MUNICIPALITY OF
Huron East



COMMUNITY SERVICES MASTER PLAN

October 2026

MGA
MCQUEEN GALLOWAY ASSOCIATES

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INTRODUCTION

Community services play an important role in creating healthy, connected and vibrant communities. In Huron East, parks, recreation facilities, community centres, programs, trails, open spaces and other community services provide opportunities for residents of all ages to be active, socialize, participate, volunteer and connect with their community. These services also contribute to the Municipality's attractiveness as a place to live, work, raise a family, visit and invest.

The Municipality of Huron East is a rural community with a number of distinct settlements and a strong history of community involvement and volunteerism. The delivery of community services reflects this rural context, with the Municipality working alongside community organizations, service clubs, sports organizations, schools, Conservation Authorities and other partners. The Master Plan recognizes that the future success of community services will depend not only on municipal investment, but also on strong partnerships, effective volunteer support, sustainable service delivery and making the best use of existing community assets.

The development of Huron East first Community Services Master Plan provides the Municipality with an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at its existing services, facilities, parks, programs, operations and resources and establish a clear direction for the next ten years. The Plan considers current community needs, demographic trends, facility and park conditions, utilization, financial pressures, staffing capacity, changing recreation trends and the perspectives of residents, Council, staff, youth, community organizations and other partners. The Plan also recognizes the importance of ensuring that future investments are financially sustainable and aligned with the Municipality's ability to operate and maintain its assets over their full life cycle.

WHY A COMMUNITY SERVICES MASTER PLAN?

The Municipality of Huron East is undertaking its first Community Services Master Plan at an important time in its growth and development. The Plan provides the new Council term and staff with a practical framework to guide decision-making, establish priorities, and support the delivery of community services over the next decade.

THE MASTER PLAN:

1. **ESTABLISHES A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES.**
   The Plan provides a strategic framework to guide future decisions related to parks, recreation facilities, programs, community spaces, trails, open spaces and other community services.

2. **RESPONDS TO CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS.**
   Demographic changes, recreation trends, changing volunteer capacity and evolving expectations for municipal services require the Municipality to regularly review how services are planned and delivered.

3. **PROVIDES AN EVIDENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING.**
   The Plan brings together quantitative information, financial and asset information, facility and park assessments, utilization information, trends and community input to support informed decisions.

4. **SUPPORTS RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL PLANNING.**
   Huron East faces the same financial pressures experienced by many rural municipalities, including aging infrastructure, increasing operating costs and competing demands for limited tax resources. The Plan identifies priorities that can be considered within the Municipality's financial capacity and long-term asset management requirements.

5. **IDENTIFIES PRIORITIES FOR EXISTING FACILITIES AND PARKS.**
   The Plan recognizes that maintaining and maximizing existing community assets is an important priority. It identifies opportunities for improvements, accessibility, lifecycle planning, utilization and service delivery before significant new infrastructure is considered.

6. **STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEER CAPACITY.**
   Volunteers and community organizations have historically played an important role in delivering recreation, sports, parks, events and community services throughout Huron East. The Plan identifies opportunities for the Municipality to strengthen these relationships and provide the support necessary for community organizations to remain sustainable.

7. **IMPROVES ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY.**
   The Plan considers how parks, facilities, programs and services can become more welcoming and accessible to people of all ages and abilities, while also considering barriers that may prevent residents from participating.

8. **PROVIDES A BASIS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY.**
   Recommendations are prioritized according to short-, medium- and long-term implementation and identify the resources and strategic alignment required to move priorities forward.

9. **PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK THAT CAN BE MONITORED AND UPDATED.**
   A Master Plan is not intended to remain static. Priorities may need to change as demographics, participation, funding opportunities, staffing, volunteer capacity and other community conditions change. The Plan therefore provides a framework that Council and staff can use and revisit over time.

THE COMMUNITY SERVICES MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The Huron East Community Services Master Plan is grounded in a proven, evidence-based methodology. The process brings together background research and quantitative analysis, community and stakeholder engagement, current trends and best practices, facility and park assessments, financial considerations and ongoing validation through input received from the community.



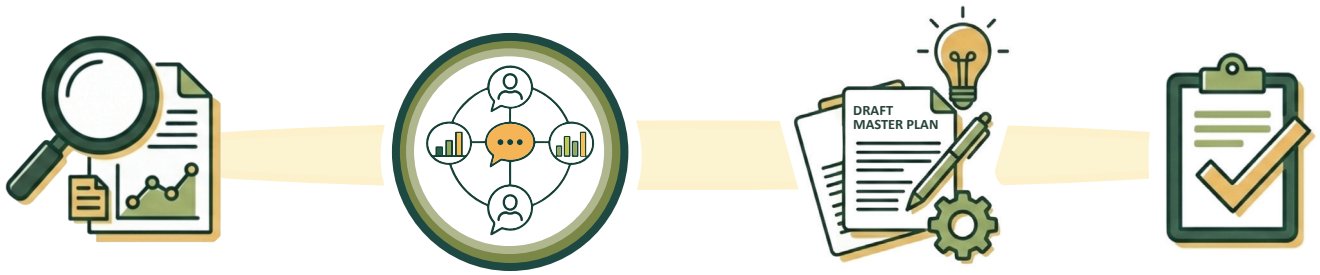
The development of the Master Plan included four broad phases:

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS – Review of existing municipal information, demographics, financial information, asset management, facilities, parks, programs, operations, policies, trends and service delivery.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – Consultation with Council, municipal staff, residents, youth, community organizations, service clubs, sports organizations, school boards, Conservation Authorities and other key stakeholders to understand current experiences, needs, priorities and opportunities. The community-wide survey provided additional input on recreation programs, parks, trails, facilities satisfaction and importance and future priorities.

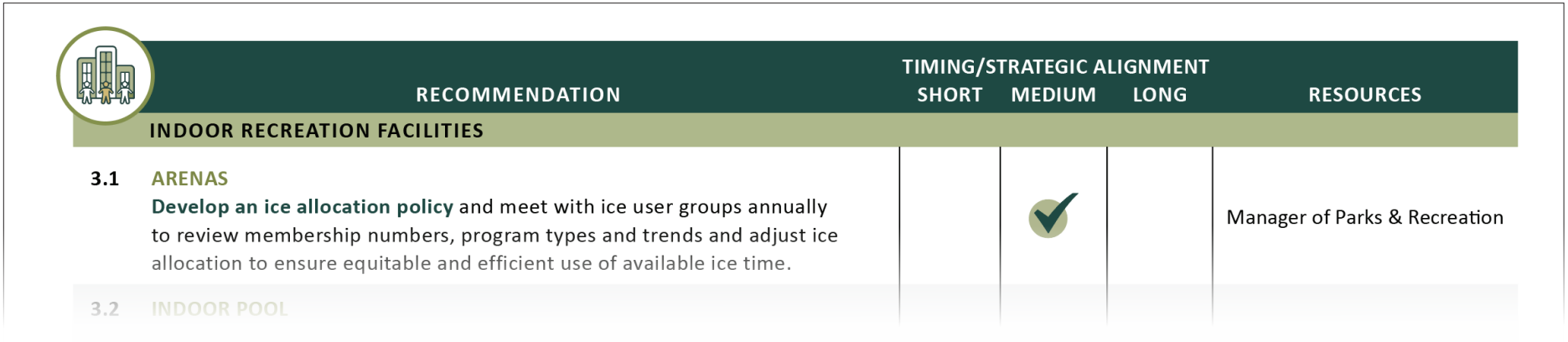
FORMULATING THE PLAN – The findings from the background analysis and engagement process were reviewed together to identify common themes, service gaps, opportunities and priorities. Eight key themes emerged to guide the Plan, including technology and data collection, partnerships and volunteer support, facility and infrastructure improvements, staffing capacity, policies and risk management, financial sustainability, recreation program expansion, and communication and organizational structure.

FINALIZING THE PLAN – Recommendations were developed based on the identified needs and opportunities and organized by subject area. Each recommendation considers the appropriate timing, strategic alignment and resources required for implementation.



THE MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this Master Plan are intentionally grouped by subject area. Each section provides the context and analysis supporting the recommendations and identifies the opportunities and challenges that should be considered by Council and staff.



	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES				
3.1	**ARENAS** **Develop an ice allocation policy** and meet with ice user groups annually to review membership numbers, program types and trends and adjust ice allocation to ensure equitable and efficient use of available ice time.		✓		Manager of Parks & Recreation
3.2	INDOOR POOL				

The recommendations are intended to provide direction rather than prescribe a fixed course of action. Implementation should be responsive to changing community needs, funding opportunities, staff capacity, volunteer support, asset conditions and other factors that may influence municipal priorities.

For implementation purposes, recommendations are identified by timeline and resources:

TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Short-Term: 1–3 years
Medium-Term: 4–6 years
Long-Term: 7–10 years

RESOURCES

Key personnel to be involved in recommendation.
Not all recommendations require outside funding but some may.

The timing of recommendations may be adjusted as conditions change. Council and staff should continue to monitor trends, participation, financial capacity, funding programs, asset conditions, staffing resources and community priorities to ensure that the Master Plan remains relevant and responsive.

Ultimately, the Community Services Master Plan is intended to provide Huron East with a practical and sustainable roadmap for the next decade—one that builds on the Municipality's existing strengths, recognizes its rural character and strong volunteer base, protects and maximizes existing investments, and establishes priorities that will enhance the quality of life and enjoyment for current and future residents.

HURON EAST
COMMUNITY PROFILE

A snapshot of our community based on the 2021 Census



9,512
TOTAL POPULATION
4.1% growth since 2016

41.6
MEDIAN AGE
Average age: 41.9 years

2,680
CENSUS FAMILIES
Average family size: 3.0 people

2.0
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN
among families with children

AGE OF OUR COMMUNITY

Huron East is home to people of all ages.

- **19.2%** Children 0–14 — 1,826 people
- **59.1%** Adults 15–64 — 5,621 people
- **21.7%** Older Adults 65+ — 2,065 people

0% 50% 100%

A balanced community with children, working-age adults and older adults—supporting the need for programs and spaces for every stage of life.

ECONOMIC PROFILE (2020 INCOME)

$100,000	$127,000	$84,000	$69,000
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME	COUPLES WITH CHILDREN	COUPLE-ONLY FAMILIES	ONE-PARENT FAMILIES
Economic families	Median family income	Median family income	Median family income

$80,000 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME — All private households

10.4% LOW-INCOME RATE — Based on the after-tax Low-Income Measure

ABOUT FAMILIES IN HURON EAST

- Census families make up **70.2%** of all households.
- Most families (69.5%) live in single-detached homes.
- A diverse mix of family types supports a strong, inclusive community.

These statistics help guide the Municipality in planning and investing in parks, facilities and programs that build healthy, active and connected communities for all residents.



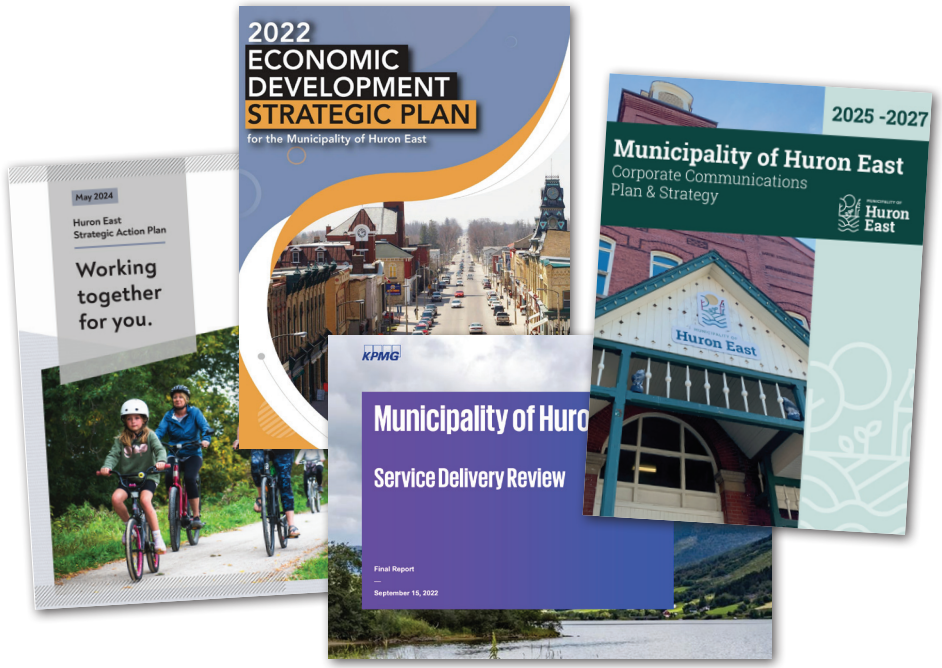
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population – Huron East (Municipality), Census Profile

NEEDS ASSESSMENT & BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many documents were reviewed to provide insight, data for the Master Plan and a summary can be found in the separate Background Report.

- Huron East Strategic Action Plan
- Huron East Official Plan
- Population & Housing Projections Study – Huron County
- Service Delivery Review
- Corporate Communications Plan
- County's Day Care Strategy



FINANCIAL STABILITY

Based on the review of the following municipal financial documents the following analysis should be considered as part of the development of the Community Services Master Plan.

OPERATING BUDGET

(Identified by staff in 2026 budget process and highlighted during preliminary interviews)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Secure grants and build strategic partnerships with businesses and community groups to fund essential programs and infrastructure improvements
- Develop new programs by analyzing recreation and culture trends and incorporating community feedback to meet evolving needs
- Upgrade community facilities, parks, and public spaces while implementing energy-efficient solutions to reduce long term costs

CHALLENGES

- Balancing community needs with limited resources while preparing ready-to-launch projects and managing reliance on unpredictable external funding sources
- Meeting municipal, provincial and federal requirements, including childcare regulations, which often increase administrative costs and staffing demands
- Addressing diverse resident priorities responsible and engaging the community to build consensus on budget decisions

TEN-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET

- The three recreation Centre's have substantial repair, and replacement costs identified over the next 10 years totaling approximately $7.3m.
- The park's 10-year capital funding is identified as just under $1,000,000.
- Both arenas have substantial funding requirements in the next 10 years (2030- $1.4m & 2033- $1.7m) to replace the arena floors.
- Parks funding seems light and full life-cycle replacement costs on all features should be undertaken.
- Based on the Asset Management Plan (AMP) and staff capital budget capital forecasting significant annual funding to the AMP is required to meet future facility repairs and replacement. The two plans are not properly linked to funding requirements.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Only 74% of Recreation Service building have current condition assessment and no park amenities have been assessed so additional work is required.
- Staff 10-year capital forecast does not seem to align with AMP (page 122 $228,000 identified for 10 years). Staff 10-year forecast shows the need for $8.7m.

RESERVES

- The Municipality maintains several reserve accounts that appear well managed; however, it lacks a formal policy establishing reserve targets and processes to support transparency and long-term planning.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

- The Municipality does not currently have a Development Charges Study or related fees to fund growth-related infrastructure, which affects the capital budget and parkland cash-in-lieu reserves. New parks are currently funded through existing taxation; however, the Municipality should use parkland cash-in-lieu contributions to acquire new parkland and development charges to fund new park development.

MUNICIPALITY OF HURON EAST FACILITY CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT 2020 (Updated 2023)

- Park assets are missing from the report, including play structures, sports field fencing and lighting, Seaforth Lions' Park assets, Seaforth Optimist Park assets, St. Columban Soccer Fields, multi-use courts, and related amenities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	FINANCIAL STABILITY				
1.1	**OPERATING BUDGET** **New financial accounts should be created in 2027 to track all off-site maintenance completed by centre staff,** including parks maintenance, other municipal property maintenance, and cemetery work, to accurately reflect Community Centre and parks costs.	✓			Finance & Community Services Staff
1.2	**CAPITAL BUDGET** **The Municipality should align its 10-year capital budget forecast with the next update of the Asset Management Plan** to ensure adequate funding is reserved for Community Services assets.		✓		Finance
1.3	**ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN** **Staff should continue prioritizing indoor recreation facilities and park building repairs identified in the 2023 BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment** through the 10-year capital budget.	✓			Finance & Community Services Staff

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
1.4	**ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN** **The Community Services Department should engage a qualified firm to complete a full life-cycle assessment of all park amenities, sports fields, outdoor pools, splash pads, play structures, and related assets** owned by the Municipality to support comprehensive asset management planning and financing, and to meet Provincial legislation.	✓			Finance, Director of Community Services, Consultant
1.5	**RESERVES** **The Municipality should develop a Council-approved Reserve Fund Policy** as part of the annual budget process. This would include how the Parkland Reserve can be administered and used.	✓			Finance Staff
1.6	**DEVELOPMENT CHARGES** **The Municipality should complete a Development Charges Background Study/ Bylaw** to establish development fees for new growth and help fund related new community services facilities and amenities.		✓		Finance & Consultant

TRENDS

Trends relevant to Huron East

	TREND	CONSIDERATION FOR HURON EAST
	**RURAL COMMUNITY HUBS** Across Ontario, municipalities are repositioning community centres, libraries, arenas and parks as multi-service community hubs. Rather than focusing solely on recreation, these facilities are becoming places where residents can participate in recreation, social programs, health initiatives, education, cultural activities and community events.	Given the number of small settlements and community halls throughout Huron East, facilities should continue to evolve as flexible community gathering spaces that support multiple uses throughout the week and year, helping maximize utilization and financial sustainability.
	**AGING POPULATION AND ACTIVE AGING** Ontario's older adult population continues to grow, but today's seniors are healthier and more active than previous generations. Rather than passive recreation, there is increasing demand for wellness programming, social recreation, outdoor activities, lifelong learning and volunteer opportunities.	Continue expanding programs that encourage healthy aging including walking clubs, pickleball, low-impact fitness, educational workshops, outdoor recreation and volunteer leadership opportunities that reduce social isolation.
	**OUTDOOR RECREATION CONTINUES TO GROW** Since COVID-19, participation in outdoor recreation has remained consistently high. Residents continue to value trails, natural areas, waterfronts, parks and outdoor gathering spaces more than ever before.	Continue investing in trail connectivity, park amenities, seating, shade, accessible pathways, wayfinding signage and small destination features that encourage residents to spend more time outdoors.
	**ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS** Municipalities are moving beyond simply meeting accessibility legislation toward creating universally designed recreation opportunities that are welcoming for people of all ages and abilities.	Future facility upgrades, parks and playgrounds should incorporate universal design principles, sensory play elements, accessible seating, accessible washrooms and barrier-free connections between amenities.

TREND	CONSIDERATION FOR HURON EAST
 **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** Many municipalities are facing increasing operating costs, aging infrastructure and limited tax capacity. This has resulted in greater emphasis on maximizing existing assets before constructing new facilities.	Future investments should focus on maximizing utilization of existing facilities through improved programming, partnerships, flexible facility design and lifecycle asset management before considering significant facility expansion.
 **PARTNERSHIPS ARE BECOMING ESSENTIAL** Municipalities increasingly rely on partnerships with school boards, service clubs, conservation authorities, libraries, health organizations and community groups to deliver recreation opportunities more efficiently.	Continue strengthening partnerships with volunteer organizations, schools, the Huron County Library, local service clubs, healthcare providers and community organizations to expand programming without significantly increasing municipal resources.
 **FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING** Residents increasingly prefer shorter, drop-in and seasonal programs rather than committing to long sessions. Pop-up programming allows municipalities to test new ideas before making permanent investments.	Expand seasonal programming, outdoor pop-up events and introductory “Try-It” programs throughout the municipality to determine demand before investing in permanent infrastructure or ongoing programming.
 **YOUTH RETENTION THROUGH RECREATION** Smaller rural municipalities are recognizing recreation as an important strategy for retaining youth and attracting young families. Youth are seeking places to gather informally, participate in recreation and feel connected to their communities.	Continue investing in youth-oriented amenities including skate and bike facilities, outdoor courts, informal gathering spaces, evening programming and youth leadership opportunities.
 **CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT** Municipal park planning increasingly incorporates climate adaptation through tree planting, shade structures, naturalized landscapes, stormwater management and drought-resistant landscaping.	Future park development should emphasize tree canopy expansion, natural landscaping, pollinator gardens and shade structures to improve environmental sustainability and visitor comfort.

TREND	CONSIDERATION FOR HURON EAST
 **TECHNOLOGY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE** Residents increasingly expect convenient online registration, facility booking, ease of payment, digital communications and access to real-time program information.	Continue improving online registration and payment (credit card and debit), facility booking systems, digital communication and wayfinding to improve customer service while reducing administrative workload.
 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RECREATION** Recreation is increasingly viewed as an community development tool. High-quality parks, trails, festivals and recreation facilities contribute to community attractiveness, satisfaction, and workforce attraction.	Continue investing in recreation amenities and community events that the community, encourage places to visit and enhance Huron East's attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest.
 **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** Volunteerism continues to evolve across Ontario as municipalities face increasing challenges recruiting and retaining volunteers. An aging volunteer base, changing lifestyles, competing time commitments and volunteer burnout have reduced the capacity of many community organizations to sustain programs, events and facilities. In response, municipalities are investing in volunteer recruitment, training, recognition, succession planning and leadership development to help build long-term organizational capacity. There is also a growing emphasis on offering flexible and short-term volunteer opportunities that appeal to younger generations and busy families.	Volunteer recruitment and retention will continue to be critical to the long-term sustainability of recreation services, community programming and special events. As the Municipality continues to rely on volunteers and community partners to enhance service delivery, consideration should be given to developing initiatives that support volunteer recruitment, recognition, training, leadership development and succession planning. Strengthening volunteer capacity will help ensure community organizations remain resilient and continue to provide valuable recreation and community opportunities for residents.

"WHAT WE'VE HEARD"
COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A comprehensive engagement program was undertaken to ensure the Community Services Master Plan reflected the needs and priorities of residents, community organizations, staff, Council, youth, and key stakeholders.

Feedback received through a variety of engagement methods: surveys, workshops, interviews and community events, was used to validate needs, identify priorities and inform the recommendations contained throughout this Plan.

STAFF AND COUNCIL SURVEY

At the outset of the project, an online survey was distributed to municipal staff and members of Council to establish a baseline understanding of key issues and identify topics requiring further exploration during interviews, workshops and stakeholder engagement. The survey helped identify common themes, priorities and areas of differing perspectives, allowing subsequent engagement activities to focus on issues of greatest importance. The survey included questions related to:

- Current role within the Municipality.
- Priorities for indoor facilities, outdoor amenities, cemeteries, and recreation programs.
- Funding priorities for parks and recreation services.
- Adequacy of staffing resources, facilities and equipment to deliver quality customer service.
- Opportunities to improve or repurpose existing parks and recreation facilities.
- Additional comments and recommendations to inform the Community Services Master Plan.

The findings from the survey were used to guide the development of interview questions, workshop discussions and stakeholder engagement sessions, ensuring that the consultation process explored the issues identified by both staff and Council in greater detail.

INDIVIDUAL STAFF INTERVIEWS

One-on-one and small group interviews were conducted with key municipal staff, including the Chief Administrative Officer, Director of Community Services , Director of Finance/Treasurer , Economic Development Officer, Aquatic Facility Supervisor and Operator, Manager of Parks & Recreation, supervisors, and operators, daycare and administrative staff. These conversations provided valuable insight into existing services, facility operations and long-term planning considerations.

COUNCIL WORKSHOP

A workshop was held with the Mayor and members of Council plus the senior management team to review the engagement findings, validate key themes and identify additional opportunities and priorities to be considered throughout the Master Plan.



ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SURVEY

Meetings and facilitated questionnaires were completed with municipal advisory committees, recreation organizations, cemetery boards and community groups. These discussions identified local priorities, operational challenges and opportunities to strengthen recreation and community services.

COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

Committees and boards are valuable resources that municipalities can rely on to provide local knowledge, community perspectives, volunteer capacity, and specialized expertise. They serve as an important link between Council, municipal staff, and the community, helping to identify emerging issues, generate ideas, support program development, and build community ownership. However, committees are only successful when they are supported and valued by both Council and staff. Committee members volunteer their time because they want to make a meaningful contribution, and they need to see that their advice is considered, their expertise respected, and their efforts appreciated. Clear mandates, regular meetings, staff support, ongoing communication, and feedback on committee recommendations are all essential to maintaining engaged and productive volunteers.

THE RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC) has not met in over two years despite its primary mandate being to provide advice on recreation programming, facility operations, and emerging community recreation needs. During the consultation process, it became evident that the relationship between the Recreation Advisory Committee, Council, and staff has not grown over time, with each group not knowing their roles regarding expectations, communication, and the value of the committee's contributions.

The Municipality now has two clear paths forward. If Council believes that volunteer advisory committees remain an important component of community engagement, then the Municipality must invest in their success. This includes assigning a dedicated staff resource responsible for coordinating committees and volunteers, establishing annual work plans, scheduling regular meetings, providing administrative support, communicating how recommendations are used, and fostering strong relationships between Council, staff, and volunteers. Successful committees require leadership, coordination, and ongoing support—they cannot simply exist without active municipal commitment.

Alternatively, if the Municipality determines that the Recreation Advisory Committee no longer provides sufficient value, it should consider formally disbanding the committee and replacing it with a consistent, community-wide engagement program. Rather than relying on a small advisory committee, Huron East could regularly engage residents, recreation user groups, community organizations, and the Municipality of Morris-Turnberry through annual surveys, focus groups, open houses, online engagement tools, and targeted discussions. This broader engagement model would provide Council and staff with a wider range of perspectives on recreation programming, facility improvements, and service delivery while ensuring that Morris-Turnberry has meaningful opportunities to contribute ideas and participate in decisions regarding shared recreation services and facilities. Such an approach would create a more inclusive, transparent, and representative process for gathering community input and planning future recreation investments.

SCHOOL BOARD CONSULTATION

Conversations were held with the public school board superintendent to discuss opportunities for continued collaboration, shared use of facilities and maximizing access to school spaces for both students and the broader community. Discussions also explored current and future childcare and daycare needs. Additional information receive from the public school board:

- School gymnasiums are currently used by a variety of community groups and activities, including volleyball, basketball, choir and marching bands.
- There is still availability within the gymnasiums to accommodate additional community groups.
- Community groups are booked on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Different rental fees apply to youth, adult and not-for-profit groups.
- Priority for gymnasium use is given to internal school programs and school events.
- North Woods Elementary School and Seaforth Public School gymnasiums are not currently at capacity.
- The School Board does not have capital funding available to upgrade the existing tennis courts.
- Parking issues at the school also need to be addressed by the School Board.
- Once the Municipality develops new tennis courts, the School Board intends to remove its existing courts.
- A reciprocal agreement is currently in place between the Municipality and the School Board. The agreement is not very reciprocal and it has expired.
- The School Board is required to hire a third-party playground/play space inspector.
- Grass cutting is also contracted to a third-party service provider.
- Explore shared spaces and programming to support before- and after-school child care.



CONSERVATION AUTHORITY CONSULTATION

Conversations were held with both local Conservation Authorities to discuss existing parks, trails, natural heritage resources and opportunities for future collaboration. Input from these discussions has been incorporated into the recommendations contained within this Community Services Master Plan. Both conservations authorities were more than willing to broaden the partnerships with the Municipality on programming and look for ways to purchase land to link more trails within Huron East.

AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY CONSULTATION

Discussions were held with the Agricultural Societies throughout Huron East to build awareness of the Recreation Master Plan, better understand their role in supporting community recreation and events, and explore opportunities to strengthen the ongoing partnership between the Municipality and the Agricultural Societies for the benefit of the community.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA (BIA) CONSULTATION

Conversations were held with the Business Improvement Area (BIA) to better understand its role in organizing community events and supporting downtown vitality. Discussions focused on identifying how the Municipality can continue to support BIA-led initiatives, understand current challenges and resource needs, and strengthen collaboration in delivering community events and activities.



Word cloud of students' **TOP PRIORITIES** for the parks of Huron East.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

More than 20 Grade 8 students from Seaforth participated in an interactive youth workshop focused on the future of parks and recreation. Students completed a "Build Your Park" exercise where they designed neighbourhood, community and regional parks, while discussing recreation amenities priorities, fundraising ideas, grant opportunities and phased implementation strategies. The workshop provided valuable insight into the recreation interests and aspirations of Huron East's youth.



POP-UP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

RIVERFEST AND THE SEAFORTH FALL FAIR

MGA attended the River Fest at the Brussels Conservation Area on September 13 and the Seaforth Fall Fair on September 18 to continue building awareness of the Community Services Master Plan and share information about the project and upcoming timelines.

As part of the engagement process, MGA also offered an interactive visioning dotmocracy activity asking residents, “What recreation amenities are important to you?” The activity provided a fun and accessible way for residents to share their ideas, priorities, and values related to future parks and recreation spaces.

These engagements provided families and youth with a welcoming and interactive way to participate in the Master Plan process, learn about the importance of parks and recreation planning, and understand how they can continue to follow the Master Plan and its progress on the Municipality’s website.











TOP 8 AMENITIES

RIVERFEST EVENT

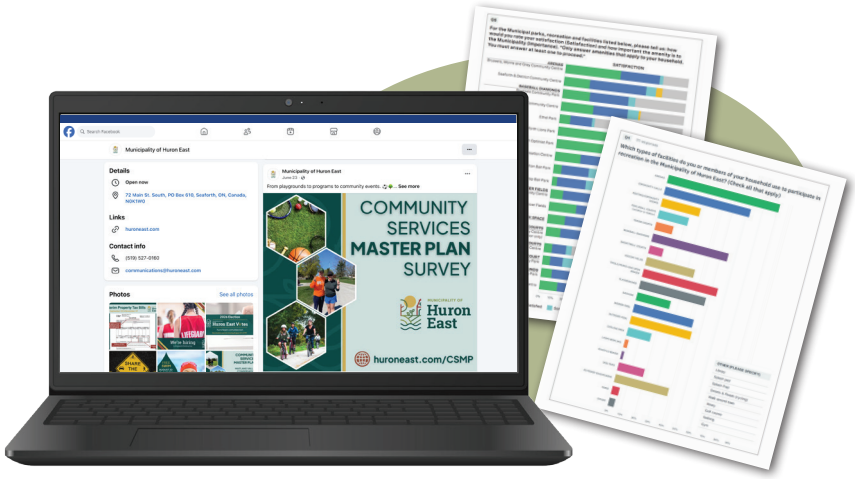
- Trails and Paths/Walking Track
- Climbing/Adventurous Play/Zipline (playgrounds that have risky play for older children)
- Splashpad
- Winter Activities/Outdoor Skating
- Skate Park/Pump Track
- Sportsfields
- Improved Amenities (i.e., safety and lighting at the parks)
- Sportsfield and Volleyball Courts

SEAFORTH FALL FAIR

- Climbing/Adventurous Play/Zipline (playgrounds that have risky play for older children)
- Sportsfields
- Indoor Pool
- Improvements to the Ice Rink
- Fitness Room
- Skate Park/Pump Track
- Tobogganing Hill
- Trails and Paths/Walking Track

THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community-wide online survey was conducted to gather feedback on recreation programs, parks, trails, facilities and future priorities. The survey was promoted through the Municipality's website, Facebook, paid advertising, community networks and word of mouth to encourage broad participation. The survey was made available for three weeks and in addition to on-line survey, hard copies were also available at all indoor facilities. The full online survey results can be found on the Municipality's website: Community Survey Results



175 TOTAL RESPONSES from residents of Huron East

5 WARDS represented in responses

TOP 3 PRIORITIES FOR PARKS & RECREATION OVER THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS:



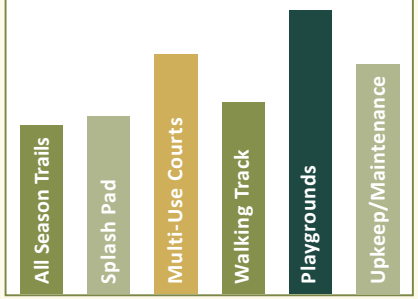
TOP CHOICE TO SHARE INFORMATION

with residents about parks & recreation: **ONLINE**

TOP FACILITIES USED FOR PARKS & RECREATION

- Arenas
- Community Halls
- Baseball Diamonds
- Trails
- Playgrounds
- Pools

MOST IMPORTANT PARK AMENITIES



WHAT WE HEARD

- **Strong support for more trails (walking, biking, all-season)** and connection between communities.
- **Playgrounds need updated –** equipment, accessibility and shade were top requests.
- **Public washrooms need to be better maintained and available year-round** in key locations.
- **More programs for all ages,** including youth, seniors and family-friendly activities.
- **Proud of community spaces and natural areas –** want to protect and enhance what we have.

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT				
2.1	**Replace the Recreation Advisory Committee with an Annual Community Engagement Program.** This broader engagement model would provide more representative community input while ensuring recreation decisions reflect the needs and priorities of residents and partner municipalities.	✓			Director of Community Services, Communication Coordinator
2.2	**The Municipality should work with the School Board to better promote available school gymnasium utilization** for community recreation programs and local sport organizations.		✓		Director of Community Services & Communication Coordinator
2.3	**Review the existing reciprocal agreement with the School Board** to clearly identify opportunities for shared facility use, maintenance services and coordinated community programming.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, Legal
2.4	**Establish a working partnership with the Conservation Authorities and Agricultural Societies** to expand programming, and trail and open space opportunities.		✓		CAO, Director of Community Services







INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Indoor recreation facilities provide safe, flexible, climate-controlled spaces for year-round activities for people of all ages, genders, and abilities.

They serve as community hubs, supporting local identity while accommodating a range of sports and social activities. These facilities typically operate from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. or later, depending on scheduled use, and may include pools, arenas, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, community halls, fitness areas, and walking tracks.

For a small rural municipality, Huron East is well served by municipally owned and operated indoor recreation facilities. All three facilities are getting to the end of their life-cycle however they remain in relatively good condition and will require planned lifecycle maintenance in the next ten years to continue to be fully utilized by the community.

NOTE: For more information on all indoor recreation facilities, refer to the inventory and condition report in Background Report.

COMMUNITY/RECREATION CENTRES

BRUSSELS, MORRIS & GREY COMMUNITY CENTRE (BMGCC)

Built in 1977, the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre (BMGCC) received a multi-million-dollar renovation in 2023, funded through federal, provincial, and municipal contributions as well as local donations. Improvements included six new arena change rooms, including two accessible rooms; a new front lobby with two accessible washrooms; an accessible warm viewing area; concession and seating areas; and a privately operated fitness room. The work also enhanced the existing NHL-sized arena, which seats 1,200 and includes overhead heating. The older portion of the Centre includes a large hall for 425 to 600 people, an upper hall for 80 people with a kitchenette, and a small meeting room for 12 to 15 people. The upper levels are accessible by elevator, and the upper hall and meeting room are currently leased to a local church for use several days per week. The municipally owned and operated facility is served by a large gravel and asphalt parking lot and an adjacent outdoor sports field/ open space.

Following the recent BMGCC renovations, the BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment and staff's 10-year capital budget identify approximately $2.5 million in capital costs over the next decade. This includes an arena floor replacement in 2033, estimated at $1.5 million. The updated 2023 BM Ross assessment also identifies $1.1 million in additional work, with the largest items being a high-priority roof covering replacement at $300,000 and a medium-priority rink cooling unit replacement at $750,000.

SEAFORTH & DISTRICT COMMUNITY CENTRE (SDCC)

The Seaforth & District Community Centre (SDCC) includes an NHL-sized arena with four change rooms and seating for 1,000. While less accessible than the BMGCC, the facility has accessible entrances, community hall, and lobby washrooms. The centre also includes a large community hall for 477 people, a kitchen, and a small boardroom/meeting room for 12 to 15 people. An upper hall overlooking the arena can accommodate 200 people but is not accessible. A large unfinished space above the mechanical and change room area could be upgraded, but doing so would require significant funding to relocate existing mechanical and electrical services. The municipally owned and operated facility has a large asphalt parking lot.

The staff's 10-year capital budget identifies approximately $3.5 million in expenditures over the next decade, including a major ice floor replacement estimated at $1.4 million in 2030. The 2023 BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment also identifies $390,000 in low- to medium-priority repair work.

VANASTRA RECREATION CENTRE (VRC)

Built in 1974 (outdoor pool) and 1980 for entrance, lobby, daycare room, the Vanastra Recreation Centre (VRC) is a smaller facility that includes a 25-metre indoor pool, sauna, 200-person community hall, adjacent kitchen, public fitness room, small meeting room, small daycare rooms, and daycare with a private entrance and outdoor play area. The pool includes an accessible change room; and accessible entrances to the facility, pool area, and community hall. The municipally owned and operated centre has a medium-sized asphalt parking lot and an adjacent park.

The 10-year capital budget allocates $1.1 million for VRC projects, including approximately $100,000 annually. The 2023 BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment identifies an additional $133,500 in low- to medium-priority repairs.

SUMMARY OF INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

FACILITY TYPE	SUPPLY	LOCATION
Arena	2	Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre (BMGCC) & Seaforth District Community Centre (SDCC)
Indoor Pool	1	Vanastra Recreation Centre (1)
Community Halls	6	BMGCC (1), Cranbrook Community Hall (1), Ethel Community Hall (1), SDCC (1), Vanastra Recreation Centre (VRC) (1), Walton Community Hall (1),
Multi-purpose Meeting Rooms	6	BMGCC (3), SDCC (1), VRC (2)
Day Care	1	VRC
Fitness Room	2	BMGCC (1- private) & VRC (1)

NEIGHBOURING FACILITIES:

- Several municipal arenas are within a 30-minute drive of Huron East's arenas, including Mitchell (15 minutes from Seaforth), Exeter (25 minutes from Seaforth), South Huron's two arenas (30 minutes from Seaforth), Clinton (12 minutes from Seaforth), Wingham (20 minutes from Brussels), Blyth (17 minutes from Brussels), and Listowel (25 minutes from Brussels).
- Nearby indoor pools are located in Goderich (27 minutes from Vanastra) and Wingham (20 minutes from Brussels).

PROVISIONS

Recognizing Huron East has a population of 10,254 in 2026, the provision standards for indoor recreation facility components per 1,000 population are as follows:

INDOOR FACILITY	HURON EAST SERVICE LEVEL	RECOGNIZING PROVINCIAL SERVICE LEVEL
Arena	1:5,158	1:15,000
Indoor Pool	1:10,254	1:30,000
Indoor Track		1:30,000
Gymnasiums		1:30,000
Fitness	1:10,254	1:30,000
Community Hall	1:1,709	1:5,000
Meeting Rooms	1:1,709	1:5,000
Curling Facilities	1:5,158	1:30,000

ARENAS

Many rural municipalities developed arenas as community hubs with support from provincial Wintario lottery funding, contributing to the strong arena supply now found in many amalgamated municipalities. The Ontario Hockey Federation has also removed traditional residency restrictions for U10 and older players. This "open borders" policy allows players to try out, register, and play with any sanctioned minor hockey association in Ontario without a formal release, which has affected some municipalities by influencing local youth hockey membership and ice-time allocation.

Staff booking schedules indicate that Huron East has sufficient prime-time ice available. Prime time is typically 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on weekends. Most organizations prefer 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weeknights and 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. on weekends; however, limiting rentals to these periods is not cost-effective for municipal ice operations, so groups must also book ice outside their preferred times. Staff also note that summer arena floor use is limited, so access to floor time is not a concern.



BMGCC WINTER BOOKING SCHEDULE 2025/2026

HOURS OF OPERATION

Mon. to Fri. 5pm to 11pm = 30 hours
Sun. & Sat. 8am to 11pm = 30 hours

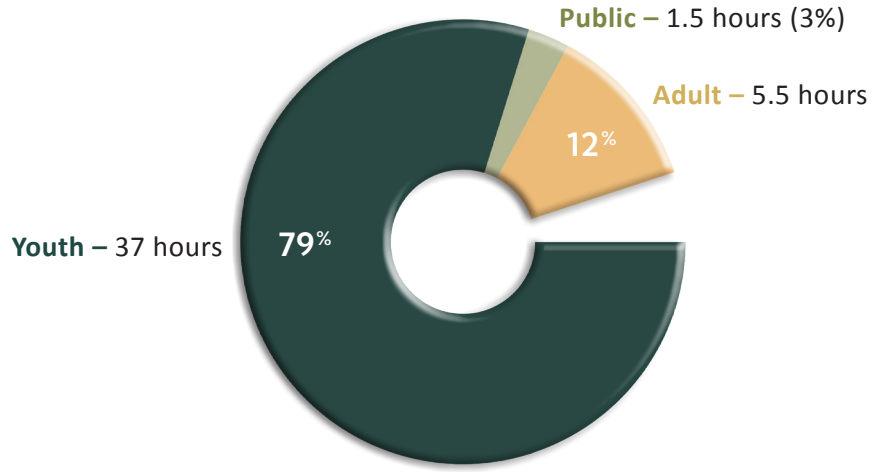
Total = 60 hours/week

CURRENT UTILIZATION

22.5 hours
24.5 hours

Current Hours Booked = 47 hours/week

PRIME USEAGE



Remaining Availability: 13 hours/week

SDCC WINTER BOOKING SCHEDULE 2025/2026

HOURS OF OPERATION

Mon. to Fri. 5pm to 11pm = 30 hours
Sun. & Sat. 8am to 11pm = 30 hours

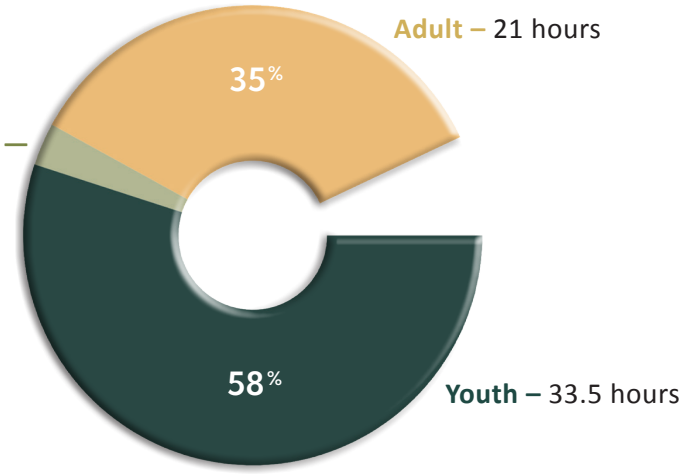
Total = 60 hours/week

CURRENT UTILIZATION

28.5 hours
27.5 hours

Current Hours Booked = 56 hours/week

PRIME USEAGE



Remaining Availability: 4 hours/week

In total, the Municipality has 800 minor participants in ice sports. Using the standard provision of one ice pad per 450 minor youth participants, Huron East currently has a surplus of ice capacity—a position expected to remain stable for at least the next decade. To ensure balanced community access, it is also recommended that the Municipality continue to reserve 3–5 hours of prime-time ice weekly for public programs and drop-ins.

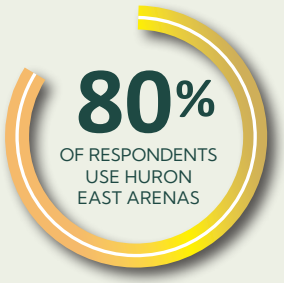
ARENA TAKE UP RATES, CURRENT ICE SPORTS MEMBERSHIP, AND FUTURE ARENAS NEEDS

YEAR	COHORT	HURON EAST POPULATION	ICE SPORTS MEMBERSHIP	TAKE-UP RATE	TOTAL ARENAS 2036 (including existing)
2026	Youth (5-19)	1,935	800	41.3 %	Still under capacity with 2 arenas
2036	Youth (5-19)	2,148	887	41.3 %	Nearing capacity and lifecycle

NOTES:

- Using 2021 Census data with a population of 9,829 – Ages 0-4 (580 – 5.9%), 5-19 (1,750 -17.87%), 20-64 (5,486 -55.9%), 65+ (2,728 – 24.6%).
- Assume the 2026 population at 10,254 and the 2036 population of 11,387 has a similar age distribution.
- Based on 1 arena per 450 ice minor registrants.

WHAT WE HEARD:



Arenas were the most-used facility type among residents, with just over 80% of respondents reporting participation. **Satisfaction was also high**, with 87% of respondents very or somewhat satisfied with the BMGCC arena and 67% reporting the same for the SDCC arena.

Arenas were also rated as highly important to residents, with 78.3% identifying the BMGCC arena and 83.7% identifying the SDCC arena as important.



INDOOR POOL

Indoor pools provide year-round recreation and fitness opportunities, including swim lessons, recreational swimming, aquafit classes, and swim team activities for people of all ages. However, they are costly to build and among the most expensive indoor recreation facilities to operate, largely due to ongoing mechanical and pool filtration system costs. As a result, municipalities are cautious when considering new indoor pools to ensure they can be supported within long-term financial budgets.

As shown in the chart (page 21), the typical provision standard for indoor pools is one pool per 30,000 residents. However, provision varies: some communities with fewer than 10,000 residents operate an indoor pool, while others with populations above 30,000 do not.

Indoor pool provision depends on factors such as access to nearby pools, potential partnerships with private or non-profit providers, and the community's capacity to fund capital and ongoing operating costs. Nearby indoor pools are located in Goderich (27 minutes from Seaforth) and Wingham (20 minutes from Brussels).

Smaller municipalities are increasingly exploring regional indoor recreation facilities that combine amenities such as pools, ice pads, and gymnasiums. This model can offer a more sustainable and cost-effective way to serve multiple communities, but it depends on trust, shared leadership, proportionate capital and operating contributions, sound location analysis, and partnership agreements that clearly define risks and benefits.

As noted previously, the 10-year capital budget allocates $1.1 million for VRC projects, including approximately $100,000 annually. The 2023 BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment identifies an additional $133,500 in low- to medium-priority repairs.

The Vanastra indoor pool offers swim and fitness programs throughout the week/year and is also rented by the Huron Hurricanes Aquatic Club. With one indoor pool, Huron East is well served and is expected to meet projected needs through 2036.

The Vanastra Indoor pool operates seven 7 days a week and supports swim lessons, rentals, fitness programs, swim team activities, rehabilitation programs, , and recreation swims. Although revenues have remained relatively stable over the past three years, operating costs have continued to rise, increasing pressure on municipal operating budgets (See Background Report - Operating Budget).

WHAT WE HEARD:

87%+
OF RESIDENTS RATED THE INDOOR POOL AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

Just over 40% of survey respondents reported using the indoor pool.

Satisfaction was high, with 73% very or somewhat satisfied, **and more than 87% rated the pool as very or somewhat important.**







COMMUNITY HALLS

BMGCC, SDCC AND VANASTRA RECREATION CENTRE COMMUNITY HALLS

Huron East has several large, medium, and small community halls distributed across the municipality. As noted previously, each of the three main community/recreation centres includes a large community hall with washrooms, and some also include kitchens, for event and program rentals. These halls were once central venues for weddings, stag and doe events, and private parties. In other public facilities municipalities are moving away from holding liquor licenses and requiring renters to acquire their own special occasion permit (SOP) from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, **The halls would benefit from a renewed approach to rental opportunities and program use.** Both the BMGCC and SDCC have painted shuffleboard and pickleball courts on the floor, providing space for this rapidly growing recreation activity.

RURAL COMMUNITY HALLS

Cranbrook Community Hall

The centre was built in 1950 and is a wood-clad building with a steel roof. Rental space is available on both the upper and lower levels. The upper level includes a small stage but is not accessible. The lower level is accessible and includes a small kitchen. Tables and chairs are available. A small gravel area is located in front of the building, with a grassed area beside the hall. Water is supplied by a well on an adjacent property.

The BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment (updated 2023) and follow-up roof assessment identify several low-, medium-, and high-priority improvements required at this community hall. The highest-priority item is a new roof structure, estimated at $200,000. Additional repairs, including foundation work, siding repairs, upper-ceiling replacement, and window replacement, are estimated at $32,000.

The 2026 capital budget has allocated $50,000 for this facility and $20,000 in 2035.

Ethel Community Hall

Built in 1892, Ethel Community Hall is a brick building with a small rear addition located beside the Fire Hall. No parking is available for hall users. Rental space is available on both the upper and lower levels, which are not accessible. The upper level includes a small stage, while the lower level includes a small kitchen. Tables and chairs are available.

The BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment (updated 2023) identifies several low- to medium-priority building repairs, estimated at $24,500. These include exterior wall and foundation repairs, window replacement, wall repainting, and ceiling finish repairs.

Staff have allocated $20,000 in capital funding for 2036.





Walton Community Hall

Built in 1938, Walton Community Hall is a small wood-clad building with a steel roof. Both the upper and lower levels are available for rent, however they are not accessible. The upper level includes a small stage, while the lower level includes a small kitchen. Tables and chairs are available. A gravel parking lot adjacent to the hall is shared with the ball diamond. The BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment (updated 2023) identifies $26,000 in low- to medium-priority building repairs, including basement and exterior wall work, foundation repairs, roof replacement, and installation of a new furnace exhaust pipe.

Capital funding of $20,000 has been identified for 2037.

RURAL COMMUNITY HALL OPERATIONS

All three rural community halls are owned by the Municipality but operated and managed by a community group (“Committee”), including rental bookings and operating costs.

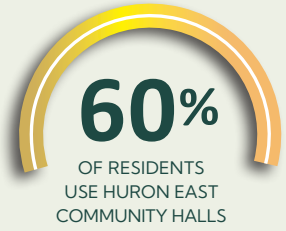
The Municipality’s DRAFT Terms and Conditions for Operations define each committee’s purpose, structure, and responsibilities. Voting members include the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Council representative, with non-voting members permitted to support operations. All members must follow applicable municipal policies, including the Municipal Council and Staff Relationship Policy and the Code of Conduct for Citizen Appointments. Committees are responsible for bookings, setup and takedown, building and property maintenance, supplies, revenues and expenses, and annual budget preparation. They must also comply with municipal booking requirements, rental agreements, alcohol policies, health and safety guidelines, and fire safety requirements. The Municipality covers insurance, water testing, and fire safety. The Municipality is still reviewing how capital costs for building repairs that are life cycle in nature are to be funded between the community groups and the municipality. The Municipality asks the committees to submit annual rental confirmations and invoices, and any profits must be reinvested in the facility or community programs. The Terms renew automatically unless either party provides at least 30 days’ notice.

The three community halls and related ball diamonds are covered under two operating budgets. “Grey Hall Boards” includes Cranbrook Community Hall, Ethel Community Hall, and the Ethel ball diamond,

while “McKillop Rec Boards” includes Walton Community Hall, the Walton ball diamond, and the Winthrop ball diamond. Because these facilities are managed by committees, their impact on the Municipality’s annual operating budget is minimal. Recent budgets show the following: (see chart on right)

As shown, **revenues and expenses have declined annually, indicating reduced use.** However, all three buildings require capital improvements, with Cranbrook needing significant roof renovation.

WHAT WE HEARD:



Community halls were among the more frequently used facilities, with just over 60% of survey respondents reporting use. Satisfaction with the three main halls ranged from 38% to 60% very or somewhat satisfied, while satisfaction with two rural halls ranged from 10% to 23%.

Respondents rated community halls as very or somewhat important as follows:

- **BMGCC hall – 66%**
- **Seaforth and Vanastra – 66%**
- **Ethel – 29%**
- **Walton – 33%**



Cranbrook Hall was inadvertently missed as a facility in the initial survey. However, feedback received through community conversations and additionally **engagement events and opportunities highlighted the hall’s importance as a valued community gathering space**. This input has been incorporated into the overall engagement findings that informed the draft Community Services Master Plan

LOCATION	2023 YEAR END	2024 YEAR END	2025 YEAR END	2026 YEAR END
CRANBROOK HALL				
Revenue	-33,675	-8,408	-11,390	-3,900
Interest	0	-2,760	-1,507	0
Expenses	5,773	8,351	8,640	3,900
GRAND TOTAL	**-27,902**	**-2,817**	**-4,257**	**0**
ETHEL HALL & BALL DIAMOND				
Hall Revenue	-5,982	-6,830	-1,100	-1,000
Hall Interest	0	-543	-414	0
Hall Expenses	2,421	3,357	3,402	1,000
SUBTOTAL	-3,561	-4,016	1,888	0
Ball Revenue	-12,361	-11,020	-8,914	-1,500
Ball Interest	0	-985	-712	0
Ball Expenses	3,137	10,571	5,958	1,500
SUBTOTAL	-9,224	-1,434	-3,668	0
GRAND TOTAL	**-12,785**	**-5,450**	**-1,780**	**0**
WALTON HALL & BALL DIAMOND				
Hall Revenue	-3,725	-5,825	-750	-1,000
Hall Interest	0	-929	-636	0
Hall Expenses	2,867	2,587	4,194	1,000
SUBTOTAL	-858	-4,167	2,808	0
Park Revenue	-2,505	-4,340	-21,315	-1,000
Park Interest	0	0	0	0
Park Expenses	4,542	3,973	3,044	1,000
SUBTOTAL	2,037	-367	-18,271	0
GRAND TOTAL	**1,179**	**-367**	**-18,271**	**0**
WINTHROP BALL DIAMOND				
Ball Revenue	0	-4,093	-3,755	-1,000
Interest	0	-1,208	-744	0
Ball Expenses	129	3,952	3,552	1,000
GRAND TOTAL	**129**	**-1,349**	**-977**	**0**

Given the age, community significance, locations, and limited opportunities for conversion to other private or public uses, selling any of the rural community halls would be challenging. The Municipality could first work with an architect or engineer to explore renovations that would support alternative uses, then obtain market valuations for the options identified. With this information, the Municipality would be better positioned to decide whether to retain or sell the halls. Any future consideration of leasing or disposing of a municipally owned community hall should include detailed analysis and community consultation prior to Council making a final decision.

Staff noted that annual rental data and financial reporting from the committees have not been consistently collected, and that all three community halls are currently underutilized. This was confirmed during the additional utilization work completed by MGA. To make fuller daily use of these spaces, the Municipality should work with committee members to expand marketing and increase rentals, while also considering additional municipal programming and partnerships with external service providers to deliver regular activities, programs, and rentals at the halls.

The Municipality has a surplus of community hall capacity to meet long-term needs.

While major capital replacements such as roofs can represent significant one-time costs (approximately $250,000–$300,000), these expenses are manageable when lifecycle reserves are established. For example, a roof with a 25-year lifespan equates to an annual reserve contribution of approximately $10,000–$12,000.

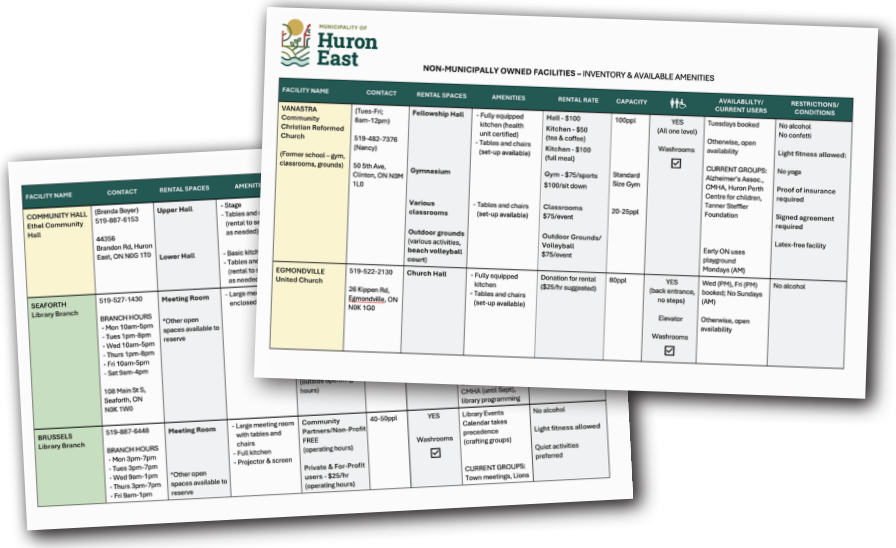




Outside of these planned capital investments, **Huron East's rural community halls have relatively low annual operating costs. These facilities also provide significant community value, serving as the primary gathering place and social hub for their respective hamlets while preserving local history, identity, and opportunities for community connection.**

OTHER COMMUNITY HALLS/CHURCHES IN THE HURON EAST

In addition to municipally owned facilities, Huron East is served by a number of non-municipal community halls that provide a range of rental opportunities for social events, celebrations, meetings, and community programs at generally comparable rates. Collectively, the inventory of municipal and non-municipal gathering spaces appears to exceed current demand, providing Staff and Council with the opportunity to evaluate whether all municipally owned rural community halls are required to meet future community needs or whether some facilities could be considered surplus while maintaining adequate access to community gathering spaces throughout the municipality. The full Municipal and Non-Municipal Inventory of Community Spaces can be found in the Background Report.


Huron East

NON-MUNICIPALLY OWNED FACILITIES – INVENTORY & AVAILABLE AMENITIES

FACILITY NAME	CONTACT	RENTAL SPACES	AMENITIES	RENTAL RATE	CAPACITY		AVAILABILITY/ CURRENT USERS	RESTRICTIONS/ CONDITIONS
VANASTRA Community Christian Reformed Church (Former school - gym, classrooms, grounds)	(Tues-Fri; 8am-12pm) 519-482-7376 (Nancy) 50 5th Ave, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0	Fellowship Hall Gymnasium Various classrooms Outdoor grounds (various activities, beach volleyball court)	- Fully equipped kitchen (health unit certified) - Tables and chairs (set-up available) - Tables and chairs (set-up available)	Hall - $100 Kitchen - $50 (tea & coffee) Kitchen - $100 (full meal) Gym - $75/sports $100/sit down Classrooms $75/event Outdoor Grounds/ Volleyball $75/event	100ppl Standard Size Gym 20-25ppl	YES (All one level) Washrooms ☑	Tuesdays booked Otherwise, open availability CURRENT GROUPS: Alzheimer's Assoc., CMHA, Huron Perth Centre for children, Tanner Steffler Foundation Early ON uses playground Mondays (AM)	No alcohol No confetti Light fitness allowed: No yoga Proof of insurance required Signed agreement required Latex-free facility
EGMONDVILLE United Church	519-522-2130 26 Kippen Rd, Egmondville, ON N0K 1G0	Church Hall	- Fully equipped kitchen - Tables and chairs (set-up available)	Donation for rental ($25/hr suggested)	80ppl	YES (back entrance, no steps) Elevator Washrooms ☑	Wed (PM), Fri (PM) booked; No Sundays (AM) Otherwise, open availability	No alcohol

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES				
3.1	**ARENAS** **Develop an ice allocation policy and meet with ice user groups annually** to review membership numbers, program types and trends and adjust ice allocation to ensure equitable and efficient use of available ice time.		✓		Manager of Parks & Recreation
3.2	**INDOOR POOL** **The Municipality needs to have the pool re-assessed for long term life-cycle maintenance/repairs and include required capital funding** in the 10-year forecast to keep the pool operational.		✓		Consultant
3.3	**COMMUNITY HALLS** **The municipality should review their risk management for holding their own liquor licenses for special events at their facilities** compared to requiring renters to hold a special occasion permit (SOP).		✓		Director of Community Services, Operation Team, Legal
3.4a	**The Municipality should assess all three community halls to consider selling or leasing two of the three rural community halls over the next three to five years.** To support this decision, the Municipality should work with an architect or engineer to assess renovations that would enable alternative uses, such as daycare, affordable housing, residential, or commercial space. It should then obtain an analysis of market valuations and community engagement for the preferred options to determine which halls to sell or lease.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, Consultants
3.4b	While assessing all three community halls, whether to sell or lease two of the three halls, **the Municipality should work with committee members to improve marketing, increase rentals, and explore municipal programming and partnerships with external service providers to support regular use.**	✓			Director of Community Services, Communication Coordinator
3.5	**Keep an updated inventory and contact information for available spaces to promote alternative options for community spaces and gatherings.**	✓			Director of Community Services

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks and open spaces are essential to strong communities, offering places for people of all ages to be active, connect socially, enjoy nature, and support their physical and mental well-being. Most spaces are free to use, aside from specific user fees, and help promote active lifestyles, strengthen community connections, reduce stress, support tourism and economic value, connect people with nature, and protect the environment.

MUNICIPALITY OF HURON EAST PARKLAND

As outlined in the Huron East Official Plan the "Goals for Urban Natural Environment and Open Space" are as follows:

1. To provide the widest possible choice of recreational opportunities.
2. To beautify and enhance the character and quality of the urban environment through the provision, maintenance, and improvement of the treescape, parks and space resources of the Municipality.
3. To attract visitors and promote tourism by creating interesting, aesthetic, and unique open space and recreational environments and experiences.
4. To protect unique or fragile natural landscapes and environments such as aquifers, woodlots, flood plains, and fish and wildlife habitats.
5. To creatively use natural environment, parks and open spaces in shaping and guiding urban development; creating linkages between them and as buffers between conflicting land uses.
6. To work with neighbourhood residents, service clubs and organizations, interested groups, and government agencies in meeting the natural environment, parks and open space needs of the community.

Parks are especially important in high-density and lower-income areas, where they provide much-needed space for recreation and community connection.









PARKLAND SUPPLY

Huron East offers residents a range of recreation facilities, parks, open spaces, and small community halls across the municipality. Parkland is distributed throughout the main communities of Brussels, Seaforth, and Vanastra, as well as the rural communities of Egmondville, Ethel, Walton, and Winthrop. The Municipality currently provides 29.51 hectares (72.73 acres) of parkland across 25 sites.

Municipalities commonly use parkland-to-population ratios as a supply benchmark. Typical targets range from 2.0 to 4.0 hectares per 1,000 residents, although many municipalities find these standards increasingly difficult to achieve. For example, North Perth uses a standard of 1.4 to 2.0 hectares per 1,000 residents, Perth East targets a minimum of 2.5 hectares per 1,000 residents, the Township of Perth East maintains an average of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 residents, and the Township of North Huron provides 4.2 hectares per 1,000 residents.

HURON EAST PARKLAND INVENTORY

	PARK/FACILITY NAME	Area (Ha)	Area (Ac)
1	Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre	5.07	12.54
2	Brussels Community Park	0.81	2.00
3	Brussels Outdoor Pool	0.26	0.65
4	Brussels Homecoming Parkette	0.05	0.13
5	Leo's Dog Park (Brussels)	0.14	0.35
6	Brussels Lions Park	0.30	0.75
7	Cranbrook Community Hall	0.16	0.40
8	Elizabeth Park (Egmondville)	0.51	1.25
9	Ethel Ball Diamond	1.32	3.25
10	Ethel Community Hall (Includes fire hall)	0.29	0.71
11	Seaforth & District Community Centre	2.59	6.41
12	Seaforth Lawn Bowling Club	0.45	1.12
13	Seaforth Lions Park	3.64	9.00
14	Seaforth Optimist Park	1.32	3.25
15	Victoria Park (Seaforth)	0.20	0.50
16	St. Columban Soccer Fields	3.19	7.87
17	Memory Lane Park (Seaforth)	0.25	0.61
18	Munn's Grove Trail (Seaforth)	1.67	4.12
19	Vanastra Recreation Centre (VRC)	0.48	1.18
20	Vanastra Park (Adjacent to VRC)	2.53	6.26
21	Vanastra Basecamp Park	0.60	1.46
22	Vanastra Curling Club	0.41	1.02
23	Walton Ball Diamond	1.57	3.87
24	Walton Community Hall	0.08	0.03
25	Winthrop Ball Diamond	1.62	4.00
	TOTAL	**29.51**	**72.73**
	2026 Population	10,254	10,254
	Parkland/1,000 Population	**2.88**	**7.09**

NOTES:

- A summary of parkland, amenities inventory, and condition assessment is included in the Background Report.

Maintaining a continuous supply of quality parkland is essential to meeting current and future recreation needs. The Municipal Official Plan does not establish a parkland provision standard per 1,000 residents. Based on Huron East's estimated 2026 population of 10,254 from the County Population Study, the Municipality currently provides 2.88 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents, or 7.09 acres per 1,000 people. This places Huron East in the mid-range of municipal parkland supply.

The Huron County Population & Housing Study estimates that the population for Huron East will be 11,387 in 2036. Based on this forecast, Huron East will need a total of 34.16 ha (84.41 ac) of parkland to meet a 3.0 ha/1,000 population target or an additional 4.18 ha of parkland In partnership with Huron County, the Municipality is reviewing several subdivision plans that would add residential lots and provide parkland or cash-in-lieu of parkland, as outlined in the Official Plan. These include:



1. Trailblaze Subdivision (Seaforth)

- A former school site in northeast Seaforth near Market Street and Huron Street. The first phase provided cash-in-lieu, while later phases will dedicate a small parkette. The cash-in-lieu will help fund park development.
- Total new parkland: 0.17 ha (0.42 acres)

2. JL Development (Seaforth)

- A small urban development near Duke Street and Seaforth Public School. Development plans are still being prepared; however, cash-in-lieu is expected due to the parcel's small size.

3. Bridges Phase 3 Development (Seaforth)

- Phase 3 is proposed at the end of Macpherson Avenue, east of Phase 1. Parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu has not yet been finalized with the Municipality.
- Based on community engagement during this master plan development, the Municipality should consider working with the developer and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to explore a publicly accessible trail connecting the Seaforth Golf Course to downtown Seaforth.

4. Cranbrook Subdivision (Cranbrook)

- Phase 2 of this rural estate lot development builds on Phase 1, for which the Municipality accepted cash-in-lieu of parkland. Phase 2 will include a small park area for the rural community of Cranbrook, with the cash-in-lieu used to help fund park development.
- Total new parkland – 0.31 Ha (0.76 Acres)

Given these current planned subdivisions, the Municipality will add 0.48 ha (1.16 ac) of parkland to their inventory and will therefore require an additional 3.7 ha (9.14 acres) above and beyond current planned developments noted above.

PARKLAND OFFICIAL PLAN POLICIES AND ACTIONS

NOTE:

- The Municipality's Official Plan, Consolidated November 2023 with OPA #16, sets out the policies guiding parkland development. The plan was reviewed as part of the literature review, with a brief analysis provided in the Background Report.

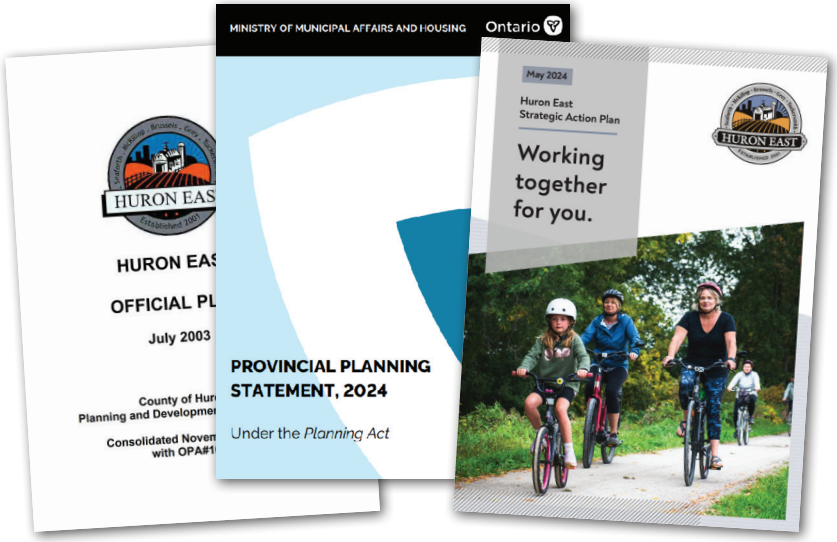
As noted, in the literature review of the Municipal Official Plan the staff at Huron County advise that the Huron East Official Plan is scheduled to be updated in 2027. The complete literature review can be found in the Background Report.

PARKLAND DEDICATION & CASH IN LIEU

Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, received Royal Assent in November 2022. Bill 98, *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026,* received Royal Assent on June 2, 2026; however, at the time this master plan was prepared, Bill 98's parkland amendments had not yet been proclaimed into force. The two bills standardize requirements, incentives, and reduce costs for home builders.

Bill 23 expanded the types of land that may be accepted as parkland, including encumbered (i.e. have easements, below grade infrastructure, or privately owned publicly accessible spaces) and stratified lands (i.e. lands are divided vertically and horizontally), and gave landowners the right to appeal to the Tribunal if a municipality refused the conveyance. These amendments were not proclaimed into force with the rest of Bill 23, leaving developers and municipalities uncertain about which lands could be accepted for parkland dedication.

Bill 98 introduces several changes, including a standardized official plan structure, climate change policies, sustainable design and electric vehicle charging requirements, minimum lot size provisions, site plan process changes, Simcoe County's transition to an upper-tier municipality without



planning responsibilities, and development charge revisions. It also seeks to clarify which lands are acceptable for parkland dedication by prescribing criteria for ineligible lands. Although the Bill has passed, municipalities are still awaiting regulations for several amendments, including those related to parkland dedication.

Sections 42, 51.1, and 53 of Ontario's Planning Act authorize municipalities to require parkland dedication or payment in lieu as a condition of land development or redevelopment. The Planning Act allows municipalities to require parkland dedication of up to 5% of land developed for residential or institutional uses and up to 2% for commercial or industrial uses.

Section 6.9.5 of the Huron East Official Plan, Consolidated November 2023 with OPA #16, requires the 5% dedication for residential and institutional development under Sections 51.1 and 42(1) of the Planning Act, and this approach should continue. **However, the Official Plan does not currently require 2% parkland dedication for commercial or industrial development.**

The Act also establishes an "Alternative Parkland Dedication" rate for residential development: 1 hectare per 600 residential units for land conveyance, or 1 hectare per 1,000 units for payment in lieu. Because this approach is generally used for higher-density development, it is unlikely to be suitable for the Municipality of Huron East.

Cash-in-lieu payments must be managed transparently, with clear reporting on how funds are used for new parkland or parkland development. Section 6.9.8 of the Official Plan outlines when and how cash-in lieu may be accepted – "The acceptance of cash-in-lieu of the parkland conveyance will be based on the appraised value of the land as of the day before the day of draft approval of the Plan and the following additional considerations:

- Adequate parkland is already available in the area.
- The site is unsuitable for parkland purposes because of physical factors such as size, shape, topography, accessibility or location.

The parkland dedication would render the remainder of the development or redevelopment area unsuitable or impractical for development." **These criteria set a high threshold for accepting cash-in-lieu; therefore, revisions are not recommended.**

Neither Huron County nor the Municipality of Huron East currently has a Parkland Dedication By-law. Once the Province establishes parkland dedication regulations under Bill 98, Huron County and the Municipality of Huron East, together with other Huron County municipalities, should collaborate to develop a standard Parkland Dedication By-law.

In addition to the parkland tools outlined above, the Municipality should collaborate with school boards and Conservation Authorities to support the shared use and development of open space and recreation amenities.

SUITABILITY OF LAND DEDICATION & ACQUISITION FOR PARKLAND

As noted above the Province has still not provided regulations for lands that would be ineligible for parkland dedication as part of the passing of Bill 98 so the following analysis and recommendation may need to be reconsidered pending any amendments Section 6.9.4.6 states that "Land to be conveyed for parkland, shall be accepted only when the Municipality has deemed that the site is suitable for park purposes, is needed in the area, is suitably located and accessible to the public." However, the wording is broad, and more specific criteria should be considered.





PARKLAND CLASSIFICATION

The Municipality of Huron East Official Plan does not currently define parkland classifications, and the Municipality has requested a classification system through the Community Services Master Plan. Municipalities typically use core categories such as Neighbourhood Parks, Community Parks, and Regional Parks, with additional classifications added to reflect local character, such as Heritage, Destination, Waterfront, Linear, or Natural Parks. Broader classifications also include Conservation Areas and Provincial, and National Parks.

Based on Huron East's current parkland inventory and future planning needs, the following parkland classification system is recommended.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK

- Small open spaces that service residents with a walking time of 10-15 minutes (800m) and provide basic amenities like playgrounds, walking paths, spontaneous play sport fields, multi-use courts, open grassy areas, trees (shade), social spaces, and seating.
- Located in areas that can be accessed by walking, cycling, and cars with road frontage to provide defined entrance, visual safety of the park and easy access for all users.
- Size varies depending on park uses but typically are not less than 0.8 ha (2.0 ac)

COMMUNITY PARK

- Larger open spaces that serve several neighbourhoods or the community at whole. They offer a wider variety of active and passive opportunities and can include sports fields (lit), picnic shelters, washrooms, skateboard parks, splash pads, trails, open space, trees (shade natural & environmental features, and may include cultural, historical or art features. Normally these parks include onsite parking.
- Can be located adjacent to other public spaces (i.e. schools, environmental areas, natural areas, and have access to major roads that are accessible by walking, cars and active transportation.
- Sizes vary depending on park function and amenities.

DESTINATION PARK

- Open Spaces that offer amenities or features that attract residents from inside and outside the community
- Located in areas that can be accessed by walking, cycling, and cars with road frontage to provide defined entrance, visual safety of the park and easy access for all users.
- Spaces include higher end sports fields, arenas, event areas, special features, large pavilions, outdoor pools, multi-use spaces, parking lots, large accessible play structure areas, etc. Maybe connected to other natural lands and connected by trails.
- Have significant road frontage to provide easy access by walking, cycling, vehicles, and transit.
- Sizes can vary but are typically larger spaces (over 3 ha) that can accommodate large gatherings and should be located on main roads.

PARKETTE

- Smaller spaces that act as gathering areas for the residents and typically found in urban areas.
- Spaces can include seating areas, landscaping, art, historical or cultural pieces, trees (shade), water features, and unique amenities
- Sizes can vary but typically smaller spaces less than 0.4 ha (1.0 ac)

HURON EAST PROPOSED PARK CLASSIFICATIONS	
PARK NAME/FACILITY	**PARK CLASSIFICATION**
Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre	Destination
Brussels Community Park	Community
Brussels Outdoor Pool	Community
Brussels Homecoming Parkette	Parkette
Leo's Dog Park (Brussels)	Community
Brussels Lions Park	Community
Cranbrook Community Hall	Community
Elizabeth Park (Egmondville)	Neighbourhood
Ethel Ball Diamond	Community
Ethel Community Hall (Includes fire hall)	Community
Seaforth & District Community Centre	Destination
Seaforth Lawn Bowling Club	Community
Seaforth Lions Park	Destination
Seaforth Optimist Park	Community
Victoria Park (Seaforth)	Parkette
St. Columban Soccer Fields	Community
Memory Lane Parkette (Seaforth)	Neighbourhood
Munn's Grove Trail (Seaforth)	Neighbourhood
Vanastra Recreation Centre (VRC)	Destination
Vanastra Park (Adjacent to VRC)	Community
Vanastra Basecamp Activity Park	Neighbourhood
Walton Ball Diamond & Community Hall	Community
Winthrop Ball Diamond	Community

PARKLAND DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT DESIGN

This section outlines design considerations for developing new parks and redeveloping existing parks. The Background Report provides the indoor and outdoor recreation facility inventory and condition assessment for each component. During site visits, MGA also identified preliminary opportunities for upgrades, additions, or other improvements at existing recreation facilities.

PARKS FOR ALL

All parks should provide equitable, accessible and welcoming opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, with basic amenities such as accessible pathways and connections, seating, shade, play or informal recreation opportunities, and appropriate maintenance. Parks should be safely and independently accessible through connected sidewalks, multi-use paths, crossings and wayfinding, and should provide comparable quality and amenities regardless of neighbourhood or income level. Parks should also incorporate natural areas and opportunities to connect with nature, spontaneous play, support social connection and intergenerational use, and apply age-friendly and universal design principles.

FINDINGS FOR EXISTING PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Most Huron East parks and open spaces have few accessible features. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), newly built or substantially redeveloped public spaces—such as sidewalks, parking lots, and outdoor eating areas—must include accessible features. As the population ages and more young families settle in the Municipality, park amenities should be improved to better serve people with disabilities, parents with strollers, and seniors using walkers or canes.

Huron East's parks and open spaces are generally well developed, leaving little room for new amenities. However, the following improvements should be considered as funding or fundraising opportunities become available.

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR NEW AND EXISTING PARKS



ADJACENT LANDS

Ensure adjacent schools' properties, conservation areas, natural areas, etc., maximize layout of amenities and are well connected.



WASHROOMS/CLEANLINESS

Include well-placed washrooms, attractive, durable, trash receptacles near play structures, sports fields, seating areas, parking areas, and entrances.



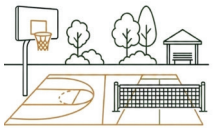
INCLUSIVE ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure barrier free amenities throughout the park, that accommodate wheelchairs and strollers.



PLAY STRUCTURES

Variety of plan elements for all ages (18 months to 5 years and 5 years to 12 years), universally accessible and meet or exceed Canadian Playground safety CAN/CSA-Z614 standard or amended.



AMENITIES

Maximize spontaneous and structured recreational play and socialization area, including grassy areas, multi-use courts, and play boxes in parks that would provide equipment (like basketballs, balls, frisbees, skipping ropes, racquets, etc...) that can be used by all.



YOUTH

Provide areas for youth to "hang out" while ensuring their safety and providing free Wifi.



GREENERY

Devote large area to tree planting, natural areas, grassy areas, and landscaped gardens for people to connect with nature.



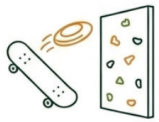
TRAILS/PATHWAYS

Should be minimum of 3 m wide, have an accessible smooth surface, be well-drained and connect active and passive spaces, park entrances, and parking lots.



VISIBILITY

Keep clear unobstructed views of play areas, seating, sports fields, splashpads, buildings, etc. so users and adjacent residents may provide active security day and night.



NON-TRADITIONAL SPORTS & ACTIVITIES

Consider alternate sports like cricket, disc golf, rock climbing, ziplining, movie nights, etc.



SEATING

Strategically locate comfortable benches and picnic tables for socialization and parenting.



SPORTS FIELDS

Properly drained areas located for optimal play and safety for players and non-users during games. Use Provincial sports organizations field standards for requirements and layout. Separate passive areas from active play areas.



SIGNAGE

Provide clear, large print, consistent signage and maps to help park users navigate the park space or trail. Signage also helps to educate users about historical and/or environmental elements with or adjacent to the park/trail.



SHADE

Provide natural shade through tree canopy and shade shelters deliberately placed adjacent to play areas and seating areas to provide sun and inclement weather protection for all users.

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	PARKS AND OPEN SPACES				
4.1	During the Official Plan Update, **the Municipality and Huron County should consider the following:** o Renaming Section 6.9 to "Parkland, Open Space, and Natural Environment" to more clearly reflect parkland's role in community planning and recreation. o Add to Goal 1: "To provide the widest possible choice of recreation opportunities while providing amenities that accommodate a wide range of ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds." o To support future growth and meet the target of 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents, add a new goal: "To expand accessible open space and parkland through strategic acquisitions, developer dedications, and partnerships." o To reflect the community's interest in connected parkland and expanded trails, add a goal: "To link parks to neighbourhoods through trails, greenways, and pedestrian-friendly streets."	✓			CAO & County
4.2	**Huron East should establish a municipality-wide parkland provision target of 3.0 hectares per 1,000 residents** and include in the Huron East Official Plan (acquiring additional 3.7 hectares by 2036 should be a priority)	✓			CAO & County
4.3	**Adopt the parkland classification system as an overall framework** to guide the acquisition, location, development of new parks and redevelopment of existing parks based on function, size, and required amenities. Include the classification system in the 2027 Official Plan update.	✓			CAO & County Planning

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
4.4	**Replace Section 6.9.4.6 of the Official Plan with the following wording:** "The Municipality should only accept land dedicated for park purposes based on the following criteria: o Lands adjacent to existing parks, recreation facilities, schools, conservation areas, or storm water areas o Lands easily accessible for residents within the residential area to be served o Lands with adequate street frontage ensure high visibility and safety of the park. o Lands that are level (no steep slopes), proposed facilities can be accommodated (form to follow function), not subject to flooding (proper drainage), or other environmental conditions that would not allow the park to function appropriately. Other environmental lands, natural features, or storm water lands may be conveyed to the Municipality or Conservation Authority but are not to be considered part of the parkland contribution. These lands can be used for passive recreation including multi-use trails, education, etc. and may help to connect existing parks or residential areas.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, County Planning
4.5	**That the Municipality adopt "Key Design Elements for New and Existing Parks" to guide parkland dedication** through development applications and inform all park development. In the Official Plan, make reference to the Key Design Elements in the Community Services Master Plan	✓			CAO & County Planning
4.6	**The Municipality should assess the financial and development impacts of collecting the 2% parkland dedication for commercial and industrial uses.**		✓		CAO, Director of Community Services, Director of Finance, County
4.7	**Planning application reviews should consider the Community Services Master Plan** to identify parkland gaps and prioritize parkland dedication over cash-in-lieu.	✓			CAO & County

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
4.8	Huron County and the Municipality of Huron East, together with other Huron County municipalities, should collaborate to **develop a standard Parkland Dedication By-law.**		✓		CAO & County Planning
4.9	**The Municipality should collaborate with school boards and Conservation Authorities to support the shared use, acquisition, and development of open space and recreation amenities,** and connection of trails and improved trail heads	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, County Planning
4.10	**Work with Huron County's Accessibility Advisory Committee and Public Health to review Huron East's park areas and amenities** to develop a prioritized plan to improve accessibility and social equity at every municipal park.	✓			Director of Community Services
4.11	As the Municipality builds new parks or redevelops existing ones, it should **improve accessibility across all parks and open spaces** by adding features such as accessible trails, picnic tables, washrooms, and pavilions.		✓		CAO, Director of Community Services, County Planning
4.12	**Community Services should assess the proposed park improvements** through community engagement to determine their viability and preferences.	✓	✓	✓	CAO & Director of Community Services
4.13	**The Municipality should create consistent branding, similar to their current wayfinding branding, for signage and amenities** across recreation facilities, parks, open spaces, and trails (i.e., furniture and waste containers).	✓	✓	✓	Director of Community Services & Manager of Parks and Recreation
	SITE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS				
4.14	**A. VANASTRA PARKS** i. **Recreation Centre Park –** remove existing ball diamond and create family-oriented area with accessible play structure, open grass area for play, disc golf and play boxes, natural ice rink, possible dog park, and trail loop throughout the park. ii. **Basecamp Activity Park –** add an accessible trail that connects both entrances to the activity amenities in the middle of the park.		✓ ✓		Director of Community Services & Manager of Parks and Recreation

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
4.14	**B. SEAFORTH PARKS**				
	i. **SDCC –** The open space around the community centre could accommodate the multi-use courts currently being reviewed by staff.	✓			
	ii. **Lions Park –** add water refilling station, develop a trail along the creek which links into the park, enhance trail from parking lot to the pool washroom building and make an accessible and link to play equipment.		✓		
	iii. **Optimist Park –** add water re-filling station and install backstop on the new under 14 ball diamond.		✓		Director of Community Services & Manager of Parks and Recreation
	iv. **Elizabeth Park –** add new amenities into the park possibly incorporating theming from the adjacent historic cultural centre.		✓		
	v. **Victoria Park –** swings need repair as does the building.	✓			
	vi. **St. Columban Soccer Fields –** add water re-filling station.		✓		
	vii. **Seaforth Tennis Court –** remove and replace with multi-use courts at SDCC.	✓			
	C. BRUSSELS PARKS				
	i. **BMGCC –** add more trees to sports fields areas for shading and to define spaces, portable pickleball nets.		✓		
	ii. **Outdoor Pool –** enhance all pathways to building and picnic area for accessibility and to improve pool entrance into the water.		✓		Director of Community Services & Manager of Parks and Recreation
	iii. **Lions Park –** Add appropriate riverside amenities including seating, picnic tables, trail, waste receptacles, etc.		✓		
	D. RURAL PARKS				
	i. **Make accessibility upgrades** to washroom/pavilions, improved wayfinding and emergency signage. Look for ways to add sand and play boxes for spontaneous play.		✓		



OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Huron East offers several outdoor recreation facilities across the municipality, summarized by facility type, supply, and location in the following chart.

SUMMARY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

FACILITY TYPE	SUPPLY	LOCATION
Ball Diamonds (L-Lit)	12 Total (3, 6-L)	BMGCC (1), Brussels Community Park (1-L), Ethel Ball Diamond (1-L), Seaforth Lions Park (1-L), Seaforth Optimist Park (1-L, 1), Walton Ball Diamond (1-L), Winthrop Ball Diamond (1-L), Vanastra Park (1)
Soccer Fields (all unlit)	7 Total (3 full, 2 medium, & 4 mini)	BMGCC (2 full & 2 mini), & St. Columban Soccer Fields (1 full-size, 2 medium sized, & 2 mini)
Outdoor Pools	2	Brussels Outdoor Pool & Seaforth Lions Park
Splashpads	1	Seaforth Lions Park

SUMMARY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

FACILITY TYPE	SUPPLY	LOCATION
Playgrounds	11	BMGCC (1), Brussels Outdoor Pool (1), Elizabeth Park (1), Ethel Ball Diamond (1), Seaforth Lions Park (1), Seaforth Optimist Park (1), St. Columban (1), Vanastra Activity Park (1), Vanastra Daycamp Park (1) , Walton ball Diamond (1), Winthrop Ball Diamond (1)
Lawn Bowling	1	Seaforth Lawn Bowling Club
Tennis Courts	0	School property closed due to condition
Multi-Use Courts (Pickleball, Basketball, etc.)	2	BMGCC (1) & Vanastra Basecamp (1),
Pickleball Courts (Indoor)	4	BMGCC (2) & SDCC (2) - within community halls
Pavilions/Picnic	8	BMGCC (1), Brussels Community Park (1), Ethel Ball Diamond (1) Seaforth Lions Park (1), Seaforth Optimist Park (1) , Vanastra Park (1), Walton Ball Diamond (1), Winthrop Ball Diamond (1)
Washrooms (Permanent) Note: All part of pavilions buildings in each location	8	Brussels Community Park (1) Brussels Outdoor Pool (1), Ethel Ball Diamond (1), Seaforth Lions Park (1), Seaforth Optimits Park (1), Vanastra Park (1) Walton Ball Diamond (1), Winthrop Ball Diamond (1)
Dog Parks	2	Leos Dog Park (Brussels) (1), & Seaforth Optimist Park (1)
Parking Lots	8	BMCC, Ethel Ball Diamond, Leo's Dog Park, SDCC, Seaforth Lions Park, VRC, Walton Ball Diamond, Winthrop Ball Diamond,
Community Gardens	1	SDCC (1)

NOTES:

- Lit sports fields are equivalent to 1.5 fields as they provide more than one booking each day.
- 4 mini fields soccer fields count as 2 full sized fields.



SPORTS FIELDS

Sports fields serve as community hubs, supporting physical and mental activity, social interaction, and local economic benefits. They provide accessible spaces for youth and adult leagues while attracting tournaments that help support businesses, and sports organization fundraising.

In southern Ontario, typical utilization rates for ball diamonds and soccer fields are influenced by seasonal weather. Fields are generally available from early May to late September, or about 21 weeks. Standard operating hours are 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays (20 hours total) and 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., or dusk, on weekends (26 hours total). Lit diamonds and fields may operate until 11:00 p.m. seven days a week. Municipal bookings for outdoor sports fields are limited on Saturday afternoons and evenings and on Sunday mornings and afternoons, unless local groups are hosting multiple tournaments.

Lit diamonds and fields are planned to support an average of 60 hours of use per week, while unlit diamonds and fields typically accommodate about 46 hours. To reduce wear and prevent damage, the Municipality should adopt a structured scheduling approach that includes regular rest periods for turf recovery, infield repairs, and routine maintenance.

For a 21-week playing season running from May through September, the available capacity for each field classification has been established as follows:

- Lit Diamonds/Fields: 1,260 hours/season
- Unlit Diamonds/Fields: 966 hours/season

BALL DIAMONDS

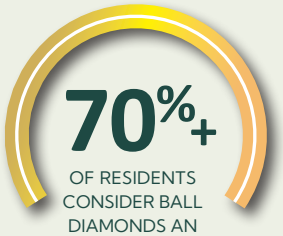
The Outdoor Recreation Facilities Chart noted on page 42 identifies a total of 12 ball diamonds equivalents based on 6 lit diamonds and 3 unlit diamonds and there is a good distribution through Huron East.

The ball diamonds at Ethel, Walton, Winthrop, Seaforth Lions Park, and Seaforth Optimist Park are managed and maintained by community groups or service clubs, resulting in significant annual operating and maintenance cost savings for the Municipality. The Municipality contributes 50% of capital costs for upgrades or replacement at these facilities, with the remaining costs shared by the responsible community group or service club. These groups must communicate facility needs proactively to support capital funding decisions.

Standard provisions for lit diamonds are 1:20,000 and 1:5,000 for unlit diamonds so based on this service level Huron East is well served based on its current population and future growth.

A more accurate service level typically used by Ontario municipalities, and a best practice is 1 diamond per 75-100 ball registrants. For Huron East we used 1 diamond to 90 ball registrants. This approach is more aligned to users and more responsive to changing sport trends.

WHAT WE HEARD:



More than half of survey respondents reported household participation in ball diamonds, which is third highest facility use. About 50%–70% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with community ball diamonds overall, although **satisfaction with the Ethel, Walton, and Winthrop diamonds was lower, at 10%–30%.**

The importance of ball diamond ratings was slightly higher overall, with **70%–80% considering diamonds important or somewhat important**; however, the same three diamonds rated lower, at 30% to 45%.

Huron East has a high number of adult ball leagues for ladies and men. The leagues play at all the ball diamonds, except Vanastra Recreation Centre Ball diamond which is only used for community use. It was very challenging to collect the total number of players in the various leagues however we have estimated the total number to be approximately 45 teams with 12 players per team for a total of 540 players.

2026 BALL DIAMOND UTILIZATION

(Schedules provided by staff, service clubs, sports groups)

LOCATION	AVAILABLE HOURS	2026 HOURS UTILIZED	% USAGE
BMGCC	966	192	19.9 %
Brussels Community Park	1,260	363	26.8 %
Ethel Park	1,260	451	35.8 %
Seaforth Lions Park	1,260	518	41.1 %
Seaforth Optimist Park (Main)	1,260	699	55.5 %
Seaforth Optimist Park (Under 14) UNDER CONSTRUCTION	966	0	0
Vanastra Park	966	0	0 %
Walton Park	1,260	268	21.3 %
Winthrop Park	1,260	268	21.3 %



BASEBALL TAKE UP RATES, CURRENT BALL MEMBERSHIP, AND FUTURE DIAMONDS NEEDS

YEAR	COHORT	HE POPULATION	2026 BALL MEMBERSHIP	TAKE-UP RATE	TOTAL DIAMONDS 2036
2026	Youth (5-19)	1,935	364	18.8 %	4.0
	Adult (20- 64)	5,732	540	9.4 %	6.0
2036	Youth (5-19)	2,148	404	18.8 %	4.5
	Adult (20- 64)	6,365	598	9.4 %	6.6

NOTES:

- Using 2021 Census data with a population of 9,829 – Ages 0-4 (580 – 5.9%), 5-19 (1,750 -17.87%), 20-64 (5,486 -55.9%), 65+ (2,728 – 24.6%).
- Assume the 2026 population at 10,254 and the 2036 population of 11,387 has a similar age distribution.

WHAT WE HEARD:





Improved ballpark lighting ranked among the top three park priorities for just under 10% of respondents, **while upkeep, maintenance, and beautification ranked much higher at 32%.**

Additional comments called for upgrades at the BMGCC, including refreshed facilities, improved dugouts, benches, and lighting. **Respondents also frequently requested water-filling stations and washrooms,** including year-round washrooms at some sports fields.

A few ball groups have requested to service clubs for diamond use for free or on a night already booked which have not been accommodated.





SOCCER FIELDS

Huron East has two main soccer field locations: the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre, with two full fields and two mini fields, and the St. Columban Soccer Fields, with 1 full-size, two mid-sized and two mini fields, located about five minutes south of Seaforth. **It should be noted that no soccer fields in Huron East are currently lit and youth and adult teams must travel to Exeter for games on a higher end field with lights.** If additional capacity is needed, the Municipality should work with local sports organizations to add lighting to one or two full to medium-sized fields at St. Columban and/or the BMGCC. Since future growth is expected to focus on Seaforth, St. Columban is the preferred location because it is close to Seaforth and farther from residential areas.

There are other non-municipal soccer fields in Huron East including one medium and one large-size school level soccer fields at Seaforth Public School, and one large school level soccer field at North Woods Elementary School (Ethel), and one large school level soccer field near the St. James Catholic School.

Ontario municipalities commonly use a standard of 1 field per 80–100 soccer registrants, which better matches user needs. For Huron East we used 1 field per 90 soccer registrants.

2026 SOCCER FIELD UTILIZATION

(Schedules provided by staff and sports club)

LOCATION	AVAILABLE HOURS	2026 HOURS UTILIZED	% USAGE
BMGCC Large	966	15	1.6 %
BMGCC Large	966	15	1.6 %
BMGCC Mini	966	15	1.6 %
BMGCC Mini	966	15	1.6 %
St. Columban Large (11X11)	966	125.75	13.0 %
St. Columban Medium (9X9)	966	55.25	5.7 %
St. Columban Medium (7x7)	966	66.5	6.8 %
St. Columban Mini #1 (5X5)	966	29	3.0 %
St. Columban Mini #2 (5X5)	966	13	1.3 %

SOCCER TAKE UP RATES, CURRENT SOCCER MEMBERSHIP, AND FUTURE FIELDS NEEDS

YEAR	COHORT	HE POPULATION	2026 BALL MEMBERSHIP	TAKE-UP RATE	TOTAL DIAMONDS 2036
2026	Youth (5-19)	1,935	487	25.2 %	5.4
	Adult (20- 64)	5,732	50	<1.0 %	0.5
2036	Youth (5-19)	2,148	541	25.2 %<	6.0
	Adult (20- 64)	6,365	60	1.0 %	0.5

NOTES:

- St. Columban Soccer Club uses approximately 90 hours a year of soccer fields located outside the municipality. The Exeter Community Park soccer field, which has lights, is heavily used for their older youth age group and adults' teams for evening games with lights.
- Using 2021 Census data with a population of 9,829 – Ages 0-4 (580 – 5.9%), 5-19 (1,750 -17.87%), 20-64 (5,486 -55.9%), 65+ (2,728 – 24.6%).
- Assume the 2026 population at 10,254 and the 2036 population of 11,387 has a similar age % distribution.



WHAT WE HEARD:



About 40% of respondents answered that they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with community soccer fields. Approximately half did not respond to the question, and very few indicated dissatisfaction.

Among respondents who answered, **50% – 60% considered soccer fields important or somewhat important to the community.**

A lit soccer field is needed for older youth and adult games.

Additional comments suggested interest in a turf field and a field with lights that could support multiple sports and possible year-round use.

A year-round turf field would be well used and help to grow the game locally, including access to other sports groups (i.e., Field lacrosse).

50%+
OF RESIDENTS CONSIDER SOCCER FIELDS AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

OUTDOOR POOLS

There are no standard provision levels for outdoor pools in Ontario. Municipalities determine their own needs based on population demographics, recreation demand, history of existing pools in community, and financial capacity. Outdoor pools are costly to build given their short operating season in Ontario, and they are also expensive to operate due to provincial health, lifeguarding, and operating requirements.

Huron East is well served by two large outdoor pools. The Seaforth Lions Club manages and operates the pool at Seaforth Lions Park, built in 1935, while the Municipality manages and operates the outdoor pool in Brussels. Both pools are well used, although utilization depends on summer weather conditions. The 10-year capital budget includes $168,000 for mechanical, filtration, and other maintenance needs at the outdoor pool. In 2025, operating costs were $60,179, with revenues of $16,776, resulting in a net cost of $43,403.

Because the Seaforth Lions Club manages and operates the Lions outdoor pool, the Municipality avoids these annual operating costs in its budget. Under existing agreements with the Lions Club, capital costs are shared equally between the club and the Municipality and the municipality provides an annual operating grant in the amount of $25,000 to the Lions club for the pool operations. Given the age of the pool and adjacent changeroom building, the Municipality should plan for its share of future capital upgrades or replacement costs. It should also be prepared for the possibility of one day assuming full responsibility for Lions Park maintenance and operations, given declining volunteer capacity locally and across Ontario.



WHAT WE HEARD:

40%+

OF RESIDENTS CONSIDER OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOLS AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

More than 40% of survey respondents reported using Huron East's outdoor pools. Among the 44 respondents to this question, over 38% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied, while only 13% were somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied.

More than 60% of the 39 respondents rated outdoor pools as important or somewhat important, while fewer than 8% considered them not very important.

OUTDOOR MULTI-USE COURTS

Multi-use courts offer flexible, cost-effective spaces for activities such as basketball, pickleball, tennis, and road hockey. They maximize recreation opportunities within a single space and can serve residents of all ages. Because activities, particularly pickleball, can generate noise, these courts should be located away from residential properties where possible.

A fenced, accessible multi-use court behind the BMGCC includes three pickleball courts and a basketball court. Vanastra Basecamp Activity Park also offers a new fenced multi-use court with pickleball, basketball, and volleyball facilities.

The two lit tennis courts at Seaforth Public School were built when the site was a high school. Now that it operates as a public school, the courts are no longer needed for school use. Although the Municipality previously maintained them, they have deteriorated, are no longer usable, and the land can now be repurposed for other school-related activities.



The Municipality is currently planning to replace the two tennis courts and build a multi-use court at the Seaforth & District Community Centre. The proposed new multi-use court will include a basketball/ball hockey court, pickleball court, and a tennis court.

Pickleball courts are set up inside the BMGCC (2) for winter use only and SDCC (2) community halls for use for year-round use.

The normal service level for multi-use courts if 1:5,000 people and with 2 existing and one planned multi-use court, the Municipality is well served to meet future growth with one multi-use court in each of the urban areas.

WHAT WE HEARD:

40%+

OF RESIDENTS CONSIDER MULTI-USE COURTS AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

MORE

MULTI-USE COURTS IN PARKS

For the BMGCC courts, 18% of respondents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied, while only 5% were dissatisfied, based on 48 responses. For the Vanastra facility, 17% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied, while 21% were somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied.

Survey responses showed that multi-use courts at both locations were considered important or somewhat important by 27%–48% of respondents.

Multi-use courts ranked second among respondents' top three park priorities, with about 40% of responses.

Several comments expressed interest in adding more multi-use courts in parks.

CHILDREN'S SPLASHPAD

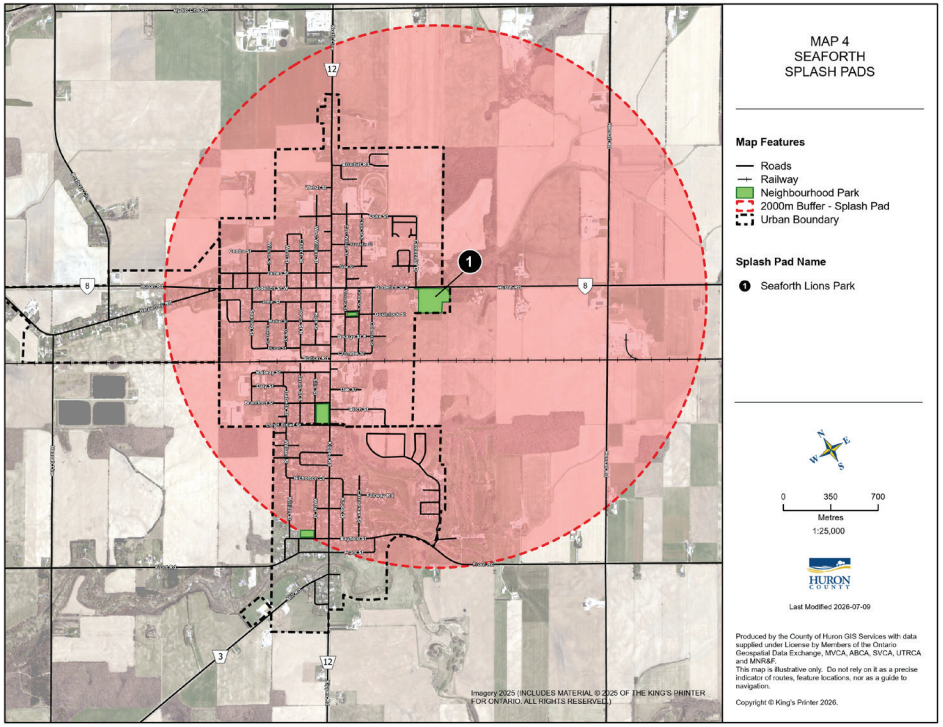
The Municipality has one splashpad, newly built in Seaforth Lion's Park. The park also provides washrooms and parking, supporting convenient access. A common service standard is one splashpad per 3,000 children under age 9; according to the 2021 Census, the Municipality's under-9 population was below 1,000. Another common standard is a 2,000-metre service radius, shown on the map below, which helps assess service levels in rural areas. This radius indicates good service coverage for Seaforth residents and nearby rural areas.

Given the distance between Huron East's main communities, a Brussels splashpad would be appropriate. Potential locations include the Brussels Outdoor Pool and the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre. Because space is limited at the pool property, the BMGCC Community Centre lands, next to the existing play structure, would be a suitable site. This location is close to building hydro and water services, provides parking, and benefits from staff presence in the facility.









WHAT WE HEARD:

PRIORITY #5

SPLASH PADS RANKED THE #5 MOST IMPORTANT PARK AMENITY

Splash pads ranked #5 in the survey's Most Important Park Amenities.

Several comments supported adding a splashpad in Brussels, while none mentioned Vanastra, possibly because of the indoor pool at the recreation centre.





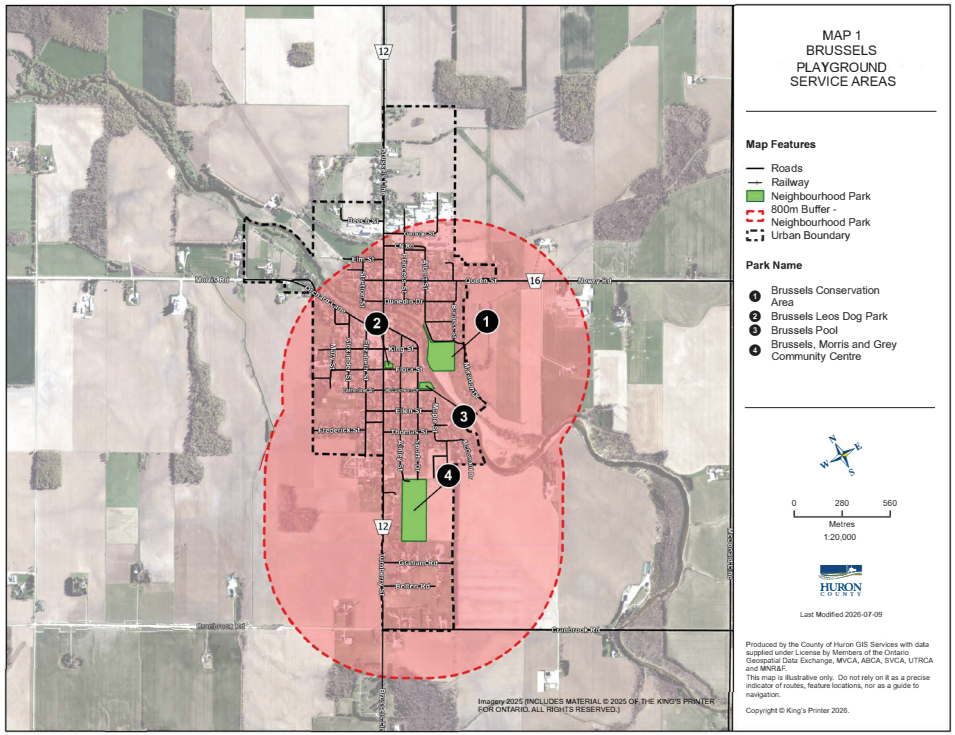


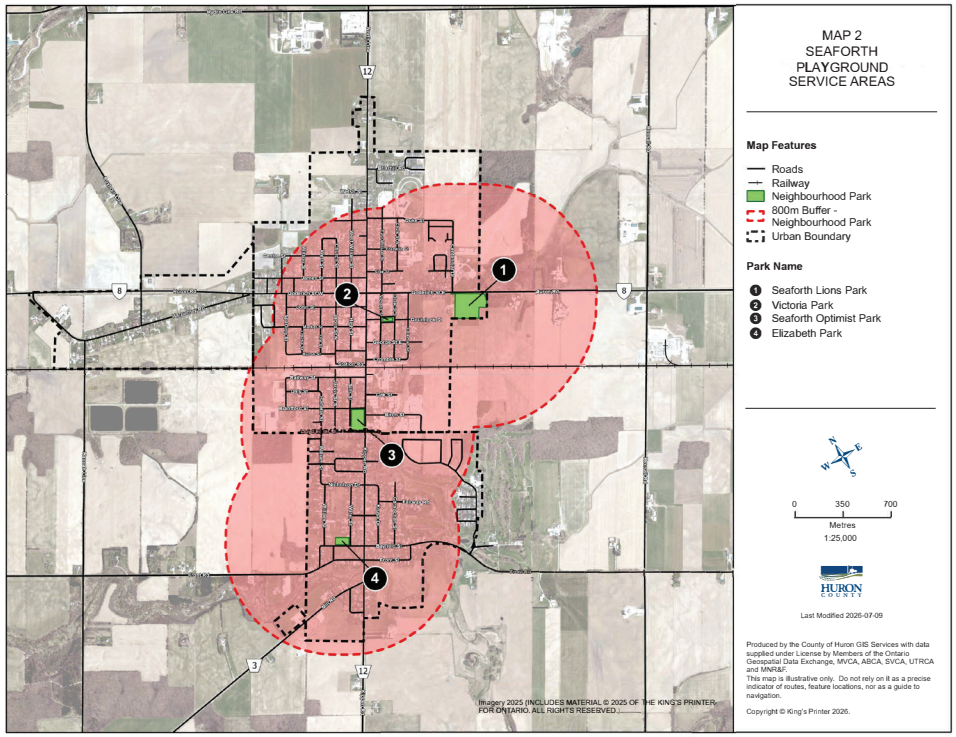
CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are essential to municipal park amenities that support children's physical and mental development. They promote social interaction, motor skills, and imagination, while also creating opportunities for parents and caregivers to connect.

There are 11 playgrounds in the Municipality's Park system including urban areas of Brussels, Seaforth, Vanastra and some rural areas. These include a variety and combination of climbers, slides, swing sets, however no accessible structures, or play elements for older youth (i.e. climbing wall). All locations have gravel, or a few have a wood chip safety surface, with no edge borders. It should be noted that at some locations the play structure area has only one or two opportunities for playing (i.e. Victoria park (Seaforth), Ethel ball diamond, Walton ball diamond, Winthrop ball diamond). These locations should be expanded.

A playground distribution analysis was completed through mapping of all locations in the urban areas of Brussels, Seaforth, and Vanastra within a 800-metre radius which is an appropriate service level. A 800-metre distance is generally best management practice for small rural municipalities, being within an 8-12 minute or less walking distance.





NOTES:

- North Wood Elementary School, located on Ethel Line, just outside Ethel, recently installed a new play structure with wood fibre safety surface, so this provides two play structure locations in Ethel. Community fundraising supported the new installation.
- The Maitland Conservation Authority have play structures located in or near Brussels at Brussels Conservation Area and Ethel Conservation Area for visitors and areas residents. Only the Brussels Conservation Area play structure has been included in the above mapping.

WHAT WE HEARD:

PRIORITY #1

PLAYGROUNDS RANKED AS THE #1 PRIORITY FOR PARKS

DESTINATION PARK THEMES:

- NATURAL
- AGRICULTURAL
- ACCESSIBLE



Playgrounds ranked as the #1 priority for parks

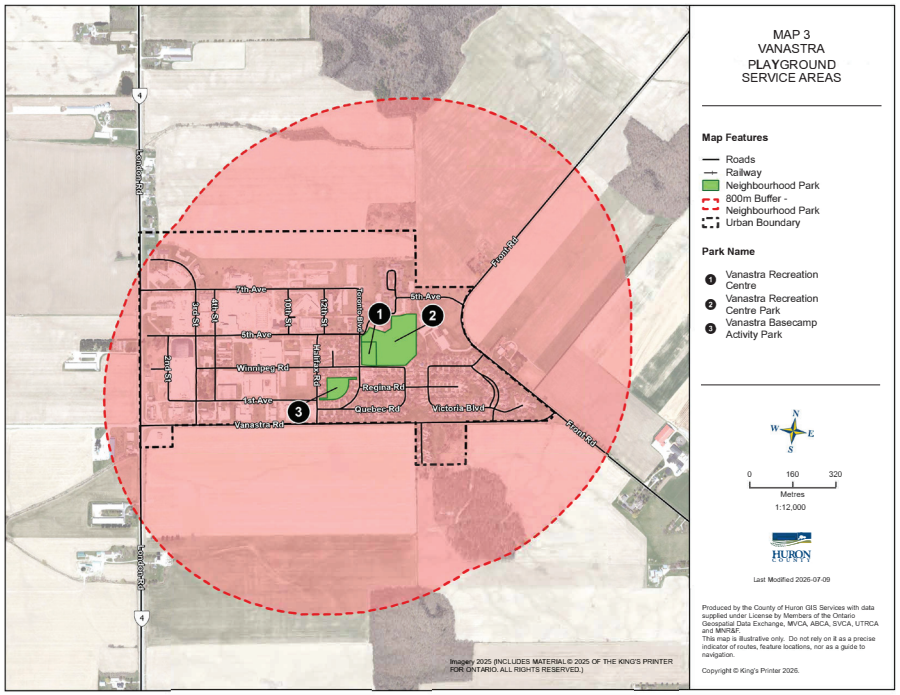
BMGCC, Brussels Community Park/Pool, Seaforth Lions, Seaforth Optimist, VRC park all had high satisfaction rates and Winthrop at a lower somewhat satisfaction rate. **Elizabeth and Ethel had high dissatisfaction rates.**

All locations scored high on playgrounds in these parks being important of somewhat important. Only Ethel Park had play structure as not very important or unimportant with a response of 10%.

Several comments were made that some playgrounds were need of updates in Brussels and throughout the community and **several people commented in the open response section the need for play structures as a priority and activity for all ages.**







NOTES:

- The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority does have a play structure located in the Clinton Conservation Area which is a short distance from Vanastra.



A review of playground distribution in urban areas (shown in maps above) shows that most residential neighbourhoods in Brussels and Vanastra are well served. In Seaforth, there is once service gap in the small residential area in the northeast, near the municipal property known as Munn's Grove Trail.

LAWN BOWLING

There is no standard service level for lawn bowling facilities, as they are unique park amenities based on municipal demographics and resident interest. There are approximately 107 club/organizations throughout Ontario based on the Ontario Lawn Bowls Association.

They are typically located on municipal land and managed and operated by volunteers, as is the case in Seaforth.

Seaforth has a strong community-managed lawn bowling club that has recently worked with the Municipality to fund accessibility improvements to the building and washroom.







OFF-LEASH DOG PARK

The Municipality has two off-leash dog parks: one at Seaforth Optimist Park and one at Leo's Dog Park in Brussels. Both areas are fenced and include some seating and trees. Leo's Dog Park also has adjacent parking and a drinking station for people and dogs, which is a valuable feature. Seaforth Optimist Park has only street parking and no water fountain. Neither off-leash area is separated into small- and large-dog zones.

Redeveloping the existing Vanastra ball diamond/park could provide an opportunity to add an off-leash dog park.





WHAT WE HEARD:



Because **Huron East already has two off-leash dog parks**, adding more ranked as a relatively low park priority, at less than 10%.

DOG PARKS **LOW** PRIORITY

WASHROOMS

Park washrooms are important amenities for families with children, seniors, sports participants, and general park users. They help visitors stay longer and participate more comfortably in park activities. Washrooms should be well stocked, accessible to everyone, and regularly cleaned and monitored by staff and the community to support safety.

Public park washrooms can be difficult to maintain because they may become dirty or unsanitary soon after cleaning, including through misuse, people sleeping in them, or vandalism. For this reason, they require frequent monitoring, cleaning, and maintenance.

Huron East has eight washroom/picnic pavilion facilities in municipal parks, along with washroom access at the three community centres . Most park washrooms have limited accessible entrances washroom features and require improvements to meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Several facilities are managed by community organizations or service clubs, including those in Ethel, Walton, Winthrop, Seaforth Lions Park, and Seaforth Optimist Park.

WHAT WE HEARD:

87% OF RESPONDENTS RATE WASHROOMS AS AN IMPORTANT AMENITY

Online survey responses showed strong support for washrooms. More than 56% of respondents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied, while 23% were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. **Among 52 respondents, 87% rated washrooms as important or very important.**

As noted above, **washrooms ranked seventh among high-priority park amenities and were identified as a high-value park feature.**

Some respondents commented that they would like washrooms to remain open year-round.

NEW PARKLAND DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A range of additional amenities could be included in new parks, open spaces, or redeveloped parkland. Providing a broader mix of amenities across municipal parks would give more residents opportunities to enjoy recreation individually or with family. Potential amenities include skateboard parks, community gardens, climbing structures, youth and senior social spaces, disc golf, cricket, sand volleyball courts, additional tree planting to support climate resilience, trails, barbecues, and other unique features.

OUTDOOR ICE RINKS

The Municipality does not operate or provide natural outdoor ice rink locations or equipment anywhere in the municipality. Typically, municipalities provide an underground water service and lighting within a grass area of the park which is easily accessible during the winter months for neighborhood use. The city then provides hose equipment and storage boxes for volunteers to make and maintain the ice rink through the winter months of December - March. Given rising temperatures during winter months the ice rinks can become challenging to maintain safe skateable ice during periods of the year.

SKATEBOARD/BMX PARK

Skateboard and BMX facilities are increasingly popular, especially among youth, with some adult participation supported by their inclusion in the Olympics and X-Games. Although municipalities have historically been cautious about these facilities because of safety, risk, and neighbourhood compatibility concerns, many now provide small to large skateboard/BMX parks as dedicated recreation spaces for youth.

These facilities offer several benefits, including physical activity, mental stimulation, inclusivity, social connection, and skill development.

Huron East has one private BMX facility in Walton but no municipal public skateboard/BMX facilities. These facilities can be built using portable ramps and jumps or more permanent concrete structures. A reasonable service standard is one facility per 20,000 residents.





WHAT WE HEARD:

Engagement and online survey results identified the top park priorities as:

- **#1. Playgrounds**
- **#2. Multi-use courts**
- **#4. Walking tracks**
- **#5. Splashpads or water features**
- **#6. All-season trails**
- **#7. Washrooms**
- **#8. Outdoor rinks**
- **#9. Community gardens**
- **#10. Naturalized areas**

Residents also ranked upkeep, maintenance, and beautification as a high priority (#3).

During the youth engagement session, participants expressed interest in social spaces where they can gather and spend time with friends. They also noted that these spaces should include Wi-Fi and support social media connectivity.

Open-ended comments indicated that residents want existing and new park amenities to be accessible to everyone and provide opportunities for all ages.

YOUTH SOCIAL AREAS

Community youth are seeking places to gather and socialize in municipal parks and open spaces. These areas should be intentionally designed to meet youth needs and located in safe, accessible locations.

Potential features include modular seating arranged for conversation, shaded pavilions, and locations near youth-oriented amenities such as multi-use courts and skateparks. These areas should include lighting for safety and may also offer charging stations, free Wi-Fi, and opportunities to share music.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens encourage social connection, support health and nutrition education, and improve access to affordable food. Typically developed through partnerships between community groups and the Municipality and operated by volunteers, they provide residents with a low-cost park amenity.

A raised community garden is located beside the SDCC, which is well used and coordinated by a volunteer . Since residents identified community gardens as a priority, the Municipality should connect with SDCC garden organizers and interested residents to explore support for developing and operating additional community gardens.

SAND VOLLEYBALL COURTS

Huron East currently has no sand volleyball courts; however, the sport is growing in popularity, supported in part by its status as an Olympic sport. Based on standards used by other municipalities, a service level of one court per 5,000 residents is reasonable.









	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES				
5.1	**BALL DIAMONDS** **Collaborate with the Ethel, Walton, and Winthrop community groups to improve ball diamond conditions and maintenance,** increasing use and user satisfaction.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation, Operation Staff
5.2	If groups identify a need for more ball diamonds, **work with local ball organizations to assess the feasibility of adding lighting and upgrading** the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre ball diamond to increase available use time.			✓	Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.3	**SOCCER FIELDS** **Install lights at the 11 X 11 soccer field** at St. Columban Soccer Fields.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.4	**Install an artificial turf surface for year-round play on the 11 x 11 field** at the St. Columban Soccer Fields.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.5	When additional junior unlit soccer fields are required, **work with the Seaforth Public School Board to secure additional access to existing fields.**		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.6	**Enter into discussions with the St. Columban Soccer Club and other community organization** regarding shared funding, seeking out grants, and fund-raising opportunities to assist in funding the new lights and artificial turf field.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation, Director of Finance
5.7	**ADDITIONAL SOCCER & BALL DIAMOND RECOMMENDATIONS** **Implement a turf management program for sports fields,** including annual fertilization in spring, summer, and fall, as well as rolling, aeration, and overseeding on soccer fields and ball diamonds. Extend this service, at the Municipality's cost, to organizations that manage and maintain other community fields and diamonds, to increase risk management of all fields and diamonds.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation & Director of Finance

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
5.8	**Building on the framework developed for the Master Plan, continue collecting program participation data and field booking schedules from service clubs and user groups,** and track this information annually to inform future outdoor recreation facility forecasts.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.9	To manage risk effectively, **the Municipality should work with groups that manage parks and sports fields on municipal land to establish legal operating agreements**. These agreements should clearly define roles and responsibilities, communication expectations, financial arrangements, insurance requirements, reporting, capital cost sharing, and future asset management costs for sports fields, amenities, buildings, play structures, and related assets.	✓			Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation, Legal
5.10	Where a clear, sustained need for additional capacity is demonstrated, **first improve scheduling** and use of existing facilities; **then consider available or planned non-municipal, joint, or multi-municipal facilities; next, upgrade existing municipal facilities;** and, only as a final option, **develop new municipal facilities.**			✓	Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.11	Where demand for additional fields or a new facility type, such as a cricket pitch, disc golf, or bocce courts, is clearly demonstrated, **consider a temporary pilot location to assess actual use, program sustainability, and future planning and design needs.** Multi-use opportunities should be accommodated wherever possible.			✓	Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.12	**OUTDOOR POOLS** **Provide ongoing annual capital funding** to keep the Brussels Outdoor Pool well maintained and operational.	✓			Director of Community Services
5.13	**Develop a long-term business and operating plan with the Seaforth Lions Club** to support the continued operation and sustainability of the park and its facilities.		✓		Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation, Director of Finance

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
5.14	**OUTDOOR MULTI-USE COURTS** **Complete the planning process and fund/build a new multi-use tennis, pickleball, and basketball/ball hockey court at the Seaforth & District Community Centre.** Consider including multi-use courts in new and redeveloped parks	✓			Director of Community Services
5.15	**CHILDREN'S SPLASHPAD** **Explore installing a second municipal splash pad** in Brussels at the BMGCC.		✓		Director of Community Services
5.16	**PLAYGROUNDS** **Create a capital budget line to fund playground replacement and expansion** at a target rate of about one project every two years. Priority playground replacement projects.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation, Director of Finance
5.17	**Phase in replacement of all playground safety surfaces with approved impact-absorbing materials,** such as engineered wood fibre, installed at proper depths, extended beyond equipment edges, and maintained to prevent hardening as per Canadian Playground Safety CAN/CSA-Z614 standard.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.18	To manage risk successfully, **ensure ongoing training for staff to undertake regular** (weekly inspections, monthly written reports, and annual evaluations) **Playground Safety inspections** as per Canadian Playground Safety CAN/CSA-Z614 standard to ensure strong municipal risk management.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.19	**Establish a fund-raising campaign with local service clubs** to implement a large Jr. and Sr. Accessible Play Structures and Swings at BMGCC or Brussels Outdoor pool), Seaforth Lions Park, and Vanastra Recreation Park.		✓		Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation, Director of Finance
5.20	**Identify a location for a playground in the Northeast Seaforth** (near Munn's Grove Trail) to provide access to this neighbourhood.			✓	Director of Community Services, County Planning

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
5.21	**Ensure future urban parkland development includes playgrounds within 800 metres of all residences.**	✓			CAO, County Planning
5.22	**LAWN BOWLING** **Continue supporting the Seaforth Lawn Bowling Club in growing participation** in Huron East.	✓			Director of Community Services
5.23	**DOG PARKS** **Add a water drinking station for dogs at the Optimist off-leash dog park.**		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.24	**WASHROOMS** **Develop a funding program to make all park washrooms fully accessible.**		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.25	**OUTDOOR ICE RINKS** **Assess whether local volunteers have interest in implementing and maintaining natural outdoor winter ice rinks in 1-2 pilot locations,** with the municipality providing equipment and infrastructure support.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.26	**SKATEBOARD/BMX PARK** **Explore developing a Skateboard/BMX park through targeted engagement** with youth and local service clubs Seek out grants opportunities and fund raising.			✓	Director of Community Services
5.27	**YOUTH SOCIAL AREAS** **Engage youth through local schools and high schools to identify suitable park locations for pilot outdoor youth social areas in Brussels, Seaforth, and Vanastra.** After implementation, continue youth engagement to evaluate use, identify potential improvements, and consider future locations in existing and new parkland.	✓			Director of Community Services

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
5.28	**COMMUNITY GARDENS** **Engage SDCC garden organizers** and interested residents to explore support for developing and operating additional community gardens.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
5.29	**SAND VOLLEYBALL COURTS** **Assess suitable sites within new or underutilized parks to accommodate the installation of 1-2 sand volleyball courts.**			✓	Manager of Parks and Recreation



TRAILS & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Huron East has a few trails, though most are short walking routes and are not considered significant recreational trails for residents. The most significant is the Guelph to Goderich (G2G) Trail, which extends more than 132 km and passes through Walton.

Operated and maintained by dedicated volunteers, the trail relies on donations for support. A trailhead on Brussels Line in Walton includes a gravel parking lot, kiosk, and trail map.

ATWOOD TO HENFRYN TRAIL

Approximately 6.5km long on flat gravel surfaces are appropriate for walking, cycling, cross-country skiing and snow snowing. The trailhead is at the North-end of Henfryn on Henfryn Line.

MUNN'S GROVE WALKING TRAIL

A 550 m loop with flat, stonedust surface for walking, snowshoeing, and cycling. Trail can be found at corner of North St. and West St. in Seaforth.

REA MEMORIAL TRACT

A 1.2 km long trail with natural and gravel surfaces. Some slippery slopes and an old building foundation is near the trail. Located at 42817 Walton Rd., Walton.

CONSERVATION AREAS

Conservation Areas around Huron East do offer various trails for enjoyment.

WALKING ROUTES

The Municipality has developed a Huron East Tours & Trail guide which can be found at https://www.huroneast.com/trailguide

The Guide highlights the following

- Brussels Historical Walking Tour with 32 locations identified
- Seaforth Historical walking Tour with 34 locations identified
- Vanastra Heritage Trail with 10 locations identified
- Brussels Fairy Door Trail

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

There currently has no County-wide Active Transportation plan approved that would help to link Huron East trails, and provide access by cycling to various parks, facilities, conservation areas, and other communities.





WHAT WE HEARD:

From various forms of engagement people communicated that they would like to have a trail for walking and cycling in Seaforth.

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	TRAILS & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION				
6.1	The Municipality should work with the Hospital and Hospital Foundation in Seaforth, Agricultural Society, to **explore an accessible trail connecting the Seaforth & District Community Centre to Seaforth Lions Park.**		✓		CAO, Director of Community Services, County Planning
6.2	The Municpality work with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to **explore a trail connections in and around Seaforth and Vanastra with possible connections to Clinton.**		✓		CAO & Director of Community Services
6.3	The Municipality work with private landowners to **explore a possible trail link from Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre to the Guelph to Goderich Trail.**			✓	CAO & County Planning
6.4	The Municipality should encourage and work with Huron County to **develop a County wide Active Transportation Plan.**		✓		CAO & County Planning







CEMETERIES

The Municipality of Huron East is home to several cemeteries, including both private and public properties. It is anticipated that the Municipality will be required to take over the responsibilities of other cemeteries in the future. The following three cemeteries are currently municipally owned.

BRUSSELS CEMETERY – 84277 Brussels Line

Brussels Cemetery is the Municipality's largest cemetery, with more than 6,262 memorials listed on the *"Find A Grave"* website (https://www.findagrave.com/). The 7.74 ha (19.13 ac) property includes several distinct memorial areas, a columbarium, a small inaccessible chapel, internal roadways, many trees, and large grass area that allow for future expansion. The Municipality of Morris-Turnberry contributes operational funding to the Huron East annually of approximately $10,000.

The BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment (updated 2023) identifies one low-priority project estimated at $1,000 for access to the interior of the building. Following a recent staff retirement, operational responsibilities were adjusted. Staff from the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre (BMGCC) now maintain the property, and the Municipality has awarded a new plot-digging contract. Due to the size of the property and the limited space for grass-cutting equipment between monuments, weekly grass-cutting hours for BMGCC staff have increased significantly.

CRANBROOK CEMETERY – 84343 McNabb Line

This small 0.68 ha (1.69 ac) rural cemetery is located on McNabb Line, accessed by a driveway beside Knox Presbyterian Church (1835) that leads to the cemetery. The site is a rectangular grassed area with several trees and monuments. "*Find A Grave*" website (https://www.findagrave.com/) lists 408 memorials, and space remains available for additional plots. There is no building on site; however, Cranbrook Community Hall is located nearby on McNabb Line.

MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY (ETHEL) – 85344 Mt Pleasant Line

Located in the rural community of Ethel, Mount Pleasant Cemetery is approximately 1.29 ha (3.19 ac) in size. The cemetery contains many mature trees that provide shade throughout the property. An informal gravel roadway runs through the site and provides two entrances. According to the *"Find A Grave"* website (https://www.findagrave.com/), the cemetery includes approximately 762 memorials. Land remains available for future plot expansion, and a small building (not accessible) is located on the property.

The 2023 update to the BM Ross Facility Condition Assessment identifies several low- to medium-priority building repairs, with estimated costs totaling $14,500. Recommended work includes repairs to the exterior walls and foundation, exterior doors, and interior access areas.

ANALYSIS

All three cemeteries are municipally owned. Cranbrook and Mount Pleasant Cemeteries are maintained and managed by community boards, including responsibility for property maintenance, finances, and plot management. Brussels Cemetery is maintained by the Municipality, while its committee oversees plot management and financial matters. Each board includes one Councilor appointed as the municipal representative and operates under its own cemetery bylaw, approved by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario - https://thebao.ca/

The Municipality sets annual cemetery budgets, with Brussels Cemetery having the greatest impact on the municipal operating budget. Funding over the past few years is shown below.

LOCATION	2023 YEAR END	2024 YEAR END	2025 YEAR END	2026 YEAR END	2026 BUDGET
BRUSSELS CEMETERY					
Revenue	171,203	145,451	-47,987	-9,883	-29,237
Expenses	44,786	57,753	67,308	6,132	64,246
GRAND TOTAL	**215,989**	**203,204**	**19,321**	**-3,751**	**35,009**
MOUNT PLEASANT CEMETERY					
Revenue	-11,753	-10,983	-6,989	-3,020	-4,500
Expenses	4,001	7,229	3,710	0	5,400
GRAND TOTAL	**-7,752**	**-3,754**	**-3,279**	**-3,020**	**900**
CRANBROOK CEMETERY					
Revenue	-400	-401	-401	-406	-300
Expenses	3,227	5,896	5,896	0	4,000
GRAND TOTAL	**2,827**	**5,495**	**3,523**	**-406**	**3,700**

NOTE:

- The Brussels Cemetery has had significant year-end deficits in 2023, which impact the following year budgets.

WHAT WE HEARD:



During community engagement, we heard mixed reactions from cemetery board members regarding recent municipal changes and limited communication.

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
CEMETERIES					
7.1	**Staff should communicate regularly with cemetery board members and hold joint meeting with all three boards twice a year** to strengthen communications between committee members and stafff on current and future cemetery operations.	✓			Director of Community Services
7.2	**Explore new cemetery software system** to better track finances, plot records, and across all cemeteries. Work with cemetery boards on software solution suitable to all.		✓		Director of Community Services

RECREATION SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Municipalities across Ontario use a variety of service delivery models to provide recreation, parks, and community services. The most effective approach depends on community needs, available resources, partnerships, and Council priorities.

Rather than relying on a single model, many municipalities have adopted a hybrid approach that combines municipal leadership with community partnerships, advisory committees, volunteers, and external service providers. This approach allows municipalities to expand programming, improve efficiency, and make the best use of available resources. Huron East already currently operates in a Hybrid delivery model.

DIRECT MUNICIPAL DELIVERY

The direct municipal delivery model is the traditional approach where the municipality owns and operates recreation facilities and delivers programs using municipal staff. This model provides the greatest level of control over service quality, customer service, accessibility, and affordability while ensuring programs align with municipal priorities. It also enables the Municipality to respond quickly to changing community needs, maintain consistent operating standards, and collect participation data to support future planning. Core services such as parks, facilities, cemeteries, daycare, and municipal recreation programs are typically best suited to this model. Huron East delivers 'direct municipal delivery programs' in the Vanastra and Brussels' aquatic, day camps and drop in community programs (pickleball, public skate, etc.)

PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The partnership model involves the Municipality working collaboratively with schools, community organizations, health agencies, service clubs, conservation authorities, neighbouring municipalities, and other public sector partners to deliver programs, services, and events. Partnerships leverage shared expertise, facilities, volunteers, and funding opportunities while strengthening community capacity. This model can expand programming opportunities, reduce operating costs, and improve access to recreation and community services, particularly in rural municipalities. Huron East delivers Partnership programs with the Lion's Club's in both Seaforth and Brussels, Optimist Club in Seaforth, St. Columban Soccer Club, and School Board with the reciprocal agreement.



VOLUNTEER, COMMUNITY AND SERVICE PROVIDER MODEL

Under the service provider model, independent organizations, businesses, instructors, or sport organizations deliver programs within municipal facilities through rental agreements, permits, or contracts. The Municipality provides the space while the service provider is responsible for program delivery, staffing, insurance, and marketing. This approach increases the variety of programs available to residents, responds quickly to emerging recreation trends, minimizes municipal staffing requirements, and generates additional facility revenue.

The service provider model is one of the primary recreation service delivery models used by Huron East. Community organizations make significant contributions by fundraising, maintaining amenities such as Lions Park, and delivering a wide range of programs and events. The Brussels Agricultural Society and Seaforth Agricultural Society provide agricultural education, fairs, and community events, while the Van Egmond House Cultural Centre offers cultural and heritage programming. The fitness centre at the Brussels, Morris & Grey Community Centre is also operated through a service provider arrangement. In addition, all minor sport organizations—including hockey, figure skating, soccer, baseball, and other user groups—operate under this model, delivering programs and activities using municipal facilities.

COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL MODEL

Committees of Council provide a governance and advisory role by bringing together community representatives, Council members, and staff to provide advice on municipal priorities, policies, facilities, and programs. While committees generally do not deliver services directly, they provide valuable local knowledge, strengthen community engagement, assist with long-term planning, advocate for community needs, and support Council's decision-making process. Heritage, accessibility, parks, and recreation advisory committees are common examples that help municipalities remain responsive to residents. In Huron East the cemeteries boards and rural community halls are a committee of Council and there is a recreation committee.

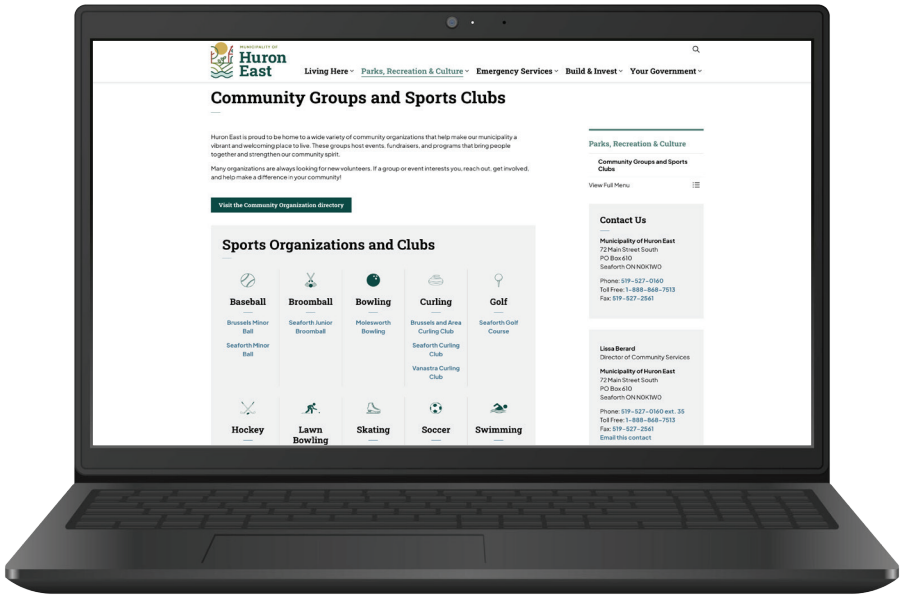
REGIONAL AND SHARED SERVICES MODEL

Many municipalities collaborate with neighbouring municipalities, counties, school boards, and public agencies to share facilities, equipment, staff expertise, specialized programming, and operational services. Shared service agreements can reduce costs, improve service quality, increase efficiencies, and provide access to programs and amenities that may not be financially feasible for one municipality to deliver independently. Currently, there is no regional and shared services model in Huron East that exists.



RECOMMENDED APPROACH

There is no single service delivery model that meets every community's needs. Best practice is to adopt a hybrid service delivery model that combines direct municipal services with partnerships, Committees of Council, volunteers, external service providers, and regional collaboration. This balanced approach enables municipalities to maintain high-quality core services while leveraging community expertise, expanding recreation opportunities, improving operational efficiency, and responding to changing community needs in a financially sustainable manner.



THE MUNICIPALITY'S ROLE IN RECREATION AND VOLUNTEERS

The role of municipalities in providing recreation, parks and community services has evolved significantly over the past several decades. While municipalities continue to own and maintain parks, trails, arenas, community centres and other public facilities, they are no longer expected to directly deliver every recreation program or community event. Instead, municipalities increasingly act as facilitators, partners and capacity builders that work alongside community organizations, volunteers, schools, businesses and other agencies to create opportunities for residents.

This shift is particularly important in rural municipalities such as Huron East. Rural municipalities typically have smaller populations, are further spread out geographically, limited staff resources, fewer financial resources, have large demands for roads, fire and police, and lower recreation participation numbers. These realities make it difficult to offer the same breadth and depth of municipally-operated recreation programs while remaining financially sustainable.

The municipality's role extends far beyond simply providing recreation programs. It includes:

- **PLANNING,** developing and maintaining parks, trails, arenas, pools, cemeteries, and community facilities.
- **ENSURING** facilities are safe, accessible and welcoming, and properly managed for risk.
- **COORDINATING** facility bookings and equitable allocation of space.
- **SUPPORTING** community organizations and volunteers.
- **BUILDING** partnerships with schools, service clubs, businesses, health organizations and neighbouring municipalities.
- **IDENTIFYING** gaps in recreation opportunities and facilitating new services where appropriate.
- **SEEKING** grants and external funding opportunities.
- **MONITORING** trends and adapting services to changing community needs.

Increasingly, success is measured not by how many programs the municipality directly delivers, but by how effectively it enables recreation opportunities throughout the community. This means supporting local organizations, removing barriers to participation, coordinating community resources and ensuring recreation services remain sustainable over the long term.

For Huron East, the municipality's role should be to act as a community leader and facilitator while continuing to directly deliver services where municipal involvement provides the greatest public benefit.

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."
—Elizabeth Andrew





THE CRITICAL ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have historically been the foundation of recreation and community life in Huron East. Community organizations, service clubs, minor sports associations, cultural groups, cemetery boards, and event committees contribute thousands of volunteer hours each year that make programs, parks and open space, community halls, sports, tournaments, festivals, cemeteries, fundraising events and community celebrations possible.

Without volunteers, many recreation opportunities simply would not exist. A prime example of this is the Seaforth Lions Club who operate the Seaforth outdoor pool and the ball diamond. Similar are the Seaforth Optimist Club who operate the pavilion, and two ball diamonds at Seaforth Optimist Park . The Ball diamonds in Walton, Ethel and Winthrop are all managed by community groups and the St. Columban Soccer Club manages the St. Columban Soccer Fields. The three small community halls near Brussels operate only because of the volunteer boards.

However, municipalities across Ontario are experiencing increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Several factors are contributing to this trend, including:

- An aging volunteer base, with many long-time volunteers retiring
- Younger adults balancing careers, young families and other commitments, leaving less time for volunteering.
- Increased governance, insurance and legislative requirements that make volunteer positions more complex.
- Difficulty recruiting volunteers willing to serve on long-term time commitment or on committees.

As volunteer capacity declines, municipalities cannot simply expect volunteers to continue operating as they have in the past. Municipal staff increasingly play an important role in supporting volunteers and creating an environment where they can succeed.

MUNICIPAL SUPPORT SHOULD INCLUDE:

- **RECRUITING AND PROMOTING** volunteer opportunities.
- **PROVIDING** orientation, training and ongoing education.
- **DEVELOPING** volunteer policies and procedures.
- **ASSISTING** organizations with governance and succession planning.
- **PROVIDING** administrative support where appropriate.
- **PROVIDING ASSISTANCE** with equipment purchases and maintenance
- **COORDINATING** facility bookings and scheduling.
- **SUPPORTING** grant applications and fundraising initiatives.
- **RECOGNIZING** volunteer contributions through appreciation programs and awards.
- **ENSURING** appropriate insurance, risk management and legislative compliance.
- **HELPING** organizations connect and collaborate with one another.

Supporting volunteers requires dedicated staff time and resources. While volunteers contribute significant value to the community, effective volunteer management is not without cost. Municipal staff must invest time in building relationships, providing guidance, coordinating activities and ensuring volunteers have the tools they need to be successful.

Rather than replacing volunteers, the Municipality should focus on strengthening volunteer capacity and ensuring community organizations remain sustainable for future generations. This recognizes that volunteers remain one of Huron East's greatest assets while acknowledging that municipal leadership and support will become increasingly important as volunteer demographics continue to change.

These realities reinforce the need for a flexible recreation service delivery model that balances direct municipal services, partnerships, volunteer-led initiatives and private service providers to best meet the diverse needs of Huron East residents.

WHAT WE HEARD:

Survey respondents indicated **a desire for greater variety and more program opportunities across all age groups**.

Residents identified interest in expanded fitness and wellness programs, youth activities, seniors' programming, outdoor recreation opportunities, and additional pickleball opportunities.





The survey also highlighted the importance of affordable, accessible programs that encourage social interaction and community participation.



HURON EAST PROGRAMS – DIRECT DELIVERY

The Municipality of Huron East currently provides a range of directly delivered recreation programs, with aquatics representing the largest and most established service area. At the Vanastra Recreation Centre and Brussels, Morris & Grey Pool, core aquatic programming includes Learn-to-Swim lessons, Aquafit classes, private lessons, public swimming, and seasonal day camps at Vanastra. These programs have maintained relatively stable participation and revenue over the past three years; however, operating expenditures have increased during the same period, reducing overall cost recovery.

Within the indoor recreation facilities, including the arenas and community rooms, the Municipality offers a limited selection of recreation programming, including drop-in pickleball, Parent & Tot activities, Huff & Puff, shinny hockey, Skills and Drills, and public skating. Public skating is currently offered only on Sundays from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., providing limited opportunities for residents who may not be available during that time. Expanding public skating and other community-based programs to additional days and times would improve accessibility and increase facility utilization.

Drop-in pickleball is available at both arena community rooms; however, attendance and admission revenues remain modest. Unlike many comparable municipalities, Huron East does not currently have an organized pickleball association or club responsible for renting court time, coordinating memberships, promoting the sport, organizing leagues, or supporting tournaments. Establishing a partnership with a local pickleball organization would reduce municipal administrative requirements while increasing participation, programming opportunities, and facility revenue.







MEMBERSHIPS

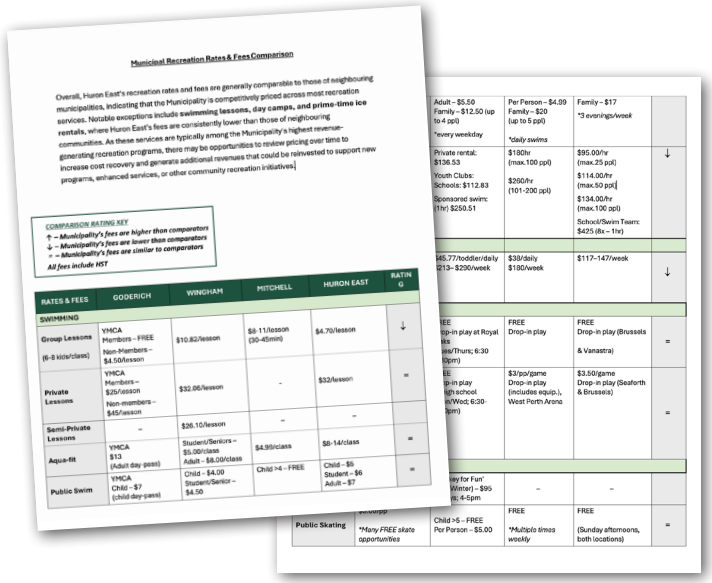
The Vanastra Recreation Centre offers memberships that provide access to the swimming pool, sauna, change rooms, and fitness centre. Membership numbers have shown modest annual growth; however, fitness centre utilization remains low, averaging fewer than 8 users per day. This level of participation suggests that the current fitness offering is underutilized and may not be meeting community needs or expectations. The Municipality should review the long-term role of the fitness centre, including opportunities to enhance programming, modernize equipment, increase marketing efforts, develop partnerships with local fitness providers, or consider alternative uses for the space if participation does not improve.

Current indoor programming consists primarily of drop-in activities such as pickleball, Parent & Tot, Huff & Puff, shinny hockey, Skills and Drills, and a single weekly public skating session. The current program schedule does not maximize the use of available ice and community spaces or provide sufficient recreation opportunities for residents throughout the week.

Although pickleball is one of the fastest-growing recreation activities in Ontario, Huron East currently offers only municipal drop-in opportunities with limited revenues. There is no organized club responsible for coordinating memberships, promoting participation, organizing leagues or tournaments, or managing court rentals.

RATES AND FEES

Given that Huron East's fees for these services are generally lower than those of neighbouring municipalities, there is an opportunity to generate additional revenue that can be reinvested into new recreation programs, enhanced services, facility improvements, and other community initiatives. For complete Rates and Fees see the Background Report.



Municipal Recreation Rates & Fees Comparison

Overall, Huron East's recreation rates and fees are generally comparable to those of neighbouring municipalities, indicating that the Municipality is competitively priced across most recreation services. Notable exceptions include **swimming lessons, day camps, and prime-time ice rentals**, where Huron East's fees are consistently lower than those of neighbouring communities. As these services are typically among the Municipality's highest revenue-generating recreation programs, there may be opportunities to review pricing over time to increase cost recovery and generate additional revenues that could be reinvested to support new programs, enhanced services, or other community recreation initiatives.

COMPARISON RATING KEY
↑ – *Municipality's fees are higher than comparators*
↓ – *Municipality's fees are lower than comparators*
= – *Municipality's fees are similar to comparators*
All fees include HST

RATES & FEES	GODERICH	WINGHAM	MITCHELL	HURON EAST	RATING
SWIMMING					
Group Lessons (6–8 kids/class)	YMCA Members – FREE Non-Members – $4.50/lesson	$10.82/lesson	$8-11/lesson (30-45min)	$4.70/lesson	↓
Private Lessons	YMCA Members – $25/lesson Non-members – $45/lesson	$32.06/lesson	-	$32/lesson	=
Semi-Private Lessons	–	$26.10/lesson	–	–	
Aqua-fit	YMCA $13 (Adult day-pass)	Student/Seniors – $5.00/class Adult – $8.00/class	$4.95/class	$8-14/class	=
Public Swim	YMCA Child – $7 (child day-pass)	Child – $4.00 Student/Senior – $4.50	Child >4 – FREE	Child – $6 Student – $6 Adult – $7	=
Public Skating					

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	PROGRAMS				
8.1	**Strengthen Volunteer Development and Community Capacity** Recognize volunteers as a critical component of Huron East's recreation system by assigning dedicated staff as part of their job responsibilities to implement an annual, municipality-wide volunteer recruitment, training, support and recognition strategy.	✓			Director of Community Services
8.2	**Improve Communication with Community Groups** Volunteers should be treated as part of the municipal team and supported through regular and frequent communication and feedback. Community groups should be engaged early in municipal decisions that affect their areas of responsibility and included in discussions about the long-term direction of the services they support.	✓			Director of Community Services
8.3	**Improve recreation management software and cost centre controls to track program revenue and expenditures** enabling the Municipality to use timely data and participation trends to monitor cost recovery, control expenditure, and make informed decisions regarding program scheduling, ease, and service level.	✓			Director of Community Services
8.4	**Continue investing in aquatic programming as a core municipal service** while improving cost recovery through: o Regular review of user fees and cost recovery targets. o Expansion of high-demand group programs and introduce semi-private lessons where capacity exists. o Evaluation scheduling by reducing the number of open swims and offering waitlist programs and rentals on Sunday's. o Invest in POS and 'square' to track and better monitor admissions and memberships.		✓		Aquatics Facility Supervisor

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
8.5	**Develop a broader community recreation programming offering that:** o Expands public skating to additional days and times so they are not offered at the same time. o Introduces additional drop-in recreation opportunities for youth, adults and older adults. (i.e. fitness classes, wellness, dance) o Expand Day Camps to other areas of the Municipality (i.e., Ethel, Walton, Cranbrook) o Regularly evaluates participation trends and adjusts programming to reflect community demand. o Develop additional summer programs	✓			Community Services Staff
8.6	**Support the establishment of a local pickleball association or club** to manage memberships, organize leagues and clinics, promote participation, and coordinate facility bookings through a seasonal rental agreement. This partnership model has been successfully implemented in many municipalities, increasing participation while reducing municipal administrative responsibilities. If a community partner cannot be established, the Municipality should assign staff resources to expand pickleball through lessons, organized play, leagues, and participant development.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation
8.7	**Repurpose the underutilized fitness centre at the Vanastra Recreation Centre into an additional licensed child care space** to address the significant community demand for child care services. Relocate the existing fitness equipment to the upper level of the Seaforth & District Community Centre, where it can continue to serve residents while making more efficient use of existing municipal space.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation
8.8	**Develop an annual recreation performance dashboard that tracks participation, cost recovery, facility utilization, customer satisfaction, and membership trends** to support evidence-based program planning and investment decisions.		✓		Community Services Staff

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
8.9	**Assign dedicated staff resources to develop and support community partnerships.** While community organizations can deliver many programs and events, municipal staff are needed to coordinate partnerships, recruit and support volunteers, provide training, assist with promotion, and facilitate bookings to ensure successful program delivery.	✓			Director of Community Services
8.10	**The Municipality should work with community partners to develop additional programs for summer use of the arena floor** or expand camp programs. Increase community programs during prime time hours (i.e., public skating, shinny, family skates)		✓		Director of Community Services & Manager of Parks and Recreation
8.11	**Annually, review recreation user fees for swimming lessons, day camps, and prime-time ice rentals** to improve cost recovery while maintaining affordability.		✓		Manager of Parks and Recreation, Aquatics Facility Supervisor, Director of Finance

CHILD CARE SERVICES

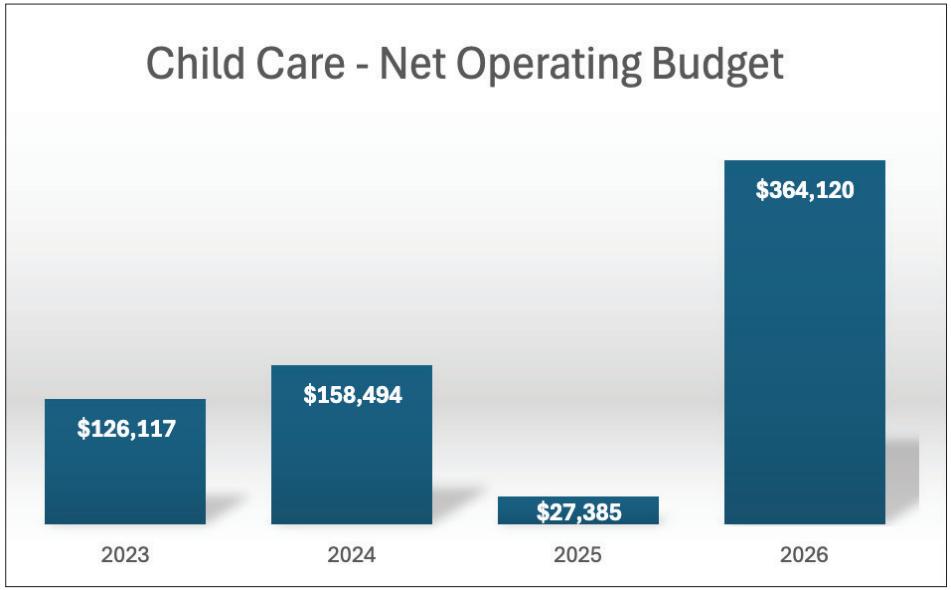
The Municipality of Huron East currently provides licensed child care through the Vanastra Early Childhood Learning Centre (VECLC), a municipally owned and operated program licensed by the Ministry of Education.

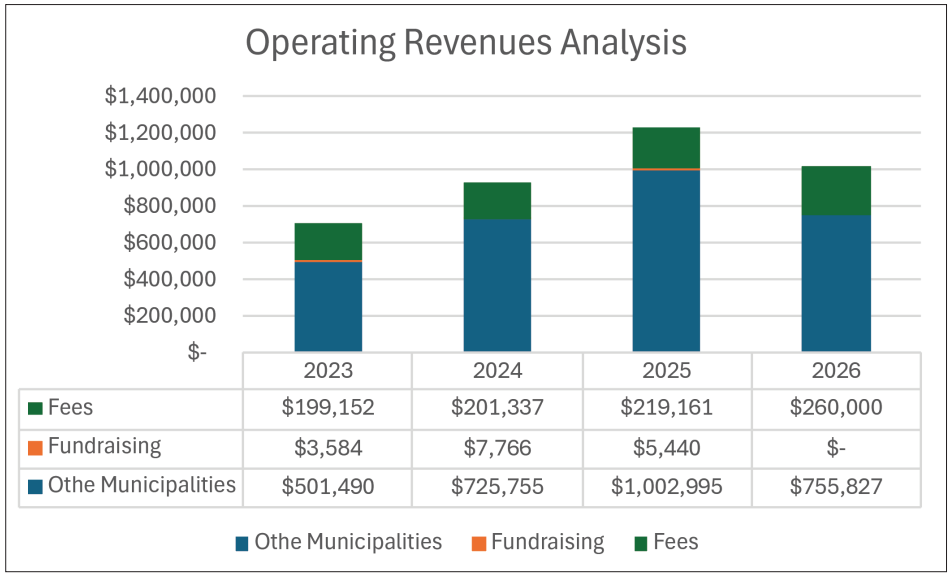
The Centre currently accommodates 42 children between 16 months and 4 years of age and 20 school-aged children (4–12 years) through before- and after-school programming. While the municipality operates the program, it functions within the broader Huron County Children's Services system, which manages centralized waitlists and childcare fee subsidies.

The Vanastra Early Childhood Learning Centre is funded through a combination of user fees, Huron County contributions, donations, municipal funding, and reserve transfers. Huron County funding has increased significantly from $501,490 in 2023 to a budgeted $755,827 in 2026, reflecting the growing cost of providing licensed childcare. User fee revenue has also increased from $199,152 to $260,000 over the same period, with actual revenues consistently exceeding budget, demonstrating strong demand for childcare services.

Operating costs continue to rise, largely driven by staffing, with salary expenditures increasing from $702,861 in 2023 to a budgeted $1,136,788 in 2026. As demand for childcare continues to grow, any future expansion must consider not only the need for additional space but also the long-term financial sustainability of increased operating and staffing costs, as no municipality can provide child care without external resources, primarily the County of Huron.

Demand for licensed childcare significantly exceeds the available supply. At the time of this review, approximately 293 families were on the waiting list, demonstrating a substantial unmet need within the community. Admission priorities are currently provided to municipal employees,





	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fees	$199,152	$201,337	$219,161	$260,000
Fundraising	$3,584	$7,766	$5,440	$-
Othe Municipalities	$501,490	$725,755	$1,002,995	$755,827

followed by existing VECLC families requiring additional care, Huron East residents, and finally families residing outside the municipality. While this prioritization helps support local families and municipal workforce recruitment and retention, the lengthy waitlist indicates that additional childcare capacity is required to meet both current and future demand. Addressing this shortage presents several potential opportunities, each with varying capital costs, implementation timelines, operational implications, and long-term benefits.
Potential expansion options include:

- Leasing additional space within the Christian church located immediately behind the existing childcare centre.
- Repurposing underutilized municipal facilities to accommodate additional childcare classrooms.
- Constructing a purpose-built childcare expansion or new childcare facility.
- Partnering with the local school board to establish additional licensed childcare and before- and after-school spaces within existing schools.
- Reconfiguring the existing VECLC to improve operational efficiency and increase licensed capacity. Repurposing the fitness room to another childcare space.

Each option warrants further evaluation through a feasibility assessment considering licensing requirements, capital investment, operating costs, staffing implications, and long-term community growth projections. From an implementation perspective, the most immediate and cost-effective opportunities appear to be repurposing the existing fitness centre space within the VECLC into additional licensed childcare space and working collaboratively with the local school boards to expand childcare and before- and after-school programming within existing Huron East schools. These approaches capitalize on existing public infrastructure, minimize construction costs, and could significantly reduce implementation timelines while increasing childcare availability.

Equally important to expanding physical space is ensuring the municipality has the workforce necessary to support future growth. Like many municipalities across Ontario, Huron East faces challenges recruiting and retaining qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). Developing a strategic partnership with Fanshawe College would help strengthen the staffing pipeline by creating student placement opportunities, cooperative education experiences, and graduate recruitment initiatives. Such a partnership would benefit both organizations by providing students with valuable practical experience while positioning Huron East as an employer of choice for future Early Childhood Educators.

Accordingly to Huron East demographics, they are the youngest median age in Huron County and childcare demand will continue to increase, expanding licensed childcare should be viewed not only as a community service but also as an important economic development and workforce attraction initiative. Access to affordable, quality childcare enables parents to participate in the workforce, supports local employers, attracts young families, and contributes to the long-term vitality and sustainability of the municipality. A comprehensive childcare expansion strategy, developed in collaboration with Huron County, local school boards, provincial partners, and post-secondary institutions, will position Huron East to better meet the evolving needs of its residents over the coming decade.



	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
	DAYCARES				
9.1	**Expand Child Care Capacity at the Vanastra Early Childhood Learning Centre** Increase licensed child care capacity by converting the existing fitness centre space at the Vanastra Early Childhood Learning Centre into an additional childcare classroom. Relocate the fitness equipment to the available upper-level space at the Seaforth Community Centre, allowing the municipality to maximize existing infrastructure while minimizing capital costs and implementation timelines. This represents the quickest and most cost-effective opportunity to increase licensed childcare spaces and reduce the current waitlist.	✓			Director of Community Services
9.2	**Work with the School Board and child care service providers to identify available spaces and opportunities to expand before- and after-school child care programs,** particularly in areas experiencing capacity pressures.		✓		CAO, Director of Community Services, Director of Finance



COMMUNITY SERVICES ORGANIZATION CAPACITY

The community survey and staff interviews identified concerns regarding workload, facility and park maintenance, programming capacity, volunteer support, staffing capacity and the availability of equipment.

The Community Services Department has recently taken on responsibility for two additional cemeteries, without additional staffing resources, creating additional workload pressures for the Community Services Department. These responsibilities, along with the potential transfer of additional cemeteries and the planned addition of new parkland, are becoming increasingly difficult to manage with the current complement of full-time staff and available equipment.

These pressures are particularly evident during winter recreation facility operations, when maintaining a full complement of qualified operators can be challenging. Without properly trained staff available at each facility, the Municipality may face increased operational, customer service and risk management concerns. Consideration should therefore be given to the use of contractors and/or part-time staff to provide additional operational capacity when required.

There may also be an opportunity to expand the Municipality's responsibilities through partnerships with the local school boards. The Municipality should investigate the possibility of assuming grass cutting and playground inspection services at Huron East schools. As the School Board currently contracts these services, its existing maintenance funding could potentially be redirected to the Municipality, generating additional revenue that could help offset the cost of additional Community Services resources and the equipment required to undertake the work.

Capacity pressures extend beyond facility and park operations. The Municipality has opportunities to expand recreation programming, increase opportunities for residents of all ages, strengthen partnerships with community organizations and provide greater support to the volunteers who are fundamental to the delivery of many community services in Huron East. Volunteers currently play a significant role in operating and supporting parks, sports facilities, programs, events and community activities. As volunteer capacity changes, the Municipality will need to provide greater coordination, communication, training and administrative support to ensure these organizations can continue to be successful.

Also, the Community Service Department has several outdated policies that should be updated to support efficient and effective operations. Human resource capacity may therefore be required within Community Services. However, before creating new positions, the Municipality should undertake a comprehensive review of the Department to determine whether existing staff have capacity within their current portfolios to assume additional responsibilities, whether responsibilities can be realigned, and where new positions, part-time staff or contracted services are necessary. These review should consider both operational capacity, strong policy framework, and program/community development capacity to ensure the Department is structured appropriately to meet future needs.

	RECOMMENDATION	TIMING/STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG	RESOURCES
COMMUNITY SERVICES ORGANIZATION CAPACITY					
10.1	**Assess Current Staffing Capacity** Benchmark comparable municipal parks and recreation services to determine how best to address growing facility and parks needs, manage risk, strengthen community partner support, expand programs and partnerships, improve volunteer management, and increase revenue opportunities.	✓			CAO & Director of Community Services
10.2	**Strengthen Programming and Volunteer Management Capacity** Establish appropriate staff capacity to support more recreation programming, and volunteer management.	✓			Director of Community Services
10.3	**Complete an Equipment and Resource Inventory** Complete a comprehensive inventory of equipment, vehicles and resources required to meet current and future Community Services responsibilities.	✓			Manager of Parks and Recreation
10.4	**Investigate a Partnership with the School Board** Investigate the feasibility of the Municipality assuming grass cutting and playground inspection services for Huron East schools, including the potential transfer of associated funding from the School Board.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation
10.5	**Strengthen Partnerships** Continue to strengthen partnerships with service clubs, community organizations and invest in volunteer recruitment, training and recognition to enhance recreation service delivery and support the long-term sustainability of community programs and services.	✓			CAO, Director of Community Services, Manager of Parks and Recreation
10.6	**Implement a two-year pilot assigning responsibility for expanding recreation programming to the Aquatic Facility Supervisor,** whose skills align with program planning and delivery.	✓			Director of Community Services
10.7	**Develop new policies and update existing ones to establish policy framework and processes that guide business operations** (i.e., cash handling, booking policy, facility allocation, etc...)	✓			Director of Finance & Director of Community Services