

Township of Woolwich

# **PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

May 2024



# Contents

Executive Summary .....	6
1. Introduction.....	9
1.1. What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?.....	9
1.2. How is the Plan Organized?.....	10
1.3. Investing in Parks and Recreation.....	11
1.4. Study Area Overview .....	12
1.5. How this Plan was Developed.....	12
1.6. Planning Context.....	13
Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe..	13
Region of Waterloo Official Plan .....	14
Township of Woolwich Official Plan .....	14
Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines.....	15
Legislative Acts and Recent Changes .....	15
2. Community Context .....	18
2.1. Growth Outlook and Socio-Demographic Profile.....	18
Projected Growth .....	19
Socio-Demographic Considerations .....	20
Other Considerations.....	20
2.2. Overview of Parks and Recreation Trends.....	22
Decline in Youth Sports Participation.....	22
Multi-Use Spaces.....	22
Accessibility for All Users.....	22
Parks as Community Gathering Spaces .....	23
Health Benefits of Parks and Recreation .....	23
Role of Parks in Reducing Urban Heat Islands.....	23
Green Infrastructure and Strategies for Creating Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Parks and Recreation Facilities.....	23
Technological Trends .....	24
2.3. Community Engagement.....	25
Community Surveys.....	25
Stakeholder Questionnaire .....	27





3.	Vision and Guiding Principles .....	30
3.1.	Overview .....	30
3.2	Vision .....	30
3.3	Goals and Objectives .....	30
4.	Parks System .....	33
4.1.	Parks Classification System .....	34
	Neighbourhood Parks .....	36
	Community Parks .....	37
	Specialized/Cultural Parks .....	38
	Connector Parks .....	39
	Natural Areas/Open Space .....	40
4.2.	Parkland Design and Development.....	41
	Design Principles .....	42
	Development Process.....	43
4.3.	Parks System .....	44
	Breslau .....	45
	Elmira .....	47
	St. Jacobs .....	49
	Rural Settlements .....	51
4.4.	Parkland Supply and Future Need .....	52
4.5.	Locating Future Parks .....	54
5.	Recreation Facilities .....	56
5.1.	Outdoor Recreation Facilities .....	56
	Ball Diamonds.....	58
	Soccer Fields .....	60
	Soccer Fields.....	60
	Playgrounds.....	62
	Outdoor Ice Pads.....	64
	Skate Parks .....	65
	Splash Pads .....	66
	Tennis Courts .....	67
	Trails.....	69



---

5.2. Indoor Recreation Facilities.....	71
Summary of Indoor Recreation Facilities .....	72
Woolwich Memorial Centre .....	73
St. Jacobs Arena .....	74
Breslau Community Centre.....	75
Rural Community Centres / Community Halls .....	76
5.3. Recreation Programming and Usage.....	77
Arena Usage.....	77
Pool Usage .....	79
5.4. Recreation Facility Supply and Future Need.....	80
Outdoor Recreation Facilities.....	80
Indoor Recreation Facilities .....	81
5.5. Locating Future Recreation Facilities.....	83
6. Recommendations and Implementation .....	86
Implementation Strategy.....	86
Planning for Growth.....	86
Maintaining the Existing System.....	87
6.1. Major Action Items .....	88
6.2. Strategic Directions .....	89
Best Practices.....	89
Community Engagement, Capacity-Building and Partnerships .....	89
Parkland .....	90
Other Actions and Strategic Directions .....	90
6.3. Monitoring .....	91
6.4. Financial Considerations.....	91
Parkland Acquisition .....	92
Park Development and Recreation Facilities .....	93



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Executive Summary

Woolwich's parks and recreation system is a vital public service. It contributes to the health and well-being of the Township's residents, facilitates social interactions, builds community spirit, and provides sense of place. The Township is expected to grow significantly over the next 2-3 decades, doubling its population by 2051. Not only will the parks and recreation system need to expand to support this growth, it will also need to evolve and adapt to changes in the demographic, social, and cultural makeup of the Township. Wider trends in recreation will also influence needs and expectations.

This Master Plan has been prepared to provide a strong foundation for the medium and longer-term planning of the Township's parks and recreation system. It highlights best practices and trends, summarizes the results of an online survey, provides an inventory of parkland and recreation facilities, and identifies high-level needs based on population estimates to 2051. The Master Plan also outlines strategic directions and actions recommended for plan implementation.

To assess future needs for parkland and recreation facilities, this Master Plan uses population estimates for the Township that reflect the regional growth forecasted by the Province to 2051 and allocated to area municipalities through the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan. Further guidance and direction on how and where growth should occur within the Township is provided by both the Regional and Township Official Plans. To estimate future needs, this Master Plan considers the preceding in combination with existing service levels in the Township and target ranges established through a review of parks and recreation provision in other Ontario municipalities.

The Master Plan should be read as providing high-level guidance on parkland and recreation facility needs. Given the growth forecasted for the Township, understanding how much parkland should be acquired to support growth and maintain existing service levels or meet a minimum standard of provision is a primary focus. Facilities that provide the physical space for recreation services and programming are equally essential to the parks and recreation system. Neighbourhood parks provide walkable access to open spaces for amenities and informal leisure activities, including play space for children, while larger community parks form the backbone of the Township recreation system as they host sport fields and other indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

Ontario municipalities typically provided between 2-4 hectares of active use parkland per 1000 residents. Active use parks include neighbourhood and community parks that host playgrounds, sport fields, tennis courts, splash pads, community gardens, paths for walking, jogging, or rolling-blading, and indoor recreation facilities like arenas and community centres. Woolwich currently provides approximately 2.5 hectares of active parkland per 1000 residents. To maintain the existing level of provision the Township will need to secure approximately 50 hectares of additional active use parkland by 2051.





As noted in the Master Plan, the Township will receive parkland or payment-in-lieu as development occurs in accordance with the *Planning Act*—enough to meet the growth-related need for neighbourhood parks whose locations will generally be determined by more detailed planning as greenfield areas are developed, mostly in Breslau and Elmira. The remainder of the estimated need will be for the community parks needed to host indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. This Master Plan outlines the approximate amounts of land required for community parks in specific settlements. Detailed planning of new parks and recreation facilities was generally considered beyond the scope of this Master Plan, however.

The Master Plan does, however, recommend the Township begin planning for a major new community park and recreation facility in Breslau to support the long-term growth and development anticipated for that community. The needs assessment notes that while the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena provide indoor ice rinks and an aquatic centre at a service level appropriate for the Township as a whole, residents in the southern half of the Township are relatively distant from these facilities. As Breslau grows, this will progressively represent a service gap. The eventual full build-out of lands in the Breslau settlement area is expected to result in a community large enough to support a multi-use recreation facility comparable to the Woolwich Memorial Centre in size and range of facilities provided. Identifying and securing lands to host this facility is a key action item required to implement this Master Plan in the next 5 years.



# 1. INTRODUCTION





## 1. Introduction

The Township of Woolwich is comprised of 14 communities with various high-quality parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs. Woolwich is currently experiencing population growth and will continue to experience significant growth over the next decade. With the recent increase in outdoor recreation space usage and increased demand for amenities and services that has come with urban growth, the Township is undertaking a long term, proactive plan that defines priorities, refines standards, protects environmental features and woodlots, and supports budgeting and service levels for the future.

### 1.1. What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The purpose of the Woolwich Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) is to provide a flexible and comprehensive framework to protect and guide the development of parks, facilities, and open space in the Township over the horizon of the next 10 years. This Plan will be a guiding document for the Township and Community Partners to understand the communities' priorities, needs and demands regarding Parks and



Recreation in Woolwich. The Master Plan provides an inventory of the existing parkland and indoor and outdoor facilities, and an overview of recreation programs and services offered. In addition, it provides an assessment of future parkland and recreation facility needs to inform future decision making.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will:

- Establish effective service models and supporting service levels.
- Provide an analysis of the existing parks and recreation facilities, and, where appropriate programming, to address future needs and/or opportunities.
- Identify community priorities and develop decision making frameworks.
- Provide policy recommendations for parkland policy development and asset management.

## 1.2. How is the Plan Organized?

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is organized as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Provides the background on why we should plan for parks and recreation, the Master Plan process, and an overview of applicable planning documents that were considered in the creation of the Plan.

### **Chapter 2: Community Context**

Describes the geographic and socio-demographic profile of the Township, as well as current trends and best practices, and the community engagement that was undertaken as part of the creation of this Plan.

### **Chapter 3: Vision and Guiding Principles**

Provides the overarching vision and guiding principles as a strategic framework for the development and maintenance of the parks and recreation system within the horizon of this Plan.

### **Chapter 4: Parks System**

Describes the inventory of the current parks, and open space system in the Township, as well as an analysis of supply and need for the community.

### **Chapter 5: Recreation Facilities**

Describes the inventory of the current indoor and outdoor recreation programs and facilities in the Township, as well as an analysis of each asset needs of the community.



## Chapter 6: Recommendations and Implementation

Outlines the strategic directions and policy recommendations for the parks and recreation system that is aligned with the vision and guiding principles, provides guidance on plan implementation, and discusses basic financial considerations that may impact the implementation of this Master Plan.

### 1.3. Investing in Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation are an essential public service that enhances the quality of life and health of all Woolwich residents, with various social, environmental, economic and health benefits. They are a key element in building vibrant and healthy communities, as they provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share ideas, and experience diversity. These opportunities help to build a sense of belonging and a strong sense of community. Indirectly, the parks and recreation system also contribute to the conservation of natural areas, community vitality, and sense of place. Therefore, it is crucial to invest in the maintenance and growth of parks and recreation services, so they can continue to sustain the needs of generations to come.

Parks and recreation provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share ideas, and experience diversity. These opportunities help to build a sense of belonging and a strong sense of community.

The benefits of parks and recreation are widely recognized including through evidence-based national/provincial charters such as Parks for All, the Framework for Recreation in Canada, and the Ontario Culture Strategy. A scan of relevant research and literature identified the following key benefits of parks and recreation:

- **Strengthens Communities:**
  - a. Improving physical and mental health by promoting active living
  - b. Addressing sedentary behaviours and contributing to disease prevention and obesity reduction
  - c. Creating a sense of belonging
  - d. Removing barriers to access recreation, sport and leisure activities for hard-to-reach populations and delivering accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities
- **Builds Sustainable Communities:**
  - a. Maintaining a healthy, strong and vibrant community
  - b. Providing affordable and inclusive spaces for gathering and celebrating
  - c. Deepening our appreciation and connection to natural environments
  - d. Contributing to ecological health and climate change mitigation through the thoughtful management of open space and natural features



- **Supports Economic Growth:**
  - a. Increase property values through the availability of amenities
  - b. Supporting tourism and generating economic benefits
  - c. Creating a competitive advantage for the Township in terms of attraction and retention
- **Leads in Public Service Initiatives:**
  - a. Contributing to larger outcomes in the Township, such as economic vitality, public health, poverty reduction, and environmental resiliency
  - b. Creating new and/or enhanced opportunities for residents and neighbourhood groups to participate and engage in identifying program and service needs and to build capacity.

## 1.4. Study Area Overview

The study area explored in the Master Plan process and referred to in this document includes the full extent of the Township of Woolwich, but focuses on settlements with parkland. The following is a list of settlement areas in Woolwich with parkland:

### Urban Areas

- Breslau

### Township Urban Areas

- Elmira
- St. Jacobs

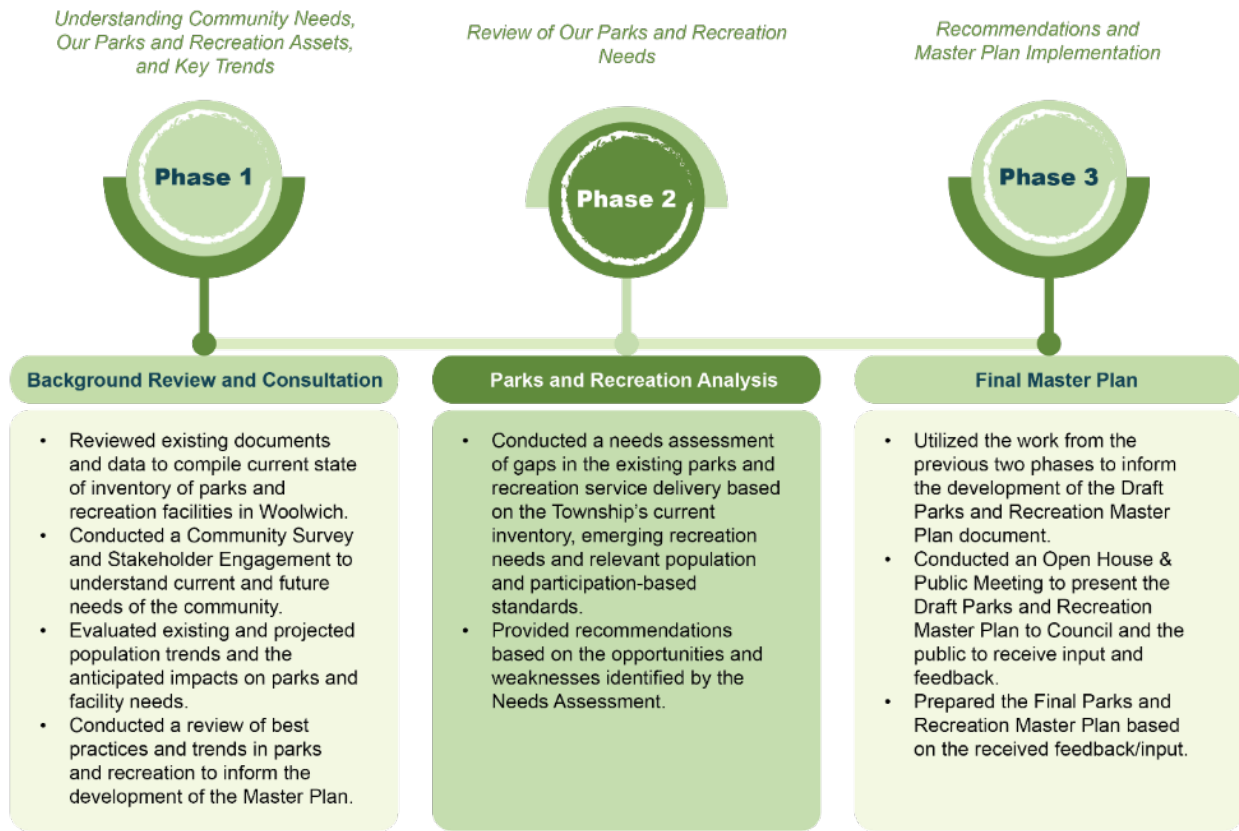
### Rural Settlements

- Bloomingdale
- Heidelberg
- West Montrose
- Floradale
- Maryhill
- Conestogo

## 1.5. How this Plan was Developed

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan process was led by the Township of Woolwich and NPG Planning Solutions Inc. The process was informed by evidence-based research including a review of best practices, trends in parks and recreation, demographics, community feedback, policy analysis, and an assessment of existing parks and recreation facilities. This work was carried out in three phases and was undertaken to understand future community needs and gaps in service delivery, to inform the recommendations in the Master Plan.





## 1.6. Planning Context

The following section includes a summary of the relevant policy documents that were considered in the creation of this Plan. The Master Plan aligns with the policy foundation and directions set by Provincial, Regional and local planning documents. In addition, an overview is provided on the planning tools/mechanisms available to municipalities related to parks and recreation services.

### Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Both the PPS and Growth Plan include policy direction related to Public Spaces, Recreation and Open Space. The PPS notes that healthy, active communities are promoted through the provision of equitably accessible parks and recreation facilities, while emphasizing the need to minimize impacts on natural areas such as provincial parks and conservation areas. The Growth Plan supports the achievement of complete communities through the expansion of convenient access to *“an appropriate supply of safe, publicly accessible open spaces, parks, trails, and other recreational facilities.”*



## Region of Waterloo Official Plan

Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 6, which updated growth-related components of the Regional Official Plan (ROP) was adopted in 2023 and has been approved by the Province. The ROP, as amended by ROPA 6 establishes the long-term framework for where and how the Region and its area municipalities should grow and develop based on forecasted growth to 2051. This Master Plan is based upon the forecasted regional growth allocated to the Township by the ROP as it will drive the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities.

The ROP does not have a dedicated section that addresses open space, parks, trails and recreational facilities; however, the ROP recognizes that an equitable community offers residents access to recreation, mobility, and other services to meet their needs, while a thriving community with 15-minute neighbourhoods is one that provides within walkable distances access to a variety of public parks and open spaces and opportunities for recreation and entertainment. Ensuring that most Woolwich residents are located within close proximity of open spaces, parks, trails, and recreational facilities is important to achieving the regional vision outlined in the ROP.

## Township of Woolwich Official Plan

A key objective of the Township's Official Plan (OP) is to provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational pursuits through the provision of parkland, sports fields, community facilities, and natural areas to satisfy the recreational needs of existing and future residents. The OP includes various policies pertaining to the adequate provision of parks and recreation facilities for residents. The OP recognizes the importance of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities, and seeks to protect and continue to expand the parkland and open space areas to improve the quality of life. Specifically, the OP provides a comprehensive policy framework for Open Space with the direction to:

- Protect and expand the Township's parkland and open space areas;





- Provide a balanced system of recreation and leisure opportunities through a specified range of parkland and associated facilities; and,
- Encourage the development of a system of linked green space, open space, and trails throughout the Township, as well as bicycle routes, sidewalks, and pedestrian paths to both provide for recreational needs and link residential areas, employment areas, major public open spaces, schools, and activity centres.

The OP permits the Township to undertake a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to establish the hierarchy for existing parkland, open space, and recreational facilities, as well as in identifying deficiencies and making recommendations for potential future acquisition/development of parkland, open space and recreation facilities.

### Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines

The Township's 2022 Landscape and Design Guidelines outline features and details to be provided for new parks and establishes the following existing classification system:

- Township Wide Park
- Community Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Parkettes
- Natural Heritage Features

The Landscape and Design Guidelines also outline general requirements for pedestrian and cycling trails, including those provided within open spaces and parks in the Township.

### Legislative Acts and Recent Changes

#### *Development Charges Act*

Under the Development Charges Act, after the completion of a development charges background study, municipalities can adopt a development charge by-law to impose development charges. This planning tool can be imposed to cover capital costs for increased need for services listed in Section 2(4) of the Act, which includes parks and recreation services, but not the acquisition of land for parks.

#### *Planning Act*

The *Planning Act* provides municipalities with two mechanisms for funding growth-related costs of land for parks and other recreational purposes: community benefits charges and parkland dedication.

#### Parkland Dedication

Parkland Dedication as permitted under the *Planning Act* is a tool for municipalities to acquire lands for parks needed to service increased needs associated with growth. It is the primary mechanism for parkland acquisition in Woolwich. There have been a number of changes made to parkland dedication in recent years, primarily to provide exemptions





for affordable and/or attainable housing, non-profit housing, additional residential units, as well as changes to the rate of parkland dedication and various implementation aspects.

### Community Benefits Charges

Community benefit charges were introduced in 2019 under the *Planning Act* as a tool to be used by municipalities to fund any public service associated with new growth, provided those costs are not already covered through development charges and parkland dedication. This tool was established to replace Section 37 density and height bonusing. Further Amendments to the *Planning Act* have clarified what type of development/redevelopment are eligible for community charges, provided exceptions to affordable and attainable housing, and established maximum thresholds on the amount that can be collected. At the time of the writing of this report, it should be noted that the exemptions for affordable and attainable housing units have not been proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor and are not yet in-effect.

## 2. COMMUNITY CONTEXT





## 2. Community Context

Located in the heart of southwestern Ontario, the Township of Woolwich is part of the Region of Waterloo, surrounded by the Cities of Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge. It is also within close proximity to the City of Guelph and within an hour and a half drive from several large urban centres in southwestern Ontario, including Hamilton, London, and Toronto. Woolwich is known for its farms and farm markets, as well as its industry, trails, and quaint rural lifestyle. The Township is comprised of an extensive rural area along with residential communities and industrial/commercial areas which include Elmira, St. Jacobs, and Breslau.

Woolwich has approximately 28,700 residents and is made up of 31,912 hectares. With picturesque towns and pastoral countryside, the Township's small community setting and proximity to the Region's urban centres boasts a rich history and a strong agricultural and tourism sector. Woolwich's heritage is reflected throughout the community, with notable features that draw year-round visitors such as the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, the St. Jacobs Farmers Market, which is Canada's largest year-round market, the West Montrose Covered Bridge, St. Jacobs Village, and more. Woolwich is also home to the Region of Waterloo International Airport, which provides charter and scheduled flight services to destinations across Canada, the US, Mexico and Central America, serviced by three major airlines.

### 2.1. Growth Outlook and Socio-Demographic Profile

Understanding who lives in the Township and how the population is expected to change over time is key in planning for future parks and recreation facilities. The following section draws from census data and the Township's growth projections.





## Projected Growth

According to the Region of Waterloo Official Plan (ROP), Woolwich's population will grow to 51,200 by 2051, an increase of 78.4% or 22,500 people over its 2021 population of 28,700. To reach the forecast 2051 population, the Township will need to grow on average by 800 people per year over the next three decades. This represents a doubling of the growth experienced by Woolwich over the past decade according to Statistics Canada.

A portion of population growth to 2051, at least 20%, is to be accommodated through intensification of Built-up Areas in Township Urban Centres (Elmira and St. Jacobs) and Urban Areas (Breslau). Most population growth in the Township, however, will be accommodated on lands referred to as Designated Greenfield Areas. These lands are located mostly in Elmira and Breslau, including those added by the Province as part of the process of approving Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 6. Development of these additional lands will result in a significantly higher population, particularly in Breslau, and will result in the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities in these areas.

Most new parkland will be provided in new neighbourhoods adjacent to the Built-Up Areas of Elmira and Breslau. In such cases, lands will be identified during the planning and development approvals process and provided via parkland dedication requirements. Population growth accommodated via intensification of Built-up Areas is typically serviced by existing parks. Overall population growth will generate the need for additional community parks which are larger and require longer range planning to locate and develop.

## PLANNING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

- By 2051, Woolwich's population is set to **increase to 51,000, an increase of 78.4% from 2021**
- Most of the population growth will be accommodated in **Elmira, St. Jacobs, and Breslau**
- Most new parkland will be provided in **greenfield areas** in Elmira and Breslau



## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT



Woolwich’s population grew by 8% from 2016 to 2021.



The median household income in 2020 was \$115,000 in Woolwich, which is 25% higher than Ontario’s average of \$91,000.



The top two languages spoken at home in Woolwich are English 77.9% and German 9.4%.



The average age is 39.7 years.

Source: 2021 Census

## Socio-Demographic Considerations

### AGE AND POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The demographic projection provided by metroeconomics for the Woolwich Official Plan Review indicates that births and deaths will result in a net natural increase of 6,700 people between 2021 and 2051. Accordingly, net migration to Woolwich from elsewhere in Ontario, Canada, and abroad will account for slightly over two-thirds of the forecast population growth over the next three decades.

Overall, migrants (intra-provincial, inter-provincial, and international) tend to be younger than the Canadian average and disproportionately entering in their childbearing years. Significant population growth from net migration would moderate the aging of the Township's population.

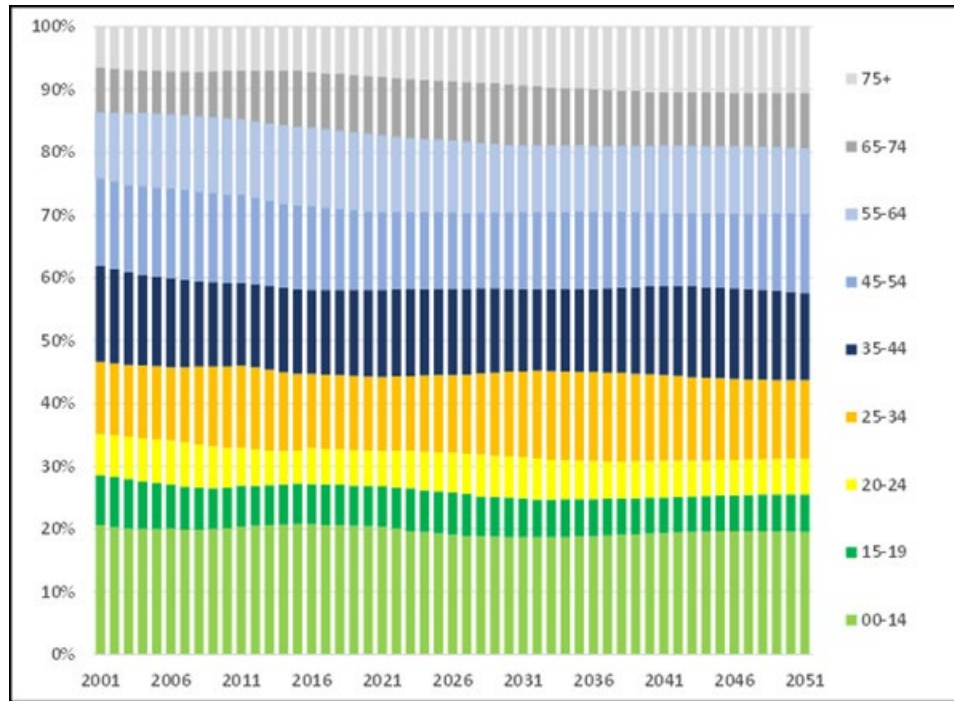
**Figure 1** below demonstrates that Woolwich is projected to experience an increase in people over 65 years old and slight decrease in people under 20.

It is noteworthy that people over 65 years old are projected to rise to approximately 20% of the population in Woolwich by 2051, with about half of them being older seniors (75+). The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will need to consider the specific needs of this group and whether current facilities and programming are meeting current needs and what might be needed to meet future needs.

### Other Considerations

Socio-demographic factors such as diversity and income are key to consider as they influence the interest, participation, and delivery of parks and recreation programming.





**Figure 1 – Woolwich Population by Major Age Group Actual 2001 to 2021, Projected 2022 to 2051**  
 Source: Statistics Canada and metroeconomics inc.

Immigrant settlement patterns in the wider region are likely to influence the range and size of different ethnic groups in the Township over time. According to the 2021 Census, immigrants make up approximately 12.5% of Woolwich’s population, with about 1.5% having arrived in Canada between 2016 and 2021. This compares to 25.4% and 4.8% in the Region of Waterloo as a whole, and 30% and 4.2% for the Province of Ontario. That difference is echoed in the percentage of the Township’s population that is classified as visible minority (9.4%) when compared to the Region of Waterloo (27.5%) and the Province of Ontario (34.3%). In terms of ethnic or cultural origin, the 10 largest reported in the 2021 Census for Woolwich are associated with older waves of immigration to Canada from the United Kingdom and Northern or Central Europe, whereas more recent immigration is dominated by origins and ethnicities associated with the Global South. As the Township has experienced relatively low levels of immigrant settlement when compared to the Region of Waterloo and the Province, changes to its ethnic composition have been modest as well.

The 2021 Census reported a median household income of \$115,000 in Woolwich in 2020. That is approximately 25% higher than for the Region of Waterloo as a whole (\$92,000) or the Province of Ontario (\$91,000). By extension, fewer Woolwich residents were considered low-income in 2020 (2.3%) when compared with the Region of Waterloo as a whole (6.2%) or the Province of Ontario (5.3%).

Parks and Recreation Master Plans typically review service delivery. This can include assessing and making recommendations about service delivery models, including the role



and responsibility of a municipality to provide, maintain, and operate facilities, and whether, or to what extent, to directly provide and/or fund services and programming. The income and ethnocultural profile of residents, as well as other forms of difference and belonging in the community, are important to consider when mapping out future parks and recreation needs, particularly with respect to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

## 2.2. Overview of Parks and Recreation Trends

The following section provides an overview of current Parks and Recreation trends which are important to consider as they influence parks and recreation programming, infrastructure and participation levels. In certain cases, trends can gain enough popularity to become new best practices within the field. The following trends were identified through a thorough analysis of reports from Canada and the U.S.A.

### Decline in Youth Sports Participation

Continuing evidence has demonstrated the steady decline in youth sports participation in North America. This has been an ongoing trend that has been further exacerbated during the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is an alarming discovery as sports offer children the opportunity to socialize with one another and partake in physical activity, which is a proven way to maintain and benefit one's mental health. Approaches that have been used to improve youth sport participation includes hosting "sport sampling programs", and expanding access to free, low-cost, or subsidised youth sports.

### Multi-Use Spaces

A recently emerging trend has been the increasing development of multi-use spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and users. Multi-use spaces include various benefits such as improved physical health, increased social interaction and enhanced environmental sustainability. Additionally, multi-use spaces have been noted to have the potential to address equity and accessibility concerns by providing access to recreation opportunities for individuals and communities that may not have access to them otherwise. By accommodating a variety of activities in one space, multi-use spaces can attract a diverse group of users, create a sense of community, and accommodate the ever-changing needs of residents. Creating multi-use spaces further allows municipalities to maximize the use of limited parkland and resources and can make them more efficient and cost-effective but can also result in conflicting needs and demands.

### Accessibility for All Users

Parks and recreation spaces are a vital part of any community that provides various social and health benefits. Unfortunately, access to these spaces is not always equal – a report by the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) noted that people with disabilities are much less likely to participate in recreation activities than those without disabilities.





To address this, parks and recreation spaces must be designed to be AODA compliant and able to accommodate the needs of diverse users, including those with different levels of mobility, such as individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and families with young children. Through the provision of accessible spaces, communities can promote social inclusion by providing opportunities for people to interact with one another and foster a sense of community amongst diverse groups of people.

### **Parks as Community Gathering Spaces**

Parks have a longstanding recognition of being important gathering spaces. They offer open spaces where individuals can gather for picnic, games, events and provide opportunities for interaction with other members of the community. Additionally, recreation facilities provide a wide array of programming and activities that brings people with shared interests together. Large scale sporting events can benefit the local economy by attracting visitors from outside of the community to boost local businesses. Parks and recreation facilities are important community assets that can help foster social cohesion, support local businesses, and create a sense of pride and identity in the community. Amenities that can help foster this function include bandshells, seating areas, and picnic structures.

### **Health Benefits of Parks and Recreation**

As previously noted, physical inactivity rates have continued to be on the rise in North America, further amplified by the COVID-19 Pandemic due to the increase of desk-bound behaviours. Fortunately, parks and recreation services have been recognized to be a critical resource in helping individuals maintain their physical and mental wellbeing, and in combatting issues such as inactivity levels, social isolation, stress, and anxiety. Parks and outdoor spaces are important in promoting physical activity – long-term health care costs associated with inactivity are significantly higher than upfront preventative costs associated with an active lifestyle.

### **Role of Parks in Reducing Urban Heat Islands**

The Urban Heat Island effect is a critical issue that needs to be addressed as it can impact human health, energy consumption, and the environment. Parks have been identified to be an important tool for combatting the rising temperatures due to the Urban Heat Island effect. This is achieved through the provision of green infrastructure, promotion of passive cooling techniques such as natural ventilation, shade, and reflecting surfaces, and reduction of heat emissions.

### **Green Infrastructure and Strategies for Creating Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Parks and Recreation Facilities**

There has been increasing recognition of the value of incorporating green and sustainable infrastructure techniques into the design and operation of parks and recreation facilities. Green infrastructure refers to a network of natural and semi-natural elements such as



parks, forest, wetlands and green roofs. Implementing green infrastructure in parks can positively benefit biodiversity conservation while providing for recreation and social benefits. Other practices may be adopted to make the parks and recreation system more sustainable such as energy efficiency audits, use of renewable energy where possible, or incorporating sustainable building materials the design of parks and recreation facilities. Through the above, the Township may decrease its carbon footprint, enhance the ecological function of parkland, improve community resilience, and promote a healthy lifestyle.

### **Technological Trends**

Technology has become an integral part of contemporary life. As such, there has been a growing interest in integrating new technologies into parks and recreation facilities. Doing so could enhance visitor experiences, lead to increases in operational efficiency, and create a more inclusive park space. Some of the growing technological trends regarding parks include beacon counters, Wi-Fi-connected parks and QR codes/geospatial visualization. Beacon counters and Wi-Fi can be used to track park usage rates, while allowing users to access information outside of their home or work. Implementing QR codes can also provide users with quick information which may include available amenities or the history of the park, bringing forward an interactive and educational component.





## 2.3. Community Engagement

Community Engagement played a vital role in the development of the Woolwich Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As part of Phase 1 of this project, engagement methods were utilized to connect and gather input from the community. The goal was to better understand the communities needs and concerns across the Township regarding parks and recreation facilities. A community survey was conducted in 2021 during the COVID-19 Pandemic as well as in May 2023. In addition, further input was gathered from identified stakeholders through a questionnaire. An overview of the public consultation process is included below.

### Community Surveys

A community survey was distributed by Township Staff in Fall 2021 to obtain information on the Township's existing parks and outdoor recreation amenities and to understand the communities' desires in terms of future municipal investment. The survey did not address indoor recreational facilities such as community centres or arenas.

Following feedback and direction from Township staff in the preparation of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a new online survey was conducted covering both outdoor and





indoor recreation areas and parks. In May 2023, the online survey was made available to members of the community via the project website over three weeks and generated 278 responses (participation in the survey was promoted through local media, social media, and in local businesses). Survey respondents were asked about the following:

#### Accessibility and Usability of Facilities

While a majority of respondents believe that parks in the Township are physically accessible and conveniently located, 24% of respondents expressed that parks are not adequately accessible or conveniently situated, with a lack of accessible pathways for individuals using walkers, strollers or wheelchairs to and from park amenities. Furthermore, 6% of respondents indicated that someone in their family has a disability that requires special accommodations when visiting parks or recreation facilities. Respondents also identified the need for inclusive features and amenities to address accessibility barriers such as adult change tables, wheelchair accessible washrooms, playground surfaces that accommodate children with special needs, signage, and improved information on facilities such as dog parks.

#### Factors Influencing Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Respondents were asked to rank cleanliness, safety, specific amenities/features, and proximity to park/facility as determining factors in deciding which park and recreation facility to visit. Survey results demonstrated that 66% of participants ranked cleanliness as a key factor to consider, followed closely by level of safety at 56%, specific amenities/features provided at 55% and proximity to park/facility at 52%.

#### Facility Improvements and Investments

When asked about priorities for upgrades or new construction, 44% of respondents indicated the need for improvements for nature trails, while 42% prioritized improvements for playgrounds, and 34% expressed a preference for upgrades or new construction of paved multi-use trails. Respondents noted the importance of facility maintenance and upgrades, with a need for washrooms, access to drinking water and water bottle fill stations, garbage collection and receptacles, and lighting. In addition, respondents also expressed the desire for other amenities such as picnic benches, shade, and multi-surface pads, as well as the need for accessible and inclusive park amenities.

#### Barriers to Participation in Recreation Programs

The largest factor identified in the survey as preventing participation in the Township's recreation programs is the lack of convenient times offered. In addition, 40% of respondents identified the lack of desired facilities as a barrier, while a number of respondents reported being unaware of program offerings. Less than 20% of respondents acknowledged cost or financial considerations as challenge to participation.

The survey indicated differing opinions with regards to the quantity of sports facilities, with the majority of respondents indicating satisfaction with the existing quantity of baseball



diamonds and soccer fields, and noting an apparent lack of hockey outdoor rinks, tennis courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, and pickleball courts. 24% of respondents expressed a desire to expand the variety of organized activities and programs available, including suggestions for tennis courts, pickleball courts (indoor and outdoor), ice rinks (indoor and outdoor), basketball courts, and volleyball courts. Approximately 50% of respondents indicated that they participate in recreation programs solely within the Township, whereas 27% of respondents indicated participating in programs outside the Township, in Guelph, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

### Stakeholder Questionnaire

The Township has numerous community groups that provide services in the areas of sports, arts and culture. 19 organizations were invited to participate in the stakeholder questionnaire conducted in May 2023. Responses were received from 8 organizations, consisting of school boards, recreation associations, and sports organizations, with key findings identified below:

#### School Boards





Schools frequently use recreation amenities such as playgrounds and sport fields for class trips and extracurricular activities. However, it has been identified that current facilities are insufficient to accommodate current needs and that further demand is expected in the next 5 years. Participating organizations have identified the desire for new fields, a pool, access to ice and hockey facilities, and long-term plans for a bubble facility. School boards have expressed that there is a disparity in the quality and availability of recreation facilities between different neighbourhoods and are open to opportunities for joint development and partnerships.

### Recreation Associations

While there is positive feedback associated with the (Heidelberg) Community Center, recreation associations have identified the need for facility upgrades and improvements, such as the need for soundproofing; the inclusion of an accessible path to the playground, a sandbox, and additional playground equipment; and improvements to the ball diamond, and maintenance of the tennis court. There is also a need for more advertisement to promote space availability in facilities. Recreation associations have noted that they are open to considering partnerships to fund outdoor recreation amenities and are in general agreement that while existing facilities are appropriately located, there are disparities in the quality and availability of recreation facilities and activities in different communities.

### Sports Organizations

While there are mixed sentiments regarding the adequacy of existing Township facilities, sports organizations have noted that an expected increase in registrations in the next five years will require upgrades or replacements of bowling greens, weekly affordable ice, reliable internet access, dedicated dressing room opportunities for older teams, and boardroom facilities with office space. Additionally, it was identified that scheduling conflicts are common and especially frequent during March/April and September. Pertaining to the location of facilities, it has been noted that facilities are considered properly located to suit the needs of the organization and there have been no noticeable disparities identified between the quality and availability of recreation facilities within Woolwich.



# 3. VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES





## 3. Vision and Guiding Principles

### 3.1. Overview

Parks and Recreation opportunities are vital to the development of healthy communities, where residents can connect, play and learn. As the Township of Woolwich continues to grow, it is crucial to invest in the maintenance and expansion of these services to ensure all residents have equitable access to Parks and Recreation. Furthermore, it is important to have a vision and goals to create a framework that will guide the development and future decision making of the Township over the next decade.

The vision, goals, and objectives of this Master Plan have been synthesized from the input gathered from the community, stakeholder focus groups and best practices research.

### 3.2 Vision

Woolwich's vision statement describes the desired future for the Parks and Recreation System in Woolwich. It is founded on the community values, priorities and aspirations identified through the community engagement process.

*Woolwich's parks and recreation system is inclusive, sustainable, and adaptable to meet the needs of a growing and diverse community, while building community connections and contributing to an improved quality of life.*

### 3.3 Goals and Objectives

The Goals of this Plan reflect the desired outcomes to be achieved by the Township of Woolwich. The objectives provide actionable recommendations as to how the goals of this Plan will be accomplished.



**Goal #1**

**Facilitate an Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Parks and Recreation System**

- 1.1 Incorporate universal design standards into Parks and Recreation facilities to support barrier-free environments for people of all ages and abilities.
- 1.2 Ensure that publicly funded parks and recreation opportunities will be affordable, with some being free to access.
- 1.3 Provide facilities for passive and organized play (e.g. multi-use spaces) to support a range of activities, interests, and abilities.
- 1.4 Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design measures to promote safety in all parks and recreational facilities.

**Goal #2**

**Promote Opportunities for Healthy Living, Aging-in-Place, and Community Building**

- 2.1 Provide a range of recreational programs that address the needs and interests of residents of all ages and abilities.
- 2.2 Facilitate place-making opportunities for cultural pursuits, events and socialization.
- 2.3 Educate residents on program offerings and the various amenities and recreational opportunities offered by the Township.
- 2.4 Explore community partnerships to deliver mutually beneficial projects.

**Goal #3**

**Provide Well-Designed and Sustainable Parks and Recreation Facilities**

- 3.1 Invest, maintain, and upgrade parks and recreation facilities to ensure the longevity of infrastructure.
- 3.2 Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable practices in parks and recreation facilities.
- 3.3 Integrate green infrastructure and shade as a key design element in the planning, development, or retrofit of parks and recreation facilities.
- 3.4 Seek opportunities to use facilities efficiently and for multiple purposes.

# 4. PARKS SYSTEM







## 4. Parks System

This Chapter details the Township's parks system by providing a park classification system, an inventory of parkland, a needs assessment for parkland, and a high-level parks plan. Parkland refers to land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and leisure activities, and connection to nature. For the purposes of the Master Plan, "parks" and "parkland" are used interchangeably to refer to lands in the parks system but not all lands in the Township's overall parkland supply are considered when assessing service levels or future parkland needs. For reasons that are detailed below, the Township's inventory of parkland is divided into active use parks and passive use parkland. Only active use parks and future parkland needed for active use parks are considered as part of the needs assessment in this Chapter of the Master Plan.

Recommendations are presented in Chapter 6. Additional documentation is contained in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared as part of this Master Plan.





## 4.1. Parks Classification System

Woolwich provides parkland that ranges in size and differs in terms of landscape characteristics, amenities, and recreation facilities. To better manage and plan the Township's parks system, parkland within Woolwich should be classified as follows:

- Neighbourhood Park
- Community Park
- Specialized/Cultural Park
- Connector Park
- Natural Area/Open Space

The proposed parks classification system includes both active use parks and passive use parkland and should be used consistently by the Township to allow for effective monitoring and implementation of this Master Plan.

The distinction between active use parks and passive use parkland is important when considering the Township's parks system. Natural area/open space and connector parks are considered passive use parkland for the purposes of this Master Plan, while neighbourhood parks, community parks, and specialized/cultural parks are deemed to be active use parks.

Natural area/open space and connector parks identify parkland comprised of natural heritage features and/or natural hazards and may include limited passive recreation facilities such as trails. These lands are not appropriate, however, for active use park development. Passive use parkland in many cases are wooded or forested areas like the South Park Woods south of Whippoorwill Drive in Elmira or Priddle Park or Sawmill Woods Park in Conestogo.

Other Park types—neighbourhood parks, community parks, and specialized/cultural parks—are considered active use parks. These parks are intended to be used for informal play, social gatherings, leisure activities, and sports, with key differences between types of active use parks being intended size, service area, and range and scale of amenities/facilities provided.

Neighbourhood parks are smaller and located such that most residences in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, especially in newer areas, are within convenient walking distance of at least one such park. Neighbourhood parks are generally limited to landscaped areas that may include facilities/amenities such as playgrounds, paths, multi-use pads, and benches.

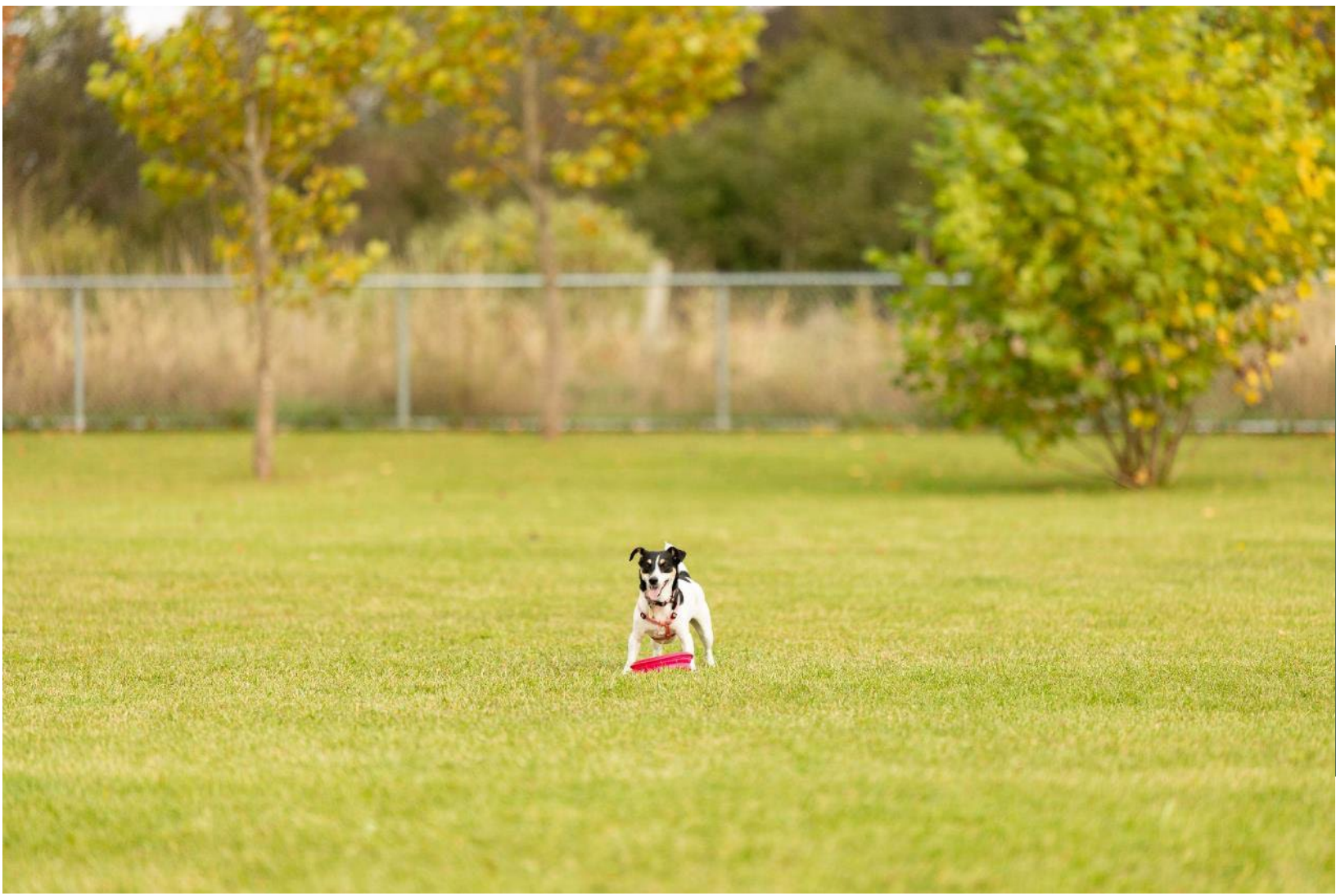
Community parks are larger and fewer in number. They host facilities like sports fields, community centres, and/or arenas that require more centralized provision to be feasible. They may also provide facilities and amenities provided in neighbourhood parks.





Specialized/Cultural parks are provided based on historical provision and/or a mix of need, advocacy, civic interest, available space, and in some cases for public commemoration. Victoria Glen, Gore Park, and Memorial Park in Elmira, as well as the Elmira Dog Park, are examples of different specialized/cultural parks in the Township.

Woolwich's parks classification system is outlined in the following fact sheets.





## Neighbourhood Parks

### Neighbourhood Parks

#### Service Area

500 metres

#### Description

Neighbourhood parks are intended to support neighbourhood-scale outdoor recreational needs. Generally smaller than community parks and limited to amenities and facilities required to meet the daily recreation and leisure activity needs of residents within convenient walking distance (5-10 minutes). Access via active transportation (walking or cycling). Should generally be 0.15 to 0.6 hectares in size and have frontage along a public street.

#### Acquisition Strategy

Lands generally obtained as part of development approval process for subdivisions. Provided based on parkland dedication requirements but may require additional capital funding.

#### Minimum Service Level

0.4 ha per 1000 residents

#### Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Active uses. Appropriate landscaping for screening. Mowed grass or open areas. May include playgrounds, benches, pathways, and multi-use courts (where not provided in other nearby parks or public facilities such as schools).

#### Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities not provided. Parkettes may be utilized where determined appropriate.





## Community Parks

### Community Parks

#### Service Area

Settlement

#### Description

Community parks are intended to support the recreation and leisure activity needs for a group of neighbourhoods or an entire settlement (i.e. community) by providing space for a range of recreation facilities, including sports fields and community centres. Community parks are larger in size than neighbourhood parks to support centralized provision of recreation facilities and programming/services, as well as to address compatibility with adjacent uses. Community parks should generally be 1.5 hectares or larger in size.

#### Acquisition Strategy

Linked to service levels and forecasted population growth in settlements. Requires capital funding to acquire parkland based on medium to long term needs.

#### Minimum Service Level

1.4 ha per 1000 residents

#### Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Active uses. Mowed grass or open areas. May include similar elements to neighbourhood parks: playgrounds, benches, pavilions or covered areas, pathways. Focus is on sports fields, ball diamonds, courts, and other recreation facilities with extensive space needs and large service areas.

#### Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities provided. Supporting amenities/facilities may be provided such as washrooms, spectator seating, concessions, and maintenance buildings or equipment storage. To optimize usage lighting may be provided for outdoor facilities.



**Specialized/Cultural Parks**

**Specialized/Cultural Parks**

**Service Area**

Settlement or Township-wide

Specialized/cultural parks are intended to support social and cultural needs and often serve a unique function: venue for gatherings or events; hosts a community garden, war memorial, or heritage feature; or serves as a tourist destination. Can vary in size but are often smaller than neighbourhood parks. Tend to be located at highly visible and accessible locations.

**Acquisition Strategy**

Not applicable.

**Target Service Level**

Not applicable

**Uses/Amenities/Facilities**

Generally active uses with an emphasis on leisure or cultural activities and community events. Bandshell, memorials, seating, and other unique features (i.e. fountains, sculptures, or other forms of public art). May include specialized facilities or uses such as common gardens or off-leash dog parks.

**Other Considerations**

Off-street parking facilities generally not provided. May have unique landscaping and maintenance requirements.



## Connector Parks

### Connector Park

#### Service Area

Settlement or Township-wide

Parks with trails intended to serve as links between neighbourhoods, parks and through settlements for pedestrians and cyclists. May be located on Township lands, or facilitated in partnership with private landowners, service groups, or other municipalities.

#### Acquisition Strategy

Not applicable.

#### Target Service Level

Not applicable

#### Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Passive uses such as trails. May include paths of various widths and surface treatments, including natural footpaths and multi-use paths with bridges.

#### Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities generally not provided. May have unique requirements for signage, landscaping, and maintenance.



**Natural Areas/Open Space**

**Natural Areas/Open Space**

**Service Area**

Settlement or Township-wide

Natural Areas/Open Space is parkland that contains naturalized open space such as forested areas and woodlots, ravines, marshes, and ponds, or natural heritage features such as woodlands, wetlands, and/or wildlife habitat that require protection and cannot be developed. These parks are typically low or no maintenance areas and only include facilities/amenities that support passive uses.

**Acquisition Strategy**

Lands are obtained as part of the development approval process. Typically, are lands with development constraints such as natural hazards and/or natural heritage features and buffers that are required by policy to be protected.

**Target Service Level**

Not applicable

**Uses/Amenities/Facilities**

Passive uses. May include access points and trails or natural footpaths.

**Other Considerations**

Off-street parking facilities not generally provided. Signage may be provided at trailheads and/or access points.





The goal of parkland design and development is to create vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive green spaces in communities through a comprehensive strategy. This effort aims to address the various requirements of the community while improving the ecological value and resilience of parklands.

Parkland design and development is guided by fundamental design concepts, including accessibility, environmental sustainability, interconnection, and multi-functionality. To ensure the parks represent the distinct qualities and goals of each community in the Township, the development process should include a careful assessment of needs, strategic site selection, intentional design, and active stakeholder engagement.

The Township's landscape and design guidelines emphasize the creation of accessible, environmentally sustainable, and visually appealing green spaces. The guidelines prioritize the integration of parks into the existing urban fabric, ensuring connectivity and ease of access for residents. They also emphasize the use of native plantings and sustainable construction practices to enhance ecological value and biodiversity.

By following sound design principles and involving the community, the Township can create parks that make its communities healthier and more enjoyable, while also enhancing the aesthetics and environmental performance of parkland.





### Design Principles

Principle	Description
<b>Accessibility and Inclusivity</b>	Where required and reasonably possible all parks shall be AODA compliant as per Section 6.4.3 in the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines. Everyone in the community, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic background, should be able to access parkland. This entails offering amenities for varied user groups, programming that appeals to a range of interests, and barrier-free access.
<b>Wayfinding</b>	Incorporate effective wayfinding strategies into parkland design to ensure that users can easily navigate through the space, understand the layout, and locate key amenities and points of interest. This may include clear signage, maps, landmarks, and intuitive path layouts that enhance user experience and promote a sense of orientation and safety within the park.
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	In Section 6.3.1 in the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines, Designs shall include sustainable features including recycled products, water and energy conservation features and locally manufactured products wherever possible. To improve ecological value, climatic resilience, and biodiversity conservation, parkland design should place a high priority on environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by implementing green infrastructure, native plantings, and sustainable construction techniques.
<b>Connectivity</b>	By incorporating parks into the urban fabric, you may improve the accessibility and usability of the park system as a whole by creating a network of green areas that are simple to get to by bicycle, foot, or public transportation.
<b>Multifunctionality</b>	Parks should be places where people interact socially, give recreational possibilities, encourage active transportation, and maintain local biodiversity.





### Development Process

Process	Description
<b>Needs Assessment</b>	Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to understand current and future recreational needs, including surveys, public consultations, and demographic data analysis.
<b>Site Selection</b>	Select suitable parkland development sites based on location, size, accessibility, and ecological value, considering redevelopment of brownfield sites or underutilized spaces to maximize land use efficiency.
<b>Design Concept</b>	Develop a design concept based on needs assessment and site analysis, including layout of park amenities, circulation paths, landscaping, and sustainable features reflecting cultural and historical context while incorporating innovative design elements. According to Section 6.3.2 of the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines, working with the staff, the design guidelines and the relevant planning documents, the developer shall engage the professional services of a qualified, O.A.L.A. registered Landscape Architect to prepare a Park Concept/ Facility Fit Plan during the preliminary stages of engineering design and master servicing for the subdivision and the preparation of the Draft Plan of Subdivision.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Engage stakeholders, including residents, community groups, and local businesses, throughout the development process to gather input and feedback, ensuring the parkland design meets community needs and expectations.
<b>Implementation</b>	Implement parkland development through a phased approach, including site preparation, construction of amenities, planting of vegetation, and installation of infrastructure in a sustainable, cost-effective manner, considering long-term maintenance and operational needs.







### 4.3. Parks System

At present, Woolwich's parks system includes approximately 234 hectares of land. Passive use parkland (natural areas/open space and connector parks) comprise approximately two-thirds of the Township's parks system or 156 hectares. The remaining one-third or 78 hectares of parkland is classified as active use parks (neighbourhood parks, community parks, or specialized/cultural parks). Over 90% of parkland in the Township is found in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs.

A comprehensive inventory of parkland is provided in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared for this Master Plan. Fact sheets are provided below in this section to provide key data and an outline of the Township's parks system.







**Breslau**

<b>Breslau</b>				
<b>Settlement Type</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2031</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>2051</b>
Urban Area	6,069	7,804	10,119	13,269
<b>Parkland Supply (ha)</b>	<b>Active Use</b>		<b>Passive Use</b>	
109.84	13.58		96.26	
<b>Active Use Parks</b>		<b>Service Level (Active Use Parkland)</b>		
Neighbourhood Parks (3) Community Parks (1)		2.24 ha per 1000 residents		

**Description**

One large community park, Breslau Memorial Park, is located centrally within the established residential community south of the rail corridor. Residential growth is occurring to the west and southwest of Breslau Memorial Park. One neighbourhood park is provided at the southern end of this area. Lands along the Grand River are included in the Township’s park system as natural area/open space.

Significant growth can be anticipated in this area between Woolwich Street South and Fountain Street North. Newer residential areas are also located to the north between the rail corridor and Victoria Street North stretching eastward from Fountain Street to Greenhouse Road. Two neighbourhood parks are provided in this area. Natural heritage features in this area are protected as part of large natural area/open space parkland parcels.

**Issues or Opportunities**

Breslau has experienced considerable recent growth and development and is planned/forecasted for significant growth to 2051. It is geographically isolated from parks and recreation facilities provided in the northern half of the Township, requiring carefully planning for future parkland needs in the near term to ensure adequate parkland will be available to meet future recreation needs typically provided in facilities hosted at community parks.



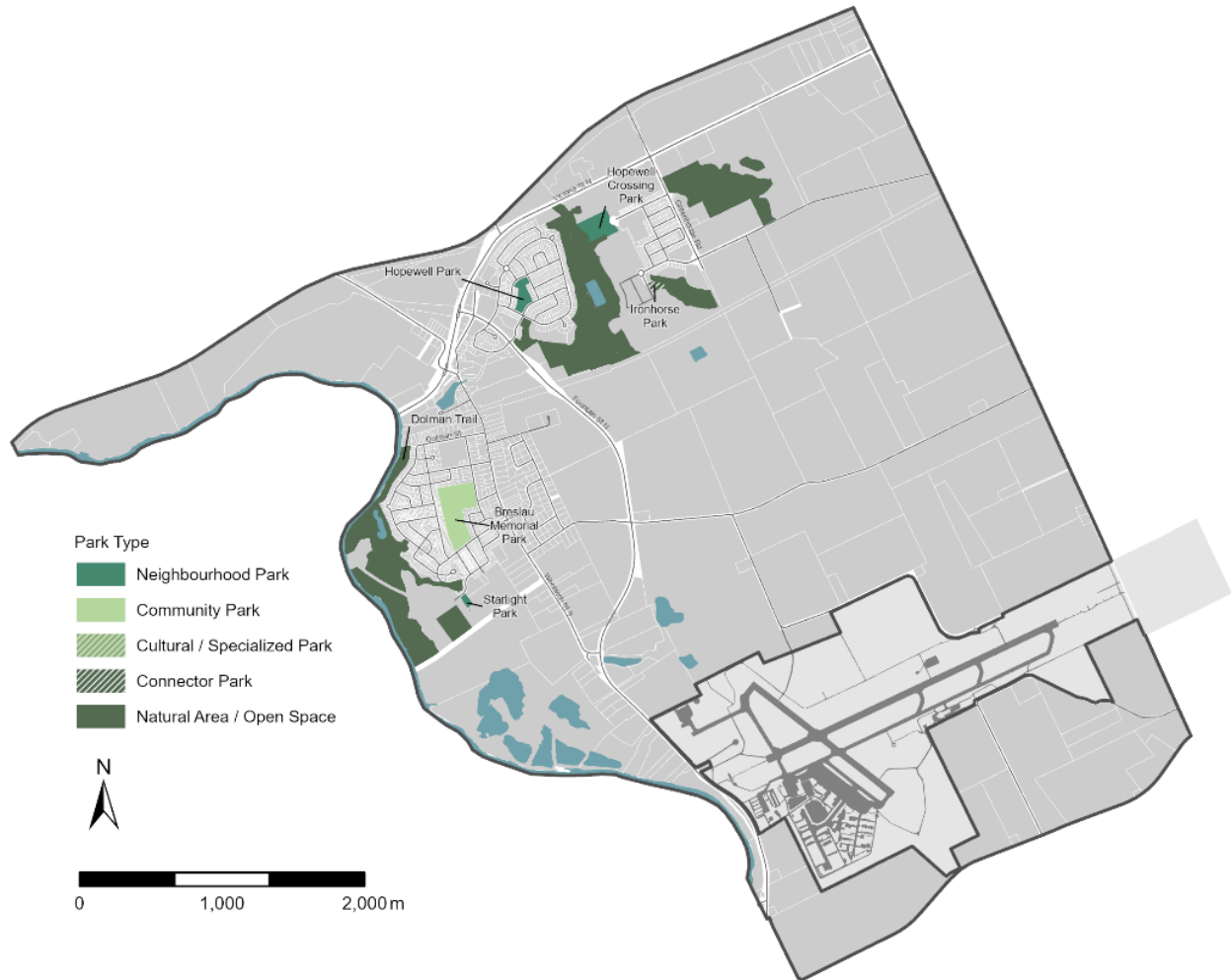


Figure 2 – Breslau Parks System

**Elmira****Elmira**

<b>Settlement Type</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2031</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>2051</b>
Township Urban Area	13,541	16,469	20,129	24,304

<b>Parkland Supply (ha)</b>	<b>Active Use</b>	<b>Passive Use</b>
72.67	37.53	35.14

**Active Use Parks** **Service Level** (Active Use Parkland)

Neighbourhood Parks (10) Community Parks (7) Cultural/Specialized Park (4)	2.77 ha per 1000 residents
--	----------------------------

**Description**

Elmira has a well-developed park system that is balanced between smaller neighbourhood parks, especially in residential areas developed in recent decades, and larger community parks with recreation facilities, including sports fields and ball diamonds. The park system in Elmira also includes several specialized/cultural parks. Gore Park and Memorial Park, parkette-sized triangular public spaces, are located along Arthur Street on the approach to downtown. There is also an off-leash dog park east of Union Street and south of Oriole Parkway East, as well as Victoria Glen at the end of Dunke Street North, which is mostly forested but includes a community garden. Elmira has a large connector park which provides trails/footpaths through forested area/woodlot connecting residential areas south of South Parkwood Boulevard to those north of Whippoorwill Drive. There are also two large natural area/open space parkland parcels in the southwest part of Elmira adjacent to employment uses. The larger of the two, south of Field Drive and east of Union Street, is the Elmira Nature Reserve.

**Issues or Opportunities**

Elmira has experienced steady growth and development in the past around the older, established areas flanking Arthur Street north of First Street. Residential subdivisions are now being developed at the northwest and southwest edges of the existing built-up area. Significant growth is forecasted to 2051 and will mainly occur in designated greenfield areas westward toward Floradale Road.



Figure 3 – Elmira Parks System

**St. Jacobs****St. Jacobs**

Settlement Type		2024	2031	2041	2051
Township Area	Urban	2,650	3,178	3,838	4,564

Parkland Supply (ha)	Active Use	Passive Use
34.24	12.13	22.11

**Active Use Parks**

Neighbourhood Parks (4)  
Community Parks (3)  
Cultural/Specialized Park (1)

**Service Level** (Active Use Parkland)

4.58 ha per 1000 residents

**Description**

St. Jacobs is a smaller urban settlement with a strong north-south orientation along King Street. Newer residential areas and recent subdivision development are found in the southeast part of St. Jacobs. Parkland south of the Conestogo River is provided mainly east of Water Street along the river as it turns and runs south to where it crosses Arthur Street/Highway 85. A considerable portion of these lands are connector park that integrates natural area/open space with a neighbourhood park (playground), community park (ball diamond and sports fields), and cultural/specialized park (off-leash dog park). North of the Conestogo River there are two adjacent community parks that host recreation facilities: a ball diamond and the St. Jacobs Arena.

**Issues or Opportunities**

The park system in St. Jacobs is strongly oriented to Riverside Meadows, with most amenities and facilities at its northern end. There may be opportunities for improvements, particularly to trails to connect new residential development at the southern end of the connector park to recreation facilities and amenities to the north, as well as provide active transportation options to reach the St. Jacobs core area along King Street south of the Conestogo River.



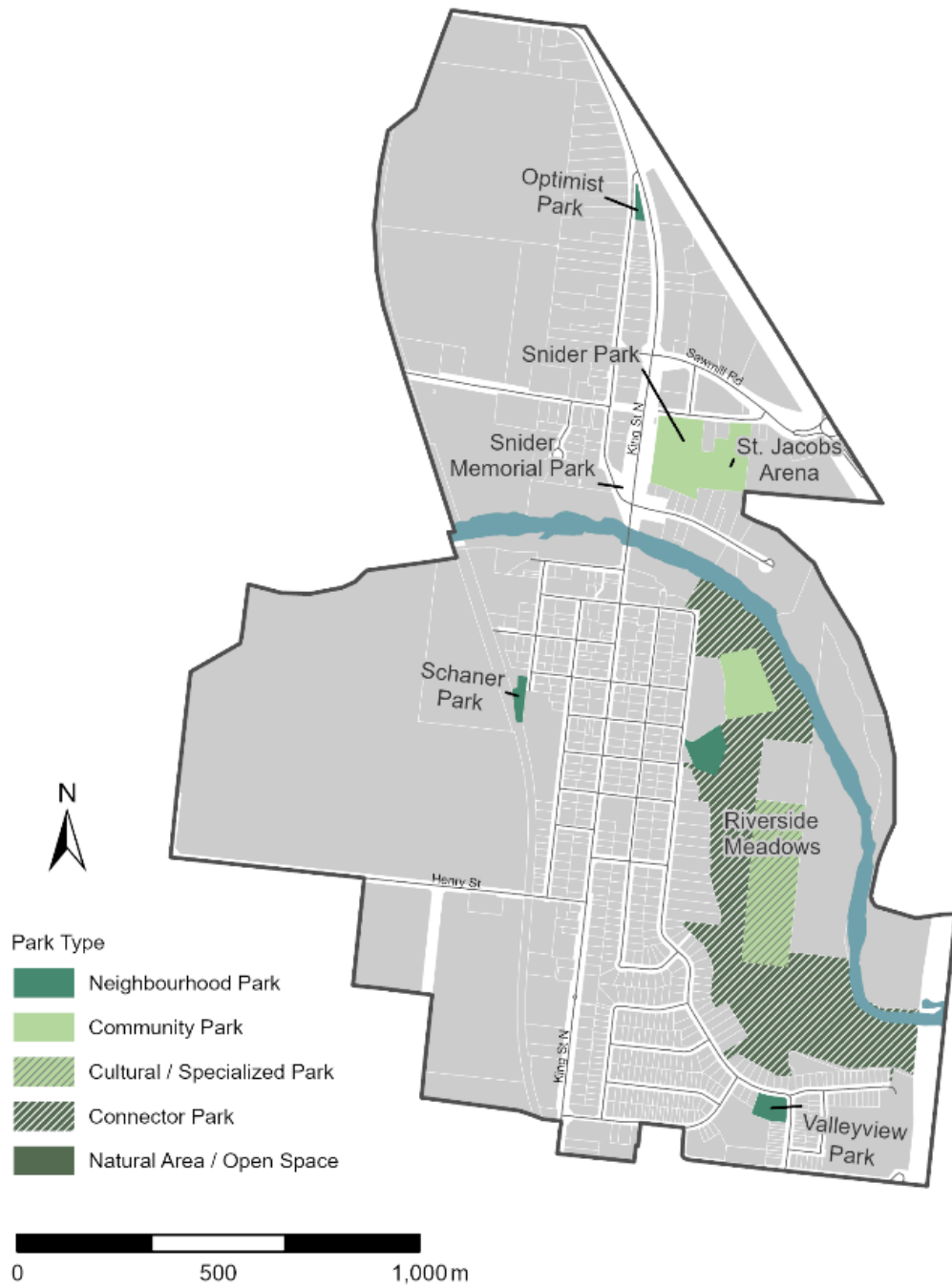


Figure 4 – St. Jacobs Park System



## Rural Settlements

### Rural Settlements and Countryside

Settlement	2024	Parks	Supply (ha)	Service Level (Active Use)
Bloomingtondale	269	1	4.58	17.03
Conestogo	1,316	1	1.35	1.03
Floradale	Not Avail.	1	2.29	Not Avail.
Heidelberg	698	1	1.59	2.28
Maryhill	645	2	4.95	7.67
West Montrose	262	2	0.27	1.03
Totals - Rural Settlements and Countryside	9,392	8	15.04	1.60

Parkland Supply (ha)	Active Use	Passive Use
17.43	15.04	2.40

#### Active Use Parks

Neighbourhood Parks (2)  
Community Parks (5)  
Cultural/Specialized Park (1)

#### Passive Use Parkland

Natural Area/Open Space (2)

### Description

The development of community parks in Bloomingtondale, Conestogo and Heidelberg is closely connected to community associations that operated playgrounds and sports facilities in these settlements historically. More recently, the Township acquired lands in Maryhill and developed a park with a community centre, playground, and outdoor sport facilities. The Township now considers requiring small parks at strategic locations in larger rural settlements as part of the subdivision approval process to ensure playground facilities can be provided within a 5-10 minute walking distance of new residences.

### Issues or Opportunities

The park system in the rural settlements should be considered distinct from urban provision as community parks and facilities serve a wider rural-agricultural countryside. Neither rural settlements, nor the countryside are expected to experience population growth. There should be a focus on quality (maintenance and renewal) and meeting community needs for gathering spaces. Periodic review of facility usage/utilization should be undertaken. The Township could explore options with the Foundation Christian School for shared use of their park space in Winterbourne.



#### 4.4. Parkland Supply and Future Need

Assessment of current parkland supply focuses on active use parkland. As noted previously, passive use parkland in the Township includes parks classified as natural area/open space and connector park. While these lands are considered part of the parks system, they are excluded from the needs assessment because they are limited to passive uses and recreation facilities such as trails and involve lands not suitable for active use park development.

The Township currently provides approximately 78 hectares of active use parkland or 2.47 hectares per 1000 residents. This falls within the range of 2-4 hectares per 1000 residents that most Ontario municipalities provide. It is recommended the Township plan for its parks system as a whole to stay within this range and generally maintain its current service level of approximately 2.5 hectares of active use parkland per 1000 residents.

The needs assessment estimates that by 2051, the Township will need to add approximately 25 hectares of active use parkland to the current parks system to achieve the minimum standard of 2 hectares per 1000 residents. To maintain the current level of provision, 2.5 hectares per 1000 residents, the Township would need to double the amount of parkland acquired to just over 50 hectares.

Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs currently provide active use parkland above the recommend minimum standard of 2 hectares per 1000 residents. As population growth occurs beyond now and 2051, Breslau and Elmira are estimated to progressively fall into a parkland supply deficit. The table below summarizes parkland supply and estimated need for these settlements as well as the Township as a whole.



**Parkland Need**

<b>Population</b>	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	6,069	13,541	2,650	9,392	31,652
2031	7,804	16,469	3,178	9,377	36,828
2041	10,119	20,129	3,838	9,579	43,665
2051	13,269	24,304	4,564	9,694	51,831

<b>Supply (ha)</b>	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
Community	7.93	26.17	5.53	14.15	53.78
Neighbourhood	5.65	5.18	1.71	0.71	13.25
Specialized/Cultural	-	6.18	4.89	0.17	11.24
<b>Total Active Use</b>	<b>13.58</b>	<b>37.53</b>	<b>12.13</b>	<b>15.03</b>	<b>78.27</b>

<b>Service Level (ha per 1000)</b>	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	2.24	2.77	4.58	-	2.47
2031	1.74	2.28	3.82	-	2.13
2041	1.34	1.86	3.16	-	1.79
2051	1.02	1.54	2.66	-	1.51

<b>Need (ha) (at 2 ha per 1000)</b>	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	-1.44	-10.45	-6.83	-	-14.97
2031	<b>+2.03</b>	-4.59	-5.77	-	-4.61
2041	<b>+6.66</b>	<b>+2.73</b>	-4.45	-	<b>+9.06</b>
2051	<b>+12.96</b>	<b>+11.08</b>	-3.00	-	<b>+25.39</b>

<b>Need (ha) (at 2.5 ha per 1000)</b>	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	<b>+1.59</b>	-3.68	-5.51	-	-0.86
2031	<b>+5.93</b>	<b>+3.64</b>	-4.19	-	<b>+13.80</b>
2041	<b>+11.72</b>	<b>+12.79</b>	-2.54	-	<b>+30.89</b>
2051	<b>+19.59</b>	<b>+23.23</b>	-0.72	-	<b>+51.31</b>

**Note:** The parkland “need” means a deficit between existing supply and the service level that results from population projections for 2024, 2031, 2041, and 2051 when compared to the recommended minimum standard (2 ha per 1000 residents) or existing service level (2.5 ha per 1000 residents). “+” is used to indicate the need for additional parkland (in hectares).







## 4.5. Locating Future Parks

As the Township grows over the next three decades it will be especially important to acquire parkland strategically in Breslau and Elmira as these settlements will accommodate most of the population growth forecasted to 2051. Determining where and in what park type additional parkland should be added to the parks system is considered at a high-level by this Master Plan.

New neighbourhood parks will mainly be required where new residential subdivisions are developed—with the necessary parkland acquired as part of the development approval process. On this basis, new neighbourhood parks will mirror the geography of designated greenfield areas in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs. The planning and approval process for these new residential areas will need to consider the Township's Landscape and Design Guidelines and the location of existing neighbourhood parks. Care should be exercised to balance cost-efficiency and operational considerations with convenient access—i.e., ensure most residences will be within 500 metres of a neighbourhood park or park with a playground.

New or expanded community parks will be required in Breslau and Elmira to accommodate forecasted growth to 2051. Target rates and/or minimum standards for recreation facilities—i.e., ball diamonds, sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, community centres, etc.—are discussed in the next Chapter of this Master Plan. These target rates or minimum standards allow the Township to translate population growth into estimated facility needs. Where the needs assessment has determined new or expanded recreation facilities will be required, the space to accommodate them will mostly be found in community parks. For this reason and the difficulty acquiring/assembling larger parcels of land in built-up areas, it is recommended that the Township plan to secure the necessary parkland for community parks ahead of the planned and/or anticipated medium and longer-term growth and development of new areas in Breslau and Elmira to ensure it is available when needed in preferred locations.

The recommended target service levels for neighbourhood and community parks implies between 55-70% of new active use parkland will be allocated to community parks. The precise breakdown will depend on the overall service level achieved. Neighbourhood parks tend to fall as a percentage of active use parkland as overall provision or service levels increase.



# 5. RECREATION FACILITIES



## 5. Recreation Facilities

This Chapter details the Township’s recreation facilities by providing an inventory of facilities, a needs assessment for each facility type, and outlining the connection between the parks system and recreation facilities. Recreation facilities are divided into indoor and outdoor facilities for convenience. Both indoor and outdoor facilities identified and discussed in this Master Plan are mostly located on municipally owned active use parkland (also including leased property from the GRCA or Region of Waterloo), with most found at community parks.

Other recreation facilities may be provided at private facilities, including places of worship, and at public schools. It is acknowledged that the provision of recreation facilities outside the Township’s parks and recreation system does impact demand. Access and usage of these facilities are outside of municipal control. For this reason, they are not directly considered as part of this Master Plan. Similarly, there are facilities, especially those linked to new sports or emergent or niche recreational trends that are not comprehensively addressed as part of the needs assessment provided in this Chapter—high-level discussion and recommendations are included, however.

A comprehensive inventory of recreation facilities is provided in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared for this Master Plan. Fact sheets are provided below in this Chapter to provide key data and an outline of the Township’s recreation facilities.

Recommendations are presented in Chapter 6.

### 5.1. Outdoor Recreation Facilities

A range of outdoor recreation facilities are provided as part of the Township’s parks and recreation system. Outdoor recreation facilities include playgrounds and splash pads to support the outdoor play and recreation needs of young children; they also include facilities for individual and team sports such as ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts. There are amenities such as trails, covered seating areas (pavilions), benches, washrooms, and landscaped areas that are not directly assessed—it is assumed these are parkland features that should be guided by individual park development or redevelopment processes and based on guidelines developed the Township such as the landscape and design guidelines referred to in the Parkland Design and Development section in Chapter 4 of this Master Plan.

As noted, there are new sports and emergent or niche recreational trends that are not comprehensively addressed. This Master Plan should be regarded as a living document. It is difficult to forecast medium to longer-term needs for sports or recreational activities that are relatively new. It is acknowledged that needs will evolve and that forecasting need to 2051 entails far more uncertainty for facilities than for parkland. The Township will need to develop a process or protocol for monitoring trends in usage and demand for recreation



facilities. This should include considering needs for sports or recreation/leisure activities that are relatively new and increasing in popularity and participation, as well as shifting preferences and declining usage of existing facilities or participation in sports associated with them. Multi-use facilities are an important way to build flexibility and adaptability into the parks and recreation system—with the additional benefit that it also tends to facilitate optimizing the use of parkland and facilities over time.

Fact sheets are provided in this Chapter for the following outdoor facilities to provide a snapshot of current provision and outline key findings or issues identified by the needs assessment:

- Ball Diamonds
- Soccer Fields
- Playgrounds
- Outdoor Ice Pads
- Splash Pads
- Tennis Courts







### Ball Diamonds

## Ball Diamonds

**Supply** 16.5 Unlit Equivalent  
- 9 Lit  
- 3 Unlit

### Overview

The Township currently provides ball diamonds in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, as well as in community parks in the following rural settlements: Bloomingdale, Conestogo, Floradale, Heidelberg, and Maryhill. Most of the Township’s ball diamonds have lighting, which allows them to be used more intensively/efficiently. Lit ball diamonds are considered 1.5 as an unlit equivalent (ULE) when determining overall supply. Most ball diamonds in the Township have fencing and are groomed. The sizes/dimensions of ball diamonds vary.

**Provision Target** 1 per 2000-3000 residents

(Ball Diamonds required)

	Year	Population	Provision <sup>1</sup>	Min	Max	Min. Standard
<b>Service Level</b>	<b>2024:</b>	31,652	1,918	11	16	Exceeds
	<b>2031:</b>	36,828	2,232	12	18	Exceeds
	<b>2041:</b>	43,665	2,646	15	22	Exceeds
	<b>2051:</b>	51,831	3,141	17	26	-

### Needs Assessment

The Township is currently well-provided with ball diamonds both in terms of service level and geographic distribution. Elmira is undersupplied, however. For the Township as a whole, service levels will fall to the minimum standard by 2051 based on forecasted population growth.

### Strategic Considerations

Although, the overall provision of ball diamonds in the Township will remain above the minimum standard until 2051, forecasted growth will occur mainly in Breslau and Elmira. The Township should monitor usage of individual ball diamonds in all communities and consider utilization rates in determining whether to maintain current service levels or allow provision to fall toward the minimum standard as forecast population growth occurs. Additionally, the

<sup>1</sup> Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per ball diamond.



Township should monitor usage to determine whether a redistribution of diamonds from communities with little/no use to urban settlements with greater needs is warranted.

Currently, the utilization of the baseball diamonds has been stable. The Township accommodates three primary groups that regularly use these diamonds, each maintaining steady registration numbers. A decline in registration among the South Woolwich Minor Baseball, Elmira Minor Softball Association, and adult user groups, would directly affect the overall usage of the baseball diamonds.

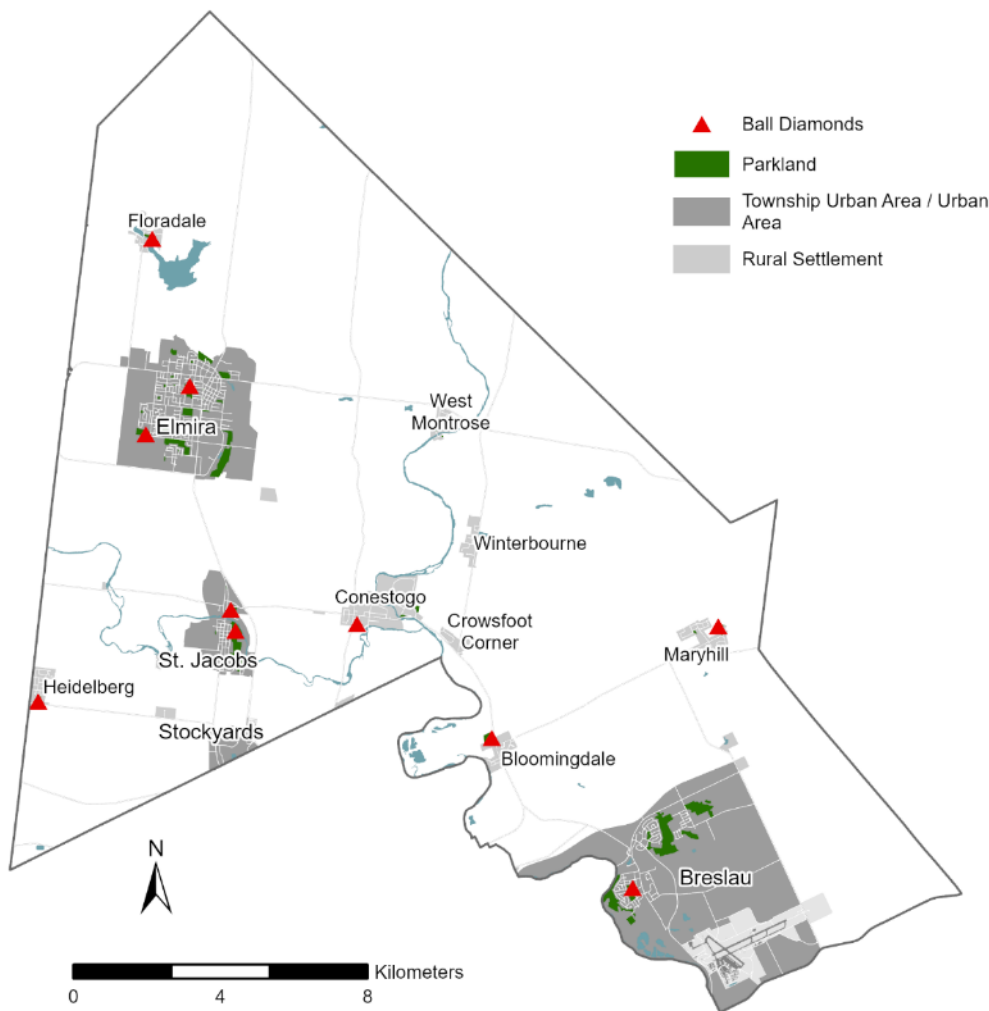


Figure 5 – Ball Diamonds in the Township of Woolwich



## Soccer Fields

### Soccer Fields

**Supply** 13.5

#### Overview

Most of the Township's supply of soccer fields are provided in community parks in Breslau, Elmira and St. Jacobs. Each park has multiple soccer pitches that range in size (full, 9v9, 7v7, 5v5). The soccer field at Lions Park in Elmira has lighting. Outside of urban settlements, Bloomingdale has a full-sized soccer pitch, while Maryhill has a 7v7 sized soccer pitch.

**Provision Target** 1 per 2000-4000 residents

(Fields required)

	Year	Population	Provision <sup>2</sup>	Min	Max	Min. Standard
<b>Service Level</b>	<b>2024:</b>	31,652	2,345	8	16	Exceeds
	<b>2031:</b>	36,828	2,728	9	18	Exceeds
	<b>2041:</b>	43,665	3,234	11	22	Exceeds
	<b>2051:</b>	51,831	3,839	13	26	Exceeds

#### Needs Assessment

The Township is currently well-provided with soccer fields in terms of service level and geographic distribution. For the Township as a whole, service levels will fall toward the minimum end of the recommended service level range by 2051 based on forecasted population growth. To maintain the current rate of provision, the Township would need to add 9-10 soccer fields to its current supply, mostly in new or expanded community parks.

#### Strategic Considerations

The Township should monitor usage of individual soccer fields, particularly bookings, to determine how residential growth in Breslau and Elmira is impacting usage and supply requirements.

Currently, Woolwich Youth Soccer is the main user of the Township's soccer pitches. There are no adult groups currently using these facilities. Over the past few years, since the

<sup>2</sup> Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per field.



pandemic, there has been a noticeable decrease in Woolwich Youth Soccer registrations, which directly affects the overall utilization of the soccer pitches.

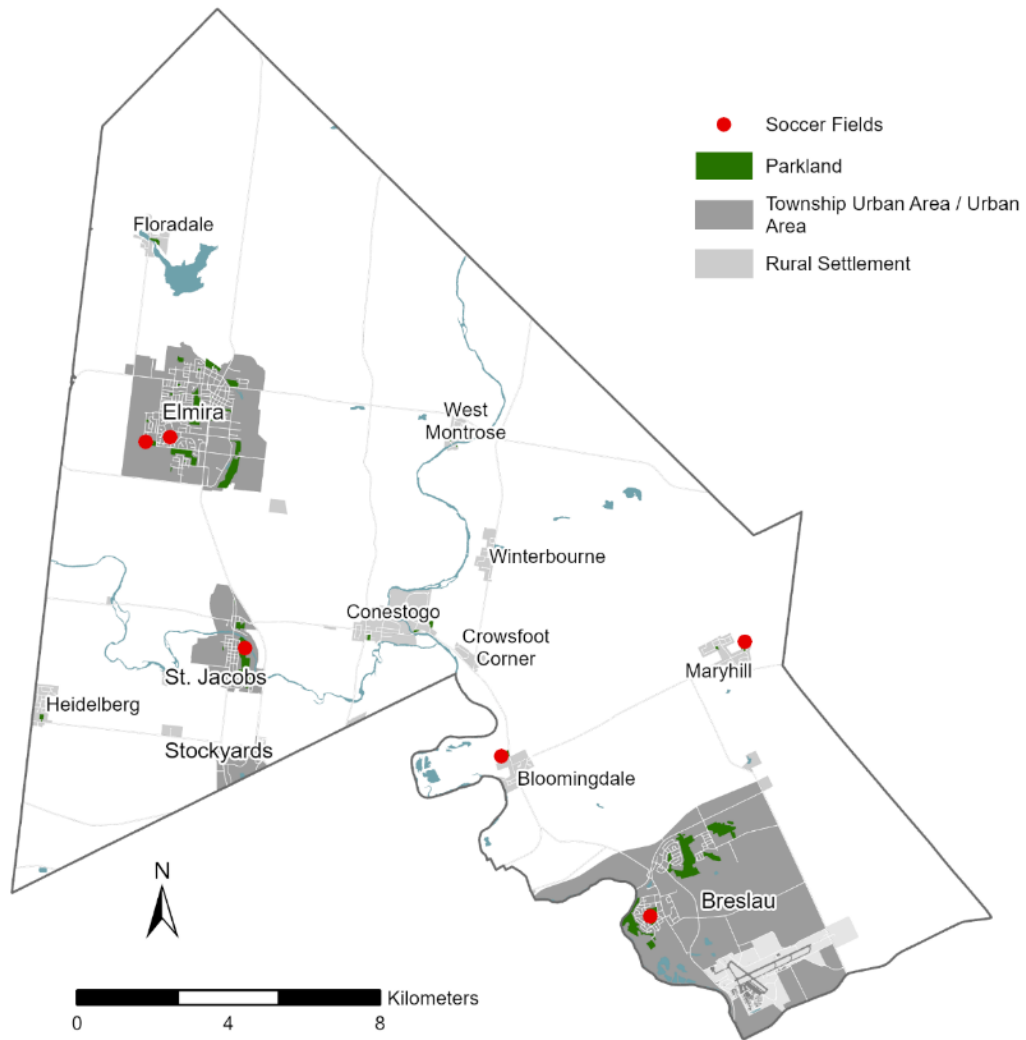


Figure 6 – Soccer Fields in the Township of Woolwich





## Playgrounds

### Playgrounds

**Supply** 20

#### Overview

Playgrounds are provided to meet the routine need for young children to engage in unstructured outdoor play. Facilities may include swings, climbing structures, slides, and other elements that combine physical and cognitive skills/activities. Because playgrounds are provided for regular use by young children, their provision targets are oriented toward proximity requirements such as most residences being within convenient walking distance of a park with a playground.

**Provision Target** Most residences within 500 metres of a playground

(Playgrounds required)

	Year	Provision	Min	Existing (service level)	Min. Standard
<b>Service Level</b>	<b>2024:</b>	222	15	20	Exceeds
	<b>2031:</b>	258	17	23	Exceeds
	<b>2041:</b>	306	20	28	-
	<b>2051:</b>	363	24	33	Under

#### Needs Assessment

The Township generally achieves the service area standard that most residences in settlements be located within 500 metres of playground facilities. A service level range of 1 per 100-300 children 0-9 years old may be considered when assessing service levels within settlement areas and to allow for variations in density. It is not recommended the Township seek to increase its overall service level and may determine based on usage the minimum standard is sufficient in most cases.

#### Strategic Considerations

Playgrounds should be provided in neighbourhood parks, and, where deemed appropriate, community parks. The priority when assessing need and selecting sites for neighbourhood parks should be achieving the service area standard to ensure most children are within a 5-10 minute walk (500 metres) of a playground, preferably without the need to cross busy streets.

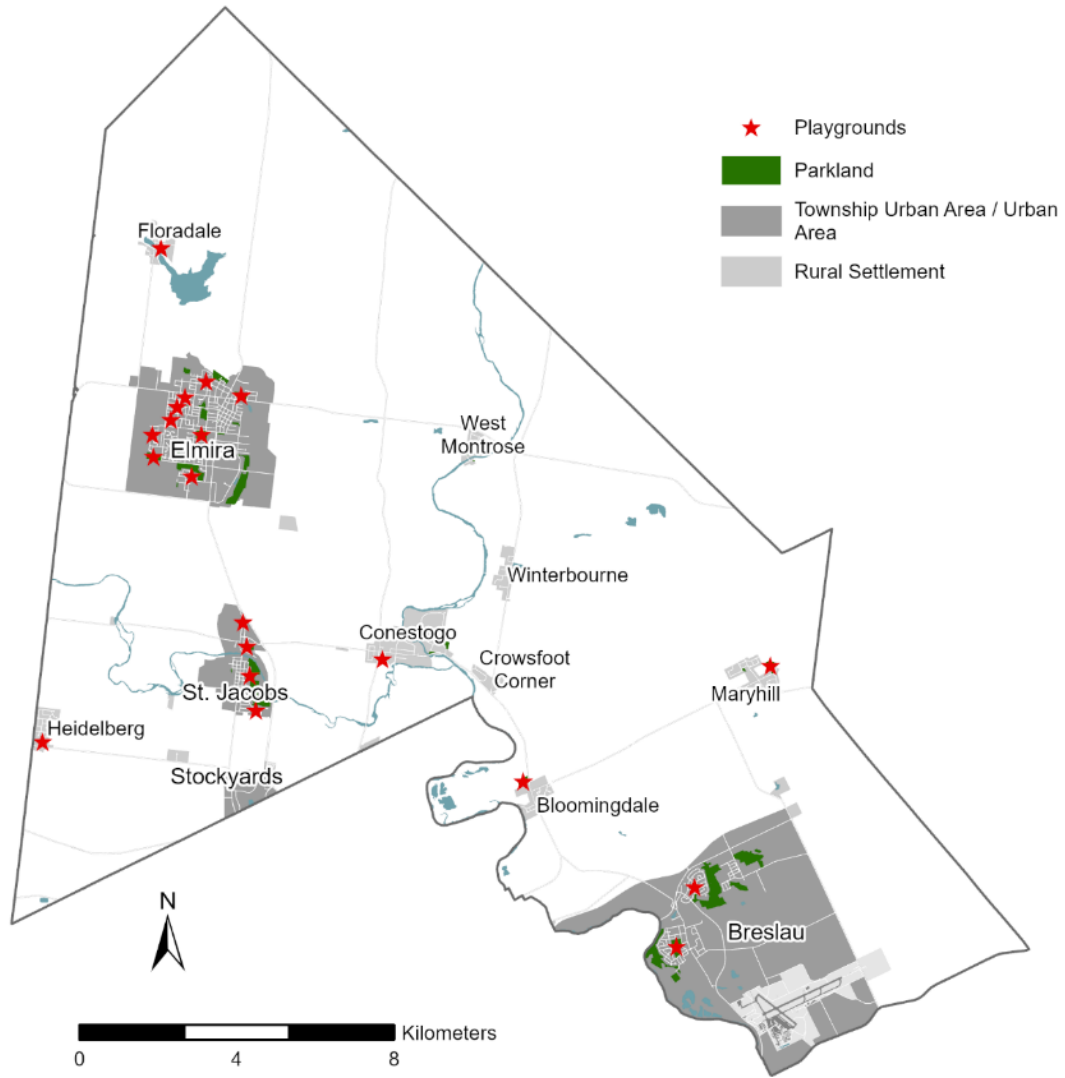


Figure 7 – Playgrounds in the Township of Woolwich



## Outdoor Ice Pads

### Outdoor Ice Pads

**Supply** 5

#### Overview

The Township current provides volunteer-run outdoor ice pads in three rural settlements – Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill – as well as in Breslau and St. Jacobs. Outdoor ice pads are typically provided at community parks, though an outdoor ice pad was recently constructed in a neighbourhood park, Valleyview Park, at the southern end of St. Jacobs. Outdoor ice pads have historically been run by volunteer groups and/or Recreation Associations in communities without an indoor ice pad.

**Provision Target** No target or minimum service level recommended.

#### Needs Assessment

While there is no recommended target for provision or minimum service level, Township-wide outdoor ice pads are provided at a rate of 1 per 6,330 residents. This is similar to the service level provided in the City of Kitchener and City of Woodstock, but somewhat lower than is provided in the City of Guelph and the Township of Centre Wellington. No outdoor ice pads are provided in Elmira or the portion of the Township north of Elmira where indoor ice pads and stick-and-puck ice times are offered.

#### Strategic Considerations

The provision of outdoor ice pads should be considered in conjunction with the supply and location of indoor ice arenas.



## Skate Parks

### Skate Parks

**Supply** 1

#### Overview

The Township current provides one skate park in Bristow Park in Elmira. Provision of skate parks and other similar facilities such as BMX tracks are typically provided based on expressed interest and support. Site selection focuses on compatibility and suitability criteria, which may include consideration of parks near where youth frequent such as schools and community centres.

**Provision Target** No target or minimum service level recommended.

#### Needs Assessment

The current skate park in The Township is centrally located in Elmira within walking distance of the public secondary school and proximate to public transit on Arthur Street. The Township may wish to establish criteria for evaluating requests for youth-oriented outdoor recreation facilities like skate parks and BMX tracks.

#### Strategic Considerations

Given the growth anticipated and relative geographic isolation from Elmira, the Township should consider providing a skate park in Breslau if there is expressed interest and the number children/youth increase with residential subdivision development.





## Splash Pads

### Splash Pads

**Supply** 2

#### Overview

The Township currently provides splash pads at Bolender Park (Elmira) and Breslau Memorial Park.

**Provision Target** 1 per 3000 children 0-9 years old

	Year	Population <sup>3</sup>	Provision	Required	Need
<b>Service Level</b>	<b>2024:</b>	4,431	2,216	1	Surplus
	<b>2031:</b>	5,156	2,578	2	-
	<b>2041:</b>	6,113	3,057	2	-
	<b>2051:</b>	7,256	4,099	3	Deficit

#### Needs Assessment

After construction of the new splash pad at Breslau Memorial Park, the Township has a splash pad in the northern and southern parts of the Township—in the settlements, Breslau and Elmira, that are anticipated to accommodate most of the population growth forecasted for the Township to 2051. The recommended provision target rate suggests a third splash pad will be needed in the medium to longer term.

#### Strategic Considerations

Provision of splash pad or outdoor waterplay facilities varies across Ontario municipalities. The Township could consider providing splash pads at a somewhat higher rate if usage patterns and feedback from residents warrants it.

<sup>3</sup> Population refers to children 0-9 years old estimated using the percent of the Township's population that was reported to be 0-9 years old in the 2021 Census of Canada.



## Tennis Courts

### Tennis Courts

**Supply** 7

#### Overview

The Township provides tennis courts in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, as well as in two rural settlements (Conestogo and Heidelberg). Twin courts are provided in Breslau Memorial Park and Gibson Park (Elmira). Single courts are provided in Conestogo Community Park, Heidelberg Community Parks, and Snider Park (St. Jacobs).

**Provision Target** 1 per 5000 residents

	Year	Population	Provision <sup>4</sup>	Required	Need
<b>Service Level</b>	<b>2024:</b>	31,652	4,522	6	Surplus
	<b>2031:</b>	36,828	5,261	7	-
	<b>2041:</b>	43,665	6,238	9	Deficit
	<b>2051:</b>	51,831	7,404	10	Deficit

#### Needs Assessment

The Township provides tennis courts at a service level comparable to provision targets found in Master Plans for other Ontario municipalities. Actual service levels do vary between municipalities, however. Woolwich provides tennis courts at a rate that is comparable to the Township of Wilmot but higher than nearby municipalities such as the City of Kitchener, City of Guelph, and Township of Centre Wellington. Forecast growth to 2051 suggests the Township will need to consider increasing supply sometime after 2031.

#### Strategic Considerations

The Township should monitor usage/utilization rates for existing tennis courts and consider growing demands for new hard-court sports such as pickleball that require similar facilities, particularly in the urban settlements.

<sup>4</sup> Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per tennis court.

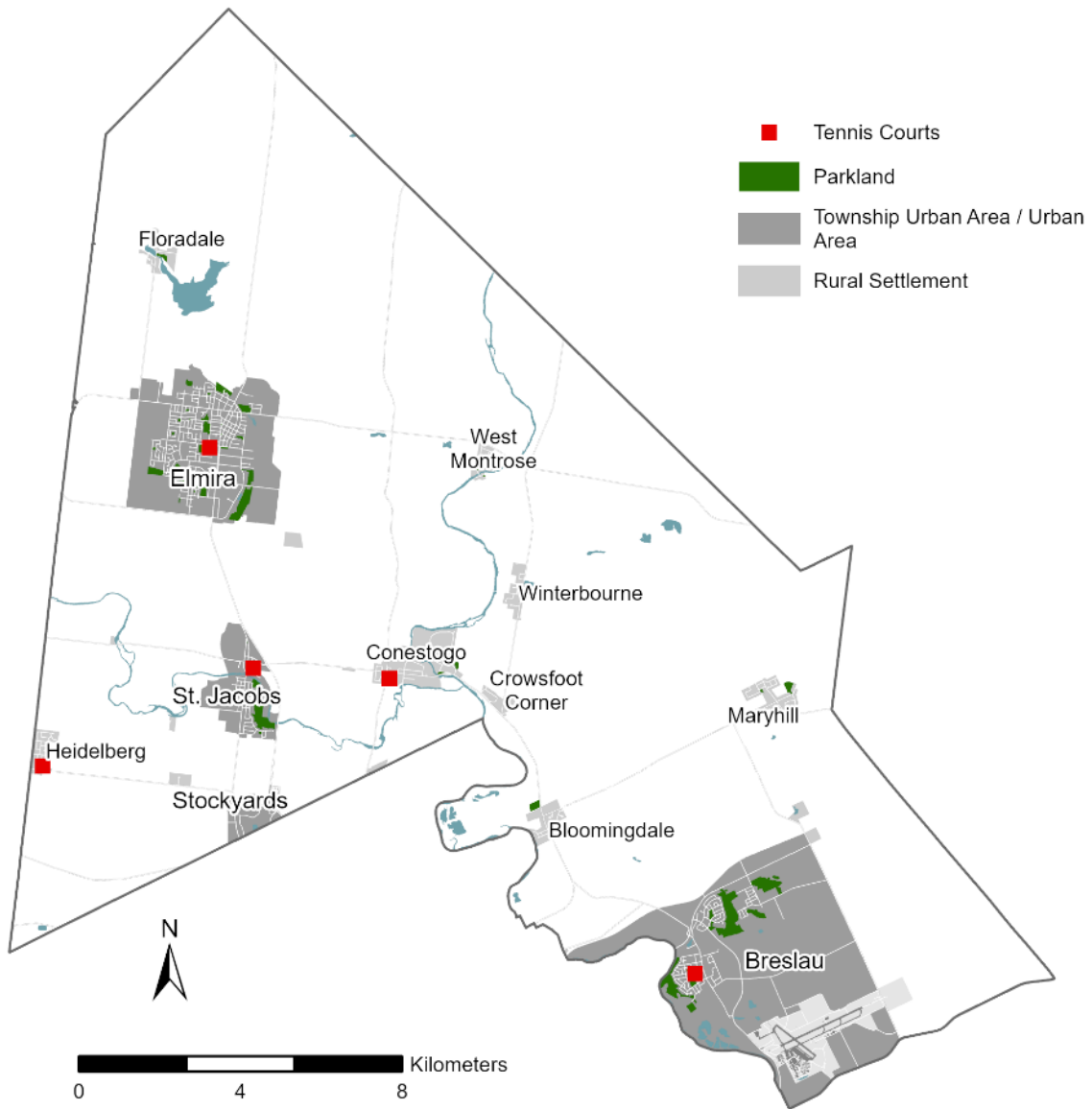


Figure 8 – Tennis Courts in the Township of Woolwich



## Trails

### Trails

<b>Supply</b>	104 km Total of Public Trails 65 km – Township Managed Trails (34 km Township owned and 31 km not Township owned)
---------------	---

### Overview

The Township has 104 km of public trail, located throughout urban settlement areas and including longer connector trails that provide east-west and north-south corridors through the Township.

Of the total 104 km of trails in the Township, 34 km are owned and managed by the Township, located primarily in Connector Parks and Natural Areas/Open Spaces. The remaining 70 km of trails are either managed by the Township (public trails on private property) or are apart of other trail networks, such as at Kissing Bridge Trail (Lions Club).

Trail surfaces throughout the Township range from natural footpaths to stone dust to asphalt, accommodating a variety of uses such as cycling, hiking, and mobility devices, and used for both recreation and as active transportation routes.

No target or minimum service level recommended.

### Provision Target

Average 2024 service level for municipalities within the Region of Waterloo is 1 km of trails per 1000 residents.

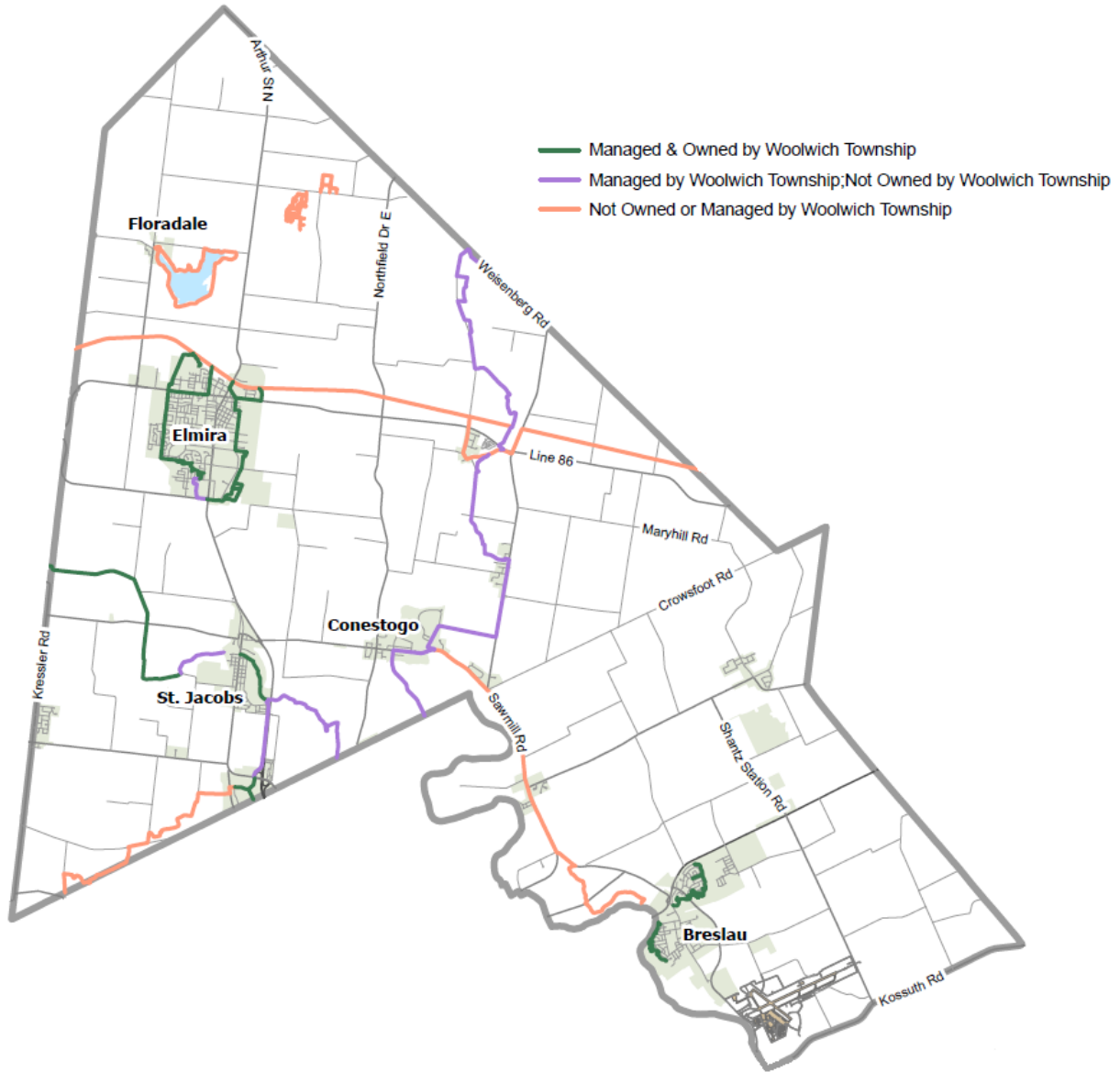
### Needs Assessment

Based on a survey of municipal trail supply within the Region of Waterloo (2024), the service level for trails has been calculated at 4 km per 1000 residents, the highest in the Region. The Township is currently well-provided with trails in terms of service level and geographic distribution.

### Strategic Considerations

Considering the forecasted population growth in both Breslau and Elmira, the Township should monitor usage of trails in these communities and consider overall utilization rates in determining whether to maintain current service levels or allow the provision to fall closer to the average service levels throughout the Region. Trails are often established through the design of and acquisition of lands for parks space, or open space. As acquisition occurs, the Township should continue to consider active transportation routes and opportunities for recreation trails to connect neighbourhoods within communities.







### 5.2. Indoor Recreation Facilities

Indoor recreation facilities provide valuable space for the Township and community organizations to deliver programs that help residents of all ages stay active, healthy and engaged. The Woolwich Memorial Centre, St. Jacobs Arena and the Breslau Community Centre are the three major indoor facilities. These facilities are complemented by smaller community centres in the Township’s larger rural settlements.

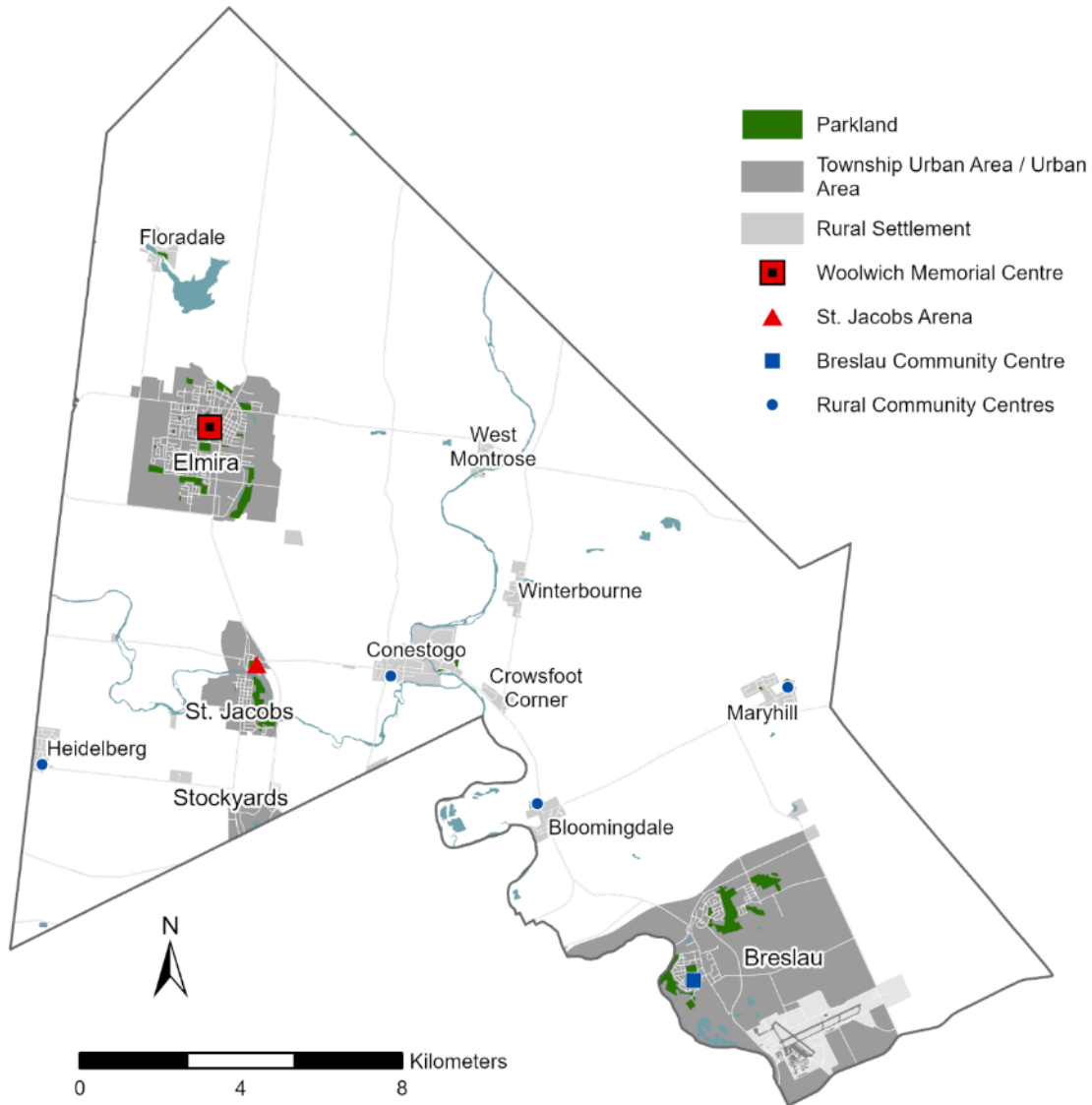


Figure 9 – Indoor Recreation Facilities in the Township of Woolwich

**Summary of Indoor Recreation Facilities**

<b>Indoor Recreation Facility Type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Location</b>
Ice Rinks	3	Woolwich Memorial Centre (2), St. Jacobs Arena (1)
Indoor Pools	2	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Community Centres	6	Bloomingtondale Community Centre, Breslau Community Centre, Conestogo Community Centre, Heidelberg Community Centre, Maryhill Community Centre, Woolwich Memorial Centre
Gymnasium	1	Breslau Community Centre
Senior's Centre	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Walking Track	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Fitness Centre	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Multi-Purpose Rooms & Meeting Rooms	11	Breslau Community Centre (2), Bloomingtondale Community Centre (1), Conestogo Club House (1), Heidelberg Community Centre (1), Maryhill Community Centre (1), Woolwich Memorial Centre (5)



## Woolwich Memorial Centre

### Woolwich Memorial Centre

#### Overview

Centrally located in Elmira, the Woolwich Memorial Centre (WMC) is a unique, modern multi-use facility in the Township’s Parks and Recreation System. Just under 11,000 square metres (118,000 square feet) in size, the WMC has two NHL-sized ice rinks, one with seating for spectators; aquatics centre (pool); fitness centre; and, walking track. As community centre, the WMC also includes space for programming and events offered by the Woolwich Seniors Association, as well as a Community Hub run by Woolwich Community Services.

Forecasted Pop.	2024	2031	2041	2051
Elmira	13,541	16,469	20,129	24,304
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

#### Need Assessment

There is no minimum or target service level recommended for community centres because they can vary significantly in size and with respect to the amenities and facilities provided and services/programming offered. The WMC includes multiple facilities that do have recommended service levels minimums or target ranges, however. For indoor aquatic centres and arenas, the recommended service levels are 1 per 25,000-50,000 residents and 1 per 10,000-15,000 respectively. These service levels suggest additional facilities will be needed in the medium or longer term as the Township grows toward its forecast 2051 population.

#### Issues or Opportunities

The recommended target ranges for both pools and arenas recognizes a second facility may be warranted in the Township in the medium to longer-term, most likely strategically located in the southern half of the Township to serve the growing population in Breslau. The expansion of existing facilities may be considered based on unmet need and/or utilized capacity in the northern half of the Township. In either case, the Township should conduct a feasibility study and/or prepare a business case that considers the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of additional facilities or expansion of existing facilities.



## St. Jacobs Arena

### St. Jacobs Arena

#### Overview

Located in the northern end of St. Jacobs amongst Snider Park, St. Jacobs Arena is a single ice rink facility at 2,663 square metres (28,666 square feet). The facility was constructed in 1974 and has seen significant investment over the past decade in its mechanical and building systems. In recent years, the facility has been utilized year-round, accommodating summer camp through the summer months.

Forecasted Pop.	2024	2031	2041	2051
St. Jacobs	2,650	3,178	3,838	4,564
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

#### Need Assessment

The recommended target service level range for indoor ice rinks is 1 per 10,000-15,000 residents. This is based on the provision in comparable municipalities and the Township’s existing supply of 3 indoor ice rinks between WMC and the St. Jacobs Arena. Based on forecast population growth to 2051, the existing supply will remain within the target range for the north half of the Township. To maintain the existing service level of approximately 1 indoor ice rink per 10,000 residents the Township will need to add an additional ice rink by 2041.

#### Issues or Opportunities

This Plan has identified the need for a multi-use facility in Breslau to serve the southern half of the Township in the medium to longer-term as forecast growth occurs. The Township should monitor usage trends and utilized capacity at the St. Jacobs Arena. If bookings, registrations, or participation rates for ice rinks at the WMC and St. Jacobs indicate or suggest of unmet need in the northern half of the Township, further study should consider the feasibility or business case for increasing supply.





## Breslau Community Centre

### Breslau Community Centre

#### Overview

Breslau Community Centre (BCC) is located at the southern end of Breslau Memorial Park in the more established part of the settlement area, south of the rail corridor. The facility is just over 2,000 square metres (22,000 square feet) in size, approximately one-fifth that of WMC in Elmira. The BCC includes a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and a library.

Population	2024	2031	2041	2051
Breslau	6,069	7,804	10,119	13,269
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

#### Need Assessment

There is no minimum or target service level recommended for community centres because they can vary significantly in size and with respect to the amenities and facilities provided and services/programming offered. The BCC currently provides a gymnasium that hosts various programming, including drop-in or open gym times and summer camp. Breslau is expected to grow significantly over the next few decades. While there are no minimum or target service levels, as Breslau’s population increases it will progressively require a community centre comparable to WMC in size and range of facilities/amenities.

#### Issues or Opportunities

Indoor aquatic centres are generally considered based on minimum population of 25,000. While service level ranges can vary based on local context, the recommended target range for the Township (1 per 25,000-30,000 residents) recognizes a second facility may be added in the southern half the Township in the medium to longer-term. Similarly, the recommended target range for arenas is 1 per 10,000-15,000 residents. Breslau’s forecasted population will fall within the range for an arena in the medium to longer-term. The Township should develop a strategy in the near term to address how it will meet the medium and longer term need for aquatic centres and arenas (indoor pools and ice rinks). This strategy should consider the feasibility/business case for a new facility comparable to WMC in Breslau versus the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of expanding existing facilities. Partnership with the City of Kitchener should be explored as part of the strategy.





## Rural Community Centres / Community Halls

### Rural Community Centres

#### Overview

Community Centres are provided in Bloomingdale, Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill within the community parks in these rural settlements. These are relatively small facilities, ranging in size from 110-305 square metres. These Community Centres function more as community halls: they are open by appointment only and offer space that can be booked/rented for meetings, gatherings, or events.

Population	2024	2031	2041	2051
Rural Area	9,125	9,202	9,312	9,422
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

#### Need Assessment

A recommended service level or target range is not provided for rural community centres.

#### Issues or Opportunities

This Plan did not include detailed study of individual facilities. While it is recommended the Township maintain current service levels for rural community centres, it should monitor their usage and review their role in the parks and recreation system and the communities they serve where they are found to be significantly under-utilized.

Note: Rural Area includes the population of rural settlement areas which account for approximately 40% of the population outside of the Township’s urban settlement areas: Breslau, Elmira, St. Jacobs, and the Stockyards.





### 5.3. Recreation Programming and Usage

#### Arena Usage

A combined three ice rinks are available between the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena. At these facilities, fees and charges distinguish between prime and non-prime-time ice. Prime-time ice is defined as weeknights between 5 pm and 11:30 pm and on weekends between 6:30 am and 11 pm, with non-prime-time ice during the remaining hours, primarily during weekdays. For the purposes of this Plan, a synopsis of prime-time ice has been provided.

Prime-time ice utilization over the past three ice seasons reveals that during a typical week at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena, overall usage levels remained consistent at 89%, representing a steady 168.25 hours booked weekly out of the 190 hours available. This trend suggests that the ice rinks at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena are operating at near full capacity with rentals and programming. It is generally uncommon for ice pads to operate at 100% utilization due to challenges renting later hours during the week and early hours during the weekend. According to the 2022/23 arena schedules, the following statistics revealed:

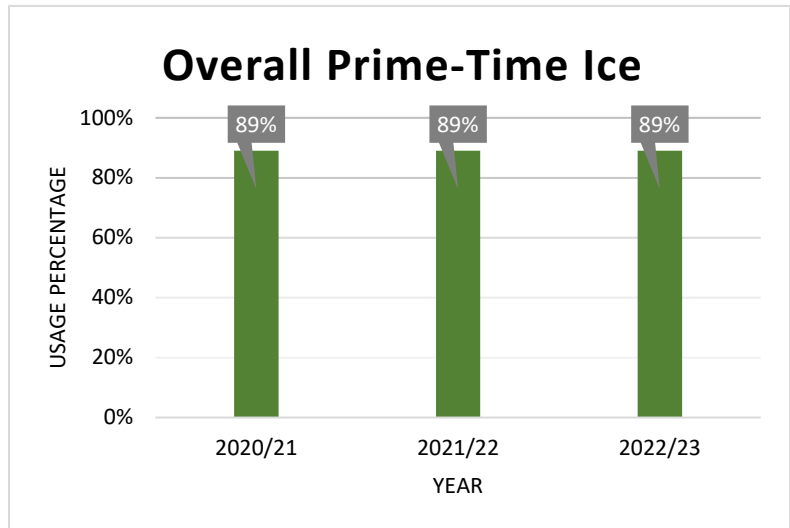


Figure 10 – Prime Time Ice Rentals

- McLeod Arena had 86% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 91% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.
- Snyder Arena had 80% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 87% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.
- St. Jacobs Arena had 87% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 90% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.

In addition to rentals and organized arena users, the Township provides drop-in recreational skating programs at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena, including public skating, stick and puck, and shinny. Participation over the past three



years has increased drastically reflecting a demand in unstructured drop-in recreational skating programs.

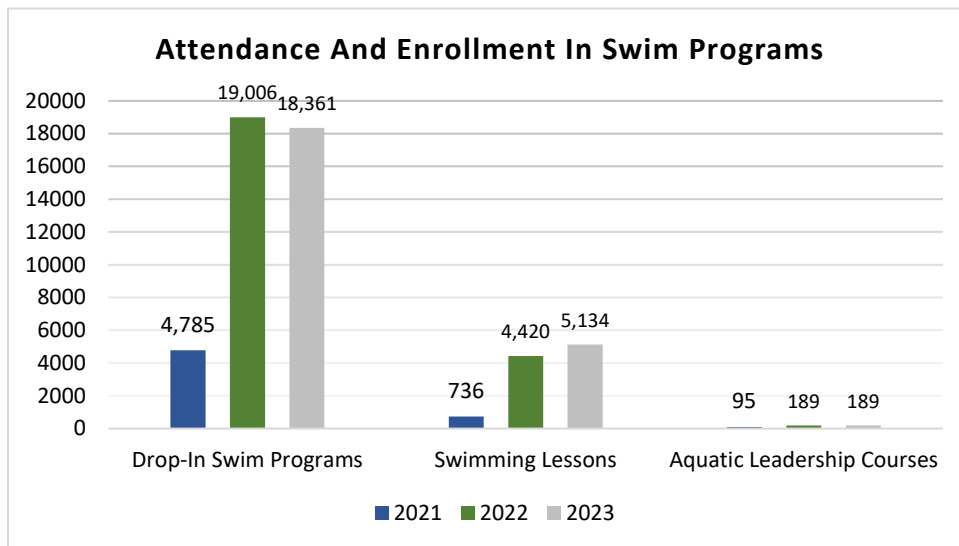
<b>WMC Drop-In Programs</b>	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Public Skating	2,320	3,206	5,232
Stick & Puck	2	287	892
Shinny	534	860	1,169
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,856</b>	<b>4,353</b>	<b>7,293</b>

<b>SJA Drop-In Programs</b>	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Public Skating	2,320	3,206	5,232
Stick & Puck	2	287	892
Shinny	534	860	1,169
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,856</b>	<b>4,353</b>	<b>7,293</b>



### Pool Usage

The Woolwich Memorial Centre pool is a highly sought-after public facility due to its ability to accommodate a wide range of programs for many ages, interests, and abilities. Learning to swim is an essential life skill that all residents benefit from. The Township offers three categories of programming which include drop-in swim programs, swimming lessons, and advanced aquatic leadership courses. The pool is also utilized by affiliated and non-affiliated swim groups. Participation data shows that the indoor pool is well utilized with usage of drop-in swim programs the most popular form of use. Drop-in swim programs appear to be more attractive to residents compared to registered programs, likely due to convenience and increasing time-constrained lifestyles.



Registration in swimming lessons has increased over the past three years. The Township provides swimming lessons ranging from parent and tot to adult swim classes. The program use rate is between 87-93%. The increase is primarily driven by the popularity in swimming lessons for preschool and youth. Due to increasing demand for swimming lessons, additional programming opportunities have been added to support the demand.

Year	2021		2022		2023	
	Registered	Capacity	Registered	Capacity	Registered	Capacity
Parent & Tot	63	63	1,166	1,256	1,084	1,207
Preschool	163	169	1,017	1,066	1,605	1,820
Youth	390	430	1,890	2,132	1,933	2,198
Teen / Adult	0	0	8	8	55	124
Private Lessons	120	122	339	350	454	495
<b>Total</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>784</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>4,812</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>5,844</b>
<b>Usage</b>	<b>93%</b>		<b>91%</b>		<b>87%</b>	







#### 5.4. Recreation Facility Supply and Future Need

The fact sheets above in this Chapter outline existing supply and needs for individual indoor and outdoor recreation facilities provided by the Township. This section considers both individual facilities in the context of the parks and recreation system, and touches upon facility needs for new sports and emergent trends in recreation that need consideration as part of this Master Plan.

##### Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Chapter 4 has already discussed future parkland needs. For simplicity, neighbourhood parks are provided using 500 metre service areas to ensure that most residences are within a convenient walkable distance of a neighbourhood park. This level of service and approach to provision has historically developed in the Township's urban settlements. In the larger rural settlements, playground facilities have been provided in community parks, though the Township has recently begun to require parkland dedication as part of subdivision approvals in rural settlements and these neighbourhood parks may also include playground facilities.





Neighbourhood parks may also provide amenities and improvements that were not specifically assessed: trails, benches, pavilions, etc. The need for playgrounds is closely associated with the need for additional neighbourhood parks in greenfield areas where new residential subdivisions will be developed and accommodate the lion's share of forecasted population growth over the next three decades.

Other outdoor recreation facilities will need to be provided in larger community parks. The fact sheets for the most numerous outdoor recreation facilities—ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts—indicate how the forecast population growth to 2051 will generate need for additional facilities or result in lower service levels. It is important that the Township continue to monitor soccer field and ball diamond usage to determine whether this need for additional facilities is required.

The target rates for service levels assume the recreation system will evolve and some flexibility will be required to ensure provision aligns with usage and participation—to ensure facilities are provided in a cost-effective and financially feasible manner. Chapter 6 will speak further to financial considerations when implementing the recommendations of this Master Plan.

As was noted in Chapter 4, it will be vitally important that the Township identify and secure additional parkland for community parks in Breslau and Elmira based on forecasted population growth. New and/or expanded community parks will accommodate the additional facilities needed to support population growth. Park development and redevelopment should consider the feasibility of multi-use fields and courts to optimize available space and increase the flexibility and adaptability of the facilities. This will be an important means to address the need for space and facilities for new sports or recreational activities experiencing increasing interest and/or participation such as pickleball and cricket.

With regard to pickleball, no target range or minimum service level has been recommended as part of this Master Plan, but it is acknowledged that interest and participation is growing in the Township. Master Plans for other Ontario municipalities are beginning to address the need for pickleball facilities, however, limited data is available to establish appropriate service level targets or minimum standards for provision. It is recommended the Township begin providing outdoor pickleball facilities based on usage and explore the merits of multi-use courts (shared with other compatible sports) and dedicated facilities. Some Master Plans anticipate pickleball may eventually require service levels on par with tennis.

### Indoor Recreation Facilities

The Woolwich Memorial Centre is the Township's major indoor recreation facility and functions a community centre with meeting rooms, fitness centre, an arena with two ice rinks, and an aquatic centre with two pools (6 lane, 25 metre competition pool and a warm-water leisure pool). A facility of this size, quality, and range of amenities –



particularly the indoor aquatic centre and 2 NHL-sized ice rinks – represents a significant investment in recreation by the Township. Based on standards in other comparable municipalities the Township will need to consider providing a similar facility in Breslau based on forecast growth to 2051.

By 2051, the overall Township population and population in Breslau will reach the level where it could support a second community centre with an indoor aquatic centre and ice arena in the southern half of Woolwich. That is based on historical provision in the Township, however. Based on the recreation Master Plans reviewed for this needs assessment, a service level of 1 aquatic centre per 25,000 residents is on the high-end of provision. The distribution of forecast population growth and unique geography/shape of the municipality, however, may warrant a second indoor aquatic facility for equitable access. A feasibility study should be conducted as the Township's population exceeds 50,000 residents and/or Breslau and southern Woolwich exceed 20,000 residents.

To accelerate the construction of a major indoor recreation facility with an indoor aquatic centre and ice rink(s) in Breslau, the Township could explore partnering with the City of Kitchener. A facility along the planned Ottawa Street regional intensification corridor or existing Victoria Street North, could serve both communities and be viable sooner than if solely based on Breslau's forecasted population growth to 2051.





An ice rink in Breslau would allow the Township to maintain its current service level until 2041. Additionally, exploring the feasibility of adding a fourth rink could be pursued longer-term. If maintaining the existing service level is desired both options will be required. Deciding whether to maintain the existing level of provision (1 ice rink per 10,000 residents) or fall toward 1 ice rink per 15,000 residents should be based on usage and participation rates, including the availability of ice time during prime-time periods and registration trends in area minor hockey associations.

In addition to the Woolwich Memorial Centre, the Township has an ice arena in St. Jacobs and community centres in Bloomingdale, Breslau, Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill. Of these community centres, all but the one in Breslau are small facilities more akin to meeting halls for gatherings or community events. The Master Plan does not recommend a minimum service level or standard for community centres in rural settlements. They should be assessed on a case-by-case basis that considers usage and local circumstances, including historical role and importance to the community served.

### 5.5. Locating Future Recreation Facilities

The location of new indoor and outdoor recreation facilities will be driven by the location of available parkland. As the Township grows over the next three decades, the growth will be concentrated in Breslau and Elmira. This will strongly influence the location of new neighbourhood parks and playground facilities but will also be a factor when locations for new community parks are selected. Recreation facilities are limited to locating where available parkland can accommodate them. For most facilities that means community parks.

In Breslau, the Township will need to consider preferred locations and timing for developing two additional community parks to accommodate growth to 2051. Ideally, one community park should be located to serve the newer residential areas north of the rail corridor and the other to serve growth south of the rail corridor. The precise size and location will be determined by available parcels of land and the facilities to be included. The previous section noted that long-term a community centre with an indoor aquatic centre and ice rink will be needed. To maintain service levels, additional ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts will also be needed. New facilities for pickleball and cricket may also be needed.

Similarly, forecast growth and the geography of designated greenfield areas in Elmira indicate that the equivalent (in area) of approximately 2-3 new community parks will be needed along the western and southern edges of the existing settlement to meet needs to 2051. The Township could also consider expanding existing community parks such as Lions Park and incorporate adjacent natural heritage features and stormwater management facilities into a larger series of connected parkland and trails. It has already been noted that ball diamonds are supplied at a noticeably lower rate in Elmira than for the Township as a whole. Forecast population growth will require additional ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts. The location and timing of new facilities will





be strongly determined by when and where new community parks are developed. Consideration should be given to the location of existing facilities and whether it would be better for functional or operational reasons and/or cost-effectiveness to co-locate certain facilities or consolidate sports into specific parks.

Outside of Breslau and Elmira, where population growth is not an overriding concern, recreation facilities in rural settlements generally serve smaller populations that are not expected to change appreciably. For these settlements and facilities, the main consideration will be ensuring use aligns with their capital and operating costs. This Master Plan recommends monitoring and periodic review to ensure needs are being met and establish if facilities are receiving sufficient use to warrant their longer-term maintenance and renewal costs.





# 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION



## 6. Recommendations and Implementation

This Chapter outlines actions and strategic directions. Action items are provided to address significant capital investments identified by the Master Plan, particularly with respect to parkland acquisition, while strategic directions provide guidance to be considered and/or identify best practices that should be adopted or employed.

### Implementation Strategy

The Master Plan is generally oriented toward maintaining current service delivery standards, including the range of amenities, facilities, and programming provided. However, the Master Plan acknowledges the parks and recreation system will need to be responsive to changing needs. The parks and recreation system should be planned with the expectation it will evolve—that demographic and recreational trends may influence interest in existing sports and result in demand for new sports and activities. The Master Plan should be regarded as a living document to be implemented. Any increase in service to accommodate new sports or recreational uses or leisure activities could increase land needs, costs, and/or require repurposing existing spaces. Action items and strategic directions outlined in this Master Plan should be viewed as embodying the preceding when read holistically.

### Planning for Growth

Planning for forecast growth was a key focus of the needs assessment prepared for this Master Plan. To provide high-level guidance on parkland requirements and facility needs to 2051, appropriate service levels for the Township were established based the existing parks and recreation system and a review of other Ontario municipalities. High-level



guidance on future needs to accommodate forecasted growth supports long-range planning and the development of a parkland acquisition strategy to ensure the Township has the requisite physical space available to host new or expanded recreation facilities when population growth warrants them.

It is understood that the development of new residential areas in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs will require new neighbourhood parks. The development of these neighbourhood parks will be determined by the timing and pace of development, with their locations determined as part of the planning and approval process for subdivisions.

Breslau and Elmira are anticipated to experience significant growth to 2051, with each settlement potentially reaching populations over 20,000. Both will require additional parkland in the form of community parks with new or expanded recreation facilities to support their forecasted population growth.

The strategy recommended by this Master Plan is to address the need for a future major indoor facility by developing a new multi-use recreation facility in Breslau to better serve the southern half of the Township and support Breslau's growth and development to 2051 and beyond.

The Woolwich Memorial Centre in Elmira is currently the primary indoor recreation facility in the Township with two NHL-sized ice rinks, an aquatics centre, fitness centre, and community/multi-purpose rooms. A single pad ice arena is located in St. Jacobs. These facilities are anticipated to meet the needs of the northern half of the Township, including forecasted population growth in Elmira and St. Jacobs to 2051.

### **Maintaining the Existing System**

While not the central focus of this Master Plan, the importance of maintenance, improvement, and/or renewal of existing assets cannot be overstated. Given the growth forecast for the Township it will be imperative that a strong asset management approach is adopted. The capital funding needed to maintain the existing asset base of the parks and recreation system should be mapped out. As the Township has limited resources, it will need to consider these capital needs—their timing, magnitude, and location—together with those required to support growth. Growth in Elmira and Breslau may provide opportunities to address the renewal of existing facilities as part of meeting increasing and changing needs. The Township should identify such opportunities and leverage them to cost-effectively address, wherever appropriate, the dual challenge of maintaining the existing system while needing to allocate significant resources to meet growth-related needs.



## 6.1. Major Action Items

1. Applying the service level standards and target provision levels established within the Master Plan to the projected population growth in Breslau through 2051, the need for parkland and outdoor amenities, and indoor recreation programming space has been identified by the Master Plan. The need for a future community park and multi-use recreation facility in Breslau should be addressed as follows:

- a. By 2028 – Identify an appropriate site for a community park and multi-use recreation facility.

Develop a financial strategy to support the land acquisition, beyond what might be provided via conveyance or cash-in-lieu in accordance with parkland dedication provisions in the *Planning Act*.

- b. By 2030 – Complete a needs analysis, including comprehensive public consultation to determine facility amenity requirements for the multi-use recreation facility.

Develop a financial strategy to support the facility construction.

- c. By 2033 – Secure community park and multi-use recreation facility lands.

2. The Master Plan has also identified the need for additional parkland and outdoor amenities in Elmira to address forecasted population growth to 2051. It is recommended that a parkland acquisition strategy be developed no later than 2028 to address the medium to longer-term land needs for community parks. The following should be considered:

- a. Desirability and feasibility of expanding existing community parks.
- b. Identification of appropriate sites for new community parks.
- c. Detailed assessment of the long-term space needs of outdoor recreation facilities and amenities within community parks.
- d. A long-term financial strategy to support the acquisition of land to meet community park needs in Elmira beyond estimates of what might be provided via conveyance or cash-in-lieu in accordance with parkland dedication provisions in the *Planning Act*.



3. Prepare and adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law in 2026 to permit the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu using the alternative requirement provided for in the *Planning Act*.

## 6.2. Strategic Directions

### Best Practices

1. Minimize barriers to participation in parks, recreation, and culture opportunities to ensure that access to facilities, programs and services are inclusive to residents. Strategies include broadening services to include non-traditional interests; designing facilities, programs, and services to be accessible; and, collaborating with organizations, associations and groups who serve diverse populations.
2. Achieve the following through park and facility design: enhance safety by incorporating crime prevention through environmental design best practices; facilitate social interaction in parks and recreation facilities, creating senses of place and inclusive community gathering spaces; and, incorporate green and environmentally conscious park design practices to reduce the Township's environmental footprint.
3. Enhance connectivity across the Township and throughout settlements by connecting parks and opens pace with existing and planned trails and active transportation facilities.
4. Create opportunities to meet emerging trends by developing multi-use spaces and amenities/facilities to maximize usage and functionality of parkland and recreation facilities in the Township based on growth projections and community needs. An example being multi-use courts that support pickleball, basketball, hockey, and more.
5. Utilize industry best practice standards, supporting usage data, and feedback for the provision of space and/or facilities for new sports or recreational/leisure activities.

### Community Engagement, Capacity-Building and Partnerships

1. Use diverse engagement forums and EngageWR to provide the public and stakeholders or partners an opportunity to provide feedback on parks and recreation development or redevelopment/renewal.
2. Establish new and foster existing partnerships with private landowners, other government agencies, schoolboards, and neighbouring municipalities for the





provision of parkland, trails, boat launch/river access, and facilities to meet or enhance establish service level standards.

### Parkland

1. Adopt the parks classification system to guide the planning and design of new parks and the revitalization of existing parks according to park class, size, and amenities. Incorporate parks classifications into the Township Official Plan, Landscape Design Guidelines, and all other relevant materials.
2. Maintain provision of active use parkland within the range of 2-4 hectares per 1000 residents for the term of the Master Plan.
3. Utilize the established service area standards and target provision levels for community and neighbourhood parks to guide the location and timing of parkland acquisition, new amenities and facilities to meet needs related to planned growth.
4. Assess the park space and facility requirements of new or emerging sports such as pickleball and cricket and consider opportunities for multi-use facilities or retrofitting, conversion, or co-location with existing facilities.
5. Evaluate where service area standards or target provision levels may be exceeded and assess how to improve or address geographic coverage and proximity/access by relocating or repurposing existing amenities.
6. Consider existing service level standards and funding models for the provision of niche uses and facilities such as skateparks, off-leash dog parks, and community gardens.

### Other Actions and Strategic Directions

1. Secure and develop inclusive outdoor spaces and facilities that provide opportunities to connect our communities, especially in Breslau, through a broadening of our focus from direct program delivery to providing unique event spaces that foster inclusivity and build on our sense of belonging.
2. Monitor population growth, demographics, and diverse cultural needs to ensure that opportunities exist for current and future residents to engage in outdoor and indoor recreation programs and services.
3. Apply asset management planning practices and usage data to guide the implementation of the Master Plan recommendations, capital plans, support grant funding opportunities, and inform future reviews.



4. Explore opportunities to reimagine and repurpose underutilized facilities for the betterment of the Township.
5. Review and update the Township's Allocations Policy to enhance the equitable distribution of park and recreation facility spaces, with a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion.
6. Continue to support the fiscally responsible capital infrastructure investment in St. Jacobs Arena to meet the recreation needs of Woolwich residents.
7. Continue to provide and where/when necessary enhance the provision of dedicated space for Woolwich seniors.
8. Implement a Township Event's Policy or Action Plan by 2026 to assist third party groups build capacity and facilitate their event through a coordinated approach with the Township. The Plan will identify the allocation of resources required to support events.
9. Evaluate the role the Township plays in community events and explore opportunities to foster partnerships and collaborate to expand the Township's capacity and physical infrastructure to host large scale outdoor events.

### 6.3. Monitoring

The implementation of this Master Plan will require monitoring and evaluation directed at balancing growth-related needs with maintenance and renewal of existing assets. This Master Plan should be viewed as a living document intended to guide the timing and prioritization of investments in the parks and recreation system. Service level standards or provision targets are provided in this spirit and should not be viewed as binding requirements. They should be regarded as benchmarks to assist decision-makers, stakeholder groups, and the public in understanding the parks and recreation system relative to current service levels (as a baseline) and typical provision rates elsewhere in Ontario.

### 6.4. Financial Considerations

Investment will be required to support the parks and recreation system. This Master Plan has been prepared with an understanding that the sustainability of services and assets is a foremost consideration for the Township—that the Township's ability and willingness to meet capital and operational costs, now and in the future, will play a major role in shaping decisions.



This Master Plan is not intended to be definitive. Other initiatives may be identified and prioritized on a case-by-case basis as need, urgency, or funding and partnership opportunities dictate. It is acknowledged that local businesses, community groups, and individual community members have through donations and organized fundraising efforts contributed significantly to the capital costs of recreation facilities in the Township, including in the last decade splash pads in Elmira and Breslau, the skate park and Kate's Place (accessible, inclusive playground and washroom) in Elmira.

To maintain existing service levels or provision rates as the Township's population grows toward its forecasted 2051 population of 50,000+ residents will require significant capital investment to acquire parkland and construct new or expanded facilities. **This Master Plan estimates that approximately 50 hectares of active use parkland (community and neighbourhoods parks) will need to be added to the existing parks and recreation system by 2051 to maintain the current rate of provision per 1000 residents.**

Costs to expand the parks and recreation system to accommodate growth may partially be recovered through parkland dedication requirements and development charges. The remainder of the cost will need to be funded through the Township's capital budget, funding programs offered by senior levels of government, and local fundraising efforts.

### Parkland Acquisition

Under the current legislative framework, the City of Guelph estimates they will receive approximately 0.6 hectares of land via parkland dedication requirements for every 1000 new residents. If Woolwich begins utilizing the alternative requirement for parkland dedication, it will likely receive a similar amount of land going forward.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Township may need to acquire nearly 2 hectares of additional land per 1000 new residents via other funding sources, including its capital budget, just to maintain its existing rate of provision: approximately 2.5 hectares per 1000 residents.

The timing of parkland acquisition should consider the strategic benefit of identifying and securing land in advance of growth and development. The timing and pace of park

---

<sup>5</sup> Woolwich currently charges the 5% for residential development under Section 51.1 of the *Planning Act*. Recent changes to the *Planning Act* and *Development Charges Act* have reduced maximums for parkland dedication charged using the alternative requirement and expanded mandatory development charge exemptions. The City of Guelph currently receives approximately 1.2 hectares of land per 1000 new residents via parkland dedication requirements. Their estimate of what they may receive going forward (0.6 hectare per 1000 new residents) represents a 50% reduction—a result of reductions to the maximum rates that can be applied where the alternative requirement is employed in accordance with Section 42 of the *Planning Act*. This Master Plan recommends the Township adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law to enable it to apply the alternative requirement where development densities warrant it in future.



development and the construction of new or expanded recreation facilities should generally follow population growth to ensure it can be adequately supported.

To assist in meeting the need for parkland due to growth and development this Master Plan recommends the Township adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law. Doing so will allow the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu for development and redevelopment using the alternative requirement provided for in the *Planning Act*. The ability to utilize the alternative requirement becomes increasingly important as residential densities increase above those typical of the low-density residential subdivisions comprised of detached houses.

### Park Development and Recreation Facilities

The needs assessment prepared as part of this Master Plan estimated future recreation facility needs. The *Development Charges Act* specifies which growth-related costs are development charge eligible and provides direction for the calculation of the rates to be charged. Parkland development, recreation facilities, and vehicles/equipment required to maintain parks and recreation assets are typically eligible costs.

The recent Development Charge Background Study completed for the Township in 2024 detailed the existing level of service and determined the gross capital costs for parks and recreation services over a 10-year forecast period. It found gross capital costs would be approximately \$41.3 million. Of that number, \$17.2 million were determined to be net growth-related capital costs that could be included in the development charge calculation (i.e. the rate charged). Included within these totals is a future Breslau Community Complex, at \$37.5 million gross capital costs and \$14.35 million net growth-related capital costs.

The 2024 Development Charge Background Study was based on the growth forecast provided in the Region of Waterloo Official Plan, as amended by ROPA 6, which forecast population and employment growth to 2051.

Roughly doubling the Township's current population over that timeframe will require considerable investment in new and expanded recreation facilities. This Master Plan provides high-level guidance on the overall magnitude and general timing and location of future needs. From this it is possible to estimate growth-related capital needs in advance of any detailed planning or design work.

Specific capital investments in parks development and new or expanded recreation facilities to support population growth should, to a significant degree, be calibrated to the pace, magnitude, and location of the residential development necessitating it. The Township should, however, undertake more detailed planning—including business case and/or feasibility studies—for major capital investments like community centres or multi-use facilities in advance of reaching population levels that would warrant or could potentially support them.