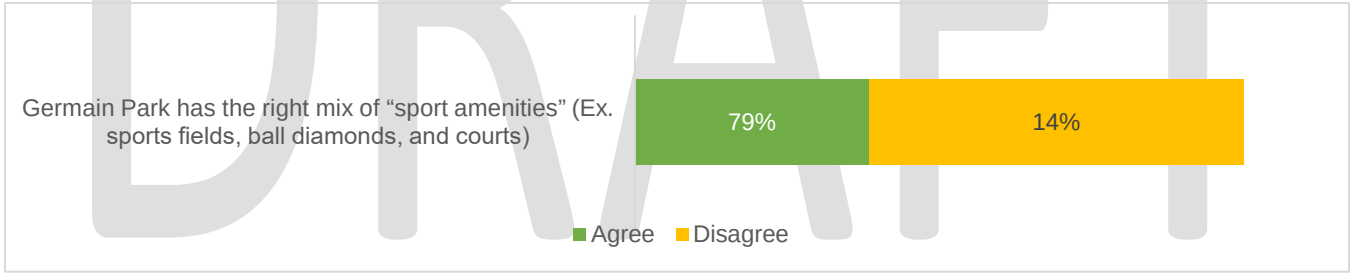
Most respondents are satisfied with the sport and casual use amenities in Germain Park (77% to 79%), but more than half (54%) support improvements to support amenities (e.g., washrooms, shade, and parking).

Figure 13: Germain Park has the right mix of "casual use amenities". (n=786)



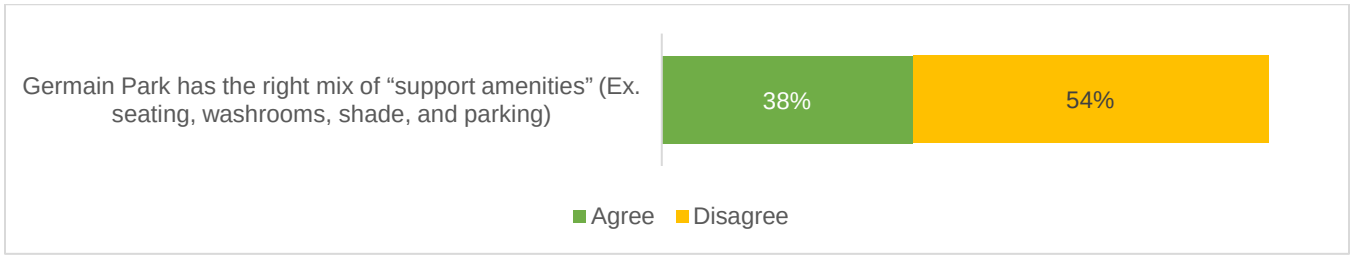
"Unsure" responses not shown.

Figure 14: Germain Park has the right mix of "sport amenities". (n=799)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

Figure 15: Germain Park has the right mix of "support amenities". (n=794)

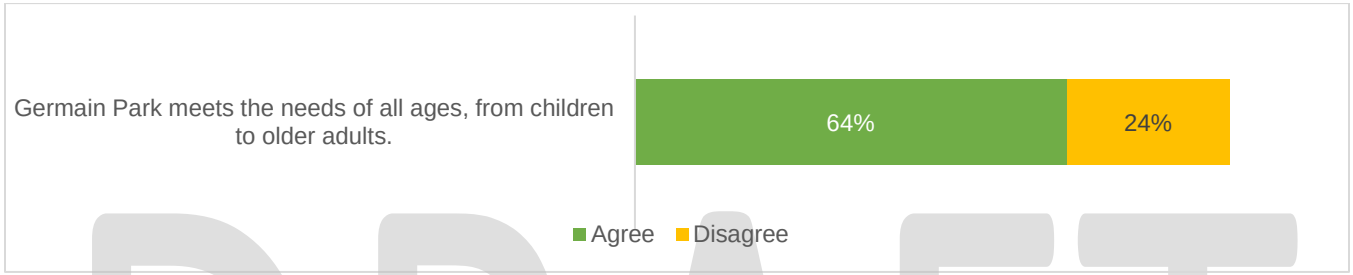


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Two-thirds (64%) agree that Germain Park meets the needs of all ages, from children to older adults.

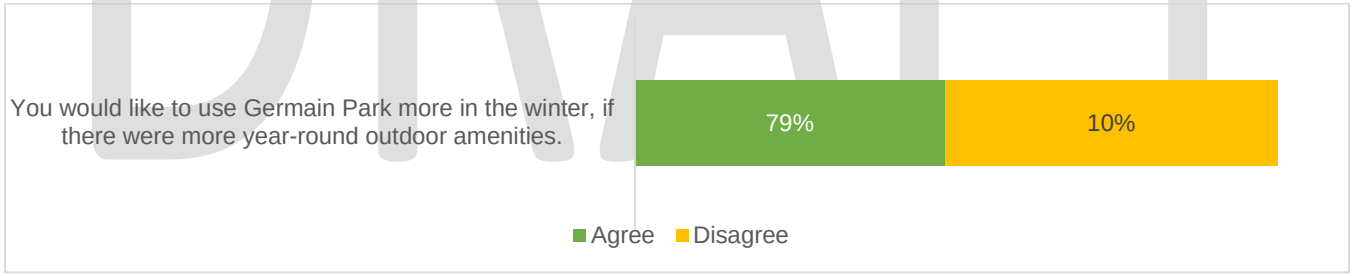
Figure 16: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. (n=793)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

Strong support (79%) was also expressed for more year-round outdoor amenities (such as outdoor skating).

Figure 17: You would use Germain Park more in the winter if there were more year-round outdoor amenities. (n=799)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they would like to be able to do in the park that they currently cannot. The top responses were:

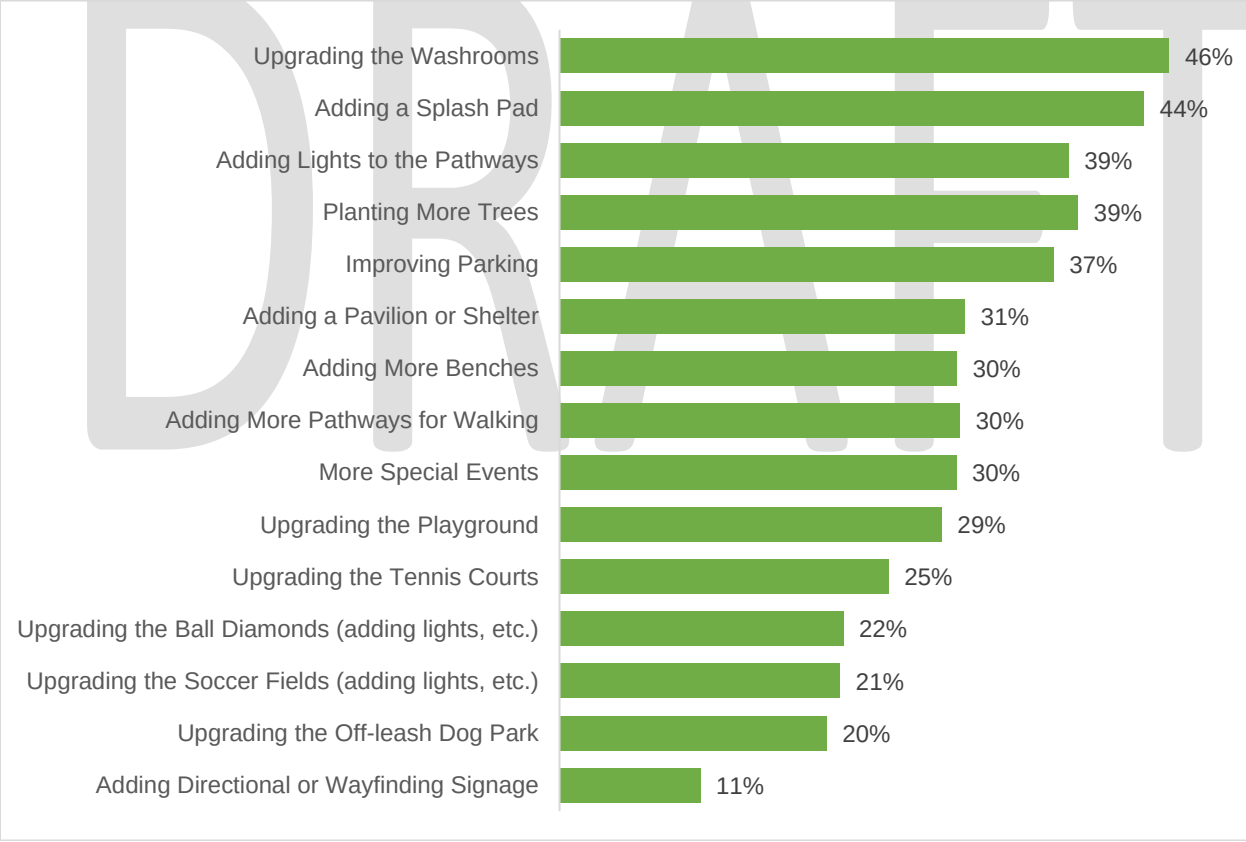
- outdoor swimming or an outdoor pool (100 responses or approximately 13% of respondents);
- splash pad (92 responses or approximately 12% of respondents);
- indoor tennis (79 responses or approximately 10% of respondents); and
- outdoor skating (58 responses or approximately 7% of respondents).

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Choosing from a pre-populated list of options, the highest priorities for park improvements related to upgraded washrooms (46%), followed by adding a splash pad (44%), planting more trees (39%), adding lights to the pathways (39%), and improving parking (37%). Aside from the installation of a splash pad, all of these represent improvements to existing support amenities. Frequent users of Germain Park were more likely to indicate that improved parking is a high priority for the park.

The lowest priorities were adding directional or wayfinding signage (11%), upgrading the off-leash park (20%), and soccer field and ball diamond upgrades (21% and 22%, respectively).

Figure 18: High Priority Considerations for Germain Park (n=755-776)



"Unsure" responses have been removed.

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The following is a summary of some of the key themes from the open-ended comments received regarding Germain Park (in no particular order):

- Germain Park is a beautiful and well-maintained park. The gardens are particularly unique and appreciated.
- Several requests were received to add a pool to the park, an indoor facility for pickleball and tennis, a pavilion or shade structure near the sports fields, additional parking spaces, and water bottle refill stations.
- Several requests were received to improve the ball diamonds (benches, dugouts, fences, fields, lighting), off-leash dog park (shade and features), playground, park lighting (including installing cameras for park safety), and overall accessibility within the park (including additional paved trails).

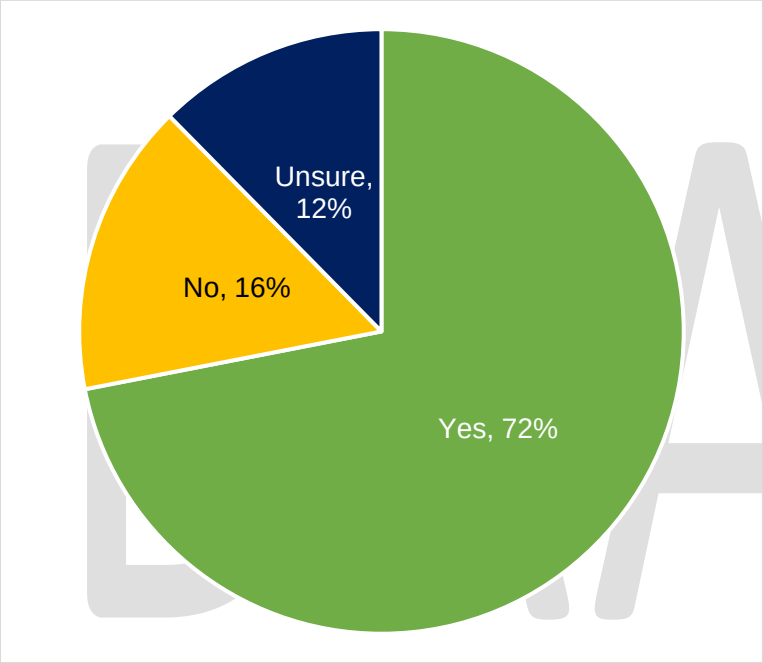
> *"There should be a covered area for picnic tables or rentable for events in an open area."*
>
> *"Add more seating at ball diamonds and soccer fields."*
>
> *"Convert the tennis courts from outdoor to indoor. Sarnia has a large tennis playing population that has nowhere to play winter tennis unless they travel to Port Huron or London."*
>
> *- Survey respondents*

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Waterplay Features in Germain Park

When asked specifically about a **splash pad** in Germain Park, 72% supported adding one to the park.

Figure 19: Do you support an addition of a splash pad in Germain Park? (n=816)



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Respondents had an opportunity to provide additional open-ended input on this topic. The most common comments regarding the addition of new waterplay features to Germain Park included (in no particular order):

- Providing a splash pad large enough to support children and youth within walking distance to Germain Park
- Adding a pool at Germain Park that can support swimming programs and several age groups, and to help families that do not have transportation to access other swimming locations
- Ensuring that any new waterplay features are accessible to persons with disabilities, free to use, age-friendly, and kept clean and safe
- Providing accessible washrooms and play equipment, shelter, shade, and seating

“Splash pad would be absolutely amazing as there are many young families in this area.”

“Features should not only include splash pad but also a full-size pool to replace Jackson pool suitable for swimming lessons, exercise, and competitions.”

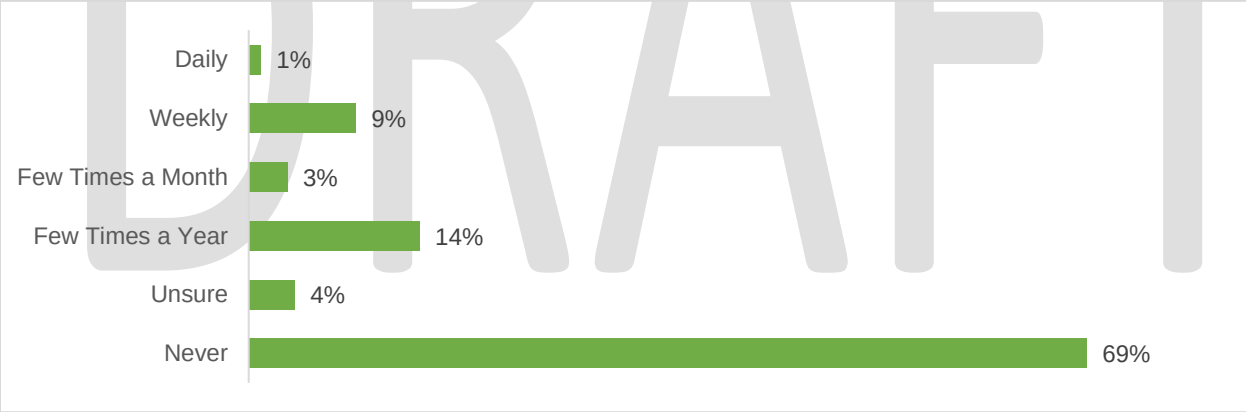
- Survey respondents

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Usage of the Strangway Community Centre

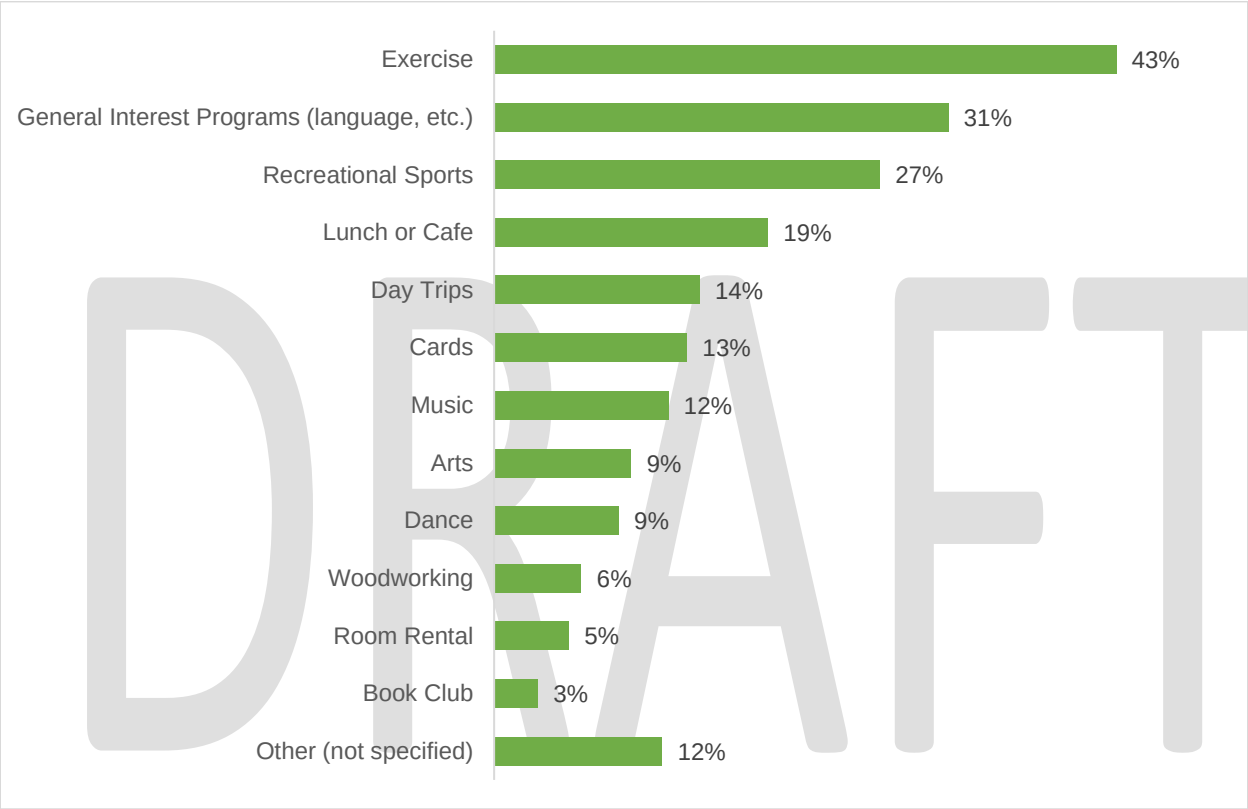
One quarter (27%) of survey respondents have visited the Strangway Community Centre.

Figure 20: How frequently do you or members of your household visit the Strangway Community Centre? (n=816)



Of these that have visited the Strangway Community Centre, the most common uses are exercise (43%), general interest programs (31%), and recreational sports (27%). The majority of activities within this profile represent active pursuits, whereas “traditional seniors’ activities” such as cards and arts ranked lower.

Figure 21: What do you typically use the Strangway Community Centre for? (Select all that apply) (n=233)

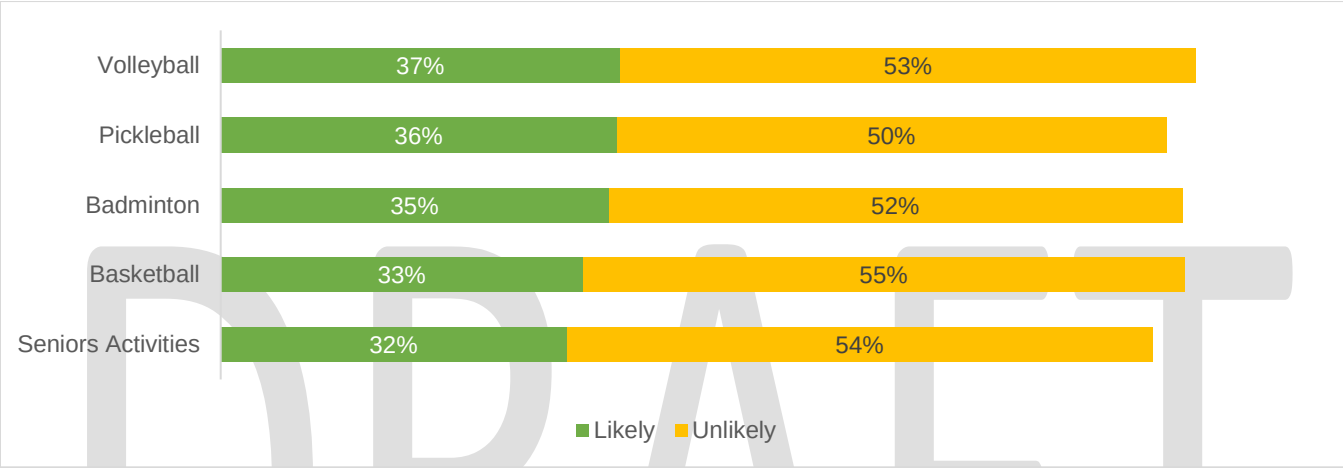


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Strangway Community Centre Improvements

A gymnasium is proposed to be added to the Strangway Community Centre. Approximately one-third of respondents indicated that they would be likely to use the gymnasium for volleyball (37%), pickleball (36%), badminton (35%), basketball (33%), and seniors' activities (32%). Users of the Strangway Community Centre are more likely to support the use of the new gymnasium for pickleball and seniors' activities, while non-users are more interested in opportunities for basketball.

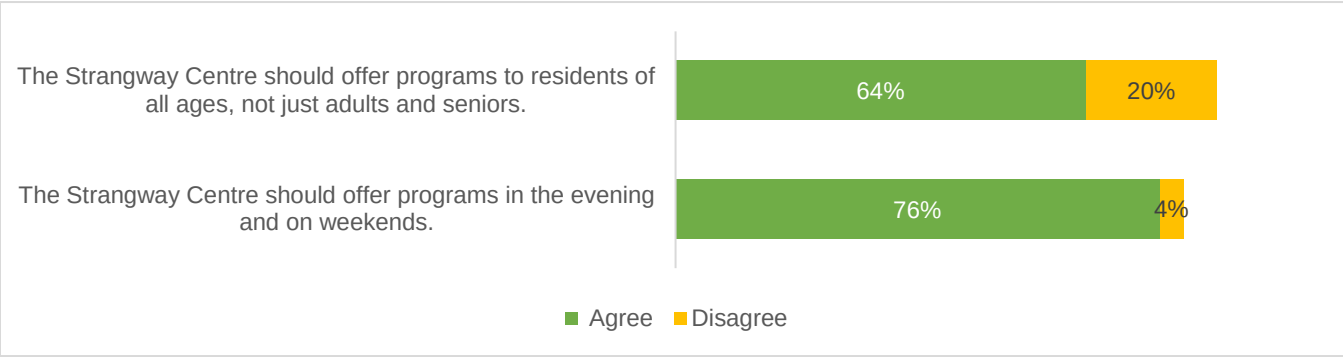
Figure 22: How likely would you be to use the new Gymnasium for the following activities, if it was open to all ages? (n=744<771)



"Unsure" responses not shown.

In terms of the Centre's hours and its market, three-quarters (76%) of respondents agree the Strangway Community Centre should offer programs in the evening and on weekends, while just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents agree the Strangway Community Centre should offer programs to residents of all ages, not just adults and seniors. Users of the Strangway Community Centre are less likely to agree that the Centre should offer programs to residents of all ages, not just adults and seniors.

Figure 23: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. (n=786<791)



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The following is a summary of some of the key themes from the open-ended comments received regarding the Strangway Community Centre (in no particular order):

- The Strangway Community Centre is very well-run centre. Many older adults felt that the facility should continue to prioritize access by seniors.
- There is interest in the community about providing gymnasium-based activities for children and youth.
- Requests were received for several new or expanded activities, such as café hours, ball hockey, basketball, chess club, computer lessons, dancing, dodgeball, line dancing, fitness classes and equipment, gymnastics, indoor soccer, indoor tennis, indoor winter walking programs, indoor pickleball, roller skating, soccer, squash, tai chi, and yoga.

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Survey Demographics

Most survey respondents live in the neighbourhoods that are closest to the park

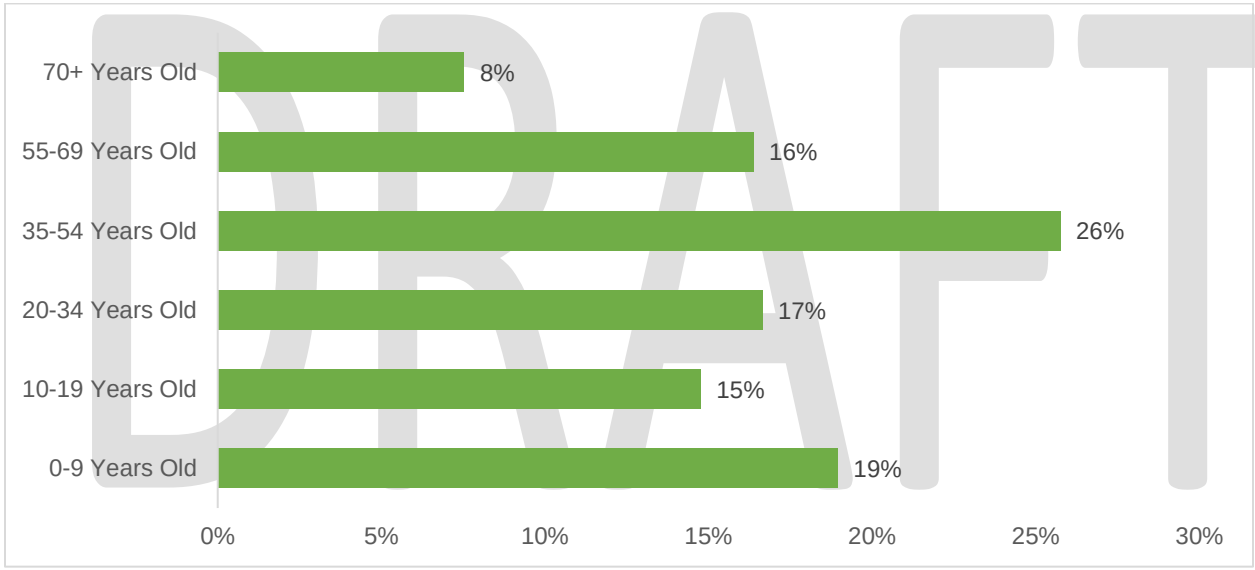
Table 3: Place of Residence of Survey Respondents

Postal Code	%
N7S	38%
N7T	35%
N7V	12%
N0N	11%
N7W	2%
N7X	1%
Other	0%
Total	**100%**



There were over 2,600 household members among the 816 responding households, for an average of 3.2 persons per household. From this broader sample, one-third (34%) were children and youth, which is higher than proportion of residents within the entire City of Sarnia (19% according to the 2021 Census). This indicates that the survey sample is younger than Sarnia's population, which is typical in this type of community research. Conversely, 24% of the sample included household members aged 55 years and older, compared to the Census figure of 40%.

Figure 24: Please indicate the number of people in your household that fall into the below age categories (n=816)



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3.3 Stakeholder Input

Two sessions were held with stakeholders representing the interests of Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre on September 12 and 14, 2022. A total of 37 individuals and organizations were invited to attend these sessions – ten stakeholders participated in the virtual sessions, interviews or provided written input:

- COPA Flight 7
- Lambton College (Research and Innovation)
- Sarnia Football Club
- Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club
- Sarnia Minor Athletic Association
- Strangway Community Centre Advisory Board
- Strangway Community Centre Instructors and Volunteers (4)

The workshops were facilitated by the consulting team and included a brief overview of the project and input received to date. Below is a summary of the key themes represented at the sessions; a full record can be found in **Appendix A**.

<u>Strengths of Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre</u>

Through each workshop discussion, there was a renowned appreciation for Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre serving collectively as an integral centerpiece of the community. Stakeholders emphasized:

- The wide variety of activities and programs within the park and centre; they support a broad diversity of users
- That the park and centre are ideally located and both serve as a neighbourhood and community hub for residents and several groups (e.g., sports association)
- The staffing and volunteer commitment at the Strangway Community Centre

These strengths underscore the fact that Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre offer an abundance of amenities, which serve to bring the community together.

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Challenges with Germain Park

A variety of challenges were identified based on the unique perspectives of each organization, including:

- Limited parking
- Insufficient wayfinding signage (e.g., park entrances, field locations, park amenities, etc.)
- Many areas lack pathways; existing pathways require upgrades
- Safety concerns expressed by some
- There is a need for shade to be provided in proximity to ball diamonds, soccer fields, the dog park and lawn bowling green
- Ball diamonds need maintenance (drainage, etc.)
- Washroom accessibility is limited

Many of these comments reflect the age of the park's amenities and changing expectations around level of service. The park's many roles in serving as a hub for events, sports and recreation, and casual use require the space to be configured to address a wide range of participant needs.

Suggested Improvements for Germain Park

The following suggestions for Germain Park offer valuable perspectives of how the park can maintain its place as a centrepiece of the community:

- Improve Park accessibility with paved trails that connect to ball diamonds and soccer fields
- Provide better / more visible signage for wayfinding
- Provide a shelter, changerooms and storage in proximity to ball diamonds and soccer fields offering cover during inclement weather
- Continue to maintain the gardens and flags around the Golden Hawk
- Reconfigure current parking spaces
- Prioritize maintenance and improvements of sports fields (e.g., drainage, covered benches, netting, lighting, etc.)
- Consider expanding the lawn bowling clubhouse (with washrooms) and installing a higher fence around the greens to help prevent vandalism

These suggestions indicate a desire amongst user groups to see enhance existing infrastructure and improve accessibility throughout the park.

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Considerations for the Strangway Community Centre

Stakeholder groups identified several considerations for the Strangway Community Centre that will be helpful in assessing the current and future operating model:

- A gymnasium is needed to allow for existing programs to be expanded and new activities to be offered year-round – the trend is toward more active forms of recreation
- The gymnasium should be properly sized to accommodate adult activities and should be accessible to entire community – make it available on evenings and weekends
- Would like to have a separate accessible washroom
- More staff and volunteer resources are needed to support expanded hours
- The provision of low to no cost activities can support a wider range of members; a community-based programming model could be considered to build local capacity and stronger connections
- The provision of more opportunities for inter-generational activities and programming can strengthen engagement from younger age groups; older adults need to be exposed to new activities before they retire

These considerations suggest strong support for the proposal to add a gymnasium to the Strangway Community Centre, which will allow for expanded opportunities for residents of all ages. Supporting existing and new programming can allow for the Strangway Community Centre to continue to attract new members and volunteers, while also engaging children, youth and families.

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3.4 Input from the 2022 Multi-use Recreation Facility Feasibility Study

The City's 2022 Indoor Multi-use Recreation Facility Feasibility Study tested community interest and demand for several indoor recreation activities and components, including a gymnasium which is now being proposed for the Strangway Community Centre.

Nearly one-half (49%) of respondents to the 2021 community survey identified a gymnasium as a high priority for the community, with another 29% indicating it was a medium priority.

The study also sought input from local sports organizations and stakeholders. Gymnasium-based groups (e.g., basketball, volleyball, etc.) indicated that there is inadequate access to school gymnasiums and that most of these spaces are too small to support their programs. A total of eight groups identified specific rental requests for a gymnasium, totalling approximately 50 hours during the peak winter season and approximately 20 hours during the off-peak summer season. The hourly rate for renting a gymnasium suggested by user groups ranged from $25 to $80 per hour (the average rate was $45/hour). Lambton College also indicated that there is considerable latent demand for community access to gymnasiums (e.g., soccer, pickleball, cricket, batting cages, dryland training, etc.) and that new gymnasiums may allow them to reallocate more time to support their College recreational programs.



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4. Germain Park

This section contains a description of Germain Park, as assessment of its current state and future needs, and proposed concepts for park renewal and redevelopment

4.1 About Germain Park

Germain Park is located centrally in the urbanized area of the City of Sarnia, with a municipal address of 900 Germain Street. The park is generally bounded by major roads including London Road to the north, Indian Road North to the east, and East Street North to the west. The site can be accessed by pedestrians from all directions, with parking lots on the park's east, south and western edges. With a size of 24.9 hectares (61.6 acres), Germain Park is Sarnia's second largest active park and accounts for 5% of the City's parkland inventory.

Figure 25: Location of Germain Park in the City of Sarnia



A Brief History of the Park

Germain Park originally belonged to the County House of Refuge in 1889. “The House of Refuge took in the destitute, feeble-minded, elderly and infirm, as well as single women from homes, jails and hospitals. In return for lodging, they had to cook, clean and work the farm, which supplied food and brought in revenue.[18]”

In 1951, City of Sarnia purchased the land for $60,000. In 1954 the building was demolished and designated for Germain Park. The park took its name from W.E. Germain, a member of the board of the city department from 1923 until 1965.

Construction of the park spanned several years and was partially made possible through community donations and grants. The ball diamonds were amongst the first features to be established in the park. The original lawn bowling clubhouse was constructed in 1961, the James Chaytor Memorial Field House and tennis courts were built in 1963, the Dr. John and Edith Jackson Memorial Pool was installed in 1966, the gardens opened in 1970, the Germain Park Arena was built in 1973, and the arboretum was established in 1981. The City authorized several major improvements to the park in 1989, including sports field upgrades and the lawn bowling/washroom building. The amphitheatre was added and the floral gardens were improved in 2012 and dedicated as the Cox Family Gardens in 2015. Due to their aging condition and low usage, the arena and outdoor pool were removed from service in 2015 and 2016 respectively and recently demolished. Most recently, in 2022, a premier soccer field was installed over several mini fields in the park.

The F-86 Sabre Golden Hawk is a notable monument in Germain Park. It was installed in 1973 as a memorial to honour the airmen who died in the Battle of Britain of World War II. It was restored by volunteers in 2014 and rededicated in honour of the Golden Hawks aerobatic team and all of the RCAF pilots and personnel who have served for Canada.[19]

[18] https://thesarniajournal.ca/elderly-and-destitute-often-ended-up-in-the-poor-house/
[19] https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/national-inventory-canadian-memorials/details/5668

4.2 Current State

The park contains a wide range of sport and community amenities that accommodate a variety of active recreation, passive, social, and cultural activities. Some of these spaces are governed by agreements (such as the Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club and SMAA's Chaytor Building) or have been made possible by significant community donations (such as the Cox Family Gardens or Sarnia FC's new stadium field).

As a result of the park's size, amenities, and activities, Germain Park sustains a high volume and intensity of use during the spring, summer and fall seasons. The City estimates that the park sees 400 to 600 visitors during the daytime and 800 to 1,200 visitors on evenings, plus those that use the pathways to cut through the park. Its market ranges from local to city-wide to regional depending on the nature of the activity, thus it serves a wide range of users.

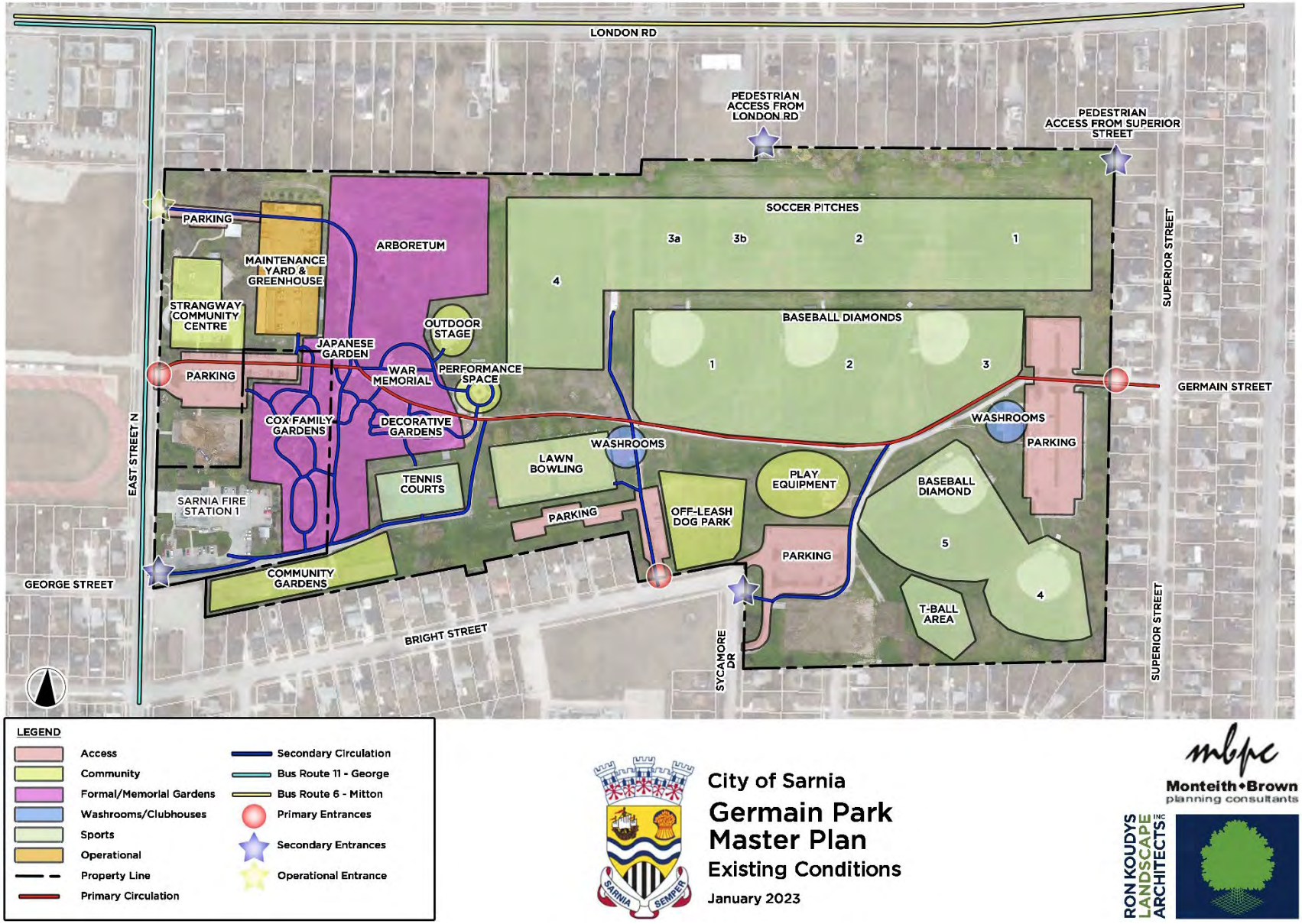
Table 4: Major Amenities within Germain Park

Sport Amenities	Community Amenities	Support Amenities
• Baseball Diamonds (8, including 2 lit senior diamonds, 2 unlit senior diamonds, 1 unlit junior diamond, and 3 t-ball backstops) • Soccer Fields (5, including one stadium field, 2 senior fields, and 2 junior fields) • Lawn Bowling Greens (2) • Off-Leash Dog Park • Playground (junior and senior) • Tennis Courts / Pickleball Courts (4) – shared	• Arboretum • Community Vegetable Gardens • Decorative Gardens (Cox Family Gardens) • Wedding Arbour and Japanese Garden • RCAF Golden Hawk • Stage (concrete) with stone seating • Activity Platform (wooden) • Public Art	• Parking Lots • Pathways • Washrooms • Concessions • Works Building, Yard and City Greenhouse

Additionally, there is collection of civic facilities at Germain Park's western edge which includes the Strangway Community Centre, Operations Yard, and Fire Hall. An elementary school is adjacent to the park's southern border.

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Figure 26: Existing Conditions



Germain Park serves a wide variety of functions for several different audiences:

1) sports fields and courts allow people to **compete and participate**
2) memorial and civic features – such as the F-86 Sabre Golden Hawk – help people to **celebrate and learn**
3) casual use spaces – including the off-leash park – allow people to **meet and gather**
4) playgrounds and open space give children and their families places to **play and have fun**
5) pathways help people to **explore and connect** to surrounding areas
6) active areas provide spaces to **exercise and keep fit**
7) gardens and arboretum provide places for residents to **relax and enjoy the seasons**.
8) event areas provide spaces to **create and perform**

4.3 Challenges and Opportunities

Based on the research and consultation activities, a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified for the renewal and redevelopment of Germain Park. These and other matters are addressed in the sections that follow.

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Table 5: SWOT Analysis for Germain Park

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Centrally located in the city; well known landmark - Park is generally well maintained (clean, free of trash, minimal graffiti) - Easily accessed from surrounding neighbourhoods, active transportation routes and public transit - Surrounded by residential community, which provides eyes on the site - Contains a wide variety of sport and community amenities that support organized and unorganized use by residents and visitors of most ages - Floral gardens and arboretum are highly unique features that draw visitors from across the city - Park has received some recent investment (stadium soccer field) - Park operations depot and greenhouse is at edge of park, with convenient access for maintenance	- Lack of parking (71% of users drive to the park) and challenges with internal circulation - Aging infrastructure (playground, sports field fencing/lighting, washrooms, greenhouses, etc.) - Some areas lack barrier-free accessibility (washrooms, pathways to activity areas) - Not well used in winter – few year-round amenities - Drainage is a challenge in spots (ball diamonds) - Lack of shade, lighting, seating, and gathering places - Safety, security and vandalism are growing concerns - Signage (wayfinding, interpretive) within the park is lacking - Lack of unstructured use amenities for older children and teens - Lack of interior pedestrian loop and north-south path connection linking to London Road
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Arena and outdoor pool have been recently removed from the park – these spaces are vacant and residents are seeking reinvestment - City has received senior government grant to fund new recreational waterplay features in the park - Expansion to Strangway Community Centre provides opportunity to improve the park's western entrance and additional cross-programming - Identified as a possible location for the proposed indoor multi-use recreation facility (MURF) - Many local groups have strong ties to the park and are active partners that can assist with funding of park improvements - The potential to move the existing operations centre off-site is under review; this could free up space for other uses long-term - Environmental goals may support more sustainable maintenance practices (e.g., areas of reduced mowing) and wildlife habitat for birds and insects (e.g., pollinator gardens) - Opportunity to tell the story of the park's history and significance	- If chosen as the site for the City's proposed MURF, this would result in the loss of sports fields and may impact other site infrastructure - Financial resources are not currently allocated to park improvements (beyond one grant); the rising costs of capital works may require alternate forms of funding or implementation - Park is largely "built-out" with little room for expansion or to accommodate new amenities (community requests) without impacting current uses - Park is surrounded by residential communities on most sides; significant changes must be sensitive to these adjacencies - Gardens and other landscaped areas rely on a high level of seasonal maintenance, changes in staffing may impact level of service - Climate change and effects on vegetation, weather patterns, and stormwater management

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4.4 The Vision for Germain Park

To support the development and implementation of this master plan, a vision and series of goals have been developed for Germain Park. These strategic directions are important tools that will assist the City in decision-making and directing investment.

The vision and goals articulate the core values and aspirations that will guide the plan's implementation. They are informed by the research, input and analysis contained throughout this report and are complementary to the City's mandate to provide high quality parks and recreation amenities and experiences, delivered in collaboration with the community.

VISION	Germain Park is Sarnia's "Central Park", a vibrant and welcoming greenspace that offers something for everyone – a place to relax, connect, play, gather, compete, celebrate, and have fun.
GOALS	1. Continue to support a wide range of community, recreation and sport activities for residents and visitors of all ages. 2. Increase opportunities for park activation, creating memorable experiences year-round. 3. Reinvest in support amenities that welcome people into the park and encourage them to stay. 4. Foster community pride through designs that are safe, accessible, functional, environmentally-friendly and easy to maintain. 5. Plan for the future by providing resilient infrastructure and maintenance practices that support the City's climate change goals. 6. Celebrate and learn about our heritage by supporting the park's gardens, memorials and civic features. 7. Engage the community and partners in the park's renewal and long-term success.

4.5 Assessment of Park Amenities

To guide the development of the recommendations and concept plans, this section examines the current condition, functionality and usage of existing park amenities. Key considerations for improvement have been derived from this research and public input.

Sports Fields

Germain Park contains 8 ball diamonds consisting of 2 lit senior diamonds (Class A), 2 unlit senior diamonds (Class B), 1 unlit junior diamond (Class C), and 3 grass t-ball diamonds. These fields have been longstanding features within the park and drive a significant amount of visitation to the park throughout the summer months.

Table 6: Assessment of Existing Ball Diamonds

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The five senior and junior diamonds are all in fair to good condition; drainage can be an issue on some fields - Ball diamond fencing and lighting has reached the end of its designed life and will require replacement on an as-needed basis - Some dugout improvements were made in 2021	- Primary usage is evenings and weekends, including frequent tournaments - The City indicates that utilization is 95% during available times – usage may be lower since the pandemic - The Park contains 40% of the City's ball diamonds - The community is generally satisfied with the existing ball diamonds, but would like to see improvements to supporting amenities - 22% of survey respondents typically visit Germain Park for baseball (6th most common activity) - Requests were received for improved drainage (diamonds are frequently unplayable), concrete pads under bleachers, safety netting, pathways to access diamonds, a pavilion, and a batting cage	- While the current diamonds are well used, additional improvements are required to ensure that they remain accessible and usable, including improved drainage, concrete pads under bleachers, safety netting, access paths, and upgraded lighting - A pavilion with shelter, storage and public washrooms should be considered in proximity to the sports fields - Adding lighting to a third diamond could be considered should demand warrant - Remove and/or re-locate t-ball diamonds and/or diamond 5 (junior diamond) if needed for circulation.

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Germain Park contains 5 soccer fields consisting of 1 premier field (Class A), 2 senior fields (Class B), and 2 junior fields. All fields are unlit and some can be programmed to serve as multiple smaller fields. These fields have been longstanding features within the park and drive a significant amount of visitation to the park throughout the summer months.

Table 7: Assessment of Existing Soccer Fields

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The premier/stadium field (field 4) was installed in 2022 and is in excellent condition - The remaining soccer fields are older but in good condition; they are irrigated and have drainage	- Primary usage is evenings and weekends, including frequent tournaments - The City indicates that utilization is 60% during available times - The Park contains 40% of the City's soccer fields (excluding fields operated by Sarnia Girls Soccer) - The community is generally satisfied with the existing soccer fields, but would like to see improvements to supporting amenities - 30% of survey respondents typically visit Germain Park for soccer (3rd most common activity) - Requests were received for accessible pathways to the fields, a shelter, storage, covered benches, and field lighting	- While the current fields are well used, additional improvements are required to ensure that they remain accessible and usable, including the installation of accessible pathways to the fields - A pavilion with shelter, storage and public washrooms should be considered in proximity to the sports fields - Adding lighting to one or more fields could be considered should demand warrant

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Sports Courts (tennis, lawn bowling)

Germain Park contains 4 lit tennis courts (each with pickleball lines) for community use and 2 lit lawn bowling greens. The lawn bowling complex is supported by a clubhouse and storage buildings and is operated by the Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club under a license agreement most recently renewed in 2019.

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Table 8: Assessment of Existing Tennis / Pickleball Courts

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The courts were resealed and painted in 2017 but are showing signs of deterioration (cracking, faded paint, etc.) - The lights and fencing are older and approaching end of life	- Most use is casual / non-permitted, primarily on evenings and weekends - Usage is shared between tennis and pickleball; can create conflicts as there are no set times - Courts are also used by the Strangway Community Centre for tennis and pickleball programs – utilization is 70% during available times - 16% of survey respondents typically play tennis when visiting Germain Park (6% play pickleball)	- Separation of pickleball and tennis uses should be a long-term goal to reduce conflict and allow of simultaneous play - Longer-term consideration may be given to installation of a seasonal dome over the tennis courts to support winter activities in partnership with local clubs, if supported by a business plan acceptable to the City - A multi-use court / basketball court is recommended to provide an amenity for youth and younger adults. Consideration may be given to all-season youth through flooding in the winter (natural rink)







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Table 9: Assessment of Existing Lawn Bowling Greens

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The two lawn bowling greens are maintained by the Lawn Bowling Club and are in good condition - The clubhouse building was built in 1989 and is in good condition - The natural treed setting with nearby parking and clubhouse provides a distinctive environment for social and competitive play	- Access is restricted to members of the Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club (established in 1906) - Club membership is 57 people as of 2022; this has declined due to the pandemic - While the club uses both greens (mainly to preserve turf and minimize maintenance), there is substantial capacity for greater use; Bowls Canada suggests that average maximum member capacity of a lawn bowling green is 80 to 100 active players - The sport has historically been popular among seniors; declining memberships in some communities has led to the closure of greens in several Ontario municipalities	- Under the terms of the current agreement (which runs to 2024), the City is responsible for major capital repairs and improvements, as well as annual utilities - The Club has requested an updated clubhouse (larger, with dedicated washrooms), higher fencing, and a consolidated storage building - The City's Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan recommended that the City continue to work with the Sarnia Lawn Bowling Club to sustain the quality and condition of existing greens and facilities at Germain Park and to maximize access to and participation in lawn bowling - Club membership should be monitored to track longer-term needs; while the Club does not currently have the membership to support two greens, they are a requirement for many of the Club's tournaments







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Aquatics

There are currently no aquatic facilities (pools or splash pads) in Germain Park, though an outdoor pool was recently closed and removed due to its age, condition, and low usage. As described below, the City was successful in its grant application to replace the pool with an outdoor recreational water amenity.

Table 10: Assessment of Outdoor Aquatic Facilities

Outdoor Pools	Splash Pads
- The Dr. John and Edith Jackson Pool was constructed in 1966 on the west edge of Germain Park - The pool and support building were closed in 2016 due to their deteriorating condition, lack of barrier-free accessibility, and high costs; they were removed from the park in 2022 - The City currently offers outdoor swimming at Tecumseh Park, which is located approximately 2-kilometres to the south of Germain Park; this pool is operated in partnership with the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario and offers swimming lessons, aquafit and recreation swims (including free sponsored swims on weekends); financial assistance is also available for lessons and swim passes; the Tecumseh Pool has capacity for additional use - On October 28, 2019, Sarnia City Council endorsed the grant application for the decommissioning of Jackson outdoor pool and development of an outdoor splash pad - In 2021, the City received a $1.41 million grant from the Federal and Provincial governments to replace the Jackson Pool with a recreational aquatic feature (splash pad); the City's share of the estimated $1.93 million project would be $0.52 million - The City has until 2024 to use the grant funding - The estimated project budget is likely insufficient to fund the development of a new pool and support building ($3 to $6 million), but would cover the costs of adding a community-level splash pad and supporting amenities to Germain Park	- Splash pads are accessible, affordable and interactive waterplay features with user-activated sprays and jets; these amenities offer an extended season for children and youth, providing a popular way to cool off on hot days - Splash pads are much less costly to operate than outdoor pools as they do not require lifeguarding; however, their appeal is more limited as they do not offer deep water swimming activities - There is currently one splash pad in Sarnia (the recently upgraded splash pad at Tecumseh Park), plus another one in Point Edward; they are free to use - The community supports the addition of a splash pad to Germain Park, with 72% of survey respondents providing their support and 44% identifying this as a high priority (ranking only behind upgraded washrooms) - Consideration should be given to installing a large splash pad near the playground in Germain Park

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Playground

Germain Park contains a junior and senior playground with separate swing structure.

Table 11: Assessment of Existing Playground

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The playground was installed in the early 2000s with financial assistance from the Rotary Club of Sarnia Bluewaterland - It is in poor condition and is approaching the end of its life – replacement should be a high priority - The playground is partially accessible, but lacks many modern barrier-free features (e.g., bucket swing, asphalt pathway, play features, etc.)	- 28% of survey respondents typically use the playground when visiting Germain Park (5th most common activity)	- The playground is a key component that sustains high level of use; a new fully-accessible and inclusive destination playground should be considered for this park; the surfacing should be engineered wood fibre or rubber







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Off-Leash Dog Park

Table 12: Assessment of Existing Off-Leash Dog Park

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The off-leash dog park was established in 2018 as a pilot project after an extensive site selection process - The dog park has separate areas for small dogs and large dogs, both with double gates - The volunteer Sarnia Off-Leash Parks and Zones group provides passive monitoring and occasional maintenance of the park	- 22% of survey respondents typically use the off-leash dog park when visiting Germain Park (7th most common activity); the majority of users are satisfied with the park - Some comments were received regarding uneven / hazardous surfacing and lack of shade	- Germain Park is the only city-owned off-leash dog park at present, though the City has recently approved sites at Heritage and Tecumseh parks - The City's 2019 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan recommended that the dog park remain at this location and that consideration be given to adding a water bottle refill station and dog drinking fountain - The fencing around the park is temporary and should be replaced; an accessible pathway to the entrances is also required - If necessary, consideration may be given to moving the dog park to a new location in the park







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Community Vegetable Gardens

The Germain Park community garden has 35 plots that can be rented out annually by residents so they may grow their own food and gardens.

Table 13: Assessment of Existing Community Gardens

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The gardens have water service (recently installed) and a communal compost bin - Nearby parking is available at the fire department	- The community vegetable gardens were recently expanded due to increasing demand - Some users expressed concern over site security and unauthorized access - 9% of survey respondents typically use the community gardens when visiting Germain Park	- Improved signage may be considered to deter theft and vandalism - There is room to further expand the gardens to the east if demand warrants - Additional picnic tables should be added at the perimeter -







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Floral Gardens, Monuments and Event Spaces

Near the park's western edge are several distinctive gardens (Cox Family Garden, as well as an arboretum with over 200 different species of trees), monuments (RCAF Golden Hawk and war memorials), public art and event spaces (stage, activity platform, wedding arbour).

Table 14: Assessment of Existing Floral Gardens, Monuments and Event Spaces

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The Cox Family Gardens were installed in 2012 and are well maintained by the City - The stage, wedding arbour and much of the public art was also installed in 2012 and is in good condition - The RCAF Golden Hawk was restored in 2015 and is in good condition	- The Cox Family Gardens, Japanese Gardens and wedding arbour are unique features within the City and draw many visitors into the park (gardens tours have been organized in the past) - The public expressed strong satisfaction with the arboretum, Cox Family Gardens, and Japanese garden - The stage is utilized for the City's summer concert series and several other events (Strangway Community Centre, etc.) - Activity zones and open spaces also used for tai chi programming - 60% of survey respondents indicated that they visit the gardens, trees and open space when using Germain Park (the most common park activity)	- Continued maintenance of the Cox Family Gardens is a high priority and may benefit from additional irrigation, wayfinding, and interpretive / educational signage - The wooden activity platform is underutilized and this space could be replanned for other amenities - The armour stone seating around the stage is not conducive to event seating and could be removed or downscaled - The arboretum and Cox Family Gardens could benefit from descriptive / educational signage detailing the plantings - Greater usage of the stage should be encouraged (could consider adding lighting) and is supported by the City's updated Festival and Event Policy - The space around the gardens and monuments should be carefully planned to maintain their serenity and potential expansion over time - Consideration may be given to the installation of public art within appropriate areas as per City policy

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Parking and Pathways

Germain Park contains five parking lots:

- a large lot (140 spaces) on the east side accessed from Germain Street to service the sports fields
- a lot (approximately 65 spaces) accessed from Sycamore Drive in the south that formerly served the Germain Park arena and is now used by many ball diamond users
- another lot (approximately 44 spaces) near the southern entrance off Bright Street that is used by users of the dog park and lawn bowling club, as well as the new premier soccer field
- the shared Strangway Community Centre parking lot (102 spaces) at the park's western entrance off East Street
- the Fire Station on East Street also has a small public parking lot (12 spaces) that can be used by park users (e.g., community garden)

The park can be accessed by pedestrians from all surrounding streets. In addition to the main park entrances from Germain Street (east), Bright Street (south), and East Street (west), there is a pedestrian only access to Germain Park off London Road to the north. There are also public rights-of-way on each side of the park's northern edge along East Street and Superior Street.

There is one public transit route serving Germain Park – Route 11 (George) stops at the Strangway Community Centre on East Street; however, summer service was discontinued in 2022.

Table 15: Assessment of Existing Parking Lots

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The park's parking lots are in fair to poor condition and will require repaving - The former arena parking lot was designed to service the former arena and does not efficiently serve current park uses	- The community wants to see improvements to parking lots, with 37% of survey respondents identifying this as a high priority - Parking challenges are most acute on evenings and weekends, particularly when all sports fields are in use	- The former arena parking lot could be replanned to provide a more efficient layout and greater capacity to serve the park - East end lot and Bright Street lot could be reconfigured for better efficiency - Lands that previously housed the Jackson Pool may be considered for additional parking to serve the expanded Strangway Community Centre

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There are several internal pathways within Germain Park, though the east-west multi-use path is a primary spine for the park and also connects to Sarnia's active transportation network. This main pathway is paved and is also used for service vehicles.

Table 16: Assessment of Existing Pathways, Signage and Seating

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- Most pathways are asphalt of varying width; some pathways have been recently upgraded, with a new pathway installed in 2022 along the southern edge of the tennis courts - The condition and design of site furniture varies considerably through the park, though most is older and approaching end of life	- The primary east-west pathway serves as the park's arterial spine and is highly utilized by pedestrians, cyclists and service vehicles - The community wants to see more lighting on the pathways, with 39% of survey respondents identifying this as a high priority - A request was received to install bollards on the pathway connecting the fire department parking lot to the community garden plots as the current gate impedes cyclists	- Additional pathways are needed to service activity areas, such as the sports fields - Wider pathways and possibly line painting are needed in some instances to support multiple uses - A looped trail and integrated pathway network is desired - The site can benefit from additional wayfinding signage to identify field numbers and direct users to activity areas - Site furniture (benches, picnic tables, bike racks) should be reconsidered throughout the totality of the park, including its placement and a consistent standard of design

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Support Buildings and Amenities (washrooms, operations, etc.)

Germain Park contains several support and operational buildings, including:

- Chaytor Building (SMAA Field House) at the park's eastern edge, consisting of a concession, washroom, and meeting room; this building is maintained by Sarnia Minor Athletic Association, which has had an agreement with the City to operate the concessions since 1991
- Public Washroom and Lawn Bowling Clubhouse, which is located centrally in the park

- Centralized Operations Centre building and Greenhouse, which serve park-specific and city-wide functions for the City's parks, forestry and horticulture staff

Table 17: Assessment of Existing Support Buildings (washrooms, concessions, storage, operations centre)

Condition and Functionality	Usage and Community Input	Future Considerations
- The Chaytor Building was built in 1963 and is in fair condition; its roof was upgraded in 2012 - The central washroom/clubhouse building was built in 1989 and is in good condition - The greenhouse is nearing its end of life - The centralized operations centre is not ideally designed to meet current needs	- The community wants to see upgraded washrooms, with 46% of survey respondents identifying this as a high priority (the highest priority on the survey) - 28% of survey respondents typically use the washrooms when visiting Germain Park	- The City is evaluating the potential to move some or all of the centralized operations centre and/or greenhouse from Germain Park; if this moves forward, it would present an opportunity to replan this space and improve the connection between Germain Park, the Strangway Community Centre and the frontage on East Street (while still keeping a local maintenance depot to serve the park)







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4.6 Proposed Concepts

Three concepts have been prepared for Germain Park:

Concept 1: Core Improvements

Concept 2: Parking & Connectivity

Concept 3: Multi-use Recreation Facility

These are high-level designs intended to demonstrate how the site might be reorganized, renovated, and rethought, in order to meet the goals outlined in Section 4.4. The elements shown in each concept are not mutually exclusive; that is, a feature shown in one concept could potentially be implemented in another concept. In addition, implementation of the recommendations is intended to take place over time in phases, depending on funding availability, community priorities, and urgency (e.g., existing unsafe conditions).

Public input has been vital to the development of key park priorities and the concept plans. Through a community survey, in-park discussions, and workshops with user groups, many great ideas were put forward for improving Germain Park. Some of the changes advanced through the concepts plans include (not a complete list):

- installation of a splash pad and new accessible playground;
- new multi-use court for basketball, ice skating, etc.;
- dedicated pickleball courts;
- updated support buildings and washrooms;
- walking loop throughout park;
- improved and expanded parking lots;
- improvements to existing sports fields (seating, shelter, etc.);
- creating a permanent off-leash dog area;
- potential for an enhanced tennis court complex (e.g., winter bubble); and
- space for a multi-use indoor recreation facility (pending further study).

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The following table provides a summary of the key features of each proposed concept.

Table 18: Concept Comparison

	Concept 1: Core Improvements	Concept 2: Parking & Connectivity	Concept 3: Multi-use Recreation Facility
Existing amenities			
Soccer fields	5	5	5
Baseball diamonds	5	4 + 1* (relocate dia.4)	3
Off-leash dog park	relocate	relocate	relocate
Playground	replace	replace	replace
Tennis court	yes	yes	yes
Lawn bowling	yes	yes	yes
East washroom	yes	yes	replace
Central washroom	yes	relocate	yes
Formal gardens	yes	yes	yes
Community gardens	yes	yes	yes
New amenities			
Walking loop	yes	yes	yes
Shade structure / pavilion	4	4	4
Splash pad	yes	yes	yes
Pickleball courts	yes - 4	yes - 4	yes - 4
Basketball/multi-use court	yes	yes	yes
MURF facility	no	no	yes
Parking			
West (103 existing)	133	175	133
Central (110 existing)	259	193	333
East (140 existing)	173	263	266
Total (353 existing)	**565**	**631**	**732**

Each concept is illustrated and described in more detail below. General recommendations for park-wide amenities such as site furnishings, tree planting, and signage, are discussed at the end of this section.

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Figure 27: Proposed Concept #1: Core Improvements

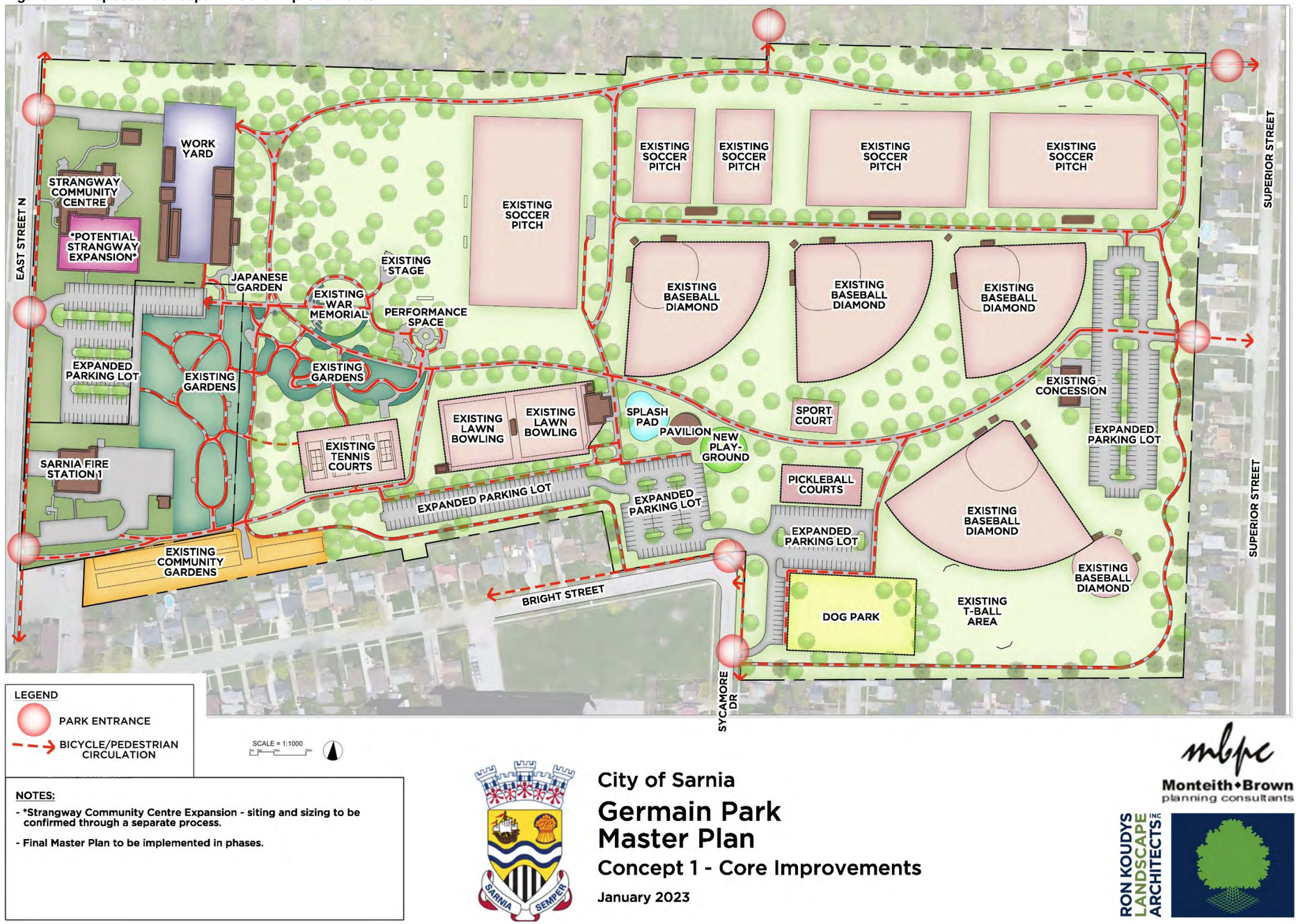


Figure 28: Proposed Concept #2: Parking & Connectivity



Figure 29: Proposed Concept #3: Multi-use Recreation Facility

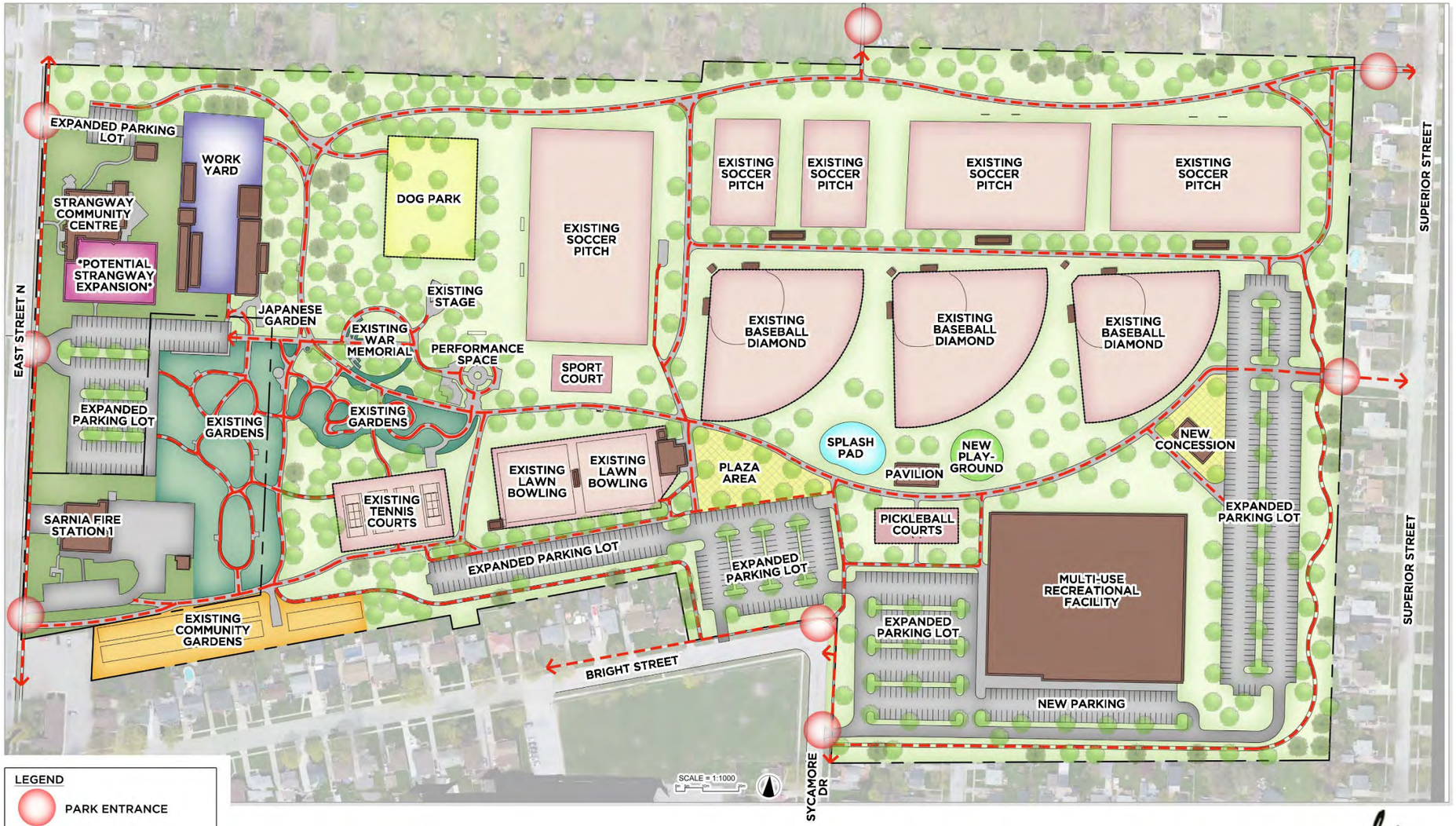


Figure 30: Example Images of New or Improved Park Amenities



SPRAY PAD



MULTI-SPORT COURT



SHELTER & CONCESSION



PLAYGROUND



PICKLEBALL COURTS

City of Sarnia

Germain Park Master Plan

Example Images

January 2023

Monteith+Brown planning consultants

RON KOUDYS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS INC

Concept 1 – Core Improvements

This concept illustrates the implementation of the core recommendations and community priorities, including a reconfigured central park area featuring:

- a new accessible playground to replace the existing play equipment;
- the addition of a splash pad;
- a shade structure / pavilion;
- four pickleball courts; and
- a multi-purpose sport court that can accommodate activities such as basketball and ball hockey, and function as a natural ice rink in winter.

Placing the multi-purpose and pickleball courts in this central area maintains distance from adjacent residential lots, reducing the possibility of noise-related issues. Locating the splash pad and playground together creates a larger play zone for children, establishing this space as a destination for families. Construction of the splash pad here may also be able to capitalize on existing site servicing (e.g., water, sewer) in this part of the park.

This concept proposes defined, formal parking areas associated with each primary site entrance (west, south, and east) to improve the visitor arrival experience and provide an overall sense of structure and organization to the park. In addition, expansion and reorganization of existing parking lots will result in a significant increase in parking spaces without the loss of functional parkland. Expanded parking areas include the former Jackson Pool site and the area south of the lawn bowling club.

Proposed new AODA-compliant pathways create accessible pedestrian connections between the parking areas and the sports fields. A park perimeter walking path loop offers new opportunities for recreation and better linkages to the surrounding neighbourhoods (e.g., formalized connections to London Road to the north and Superior Street to the east).

The off-leash dog park has been relocated to the allow for optimal layout of the central parking area and play amenities. This location also creates a better separation between the dog park and children's play areas. Relocating the dog park will provide an opportunity to install more appropriate fencing and support amenities (e.g., shade, water, waste receptacles), which are lacking in the current location.

This concept does not propose significant changes to the location or layout of the community gardens, formal gardens and memorial area, tennis courts, lawn bowling facilities, or sports fields. Ongoing maintenance of these amenities, coupled with targeted renovations, upgrades, functional improvements, and lifecycle repairs, will help ensure they continue to serve community needs.

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Concept 2 – Parking & Connectivity

In addition to implementing core recommendations, this concept emphasizes improved parking and vehicular circulation within the park. It proposes linking the east and central parking areas by an internal road through the southeast portion of the park. This will facilitate a more efficient parking experience during times of high park usage (e.g., sports tournaments, large events). For example, if the east parking lot is full, a visitor arriving at that location can continue directly to the central parking lot area through the park, rather than having to exit the park and navigate through the surrounding neighbourhood.

Care should be taken in the parking and vehicular circulation layout to provide a continuous path of travel with no or minimal dead ends that would cause confusion and congestion. Clear and visible signage should be added to direct visitors to another parking location if one lot is full.

Reconfiguration of the vehicular circulation will require the removal of baseball diamond 4. If needed it can be relocated to the former arena site.

The off-leash dog park has been moved to the open space between the premier/stadium soccer field and the parks operations yard. This location takes advantage of the existing mature trees in the area, which will provide much-needed shade, and establishes generous setbacks between the dog park and adjacent site uses and residential properties. A new parking area located in the existing operations yard will offer convenient access for dog park users; note: installation of this parking area is dependent on relocation of the City greenhouse and operations centre and may be a longer-term item.

Consultation with the lawn bowling club indicated that their existing building facilities are not in optimal condition and do not adequately serve their needs. Concept 2 proposes removal of the existing building including public washroom facilities, on the east side of the lawn bowling club, and building a new clubhouse building serving both the lawn bowling and tennis facilities. It also offers an opportunity to add a winter tennis dome over the existing courts. This new building and possible dome would be dependent on a cost-sharing agreement with user groups. The clubhouse would be served by the expanded parking lot south of the lawn bowling area.

The existing central public washrooms could be relocated to a new pavilion serving both the splash pad and playground areas, which would also act as the anchoring and welcome point in a new central plaza space. As with Concept 1, pickleball and multi-purpose courts have been located in this area, well away from adjacent residential properties.

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Concept 3 – Multi-Use Recreation Facility

This option illustrates the impacts of constructing an indoor multi-use recreation facility (MURF) on the site. The concept includes a building with a footprint of approximately 10,200 square metres – loosely based on a previous concept for the MURF for a different site – and the estimated 300 additional parking spaces that would be required to support this facility, on top of existing site parking.

The building has been placed in the southeast portion of the park, close to the former arena site, and in proximity to an existing park entrance and utility infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, hydro). Because it sits to the north of adjacent residential properties, sun/shade impacts will be minimized.

This location for the MURF will necessitate the removal of two existing baseball diamonds and associated T-ball areas. As with Concept 2, the off-leash dog park area has been relocated to the northwest part of the site.

This concept also illustrates a reconfigured visitor arrival area at the east end of the park, which can be implemented when the existing concession building requires replacement. It includes a new concession building, reoriented to address a pedestrian plaza, and new paths that reflect pedestrian desire lines between the parking lot and park amenities. Entrance and wayfinding signage should be incorporated into the plaza space to help welcome and orient visitors, and site furnishings such as benches and bike racks will help create a comfortable place to gather.

General Recommendations

The following recommendations should be applied to all the concept plans. They include strategies and considerations that are not fully depicted graphically on the concepts.

A. Site Furnishings

A consistent and coordinated palette of furniture should be developed for the park, including benches, bicycle racks, waste receptacles, bollards, tables, and planter boxes. Considerations in selecting furnishings include:

- durability of materials;
- comfort;
- ease of use for all demographic groups (e.g., include arms on benches to assist the elderly and disabled); and
- resistance to vandalism and other damage.

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Furniture may also be customized to reflect a theme unique to Germain Park. For example, colour, custom laser-cut designs, or plaques can be used to enhance appearance and tell a story.

Waste receptacles must be selected with consideration for maintenance issues as well. Maximum weight loads, types of pickup vehicles, frequency of visits, and winter access should all be reflected in the types chosen.

B. Wayfinding and Signage

Ease of navigation and wayfinding is an important factor when considering the visitor experience – visitors to a park take away a more positive impression when their visit is smooth and hassle-free.

Developing a consistent, uniform palette of signage is recommended, taking into consideration: sign hierarchy; legibility for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists; location; and graphic clarity. Signage types to consider includes park entrance signs, wayfinding and directional signs, interpretive and informational signs, and maps.

Signage style and branding should be coordinated with the site furnishings palette.

C. Lighting

A lighting strategy for the park should address a number of key areas, each with their own goals and requirements, including:

- recreational / sports field lighting;
- parking lots;
- pedestrian paths / site safety;
- building security; and
- aesthetic.

Key considerations for all types of lighting include: LED fixtures; light fixture and pole styles; paying careful attention to light levels, night sky compliance, light cut-offs; and light pollution onto neighbouring properties. Lighting timers and remote controllers can assist operations staff in managing lighting.

New and replacement lighting may be considered for Germain Park's primary ball diamonds and soccer fields, in response to demonstrated demand. Sports field lighting should adhere to all industry and recreational standards, ensuring safe play. Given the light height and intensity, special care should be taken to avoid light spill into residential properties.

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Parking lots require a different strategy, including a lower light intensity and different style of fixture. Uniformity of light coverage is important.

Design of site safety lighting should reflect pedestrian movement through site. Lighting should identify paths of travel but does not require uniform illumination, provided overly dark and bright spots are avoided. Lower light fixtures with a more decorative style provide safety and security at a pedestrian scale.

Building security lighting illuminates entrances and helps eliminate potential hiding places, allowing for easier monitoring from a distance by police and security personnel.

Aesthetic lighting can create unique artistic effects and ambience on the site, for example using colour that can be changed to reflect specific celebrations, or illuminating trees or other sculptural features. This type of lighting strategy would be best suited for more formal areas such as the floral gardens and Japanese Gardens. Event lighting for performance spaces can also be explored.

D. Tree Planting

A healthy tree population within the park is essential to: provide shade and thermal comfort; reduce flooding, soil erosion, and the urban heat island effect; create habitat for insects and animals; screen unwanted views and provide a visual buffer for neighbouring residential properties; and improve the aesthetic appearance and experience of the park. Exposure to nature and trees has also been shown to improve mental and physical health.

A program of infill and replacement tree planting should be developed to maintain the existing tree canopy and create new canopy where space allows. The program should promote species diversity, with an emphasis on native species and (where appropriate), non-invasive non-native suited to the site conditions. Seasonal interest, disease resistance, and low maintenance varieties are key factors in tree selection. In addition, existing and future tree habitat ranges should be considered, in light of climate change. In other words, tree species suited to warmer temperatures (such as those native to the Carolinian zone) may be more appropriate. Care should also be taken to stagger the timing and location of tree plantings, to build a diversity of tree maturities within a given area.

While the existing arboretum area is focused in the west and northwest portions of the park, it can be expanded to encompass the entire site. The City may consider a tree labelling and interpretive signage program, building on the existing efforts in the park.

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E. Sports Field Improvements

The existing baseball diamonds are generally in good condition, but some are subject to drainage issues, which can affect their use. Drainage should be reviewed at a large scale across the site to identify all problem areas, overall grading and drainage patterns, and existing underground stormwater infrastructure limitations and opportunities. A comprehensive and coordinated strategy should be developed to address the issues. This strategy should also consider options for phased implementation, if needed.

Ball diamond fencing and lighting is in need of replacement or upgrades, and other repairs and improvements include concrete pads under bleachers, safety netting, storage, and shade structures.

While the existing soccer fields are in good to excellent condition, possible improvements include shade structures and additional lighting (if supported by demand).

F. Community Gardens

The community garden is a well used and popular amenity and has been recently expanded. Additional expansion may be required to meet demand; space is available to the east of the existing gardens, if needed. User concerns regarding site security and theft should be reviewed. The addition of better fencing and signage may help address these issues. Additional seating and picnic tables should be considered to enhance users' experience and promote social interaction, as well as a storage area for communal tools, equipment, and community notices.

Example of Community Garden Storage Area



G. Formal Gardens

Section 4.5 outlines a number of important considerations for the formal gardens. In addition, ongoing maintenance demands may be reduced by eliminating the existing grass borders around the floral planting beds. Regular mowing and edging of these sod strips require a high level of manual labour that could be focused elsewhere on site.

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5. Strangway Community Centre

This component of this Master Plan examines a potential operating model for the Strangway Community Centre, which is proposed to be expanded through the addition of a gymnasium. Throughout the City's Indoor Multi-Use Recreation Facility Feasibility Study, the public has consistently highlighted the importance of recreation activities, including their support for the addition of a gymnasium to the municipal inventory – 78% of community survey respondents indicated that a gymnasium should be a medium or high priority for the City.

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5.1 About the Strangway Community Centre

Located on the western edge of Germain Park, at 260 East Street, is the Strangway Community Centre. The Centre was established in 1989 as an older adult centre through a one-million-dollar donation from William Strangway, as well as contributions from the Province, the City and other donors. The Centre was expanded in 2008 and programming has since been expanded to adults aged 20 years and over.

The Centre is approximately 9,000 square feet in size and consists of a variety of spaces, including: the Strangway Room (200-person capacity); Studio Room (30-person capacity); Craft Room (25-person capacity); Committee Room (10-person capacity); a café and kitchen; Hobby Shop (separated building with woodworking equipment); and more. These spaces are heavily used for older adult programming during the daytime and into the evening; they are also available for community rentals. In 2021, the City was successful in obtaining a grant to expand the centre by adding a gymnasium.

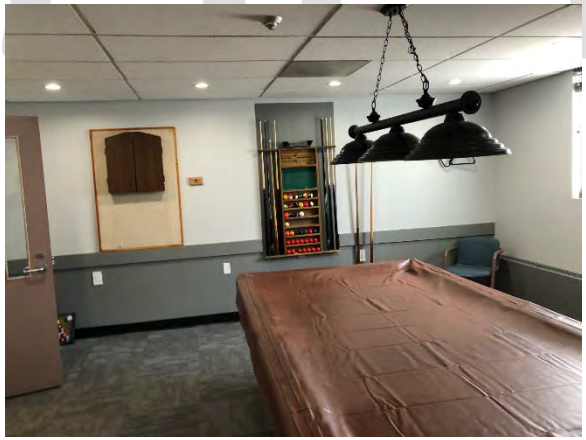
As the only municipal recreation centre in Sarnia, the Strangway Community Centre supports most of the City's recreation programming. The City offers programming in response to demonstrated community needs, with a focus on affordable and accessible activities that offer introductory-level experiences for residents. The primary types of programs and services offered at the Strangway Community Centre include:

- Arts and Crafts
- Book Clubs
- Cards
- Dance
- Day Trips

- Fitness and Wellness
- Lunch / Café (closed since the pandemic; food services are under review)
- Music
- Recreational Sports, including some that occurs off-site (e.g., Germain Park, school gymnasiums, etc.)
- Special Interest (e.g., languages, hobbies, seminars, support groups, etc.)
- Woodworking






5.2 Gymnasium Expansion

Local Demand

For several years, the City of Sarnia has been experiencing an increased demand for indoor recreational activities. This is due to several factors, including:

- The aging demographic, which is creating additional demand for activities at the Strangway Community Centre, including more active programs that can benefit from gymnasium-type spaces;
- Growth of large fitness classes and gymnasium sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, and pickleball; in particular, the popularity of pickleball has grown substantially in recent years; and
- Lack of adequate program spaces as there are currently no municipal gymnasiums to support City programs and community rentals; while school gymnasiums are sometimes used, access can be limited and unreliable.

There are currently no municipal gymnasiums in Sarnia, although there is one at the Sarnia-Lambton YMCA and Huron Oaks Golf Club. The City and user groups rely primarily on gymnasiums provided by the school boards and Lambton College, which recently built a large two-court gymnasium. The College gyms are used primarily to support their own internal programming and athletics, with community use when available. High school gymnasiums are also in high demand; however, access can be challenging and unreliable as it is dependent a variety of factors beyond the City's control. Sarnia has also experienced the loss of school gymnasiums in recent years.

Promoting active living and higher levels of physical activity are strategic priorities for Sarnia, as is facilitating recreational activities for all age groups. Active healthy living activities can be accommodated within properly designed multi-use spaces, such as gymnasiums with suitable flooring, adequate ceiling height, storage, etc.

The City's 2019 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan indicated that the current supply of public gymnasiums in Sarnia is insufficient to address the full range of needs. An integrated model that combines a gymnasium with a multi-use recreation centre was proposed as the preferred approach for Sarnia.

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To gain a better understanding of needs and priorities, the City's 2022 MURF Study examined community demand for a municipal gymnasium. Half (49%) of respondents to the MURF survey identified a gymnasium as a high priority, suggesting strong community support. Further, user groups were asked to quantify future usage. Although not all potential user groups participated, those that did expressed an interest in renting 41 to 54+ hours of gymnasium time per week during the fall/winter season (and 21 to 24 hours per week during the spring/summer). This would fill 80% to 100% of evening and weekend prime time hours (based on an assumption of 53 prime time hours per week). This demand could be greater if Sarnia's indoor sports leagues were to shift usage over from other facilities and/or if the City were to expand their evening and weekend programming. Demand may also be affected if the City moves forward with building an indoor turf facility. These findings suggest that there is sufficient pent-up demand for a municipal gymnasium that can offer a blend of City programming and community rentals.

Adding a Gymnasium to the Strangway Community Centre

Through the Government of Canada's Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), the City was successful in its grant application to add a gymnasium onto the Strangway Community Centre. The objective of the application was to increase access to recreation and leisure options for seniors and adults over the age of 20 and to continue to improve and promote an active lifestyle for older adults to help decrease isolation and support healthy aging. This program will provide 73.33% (co-funded by the Federal and Provincial Governments) of the estimated $3.57 million project cost.

The Strangway Community Centre is centrally located and is the only public recreation centre in the City of Sarnia (the Sarnia-Lambton YMCA is a non-profit facility largely available to members). It is a heavily programmed facility that serves multiple audiences, but there is limited capacity to increase program activities and services without further expansion. Adding a gymnasium would make the facility more multi-use and address stated needs in the community.

The Centre was originally designed to be a space for seniors to gather, socialize, and participate in traditional seniors' activities such as cards. This profile has evolved significantly over the years as the interests of members and the community have come to include more active pursuits (e.g., fitness, pickleball, volleyball, etc.) and lifelong learning options (e.g., languages, arts, woodworking, etc.). The pickleball, volleyball and group fitness programs are limited by space availability and have considerable waitlists. While the City uses an estimated 15 to 20 hours per week at elementary school gymnasiums, these spaces are small and not consistently available during desired times.

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The opportunity to introduce a gymnasium with a larger footprint and higher ceiling than the Strangway Room would allow for the expansion of adult and older adult programming during the daytime (e.g., fitness, pickleball, etc.), as well as offering a purpose-built and municipally-controlled space for community programming and rentals on evenings and weekends.

A sampling of activities that could be accommodated within a gymnasium are shown in the following table. The community survey found that one-third of Sarnia residents would be likely to use the gymnasium for volleyball (37%), pickleball (36%), badminton (35%), basketball (33%), and seniors' activities (32%).

Table 19: Potential Gymnasium Activities

Expanded Adult and Older Adult Activities	Potential Community Rentals
• Pickleball • Indoor walking soccer • Volleyball • Badminton • Fitness and wellness activities • Dancing • Large gatherings • Special Events • And more	• Basketball • Volleyball • Badminton • Baseball training • Ball hockey • Indoor tennis • Futsal / indoor soccer • Martial arts • Gymnastics • Fitness and dance classes • Sports for persons with disabilities • Large gatherings (e.g., church service, etc.)

Estimates suggest that a new gymnasium at the Strangway Community Centre would be fully subscribed from the start, though decisions would have to be made as to the appropriate blend of City programming and community rentals. Additional considerations for this operating model are discussed in the next section.

For the City's consideration, below are some pros and cons of expanding the Strangway Community Centre to accommodate a gymnasium. Certainly, one of the most significant advantages of adding a gymnasium at this site is readiness – the need is now and much of the funding is in place from a grant. This site also presents an excellent opportunity to expand needed programs and to enhance the Centre's ability to serve a broader market of residents.

Table 20: Advantages and Disadvantages of Adding a Gymnasium to the Strangway Community Centre

Possible Advantages	Possible Disadvantages
• **Funding** – the City has received a grant to assist with this project • **Readiness** – the site is serviced and zoned for this use • **Multi-use Recreation Centre** – a gymnasium would expand the facility's versatility and service to residents • **All Ages Hub** – the expansion will greatly improve the ability of the Centre to serve as an all-ages recreation hub for the City and strengthening engagement from younger age groups through inter-generational activities • **Municipal Programming** – there is a demonstrated need for a gymnasium to complement and expand existing municipal programs, as well as free up time in the Centre's other activity spaces • **Location** – the facility is centrally located, on a transit line, and has trail/park connections • **Economies of Scale** – the Centre has a staffing model and support infrastructure in place to promote efficient operations	• **Impact on Existing Uses** – the exact location of the gymnasium is yet to be determined; if the centre is expanded to the north, this would impact the Hobby Shop and if expanded to the east, this would impact the City Greenhouse • **Site Configuration** – the site size may restrict expansion or further expansion; additional parking will likely be required to the south • **Community Perceptions** – many residents perceive the Strangway Community Centre as a senior's centre, although it is open to those aged 20+; a new and transparent operating model will be required

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Including a Gymnasium in the Proposed MURF

A 2022 study found sufficient demand for an indoor multi-use recreation facility (MURF) that would supporting a wide variety of recreation and leisure activities for all age groups. Three primary sites were identified for further study, including Germain Park (most likely on the eastern side of the park, further away from the Strangway Community Centre). Core components included an indoor turf field, indoor track for community use, batting cages, and multi-use activity spaces. The need for a gymnasium was assessed but was ultimately not advanced as the City received the grant to develop a gymnasium at the Strangway Community Centre.

However, should the City wish to reconsider the location of the proposed gymnasium, the MURF would be a logical candidate due to the community sport focus of the facility. For the City's consideration, below are some pros and cons of adding a gymnasium to the proposed MURF.

Table 21: Advantages and Disadvantages of Adding a Gymnasium to the Proposed MURF

Possible Advantages	Possible Disadvantages
• **A Multi-use Sports Facility** – a gymnasium would be a strong complement to an indoor turf facility and would create a hub for local sports • **Community Rentals and Programming** – there is a demonstrated need for a gymnasium to address community rental needs • **Purpose-built Design** – the facility would likely have fewer site/building restrictions compared to expanding an existing facility • **Economies of Scale** – the proposed facility would have a staffing model and support infrastructure in place to promote efficient operations	• **Readiness** – the MURF is a long-term project; a site has not yet been selected for the proposed MURF and funding is not yet in place • **Funding** – the ability to transfer the existing grant funding to another project/site is unknown at this time • **Certainty** – as noted above, the MURF is not yet a tangible capital project; not building a gymnasium at the Strangway Community Centre may be a missed opportunity

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5.3 Operating Model Review

Assuming that a gymnasium is added to the Strangway Community Centre, this section examines a potential operating model for the new space, including possible programming, hours, staffing, and high-level costs.

Note: This section presents one possible operating model example for the City's consideration. Actual hours, programming, staff, hours, and costs may differ from what is proposed.

Hours

Pandemic closures have led to reduced hours and staffing at the Centre, though these are slowly recovering. Extended hours will be required to maximize public access to the gymnasium. Three-quarters of survey respondents agree the Strangway Community Centre should offer programs in the evening and on weekends.

Past, present and future (proposed) hours for the Centre are listed below.

Table 22: Strangway Community Centre Hours, Current and Proposed

Time Period	Weekday	Weekend
Prior to the Pandemic (2019)	Monday to Friday: 8:30 am to 8:30 pm	Saturday: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Sunday: open for rentals as required
Current (2022)	Monday to Wed.: 8:30 am to 8:00 pm Thursday to Friday: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm	Saturday: closed Sunday: closed
Proposed (future – gymnasium)	Monday to Friday: 8:30 am to 10:00 pm	Saturday: 9:00 am to 9:00 pm Sunday: 12:00 am to 5:00 pm

Potential Programming

As noted above, there is considerable demand for both municipal programming and community rentals within a gymnasium setting. The gymnasium should be designed and managed to accommodate both municipal and community uses and for people of all ages and abilities.

The following principles have been established as a starting point to help guide these decisions; they are subject to change at the City's discretion:

a) **Daytime use:** Strangway Community Centre programming for adults and older adults aged 20+ years should be given first consideration for usage of the gymnasium during core operating hours, generally being 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday. This includes programs delivered by the City and its partners.

b) **Evening use:** Use after 5:00 pm on weekdays (Monday to Thursday) will primarily focus on municipal programming (all ages, including a blend of drop-in and registered programming), with community rentals being secondary and in keeping with an approved allocation policy (see below). This includes a reduced reliance on City programs within schools (approximately 15 to 20 hours per week).

c) **Weekend use:** Use on Saturday mornings will primarily focus on municipal programming (all ages). Use on weekend afternoons and evenings (including Friday evening) will primarily focus on community rentals, in keeping with an approved allocation policy (see below).

d) **Summer and Holiday use:** Consideration should be given to also using the gymnasium for day camps during the summer and holiday periods.

e) **Special Events:** Dates for special events that would impact other programs/rentals should be identified well in advance to allow for block-out dates and program adjustments.

f) **Allocation:** The City should develop a space allocation policy to guide decisions related to fair and equitable community use of the gymnasium, similar to the process that is used for ice time at arenas.

g) **Program and Rental Fees:** The provision of affordable and accessible activities can support a wider range of users. The City should continue to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of no- to low-cost programs that promote universal participation for programs that support healthy living, introductory skill development, etc. Rental rates should be established for the gymnasium that represent fair market value, with consideration of reduced fees for affiliated groups such as youth and/or non-profit organizations.

h) **Partnerships:** The City is encouraged to foster and expand partnerships that promote equitable access to municipal spaces for all residents. Where appropriate, consideration may be given to agreements that engage other providers in the delivery of service.

i) **Concurrent Programming:** Due to its size, the gymnasium may be capable of accommodating multiple activities at the same time. Program decisions should seek to maximize access to this

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space, while recognizing that concurrent activities must be complementary. Community rentals should be based on a full gymnasium floor.

Staffing

The Strangway Community Centre is operated by the City using a blend of full-time and contract staff, as well as volunteers. Although not considered as part of the Centre's staffing unit, the City's Recreation Superintendent also works from the facility and provides coverage.

It is assumed that the Strangway Community Centre and new gymnasium will continue to be managed by the City of Sarnia under a similar operating model. Additional staff resources will be needed to support the expanded hours and programming opportunities offered by the gymnasium. This is proposed to include:

- extending the part-time operator coverage to address increased evening and weekend hours;
- extending the contract janitor (consideration may be given to converting this to a municipal building attendant position); and
- adding additional contract staff and volunteers to facilitate the Centre's programming.

With the pending retirement of the Recreation Superintendent and subsequent expansion of the gymnasium, the addition of a Facility Manager may also be considered to address the expanded scope of work. It is our understanding that when the Centre began operating in the 1980s, it was staffed by a full-time Facility Manager plus additional full and part-time staff. This requires a more fulsome review that considers other needs within the corporation and is not included in our cost estimates.

Table 23: Strangway Community Centre Staffing Levels, Current and Proposed

Time Period	Full-time Staff	Part-time Staff	Contract
Prior to the Pandemic (2019)	1 Community Coordinator	Evening coverage (student)	Janitor (off-hours coverage), 23.5 hrs/wk Program instructors
Current (2022)	1 Community Coordinator	none	Janitor (off-hours coverage), 17.5 hrs/wk Program instructors
Proposed (future – gymnasium)	1 Facility Manager (further review required)	Evening and weekend coverage (2 positions)	Janitor (off-hours coverage), 23.5 hrs/wk

Time Period	Full-time Staff	Part-time Staff	Contract
	1 Community Coordinator		Program instructors

Revenues and Expenditures

The Centre's operating budget (pre-pandemic and current) are shown below – both sets of figures show a very steady annual municipal subsidy of approximately $108,000. It is noted that the 2022 budget includes slightly reduced hours, staffing and program hours due to pandemic recovery, as well as the discontinuance of food services.

Table 24: Strangway Community Centre Operating Budgets, Past and Current

	2019 Actuals	2022 Budget
Revenues (e.g., program and membership fees, provincial subsidy, room rentals, etc.)	$342,269	$332,650
Expenditures (e.g., staffing, utilities, program supplies, cleaning, building maintenance, etc.)	$450,026	$440,841
Net Annual Cost (deficit)	**$107,757**	**$108,191**

As noted above, the Centre offers a very wide range of programs to the community. Prior to the pandemic, the centre accommodated an average of 250 visitors every weekday and 100 visitors per day on weekends, for over 60,000 visits per year. Currently, the Centre has approximately 450 members aged 50 years, though a large portion of facility users access programs outside of the membership structure. The Centre accommodates approximately 5,000 program registrants per year, plus an estimated 8,000+ drop-in participants annually.

If the City proceeds to add a gymnasium to the Strangway Community Centre, the potential impact on the current operating budget is estimated to require an annual operating subsidy of approximately $18,000 over and above current funding levels. Details and assumptions are contained in the following table.

Table 25: Strangway Community Centre High-level Operating Cost Impacts, Proposed

	Potential Cost Impact over pre-pandemic budgets	Notes and Assumptions
Revenues		
Additional Program Revenue (excludes existing programming)	$50,000	Assumes 4 sessions of programming, with 14 new classes per session (1 hour each, with the gym divided in two) at an average of $60/class
Gymnasium Rentals (community use)	$60,000	Assumes 20 hours of community rentals per week for 40 weeks at $75/hr (same rate as the secondary gymnasium at Lambton College)
Total Revenues	$110,000	
Expenditures		
Staffing* and benefits	$51,500	Includes additional weekend coverage (student and contract janitor) plus added costs for program convenor and instructors
Utilities	$30,000	Proportionate to existing Centre costs based on sf
Program Supplies	$30,000	Assume 50% of program revenue, plus advertising and equipment
Capital Maintenance	$18,500	Assume 0.5% of estimated capital project budget ($3.7M)
Recovery of School Gym Rental Fees	-$2,000	Assume that City programming would shift to the municipal gymnasium, for an annual savings
Total Expenditures	$128,000	
Net Annual Cost Estimate (deficit)	**$18,000**	

* excludes potential new Facility Manager position and conversion of contract janitor to municipal building attendant position (further review required)

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Next Steps

The purpose of this section was to inform the City's decision to build a gymnasium at the Strangway Community Centre by identifying a potential operating model and related considerations.

There is still more work to do to make this a reality and approval is ultimately required from City Council for this capital project to proceed. Site-specific assessments are required to determine readiness and costs, potentially including geotechnical analysis, structural engineering assessments, detailed design work, etc. Decisions also need to be made regarding the placement of the expanded space on the site, parking requirements, funding sources, etc. Further community consultation may be required prior to construction.

In terms of the gymnasium design, a priority should be placed on accessible, functional and flexible space capable of serving the needs of the community for decades to come. We heard from the public about the importance of access to adequate change rooms, barrier-free washrooms, storage, and parking. It is in the City's interest to enhance the interface and visual connection between the inside and outside elements of the site, including Germain Park. Consideration should also be given to safety and security, including securing other spaces within the Centre that are not in regular use on evenings and weekends.

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6. Capital Costs and Phasing Plan for Germain Park

To be completed following selection of preferred concept plan.

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Appendix A: Record of Public Input

Community Survey

GERMAIN PARK

1) How often do you or members of your household visit Germain Park?

	#	%
Never	30	4%
Few Times a Year	249	31%
Few Times a Month	140	17%
Weekly	295	36%
Daily	91	11%
Unsure	11	1%
answered question	**816**	**100%**
skipped question	0	

2) How do you typically travel to Germain Park?

	#	%
Car	553	71%
Public Transit	5	1%
Cycling	50	6%
Walking	172	22%
Unsure	2	0%
answered question	**782**	**100%**
skipped question	34	

3) How long does it take you to travel to Germain Park?

	#	%
0-5 Minutes	171	22%
5-10 Minutes	350	45%
10-15 Minutes	158	20%
15 Minutes or More	102	13%
Unsure	2	0%
answered question	**783**	**100%**
skipped question	33	

4) When you visit Germain Park, typically how long do you stay?

	#	%
0-30 Minutes	95	12%
30-60 Minutes	257	33%
1-2 Hours	309	39%
2 Hours or More	115	15%
Unsure	8	1%
answered question	**784**	**100%**
skipped question	32	

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5) What do you typically use Germain Park for? (select all that apply)

	#	%
Enjoying the Gardens, Trees and Open Space	470	60%
Picnics	90	12%
Gardening Plots	70	9%
Walking	438	56%
Jogging	46	6%
Baseball	171	22%
Lawn Bowling	40	5%
Pickleball	46	6%
Soccer	237	30%
Playground	219	28%
Tennis	126	16%
Special Events (use of stage, memorial, etc.)	100	13%
Using the Off-Leash Dog Park	169	22%
Washrooms	220	28%
Other (not specified)	56	7%
answered question	**780**	
skipped question	36	

6) How satisfied are you with the current features in Germain Park?

	1		2		4		5		6				
	Very Unsatisfied		**Unsatisfied**		**Satisfied**		**Very Satisified**		**Unsure**		**Answered**		**Skipped**
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Arboretum and Japanese Garden	32	4%	37	5%	370	47%	244	31%	105	13%	788	100%	28
Rentable Garden Plots	10	1%	25	3%	219	29%	87	11%	420	55%	761	100%	55
Decorative Gardens (Cox Family Gardens)	29	4%	19	2%	335	43%	264	34%	136	17%	783	100%	33
Lawn Bowling Greens	9	1%	18	2%	221	29%	60	8%	445	59%	753	100%	63
Memorial and Public Art	22	3%	42	6%	290	38%	123	16%	286	37%	763	100%	53
Off-Leash Dog Park	48	6%	85	11%	238	31%	95	13%	294	39%	760	100%	56
Parking Lots	108	14%	195	25%	338	43%	87	11%	55	7%	783	100%	33
Pathways and Trails	23	3%	89	11%	429	55%	180	23%	63	8%	784	100%	32
Playground	22	3%	94	12%	345	45%	80	10%	222	29%	763	100%	53
Baseball Diamonds	39	5%	58	8%	304	40%	78	10%	280	37%	759	100%	57
Soccer Fields	24	3%	59	8%	336	44%	106	14%	239	31%	764	100%	52
Tennis Courts	48	6%	87	11%	257	34%	44	6%	324	43%	760	100%	56
Washrooms and Concession Buildings	87	11%	188	24%	293	38%	39	5%	166	21%	773	100%	43

7) What would you like to be able to do in the park that is not currently offered? (open ended response)

	#
answered question	816
skipped	0

Open-ended

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8) What priority would you place on the following considerations for Germain Park?

	2 Low Priority		3 Medium Priority		4 High Priority		5 Unsure		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Adding a Pavilion or Shelter	196	25%	299	39%	237	31%	38	5%	770	100%	46
Adding a Splash Pad	181	23%	216	28%	342	44%	32	4%	771	100%	45
Adding Directional or Wayfinding Signage	430	57%	193	25%	81	11%	54	7%	758	100%	58
Adding Lights to the Pathways	137	18%	301	39%	297	39%	34	4%	769	100%	47
Adding More Benches	175	23%	325	42%	234	30%	42	5%	776	100%	40
Adding More Pathways for Walking	218	28%	269	35%	234	30%	49	6%	770	100%	46
Planting More Trees	170	22%	254	33%	303	39%	43	6%	770	100%	46
Improving Parking	211	27%	233	30%	289	37%	38	5%	771	100%	45
More Special Events	199	26%	261	34%	230	30%	74	10%	764	100%	52
Upgrading the Off-leash Dog Park	334	44%	126	17%	153	20%	142	19%	755	100%	61
Upgrading the Playground	173	23%	245	32%	219	29%	118	16%	755	100%	61
Upgrading the Ball Diamonds (adding lights, etc.)	245	32%	184	24%	163	22%	165	22%	757	100%	59
Upgrading the Soccer Fields (adding lights, etc.)	248	33%	200	26%	161	21%	147	19%	756	100%	60
Upgrading the Tennis Courts	243	31%	178	23%	193	25%	159	21%	773	100%	43
Upgrading the Washrooms	90	12%	243	31%	359	46%	84	11%	776	100%	40

Other High Priorities not listed above (open ended response)

	#
answered question	814
skipped	2

Open-ended

9) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree		6 Unsure		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Germain Park has the right mix of "sport amenities" (Ex. sports fields, ball diamonds, and courts)	19	2%	92	12%	513	64%	116	15%	59	7%	799	100%	17
Germain Park has the right mix of "casual use amenities" (Ex. pathways, gardens, playgrounds, and open space)	17	2%	120	15%	499	63%	103	13%	47	6%	786	100%	30
Germain Park has the right mix of "support amenities" (Ex. seating, washrooms, shade, and parking)	83	10%	346	44%	272	34%	31	4%	62	8%	794	100%	22
You would like to use Germain Park more in the winter, if there were more year-round outdoor amenities.	19	2%	60	8%	334	42%	299	37%	87	11%	799	100%	17
Germain Park meets the needs of all ages, from children to older adults.	31	4%	161	20%	429	54%	80	10%	92	12%	793	100%	23
Germain Park is well maintained.	22	3%	87	11%	484	60%	165	21%	44	5%	802	100%	14
You feel safe in Germain Park.	26	3%	132	17%	474	60%	104	13%	53	7%	789	100%	27
Investment in Germain Park should be a high priority for City Council.	15	2%	60	7%	334	42%	345	43%	48	6%	802	100%	14
Community fundraising should be used to help offset the costs of improving Germain Park.	32	4%	109	14%	391	49%	145	18%	115	15%	792	100%	24

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10) Do you support an addition of a splash pad in Germain Park?

	#	%
Yes	587	72%
No	128	16%
Unsure	101	12%
answered question	**816**	**100%**
skipped question	0	

11) Do you have any comments regarding the addition of new waterplay features to Germain Park? (open ended response)

	#	
answered question	813	Open-ended
skipped	3	

12) General comments or suggestions regarding Germain Park. (open ended response)

	#	
answered question	815	Open-ended
skipped	1	

STRANGWAY CENTRE

13) How frequently do you or members of your household visit the Strangway Community Centre?

	#	%
Never	564	69%
Few Times a Year	115	14%
Few Times a Month	26	3%
Weekly	72	9%
Daily	8	1%
Unsure	31	4%
answered question	**816**	**100%**
skipped question	0	

14) What do you typically use the Centre for? (select all that apply)

	#	%
General Interest Programs (language, etc.)	73	31%
Arts	22	9%
Book Club	7	3%
Cards	31	13%
Dance	20	9%
Day Trips	33	14%
Exercise	100	43%
Lunch or Cafe	44	19%
Music	28	12%
Recreational Sports	62	27%
Room Rental	12	5%
Woodworking	14	6%
Other (not specified)	27	12%
answered question	**233**	
skipped question	583	

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15) How likely would you be to use the new Gymnasium for the following activities, if it was open to all ages?

	1 Very Unlikely		2 Unlikely		4 Likely		5 Very Likely		6 Unsure		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Basketball	244	33%	167	22%	144	19%	104	14%	89	12%	748	100%	68
Badminton	215	29%	175	24%	176	24%	88	12%	90	12%	744	100%	72
Pickleball	211	28%	170	22%	153	20%	122	16%	103	14%	759	100%	57
Volleyball	224	30%	169	23%	168	22%	105	14%	81	11%	747	100%	69
Seniors Activities	293	38%	120	16%	143	19%	101	13%	114	15%	771	100%	45

16) Are there any other activities not listed above that you would be very likely to use the new Strangway Centre gymnasium for? (open ended response)

	#	
answered question	815	Open-ended
skipped	1	

17) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement.

	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree		6 Unsure		Answered		Skipped
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
The Strangway Centre should offer programs in the evening and on weekends.	10	1%	20	3%	358	45%	241	30%	162	20%	791	100%	25
The Strangway Centre should offer programs to residents of all ages, not just adults and seniors.	42	5%	119	15%	269	34%	236	30%	120	15%	786	100%	30

18) General comments or suggestions regarding the Strangway Community Centre. (open ended response)

	#	
answered question	814	Open-ended
skipped	2	

DEMOGRAPHICS

19) What are the first three characters of your postal code?

	#	%
N7S	314	38%
N7T	287	35%
N7V	99	12%
N7W	19	2%
N7X	6	1%
N0N	88	11%
Other	3	0%
answered question	**816**	**100%**
skipped question	0	

20) Please indicate the number of people in your household that fall into the below age categories.

	# of Households	% of Households	# of People	% of People	2022 Census (pop.)
0-9 Years Old	274	34%	493	19%	9%
10-19 Years Old	223	27%	384	15%	10%
20-34 Years Old	269	33%	433	17%	18%
35-54 Years Old	394	48%	670	26%	23%
55-69 Years Old	274	34%	426	16%	23%
70+ Years Old	136	17%	196	8%	17%
Total			**2,602**	**100%**	**100%**

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Pop-up Consultations – Open-ended Input

What do you Like Most about Germain Park and the Strangway Community Centre? (n=6)

- Dog park is awesome (2)
- Beautiful garden
- Nature
- New soccer field is great!
- Right spot!

What can be Improved about Germain Park? (n=126)

- Add a park pavilion between ball diamonds (8)
- Add a portable restroom beside compost
- Add a splash park (3)
- Add a water tap in dog park
- Add accessible parking at Germain Ball Diamonds
- Add amenities for young families
- Add an obstacle course into the dog park
- Add an outdoor rink
- Add batting cages (3)
- Add more parking
- Add naturalized green spaces
- Add new signage for ball diamonds (2)
- Add picnic tables next to the garden
- Add tool shed by the compost & garden
- Add Traffic Calming at park entrances
- Add trails and pathways
- Add trees
- Additional lighting for ball diamonds
- Build a rec centre
- Create trails along park perimeter
- Fix ball diamond gates
- Fix benches at ball diamond dugouts
- Fix drainage on large ball diamond (4)
- Garden maintenance
- Improve dog park grass surface
- Improve field conditions - not gravel (3)
- Improve grass walkability around ball diamonds
- Improve park safety (2)

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- Improve safety and visibility for playground & new splash pad
- install a fence with a gate around vegetable garden (2)
- Install an artificial turf field
- Install poles to keep people from driving through the park
- Install storage units for sports equipment
- Install umpire change rooms
- Lighting in park
- Maintain park spaces
- Misting poles for adults
- More bleachers around ball diamonds
- More pickleball courts (2)
- More shade and trees
- More trail connections to other parks
- Restrict vehicles from driving through park after ball games
- Widen main path and paint lines to accommodate bikes

What can be Improved about the Strangway Community Centre? (n=3)

- Pickleball needs a larger space (2)
- Overall space to support programs is limited

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Appendix B: Detailed Cost Estimates

To be completed following selection of preferred concept plan.

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