



Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Township of Lucan Biddulph

DRAFT



Monteith ♦ Brown
planning consultants



Town of Lucan Biddulph

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

July 17, 2024

DRAFT



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Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (the “Master Plan”) is a 10-year strategy to continue building upon Lucan Biddulph’s parks, recreation and trails system. It is a guide that can be referenced by Township Council, staff and the community to assist planning and decision-making in response to the community’s needs. Since the 2015 Master Plan was approved, Lucan Biddulph has experienced some of the country’s highest proportional population growth rates. Continued growth is anticipated over the next 10 years, at which time the Township’s population is expected to reach 7,000.

The new Master Plan re-engages the community and renews the vision and strategies that reflect the changes in the Township over the past decade. The vision statement guiding this updated Master Plan is:

“Building a legacy of parks and recreation for our community.”

In many respects, the Township has been building its legacy for parks, recreation and sport for decades. Lucan Biddulph has received national acclaim through its recognition as “Kraft Hockeyville” and recently expanded and improved the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre based on a successful grant application for funding from senior levels of government. The Township has added new parks and trails, replaced aging outdoor recreation facilities, is developing a multi-field soccer complex, and is delivering selected recreational programs to complement offerings of its community partners.

A total of 21 Recommendations are advanced through the Master Plan and are listed in the pages that follow.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Recommendations

- R1** Prepare an architectural feasibility study to determine if the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre arena can be twinned in a cost-effective manner along with modernizing the existing ice pad's dressing rooms and entrance corridor. Improvements to the gymnasium and other areas deemed appropriate should also be explored.
- R2** Build on recent ball diamond lighting upgrades at Granton Park by improving playing surface improvements and other amenity enhancements that will increase capacity and playing experience. Rejuvenate the hard surface court and line it as a multi-use tennis and pickleball court while exploring the feasibility of integrating a dedicated half basketball court.
- R3** Final development phases of Campanelle Park Soccer Complex should integrate onsite amenities including storage space, washrooms, and a playground structure at a minimum, to support basic operations and league programming. Enhanced amenities such as dressing rooms may be explored contingent upon supporting base funding through fundraising, user fee surcharges, or other means.
- R4** Relocate the Elm Street Park ball diamond to the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre, replacing it with a lit ball diamond to increase efficiencies for scheduling, operations and attractiveness for tournament play. In consultation with local ball diamond users, investigate whether other improvements can be implemented to the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre's existing ball diamonds at the time of construction the new lit ball diamond (e.g. washroom building, lighting replacements, irrigation and drainage systems, etc.).
- R5** Assess the feasibility and costs associated with bringing the Lucan Scout Guide Hall in conformity with modern accessibility standards and required asset management obligations to determine whether to reinvest in, redevelop or decommission this antiquated facility. Feedback from the Scouts, Guides and other community organizations should inform future decisions for the Hall.

- R6** Target the acquisition of 3.6 hectares of new parkland over the next 10 years with an emphasis placed on providing new parks, greenspaces and trail connections in future residential areas to be developed in proximity to Saintsbury Line.
- R7** Engage the community and the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority in the design of major park development and redevelopment projects in order to consider community needs, opportunities to build environmental sustainability, and potentially leverage community resources to make these projects a success.
- R8** Use this Master Plan as a guide to inform future trail projects and employ a range of acquisition strategies to secure lands, including within future residential subdivisions for the purposes of developing the local trails network.
- R9** Explore the development of a trail loop using connections between the Ridge Crossing Trail, Township-owned lands located north of Fallon Drive, and future residential areas located east of Saintsbury Line.
- R10** Evaluate and formalize agreements with private landowners that are currently providing trails, using the Lucan Biddulph Trails and Connectivity Advisory Committee and/or Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as resources.
- R11** Conduct an annual inspection of the Township's trails together with sidewalks to identify deficiencies, damages, safety and liability concerns, and repairs.
- R12** Develop partnerships with local service clubs, community organizations and volunteers, and/or Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to assist in trail planning and design, litter control and vegetation management along trail routes.
- R13** Engage the Thames Valley District School Board to discuss if there are ways to enhance indoor and outdoor spaces associated with the planned new school in Lucan to enable a greater degree of community use. Potential for a formalized reciprocal agreement should be explored at a minimum.

- R14** Ensure that a minimum of one staff person is trained to carry out playground safety inspections in accordance with accepted standards.
- R15** Prepare a Pricing Policy and User Fee Review for parks and recreation services that considers direct and indirect costs of operations along with establishing principles that balance cost-recovery, fiscal sustainability and inclusion.
- R16** Undertake a review of staffing roles, responsibilities and requirements within the Parks and Recreation Department in light of recent and future service expansions.
- R17** Prepare separate Allocation Policies for arenas and sports fields in consultation with local user groups. At a minimum, these policies should include principles relating to equity and inclusion, establish priority assigned to categories of user groups and residency status, and/or contain defensible formulae that assign time based on quantifiable market factors such as player registrations by age/division.
- R18** Continue to explore opportunities for joint projects with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority ranging from enhanced stormwater management facilities, stream channel remediation, trail network development, and sustainable park retrofits, or other initiatives.
- R19** Carry out regular inspections of parks, recreation, and trail facilities based on compliance with legislation, quality assurance standards, and best practices to ensure municipal spaces are safe, enjoyable and well documented to inform infrastructure planning.
- R20** Enhance opportunities for youth development and empowerment by pursuing designation as a Youth-Friendly Community upon re-introduction of this program by Parks and Recreation Ontario as well as incorporating Leader In Training (LIT) opportunities through employment and volunteer positions.
- R21** Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 5 years to reflect future market conditions, re-engage community groups and the public, and inform subsequent updates to the capital budgets and the Development Charges Background Study.

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Parks, Recreation and Trails in Lucan Biddulph

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (the “Master Plan”) provides a strategy to continue building on the facilities and services provided by the Township. The Master Plan updates and carries forward work completed as part of the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, this time with a renewed vision and strategies that reflect the Township’s growth over the past decade. The new Master Plan focuses on actions over the next 10 years at which time the Township’s population is expected to reach 7,000.

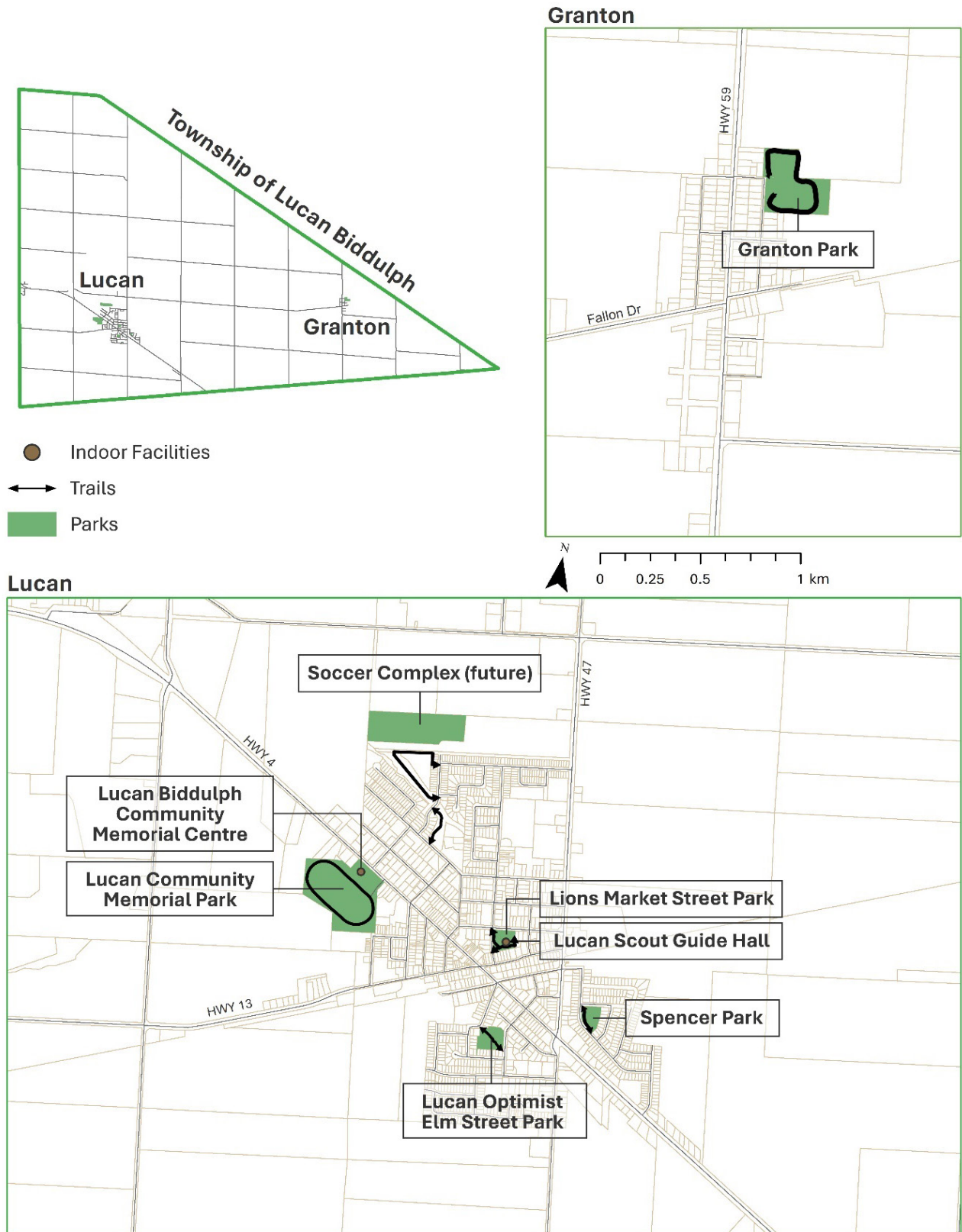
1.2 A Vision for Parks and Recreation in Lucan Biddulph

Shaped by community feedback, the Master Plan’s recommendations are directed by the following vision statement created to guide the way in which the Township and community deliver and coordinate parks and recreation services:

“Building a legacy of parks and recreation for our community.”



Figure 1: Major Recreation Facilities & Parks in Lucan Biddulph



1.3 Notable Accomplishments Since 2015

The Township operates a community centre and a community hall, six parks totalling 24.25 hectares in land area, along with seven trails and park pathways. Considerable progress over the past decade has bolstered parks and recreation services, some of which have been guided by the last Master Plan. Notable achievements since 2015 include:

- expansion of the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre along with selected improvements to the arena, outdoor pool and the broader park;
- development of a multi-field soccer complex and Spencer Park;
- improved park amenities such as replacing splash pad and playground components;
- expanded partnerships with Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to design, construct and animate public open spaces;
- formation of a Trails & Connectivity Advisory Committee; and
- an enhanced service role where the Township now directly delivers selected community recreation programs while continuing to engage with and complement community-based service providers.

1.4 Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation services have always provided vital contributions to Lucan Biddulph’s quality of life. Ample research demonstrates the many benefits associated with parks and recreation including improved personal mental and physical wellbeing, enhanced social wellbeing that encourages engagement and inclusion, building strong families and communities, connecting people with nature, assisting people develop critical and creative thinking skills, and stimulating economic development. Lucan Biddulph recognizes the benefits of parks and recreation and will advance them through the Master Plan and its implementation.

Enhance Mental & Physical Wellbeing

By providing access to physical activity opportunities, residents are more likely to live healthier lifestyles and reduce the strain on the healthcare system.

Enhance Social Wellbeing

Participation in parks and recreation can create a sense of belonging for individuals, supports the healthy development of relationships and fosters overall social wellbeing.

Help Build Strong Families & Communities

Access to parks and recreation opportunities strengthen neighbourhoods and make them unique, contribute to civic pride and make communities attractive places to live.

Help People Connect With Nature

Exposure to nature can have a positive impact on mental health and personal wellbeing, including lower blood pressure, reduced stress, cognitive development and more.

Provide Economic Benefits

The parks and recreation sector contributes to local economic development, creates jobs, fosters tourism, and creates unique places for people to visit, work and play.

~ Framework for Recreation in Canada, 2015

Trends Influencing Recreation, Parks and Trails

Affordable Opportunities

Low-to-no-cost options can reduce barriers to participation.



Exploring the Creation of Community Hubs

Delivering a range of services through a central location strengthens community cohesion and can achieve social benefits.



Aging Infrastructure Requires Reinvestment

Many recreation facilities and parks are approaching or have reached the end of their lifecycle.



Sport for Life

“Everyone has the opportunity to participate in quality sport and physical literacy experiences.”



Collaboration with Community Partners

Potential for efficiencies through collaborations with service providers, schools, and other organizations.



Unstructured, Self-Directed Activities

Growing desire for unstructured, self-directed, individual, and small group activities.



Emerging Activities

Includes pickleball, cricket, off-leash parks, splash pads, wheeled action parks, trails, to name a few.



Inclusion

Creating safe and welcoming spaces and services for all.

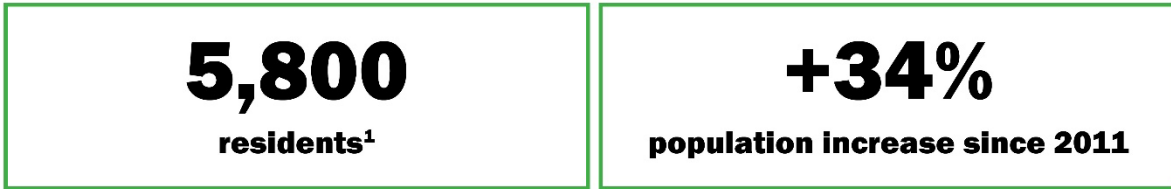


Volunteerism

Finding, retaining, and recognizing volunteers who are the backbone of recreation, parks and trail systems.



1.5 Selected Community Demographics



The number of people in the Township along with their socio-economic characteristics influence the types of facilities and services that are needed locally. The Township’s current population has grown to an estimated 5,800 residents, representing a 34% population increase since 2011. The Township is also more culturally diverse than it was at the time of the previous Master Plan.

By the end of the Planning period in 2034, the Township is forecasted to reach close to 7,000 residents². Making comparisons to Ontario, Lucan Biddulph has a younger median age (37.6 years), greater median household income (\$105,000), and a lesser low-income measure (5.1%)³.

Figure 2: Growth Rate by Age Group, 2011-2021

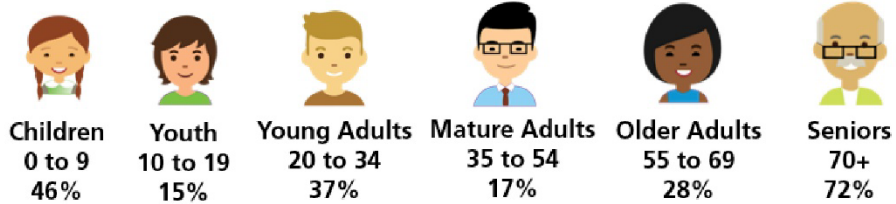
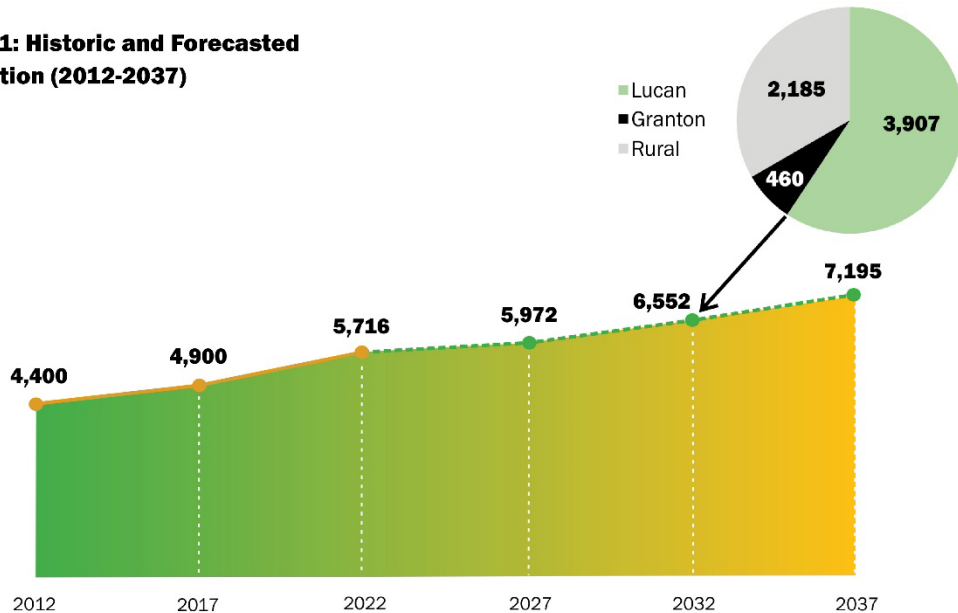


Figure 1: Historic and Forecasted Population (2012-2037)

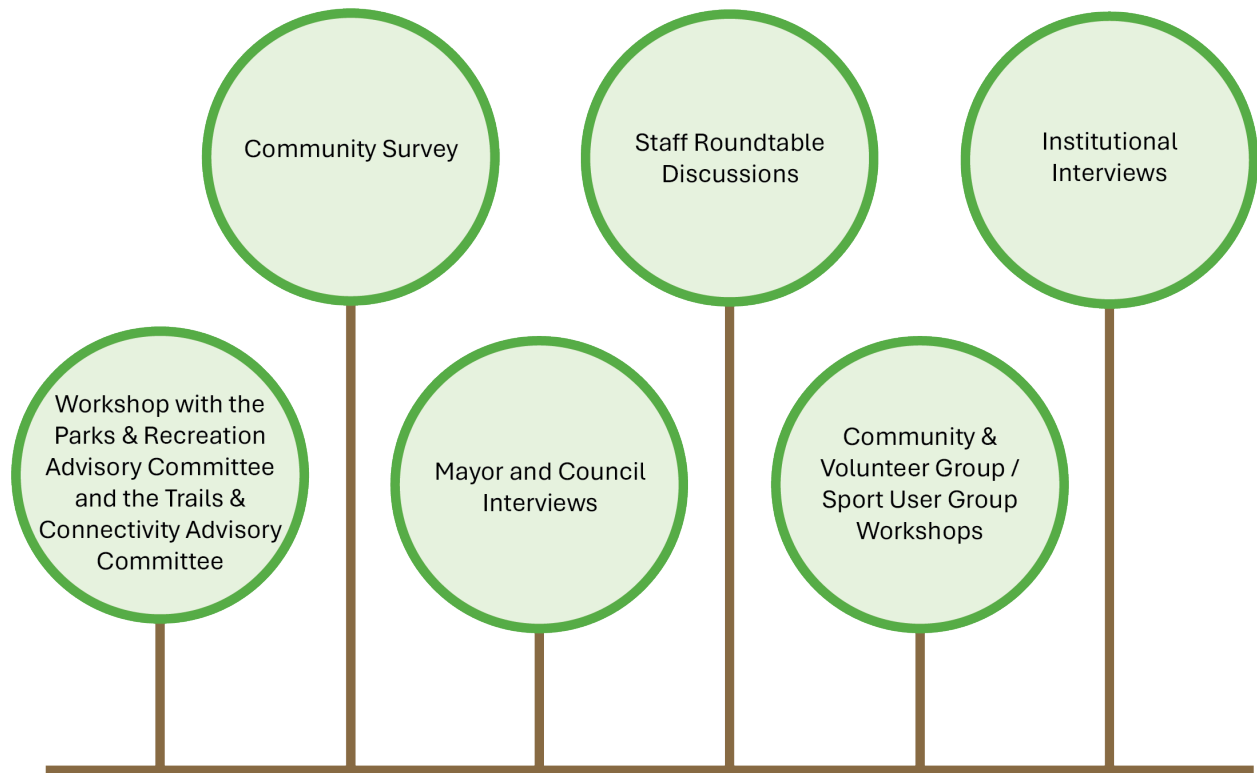


Source: Statistics Canada Census; Lucan Biddulph Development Charges Background Report 2023
 Note: 2012 and 2017 data represented in the population figure are extrapolated values.

¹Statistics Canada Census
²Lucan Biddulph Development Charges Background Report 2023
³Statistics Canada Census

Section 2. What We Heard

Engaging the community is an important piece of the planning process to ensure that the Master Plan considers the needs and priorities of public. To guide this process, several community engagement tactics were used to gather meaningful input from Township residents, stakeholders, staff and Council, and others. To support and raise awareness for the Master Plan, a webpage was created on the Township’s website to highlight ways the public could get involved and provide input. Participants were also able to submit written submissions via email or directing them to the Township Offices. The following consultation activities were used to collect community input.



2.1 Public Open Houses

A Public Open House was held at the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre in November 2023 to introduce the Master Plan's process to the public, encourage residents to become involved, and allow them to share ideas about enhancing parks and recreation. Approximately 50 visitors were engaged and shared their ideas at the open house while its display boards remained available for review and comment in the community centre lobby and at the Lucan Library until January 2024. Notable requests at the open house and received through written comments were for an additional ice pad and more trails in Lucan Biddulph, along with an emphasis on having services for a wide range of age groups from children to seniors.

A second open house will be scheduled to allow the public to review and provide comment on the Draft Master Plan prior to its finalization.

2.2 Community Survey

A community survey available online and by hardcopy for residents to complete between November 2023 and January 2024 was used to collect input about residents' parks and recreation preferences, priorities, and satisfaction levels. The community survey was promoted by the Township through social media, email, and display boards at the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre and Lucan Library.

A total of 343 responses were received and due to the voluntary and self-administered nature of the community survey, the data is not considered to be statistically significant of the entire population. The median age was 43 years with an average household size of 3.6 persons. Lucan Biddulph residents accounted for 97% of responses received.

Desire for Casual, Self Directed Activities

Unstructured activities were popular including walking or jogging (80%), attending a special event or festival (58%), use of playgrounds (55%), walking the dog (52%) and using a splash pad (51%). Correspondingly, the highest priorities for future investment were directed towards casual and self directed amenities including playgrounds (92%), natural trails (92%), paved trails (88%), splash pads (85%), and informal spaces in parks for free play (80%).

Desire for More Programming

With the Township's addition of parks and recreation programs, there is still a desire for more programming opportunities, both drop-in and registered. Respondents would like to see more arts and crafts programs for children, dancing, yoga, volleyball and senior activities.

Improved Communication

Community survey participants identified a broad range of preferred methods to learn about facilities, programs, events, and activities in Lucan Biddulph. Response rates were highest for the Township’s Facebook page and Website. However, more traditional methods such as posters, paper flyers, signage, newspapers, etc., were suggested as being more effective to getting information across to older age groups.

2.3 Interviews & Workshops

The Master Plan sought feedback from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Trails & Connectivity Advisory Committee at the onset of the project. The Draft Master Plan will be presented to these Advisory Committees to receive comments before finalization.

Initial consultation activities included interviews with Township Council, two workshops with local community-serving organizations, institutional and agency partner interviews, and roundtables with Township staff.

Throughout the community engagement process, five mayor and council interviews, two staff roundtables, two stakeholder focus group workshops, and interviews with community partners were conducted. The observations, insights, and experiences that were captured in these conversations informed the Master Plan.

Common and notable themes expressed from these conversations are as follows.

Relationship with Township

Groups expressed they generally have a good relationship with the Township. There were some who expressed times when they had an issue with facility restrictions and servicing. Many discussions recognized staffing levels may not always be suited to meet the range of services the Township provides.

Advisory Committees

Parks and Recreation Adv. Committee
Trails and Connectivity Adv. Committee

Agency Partners

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
Middlesex County Library
Thames Valley District School Board
London District Catholic School Board

Community Groups

Jake’s House Community Residences
Lucan Girl Guides
Lucan Heritage Museum
Lucan Lions
Lucan Optimists Club
Lucan Senior Exercise & Pickleball

Sport & Recreation Groups

Lucan Ilderton Minor Baseball
Lucan Irish Six Junior Hockey
Lucan Minor Hockey Association
Lucan Soccer Club
Lucan Skating Club
Lucan Women’s Soccer

Communication

Communication was expressed by many as an area for the Township to continue working toward improving. Suggestions included regularly posting and updating a single webpage and Facebook page that everyone can frequently check for updates regarding events, facility scheduling, etc. Many would like to have better coordination as to when events are scheduled to avoid instances of multiple events taking place on the same day in Lucan Biddulph. This can engage greater levels of attendance and volunteers. It was also suggested to continue including user groups in discussions revolving around facility improvements and new opportunities for parks and recreation (i.e., events, new programs, tournaments, etc.).



Participation and Volunteerism

Sport groups identified their registration numbers are generally growing above or back to pre-pandemic levels, but volunteer members (coaches, referees, organizers, etc.) are not. Numbers for community and volunteer group are also generally declining. Both can benefit from the encouragement of volunteerism in the Lucan Biddulph community.

Partnership Opportunities

Groups expressed a desire for the Township to pursue more partnership opportunities to support programming and events in Lucan Biddulph. Examples may include the Lucan Library providing affordable small-scale programming in concert with the Township, and ABCA working with the Township on park naturalization and stormwater management projects. Partnership opportunities may also exist at current and future elementary school facilities. The Community Memorial Centre, elementary schools, Lucan Library and the Township's parks should be viewed as community connectors that encourage new and established members of the community to frequently participate in parks and recreation.

Section 3. Parks & Recreation Assessments

Major components of the Township’s parks and recreation system consist of:

- Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre and Park
- Campanale Soccer Field Complex
- Granton Park
- Lucan Optimist Elm Street Park and Spencer Park
- Lions Market Street Park and Lucan Scout / Guide Hall

This Section discusses these parks and facilities along with the individual components within them. The trails system is discussed in Section 4.

3.1 Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre

The Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre (LBCMC) is the historical hub of parks, recreation and community gatherings in the Township. Over the past 10 years, the Township has significantly reinvested in this longstanding community hub with the benefit of external funding sources. Lucan Biddulph was awarded the title of Kraft Hockeyville in 2018 which funded a new scoreboard and rink boards in the arena, while a \$9 million expansion completed in 2023 using grant funding from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program allows the LBCMC to serve a much wider range of resident interests through a new high-quality community hall, kitchen, fitness centre and accessibility improvements.

Explore the Potential to Twin the Arena

The arena has been in service for nearly 50 years. Its single ice pad (185 ft x 85 ft) with bowl seating for approximately 2,000 spectators provides an excellent amenity that is not always found in communities of similar size and reinforces the Township’s reputation for sport. The arena is primarily used by the Lucan Minor Hockey Association (470 players), Lucan Skating Club (120 skaters) and Lucan Irish Six Junior Hockey (25 players).

The 615 participants collectively registered with these three arena users represent over half of all Lucan Biddulph children and teens between the ages of 5 and 19, which is a significantly higher participation rate than observed in Ontario. These three organizations

Indoor Amenities

- Single Pad Arena
- Fitness Centre
- Gymnasium
- Community Hall
- Active Senior Room
- YMCA Childcare Centre

Outdoor Amenities

- Soccer Fields (2)
- Softball Diamonds (2 lit)
- Outdoor Pool
- Walking Track
- Off-Leash Dog Park
- Playground
- Community Garden
- Washroom Building

rent the majority of prime time available at the LBCMC, leaving limited timeslots available for pick-up adult leagues.

A number of comments received through the Master Plan's public open house and sport group workshop spoke to the pressures on the arena and a desire for a second ice pad in the Township. Compounding pressures for ice time is the amalgamation of the Lucan, Ilderton and North Middlesex minor hockey rep programs resulting from their designation as an 'A' centre by the Ontario Hockey Association (noting amalgamated rep teams would have access to arenas in those two other municipalities as well). Ice sport users also requested modernization of the existing arena particularly for the original dressing rooms and the Junior team's dressing room, a need for a gender-neutral dressing room, and more storage. Certain ice sport users believe that a more equitable method of scheduling ice time is needed and suggested that an Ice Allocation Policy should be developed.

A review of arena schedules and ice sport registrations confirms that the LBCMC ice pad is under pressure with little opportunity for additional bookings. As stated in the 2015 Master Plan, a service level of one ice pad per 400 youth participants would mean that the Township is presently in a deficit position. This is due in part to minor hockey and skating club registrations increasing by 50% since 2015, which is extraordinary growth considering that ice sport participation rates in Ontario have been declining for a variety of reasons. Based on projected population growth and assuming Lucan Biddulph continues to have strong participation rates, youth registrations could reach 750 participants by 2034.

As such, Lucan Biddulph is at a tipping point in terms of needs for a second ice pad. Current registrations are such that ice sport organizations are likely facing constraints to grow their programs locally, however, registrations are unlikely to fill a second ice pad to capacity in the short to medium-term. The Township may be able to fill ice times by renting to out-of-town users looking for more convenient prime time ice slots but there are a number of arenas with surplus ice time in Middlesex, Lambton, Huron and Perth County that may also compete for ice rentals.

If projected registrations are realized by 2034, then Lucan Biddulph would have sufficient rationale to invest in a second ice pad. Achieving 750 minor ice sport participants would be contingent on continued population growth in the Township, specifically children and youth (whereas rural Ontario has historically experienced disproportionate aging trends), and that ice sport participation rates remain strong. Given that a second ice pad would be a multi-million dollar endeavour to construct and operate over its lifecycle, this Master Plan advances a cautious approach whereby the Township:

1. Undertakes an architectural analysis that examines the feasibility and associated costs of twinning the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre arena;
2. Monitors ice sport registrations and participation rates to determine if Lucan Biddulph continues to withstand prevailing provincial declines;

3. Prepares an Ice Allocation Policy that reflects modern practices including principles of gender-equity and other forms of inclusion, player/skater registrations of clubs, residency status, turnback provisions, etc. so that ice times are allocated equitably and efficiently (also see Section 5 of this Master Plan); and
4. Evaluates whether the capital and operating costs of a second ice pad are warranted in relation to market conditions, ice allocation requirements and other municipal priorities.

The above noted architectural analysis should also investigate opportunities to enhance the size and quality of arena dressing rooms, other support areas and common areas for recreational users and the junior hockey club which were not eligible for senior government funding during the most recent expansion. Please note that this Master Plan would not support the construction of a second, separate single pad arena in Lucan Biddulph based on projected 10-year registrations and the resulting operational inefficiencies from having to staff and maintain separate arenas.

Investigate Selected Improvements to the Gymnasium

The LBCMC gymnasium is used for floor sports and bookings have increased since the last Master Plan with the emergence of pickleball and certain Township-run programs. The aforementioned architectural feasibility analysis for an arena expansion should also contemplate the potential to carry out selected gymnasium improvements. At a minimum, a new gymnasium floor should be considered using a sprung-wood or other low-impact surface since it would be less prone to damage from tables and chairs with the new community hall now able to service banquets, social gatherings and other events.

A revitalized gymnasium could enable for a greater range of Township and community-based programming as well as potentially support dry-land training for arena users, day camp programs, and offer an added level of amenity to complement the fitness centre. The existing performing stage is understood to receive limited use and alternative uses should be contemplated, whether extending playout distances in the gym, adding seating or potentially creating additional storage which is in limited supply throughout the LBCMC.

With the recommended architectural feasibility, it would also be prudent to explore amenity improvements to the senior's room and/or YMCA space as a business case may deem that these areas could benefit from financial economies of scale in construction / renovation.

The Fitness Centre, Community Hall & Outdoor Pool are Positioned for the Future

The Township's development of the community hall and fitness centre have resulted in quality space, and an innovative operating agreement in the cast of the fitness centre. As such, no new halls or fitness centres are required over the master planning period although it would be good practice to review successes and challenges of the fitness centre operating

agreement in the next 3 to 5 years to discuss opportunities for enhancement with the private operator.

The outdoor pool is a longstanding facility and a community hub for many residents. Being outdoors, it is seasonally used for child and youth programs (i.e., swimming lessons and swim team) and adult and senior programs (i.e., aquafit, length swim, and swimming lessons). The pool's façade was recently redone as part of the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre's recent renovations. Many community engagement participants expressed a desire for a longer pool season.

Add a Third Ball Diamond to Reinforce Ball Programs & Tournaments

There is one lit hardball diamond and one lit softball diamond at the LBCMC that are used by Lucan-Ilderton Minor Baseball Association and selected adult leagues. These diamonds are in high demand due to their co-location, and the softball diamond is used to capacity. In addition to these two lit ball diamonds, the Township provides a lit diamond at Granton Park plus an unlit diamond at Market Street Park and a 'scrub' diamond at Elm Street Park that is only suitable for tee-ball and blastball for the youngest age divisions.

Lucan-Ilderton Minor Baseball uses diamonds at LBCMC, Elm Street Park and Market Street Park along with diamonds in Middlesex Centre. They reported an approximate 600 players at the Master Plan's sport group workshop and state that registrations are capped due to insufficient facilities in both municipalities. The men's and women's softball organizations attending the workshop reported 130 and 52 players, respectively, in their leagues. In addition to the number of diamonds in Lucan Biddulph, ball groups mentioned diamond maintenance practices, improved drainage and more equitable allocation of diamond time among various users as areas where they would like attention to be directed towards in the future.

Ball groups support the model of co-locating multiple diamonds within a park. Minor ball anticipates that it will continue to grow its registrations based on trends over the past decade. While the number of minor players that are Lucan Biddulph residents is not known, there could be 300 players based in the Township assuming 50% of the registration of this amalgamated organization is local. Added to the adult leagues, Lucan Biddulph's ball sport market is presently estimated at 482 players.

While there are five physical ball diamonds across Lucan Biddulph, the Township is providing the equivalent capacity of 6.5 unlit diamonds after factoring in the ability of its three lit diamonds to provide 50% more hours than unlit diamonds by play later into the evening (in effect, the two existing lit diamonds add the capacity equivalent of another unlit diamond). This results in the Township providing one diamond per 74 players which is in line with the service level target from the 2015 Master Plan and confirms the mounting pressures that ball groups are reporting for diamond time. Assuming ball sport participation rates remain unchanged, the number of minor and adult players could reach 575 by the year 2034 which would result in a deficit equivalent to 0.5 ball diamonds.

However, certain ball groups noted some design challenges with the Granton diamond which should be discussed so that the Township can understand if concerns can cost-effectively be rectified.

There is merit in relocating the Elm Street Park ball diamond to the LBCMC. Doing so would substantially increase programming capacity for many age divisions while strengthening the LBCMC as a destination for local ball programming and increase its attractiveness for tournaments given the availability of onsite amenities such as parking, washrooms and indoor community space while also improving operational and maintenance efficiencies. A third diamond at the LBCMC would necessitate relocation of the mini soccer fields which is made feasible with the addition of high quality rectangular fields at the Soccer Complex and will create similar efficiencies for rectangular field groups and staff operations there.

By relocating an existing unlit ball diamond to the LBCMC and lighting it, the Township's ball diamond supply would increase to 7.0 unlit equivalents (4 lit and 1 unlit diamonds), which would achieve the 1 diamond per 80 player standard. Combined with the new lighting systems being added to Granton Park in 2024, these collective actions would provide opportunities for local ball organizations to grow their programs over the next 10 years.

Alongside improvements to the ball diamond supply, the Township should revisit ball diamond allocation practices to consider elements similar to what was previously identified for an ice allocation policy in that diamond allocation should consider participant ages, gender equity and other forms of inclusion, residency status as well participant numbers of each diamond user.

Other Park Amenities

In addition to the community centre, outdoor pool and sports fields, the LBCMC contains a number of drop-in amenities including a playground that was recently replaced, an off-leash dog park, walking track and community garden. The Township's Low Impact Development (LID) project in conjunction with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority filters stormwater from adjacent land uses while bioswales are integrated throughout the park to further the Township's environmental and climate change resiliency objectives.

Township staff observe people regularly using these unstructured amenities, particularly during the summer months. While not emphasized through the Master Plan's consultations, staff have received requests to pave the outdoor walk track which was originally built as a horse racing track and presently employs a chip and dust surface. At this time, the Master Plan does not find sufficient rationale to pave the walking track as it is understood that Township staff regularly inspect the surface and remediate it as necessary to ensure a safe experience. If compacted satisfactorily, soft surfaces can be made to be accessible for persons using certain mobility aids.

3.2 Campanelle Park Soccer Complex

Campanelle Park Soccer Complex is in the final stages of development and is anticipated to be complete in time for the 2025 playing season. It will be a high quality venue for rectangular field sports by way of a fenced lit premier field and three unlit full-size fields, positioning soccer and other rectangular field sports for growth over the next 10 years and beyond. The field dimensions will allow minor and adult programs to deliver a broad range of programs, including those mandated by Ontario Soccer (i.e. 3 versus 3 to 11 versus 11 divisions).

Amenities

- Soccer Fields (1 lit, 3 unlit)

Combined with a full field at Granton Park along with two mini fields at the LBCMC, there are eight rectangular fields in Lucan Biddulph. One of the new fields at the Soccer Complex replaces a temporary field previously located on private lands adjacent to the LBCMC which have recently been developed by the property owner for residential uses. Applying an equivalency factor to the new lit field, the Township will provide the equivalent of 8.5 unlit rectangular fields which adds the capacity of 2.5 fields more than what was previously available at the time of the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Lucan Soccer Club reported 500 players while women's soccer reports approximately 60 players, and Men's Soccer fields one team with 16 players. As such, the collective reported registration of 576 soccer players results in a service level of one field per 68 players including the Soccer Complex. This exceeds the service level identified in the 2015 Master Plan (1:80 players) and provides capacity to the year 2034 when there could be 700 soccer players in Lucan Biddulph and necessitate up to nine unlit equivalent fields by that time. As noted in discussions about the LBCMC and Granton Park, however, a ball diamond is proposed in place of the LBCMC mini fields which could be addressed by improving the existing rectangular field in Granton and directing organized use to that park.

Given that the Soccer Complex will be a central destination for rectangular field sports in Lucan Biddulph, there is a need for certain supporting amenities. At a minimum, onsite storage space should support both municipal operations and organized play. There is a need for a washroom given the degree of league usage and/or tournament play while the possibility of adding dressing rooms is something to consider depending on available budget. The Township should also develop a playground at the Soccer Complex to service the surrounding residential areas.



3.3 Granton Park

Granton Park contains a lit ball diamond, an unlit soccer field, a recently replaced playground, concrete skateboard park, a community garden and an unpaved trail loop encircling the park’s perimeter. An aging hard surface court is lined for both tennis and pickleball but also has a single basketball hoop installed to one side, noting only one of these sports can be played at a time. There is also a pavilion structure (with a kitchen) that is flooded for outdoor skating in the winter along with a separate washroom structure. The park and its amenities enable a range of structured and drop-in activities to service the Granton settlement.

- Amenities**
- Soccer Field
 - Ball Diamond (lit)
 - Tennis Court
 - Playground
 - Pavilion Structure
 - Washroom Building
 - Skateboard Park
 - Community Garden

The Township has approved replacement of ball diamond lighting for 2024; selected surface improvements could further increase the diamond’s suitability for both minor and adult ball leagues. The tennis/pickleball court surfacing appears to be approaching end of life and there is merit in replacing it with either an asphalt or concrete surface that continues to be lined for both racquet sports. If there is sufficient space to include a dedicated half court for basketball, this should be strongly considered to separate play from the rejuvenated tennis/pickleball court. In the event that removal of the LBCMC mini fields necessitates additional rectangular field capacity over the next 10 years beyond what the new Soccer Complex is adding, strong consideration should be given to enhancing the rectangular field in a manner that increases its viability for organized play as it is understood that local soccer groups are not making use of this field. Doing so would reduce the need for the Township to purchase land elsewhere for a soccer field in the current master planning period.



3.4 Lucan Optimist Elm Street Park

Lucan Optimist Elm Steet Park contains a ‘scrub’ diamond with a basic infield whose undersized dimensions and quality of amenity is only suitable for tee-ball and blast-ball. However, the park has a number of higher quality unstructured amenities, including a splash pad, playground, basketball court, washroom structure, and a large shade / picnic shelter. Located south of Main Street in the Lucan settlement, the park is bisected by a creek that can be crossed by a pedestrian bridge to access the ball diamond. The Township has recently approved construction of a wheeled action park for skateboards, scooters, bikes, etc., on the north side of the park.

Amenities

- Ball Diamond (unlit)
- Basketball Court (unlit)
- Playground
- Shade Shelter
- Splash Pad
- Washroom Building
- Wheeled Action Park (future)

The amenities offered at Elm Street park reach all age groups. The refurbished playground is excellent for younger age groups while the splash pad provides an exciting way to cool down in the summer and has had a number of its components recently replaced. With an estimated 800 children under the age of 10 living in the Township and in conjunction with the nearby LBCMC outdoor pool, the splash pad will meet needs for outdoor aquatics in Lucan Biddulph over the next 10 years. The wheeled action park will be attractive for youth and teens while the pathways and seating areas are conducive to all ages. As discussed in Section 3.1, there is rationale to relocate the Elm Street Park scrub diamond to the LBCMC, which will add significant programming capacity to the local ball diamond system without having to acquire a large property. Redirecting operating resources from the Elm Street diamond could also fund improved design, amenities and/or maintenance at the LBCMC and Market Street diamonds.



3.5 Lions Market Street Park & Lucan Scout Guide Hall

Lions Market Street Park and the Lucan Scout Guide Hall are located in the Lucan settlement area, north of Main Street. The park is frequently used for community events and festivals, supported by its greenspace, a playground completed in 2016, two pavilions, and washrooms at the Lucan Scout Guide Hall. The park contains one small unlit ball diamond that is used by minor baseball’s younger age groups but is infrequently used by adult groups due to its size.

Amenities

- Community Hall
- Ball Diamond (unlit)
- Pavilion
- Playground
- Washroom Building

In addition to housing the park’s washrooms, the Lucan Scout Guide Hall contains a community hall leased to Lucan Girl Guides and Lucan Scouts on evenings for leadership training and meetings. The building is outdated and does not meet modern facility accessibility standards. In anticipation of lifecycle and renewal costs being substantial in the current cost environment, the Township should revisit its use agreement to determine if renovations are warranted, particularly since the new accessible multi-purpose room at the LBCMC is a viable meeting option.

In the event that the Township determines that costs or usage potential is such that the Hall does not represent a sound investment, an opportunity arises to reclaim space for other park uses including for smaller scale performances and neighbourhood events, or potentially for an outdoor skating rink or trail which could alleviate pressures for public skating at the arena.



3.6 Spencer Park

Spencer Park is a new addition to the Township’s inventory, servicing the Old Clover neighbourhood in the Lucan settlement. The park has an integrated basketball court and multi-racquet sport court for tennis and pickleball using a sport tile surface. A shelter with picnic tables is adjacent to the multi-use courts. These facilities are the product of a \$250k project and support Township drop-in programming, including adult and senior pickleball.

Amenities

- Tennis / Pickleball Court
- Basketball Court
- Shade shelter
- Playground

A playground has been approved and planned for the open space in the presently undeveloped southern portion of the park block. This will be a strong addition to ensure appropriate geographic distribution of playgrounds in the settlement area and will largely build out Spencer Park, thereby leaving limited opportunities for further facilities.



3.7 Future Parkland Needs

The Township’s six recreational parks collectively span 24.25 hectares and translate into 4.2 hectares of parkland per 1,000 population. This is a strong level of service as municipal parkland provision rates have historically targeted between 2.5 and 4.0 hectares per 1,000 population. Recent changes to park dedication provisions in the Ontario Planning Act have resulted in declining service levels across the province, but Lucan Biddulph’s proactive additions of the Soccer Complex and Spencer Park have been able to increase the rate of parkland compared to levels reported in the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

This is an accomplishment to be proud of, however, it does not diminish the importance of securing new parks to service planned residential growth areas in Lucan Biddulph, particularly those being planned around the Saintsbury Line. It will be important to have a parkland within walking distance – typically 10 minutes or 800 metres – of residential areas in the Lucan settlement. Selected community feedback also spoke to a geographic gap of

parkland in the Clandeboye settlement, though it was also recognized this is a small settlement in terms of population; however, the Township should monitor if an opportunity arises to acquire a parcel of land that would be suitable for a neighbourhood-serving park, should one come up for sale.

Consistent with past practice, the Township should target parkland at a rate of 3.0 hectares per 1,000 populations added in new growth areas. With 1,200 additional residents projected to arrive by the end of the master planning period, Lucan would require 3.6 hectares of new parkland by the year 2034.

Park	Classification	Land Area (hectares)
LBCMC Park	Community	10.7
Campanelle Park Soccer Complex	Community	6.99
Granton Park	Community	3.19
Lucan Optimist Elm Street Park	Neighbourhood	1.39
Lions Market Street Park	Neighbourhood	1.04
Spencer Park	Neighbourhood	0.94
Total Parkland		24.25

Source: County of Middlesex and Township of Lucan Biddulph GIS data

As directed by the Official Plan, future parkland shall primarily be acquired through dedications as a condition of lands being subdivided or otherwise developed, or through purchase using monies received from cash-in-lieu of providing parkland in areas where parkland is not considered necessary or appropriate, or where the lands available for dedication would be insufficient in size or deficient in terms of location. Lands proposed to be dedicated to parkland shall be evaluated by proximity and access to existing recreational facilities and parks, proximity and access to users, size, shape, topography and drainage, development and maintenance costs, and potential for expansion.

As noted throughout this Section, the Township has been making improvements to existing parks in response to asset management and lifecycle needs, but also through community engagement. This approach to parkland revitalization is best practice and should continue. The Granton Park playground is an excellent example of engaging the community in the renewal of that amenity and has yielded a play structure that responds to the needs of that community and generated significant goodwill and buy-in among residents. This approach of engaging the community in parkland renewal activities – as well as design of new parks – should continue for major capital projects.

3.8 Parks & Recreation Facility Recommendations

Recommendation	Suggested Timing
<p>R1. Prepare an architectural feasibility study to determine if the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre arena can be twinned in a cost-effective manner along with modernizing the existing ice pad’s dressing rooms and entrance corridor. Improvements to the gymnasium and other areas deemed appropriate should also be explored.</p>	2025
<p>R2. Build on recent ball diamond lighting upgrades at Granton Park by improving playing surface improvements and other amenity enhancements that will increase capacity and playing experience. Rejuvenate the hard surface court and line it as a multi-use tennis and pickleball court while exploring the feasibility of integrating a dedicated half basketball court.</p>	2025
<p>R3. Final development phases of Campanelle Park Soccer Complex should integrate onsite amenities including storage space, washrooms, and a playground structure at a minimum, to support basic operations and league programming. Enhanced amenities such as dressing rooms may be explored contingent upon supporting base funding through fundraising, user fee surcharges, or other means.</p>	2026 / 2027
<p>R4. Relocate the Elm Street Park ball diamond to the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre, replacing it with a lit ball diamond to increase efficiencies for scheduling, operations and attractiveness for tournament play. In consultation with local ball diamond users, investigate whether other improvements can be implemented to the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre’s existing ball diamonds at the time of construction the new lit ball diamond (e.g. washroom building, lighting replacements, irrigation and drainage systems, etc.).</p>	2028 / 2029
<p>R5. Assess the feasibility and costs associated with bringing the Lucan Scout Guide Hall in conformity with modern accessibility standards and required asset management obligations to determine whether to reinvest in, redevelop or decommission this antiquated facility. Feedback from the Scouts, Guides and other community organizations should inform future decisions for the Hall.</p>	2029 / 2030 (or as dictated by lifecycle needs)

Recommendation	Suggested Timing
R6. Target the acquisition of 3.6 hectares of new parkland over the next 10 years with an emphasis placed on providing new parks, greenspaces and trail connections in future residential areas to be developed in proximity to Saintsbury Line.	Ongoing
R7. Engage the community and the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority in the design of major park development and redevelopment projects in order to consider community needs, opportunities to build environmental sustainability, and potentially leverage community resources to make these projects a success.	Ongoing



Section 4. Trails

Trails offer many benefits in the form of furthering public health and active transportation objectives, environmental protection, and increasing opportunities for social interaction between people. The network of trails in Lucan Biddulph serves recreational and utilitarian purposes, ranging from scenic walks and nature appreciation to accessing destinations that are important in the day-to-day life of the community. The amount of feedback received in the community engagement process specific to trails indicates these are important facilities to residents in Lucan Biddulph.

4.1 Trails in Lucan Biddulph

There are currently seven trails that are owned and maintained by the Township of Lucan Biddulph, noting that some of the trails in Lucan Biddulph can be characterized as internal park pathways. None of these trails have official names but are referred to for the purposes of this Master Plan as follows.

Elm Street Park Pathway

With a 169 metre accessible concrete surface, this internal park pathway connects Albert Street to Elm Street. There is an opportunity for a connection between the internal park pathway and Harold Court, improving the accessibility of the ‘scrub’ ball diamond.

Granton Park Pathway

With a 645 metre chip and dust surface, this internal park pathway connects the perimeter of Granton Park.

Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park Walking Track

With an 840 metre length and 4.5 metre width chip and dust surface, the former horse track at Lucan Biddulph CMC Park has been adapted into a walking track. A pathway was added in 2023 connecting the east side of the park to new residential areas via Scotts Drive.

Market Street Park Pathway

With a 206 metre accessible concrete surface, this internal park pathway has two branches that connect the Lucan Scout Guide Hall to Beech Street.

Old Clover / Spencer Park Pathway

With a 140 metre accessible concrete surface, this internal park pathway connects the north and south sides of Spencer Park.

Ridge Crossing Trail

With an accessible asphalt surface and two branches, the west branch (520 metres) navigates around the storm management pond on Campanalle Way and possesses three park benches, and the east branch (200 metres) follows alongside the drain from Campanalle Way to Walnut Street. A new trail at Campanelle Park is planned to connect with the west branch.

Private Trails

There may be other trails located on privately owned lands that supplement trails and paths owned by the Township. Conservation areas or certain lands managed by Conservation Authorities often contain public trails, however, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority does not own or directly manage lands within the Township of Lucan Biddulph.

Privately owned trails may or may not be accessible to the public while maintenance practices may differ, and property owners may not have liability or other forms of insurance. As such, private trails are not included in this Master Plan, although they may be factored into the Township's future planning decisions for its trails network.



4.2 Trails System Goals & Guiding Principles

The goal statement and guiding principles are identified below and should be considered through the planning/management of new or expanded trail route opportunities.

Goal Statement:

“Lucan Biddulph’s trails network encourages safe, respectful and enjoyable recreational opportunities that connects people to local points of interest and regional systems.”

Guiding Principles:

Linking to Destinations and Regional Systems

The trail network provides direct linkages to existing and future destinations within settlement areas, such as community centres and parks, schools, residential areas, and more. To the greatest extent possible, trail routes form continuous loops within parks and communities while connecting people to regional trail systems, such as networks in conservation areas and adjacent municipalities.

Safety for Users

The trail network should be designed and maintained to minimize risk and injury to users by routing trails through open areas, designing trails to reduce potential for conflict between different types of trail users, ensuring unobstructed sightlines, properly maintaining trails, and other best practices.

Promoting Local Trails

The trail network should be promoted within the Township and County of Middlesex so that residents and visitors are aware of the recreational trails in Lucan Biddulph.

Multi-Modal Means of Year-Round Travel

The trail network facilitates different recreational and utilitarian travel choices throughout the year by designating appropriate sections for human-powered transportation and/or motorized forms of recreational travel.

Striving for Accessibility

Where possible and appropriate to do so, the trail network should be designed to be free of barriers and be inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Cost-Effective Trails

The trail network makes efficient use of municipal resources by focusing on priority routes as dictated by sound planning.

Supporting Trails with Amenities

The trail network has regard for supporting amenities, including signage, seating, parking, and more in order to provide the comforts that trail users seek.

Pursuing Partnerships with Others

Ongoing pursuit of and strengthening relationships with new and existing community partners and landowners encourages the expansion, maintenance, and promotion of the trail network.

4.3 Future Trail Opportunities

It is recognized that there are a number of informal hiking trails through privately-owned lands that have occurred with or without the consent of the landowner. This is common in municipalities with large rural and agricultural properties. Some landowners have been open to residents accessing their properties for this purpose, while others have raised concerns regarding liability impacts. While public trails on private lands are generally discouraged, in situations where these arrangements are necessary to create a connected trail network, the Township should consider long-term access and maintenance agreements.



Trail development is an important local priority and policies and plans should be put into place to allow the Township to capitalize on opportunities that are presented over time. Trail development is most likely to be possible and viable in the Lucan Settlement area. Over the timeframe of this Master Plan, the Township should seek to:

- establish an east-west trail connection between the Ridge Crossing Trail and future residential areas located east of Saintsbury Line, a portion of which could potentially traverse the soccer complex boundary;
- explore a north-south trail connection between the Ridge Crossing Trail and the Township-owned lands north of Fallon Drive along with an east-west trail connection north of the sewage treatment plant towards Saintsbury Line which would create a sizeable trail loop in conjunction with the connections noted in the bullet above;
- establish linkages and localized routes within future plans of subdivisions and work toward the development of a trail loop throughout the Lucan Settlement area, consisting of on and off-road segments; and
- evaluate and formalize agreements with private landowners that are currently providing trails.

4.4 Trail Acquisition Strategies

As the Township explores ways to expand its trails network and improve connectivity within and between settlement areas, various land acquisition strategies may need to be employed to implement the future vision for trails in Lucan Biddulph. Informal strategies to acquire land for trail purposes, such as verbal agreements, should be discouraged as challenges may arise with regard to access, routing, safety and liability. At the Township's discretion, the following acquisition tools are advanced for consideration for trail development, some of which are supported by the Ontario Planning Act:

- **Easement** – The Township may establish a formal agreement with a landowner to grant access for a specific activity, without purchasing the land. An easement agreement is registered on the title of the property and remains in effect when property ownership changes.
- **Land purchase** – This is often the most expensive option for the Township as it requires purchasing all or a portion of land at market value. The landowner must also be a willing seller and an agreeable purchase price must be identified.
- **Land exchange** – The Township and a landowner may make an exchange of lands located along a proposed trail route. Land exchanges should be based on appraised value and not size.
- **Right of first refusal** – The Township may establish a right of first refusal with a landowner that grants the Township an opportunity to match another party's offer to purchase a specific property, although this may not provide the Township with immediate access to land.
- **Dedication through Plan of Subdivision** – Supported by the *Planning Act*, this strategy allows the Township to require the dedication of land for pedestrian and bicycle pathways as a condition of draft subdivision approval. With future subdivision development opportunities in Lucan Biddulph, potential linkages should be explored.
- **Donation or bequest of land** – The Township may accept donations from landowners in exchange for a tax receipt at an appraised value, provided the donation meets the requirements under the *Federal Income Tax Act*. This strategy is typically used for the donation of environmentally sensitive lands as part of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. Alternatively, bequeath of land may be made upon death.
- **Lease/Licence private land** – Similar to an easement, the Township may enter into a lease or license agreement with a landowner to establish access to private lands. This agreement does not bind future landowners and as a result, public access is not guaranteed.

4.5 Trail Management & Maintenance

Maintenance of municipal trails is critical to ensure user safety and to reduce exposure to any liabilities it may face. Effective inspection and maintenance measures can improve the provision of trails, decrease maintenance costs, and extend the life of trail surfaces if issues are identified and remediated in a timely manner. Ontario Trails suggests that trails should be designed with easy maintenance in mind to minimize future maintenance issues, with consideration given to trail routing or the use of construction materials that are more durable and environmentally friendly, especially given the Town's climatic conditions and naturalized areas (including floodplain areas).

Maintaining a clean and clear pathway is essential to minimizing liability and protecting the Township's natural aesthetics. Grass-cutting and vegetation management along trails should be included as a part of the Township's park maintenance program. Formal trail inspections should be completed once a year and could be undertaken together with the annual sidewalk inspections as required by Ontario Regulation 239/02. Trail inspections should evaluate surface and amenity conditions, deficiencies, vandalism, erosion, and safety and liability concerns to identify potential actions going forward.

While trail litter and debris is generally the responsibility of the Township, the public should be encouraged to take ownership of local trails and assist with litter control and vegetation management. This can also be achieved through engaging partnerships with local service clubs and community organizations in sponsorships, clean-up days, or other strategies.



4.6 Trail System Recommendations

Recommendation	Suggested Timing
<p>R8. Use this Master Plan as a guide to inform future trail projects and employ a range of acquisition strategies to secure lands, including within future residential subdivisions for the purposes of developing the local trails network.</p>	Ongoing
<p>R9. Explore the development of a trail loop using connections between the Ridge Crossing Trail, Township-owned lands located north of Fallon Drive, and future residential areas located east of Saintsbury Line.</p>	Ongoing
<p>R10. Evaluate and formalize agreements with private landowners that are currently providing trails, using the Lucan Biddulph Trails and Connectivity Advisory Committee and/or Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as resources.</p>	Ongoing
<p>R11. Conduct an annual inspection of the Township’s trails together with sidewalks to identify deficiencies, damages, safety and liability concerns, and repairs.</p>	Ongoing
<p>R12. Develop partnerships with local service clubs, community organizations and volunteers, and/or Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to assist in trail planning and design, litter control and vegetation management along trail routes.</p>	Ongoing

Section 5. Service and Program Delivery

5.1 The Township's Role in Delivering Parks, Recreation & Trails

The Township provides physical infrastructure through its parks, recreation and trails system. Assets include the Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre and Lucan Scout Guide Hall, parks and outdoor recreation facilities, and lands that encompass trail routes. The Township engages in the delivery of various programs and relies upon external providers, including volunteers, to offer services and support events using municipal facilities and other spaces available in the community.

The “business” of delivering parks, recreation and trails is rapidly evolving, which means that progressive municipalities and their Parks and Recreation Departments must be flexible in adopting methods to manage and control their day-to-day activities. Building on a recommendation originally advanced in the 2015 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Township now employs a hybrid service delivery model that enables a combination of community-driven and municipally-offered programs that collectively provide a broad spectrum of choice. To be successful over time, the Township will need to be aware of shifts in corporate culture or changes in market conditions, and revise its management and operating techniques accordingly.

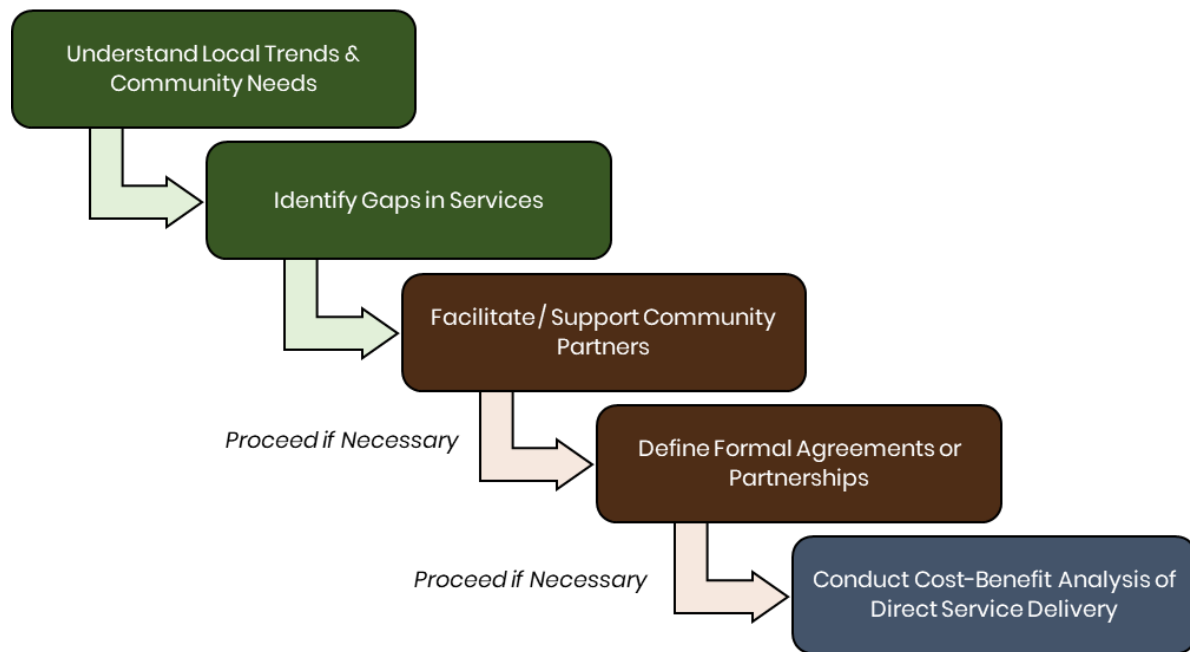
Success originates with the ability to align with the Township's vision and goals that it sets out for delivering parks, recreation and trails services. The Township has taken a business-oriented stance with regard to its services and facilities by acting primarily as a facilitator of space while identifying programming gaps among community providers and acting to fill some of these needs. Combined with an innovative partnership to introduce equipment-based fitness in Lucan Biddulph, the Township is operating under a cost effective approach where rental revenues are allocated against facility operations and maintenance.

While this approach minimizes operating subsidies relative to other direct program delivery models, it generates a heavy reliance on community providers to offer needed services to Lucan Biddulph residents. This is common across the province for certain facility types (e.g. sports fields and arenas) although certain municipalities choose to deliver programs in specific program areas (e.g. gymnasium activities) while other municipalities also facilitate programming using strategic partnerships.

In many ways, the Vision Statement articulated early in this Master Plan represents the desired legacy that the Township is trying to establish with its community to provide parks, recreation, and trails. The ultimate objective is to facilitate healthy lifestyles through meaningful physical and social activity, and through the continued availability of sustainable opportunities for sport and recreation. The Township's corporate Mission Statement “To provide residents, businesses and visitors with strong municipal leadership, quality services and support that are relevant and future-oriented, and in so doing, support the community's sense of place and ongoing volunteerism” is a way to achieve this.

As the Township grows and the needs/expectations of the community evolves, the Township must continually evaluate where the community sector is unable to address market demands. Figure 2 articulates the steps in implementing and executing the municipal role with regard to the provision of programs and services; it bears noting that the Master Plan has not identified a need for the Township to expand into any specific programs based on consultations and a review of current program offerings.

Figure 2: Executing the Township’s Role in Parks, Recreation & Trails



5.2 Community Development

Continuing along a path where external organizations help address local needs through programming requires continued support of the Township’s community development approach for community groups to be sustainable and for the Township to continue with its primary focus on providing space.

Through the community development model, the Township provides supporting resources aimed at sustaining the organizational capacity of groups and proactively seeking partnerships. The Township would optimally play a central role in connecting providers with one another with the aim of maximizing efficiency/reducing duplication in the system as a whole. The principle of community development was one that was strongly supported by the Township’s institutional/agency partners as well as local organizations participating in the Master Plan’s workshops. For the community development approach to remain effective, appropriate Township resources (e.g. financial, staffing, services in-kind, etc.) need to be devoted in order to maximize relationships that will be developed with groups.

5.3 Staffing & Governance

Township Council is responsible for all significant decisions with respect to the planning and implementation of the parks, recreation and trails system; Township staff support Council by providing information and advice. The Township has recently formed the Trails & Connectivity Advisory Committee (TCAC) which complements work of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC), and both provide guidance for the consideration of Council and staff.

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the operations, maintenance and programming for parks and facilities in Lucan Biddulph. The Department is overseen by the Director of Community Services & Facilities, who reports to the Township's CAO/Clerk. One Supervisor and one Coordinator assist the Director and manage a front-line staff team consisting of full-time, part-time and seasonal employees. Until recently, coordination of selected community events was part of the departmental purview, but that portfolio has been transferred to economic development staff.

The Department's organizational structure and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) complement has remained relatively similar over the past 5 years, although the Director position is new as of 2024 and oversees certain municipal facilities outside of parks and recreation. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on municipal parks and recreation departments, mimicking its impact on the country's broader labour force. The Township has returned to its pre-pandemic staffing levels, which is encouraging.

The Township, like many municipalities, relies on seasonal workers as a portion of their staff group. Seasonal staff are predominantly brought on during the summer months to assist with parks and open space maintenance, recreation camps, and operation of the outdoor pool. Since seasonal staff tend to be younger employees in secondary or postsecondary schools, they do not always return to work for the Township every year. In fact, the Township achieves a return rate of approximately 85% to 90% among its seasonal employees which exacerbates the growth-related pressures faced by the permanent staff group since considerable time needs to be expended towards hiring and training a constantly evolving base of seasonal workers. These constraints are especially pronounced at the outdoor pool where the community is seeking more programs and operating hours in the summer but there are not enough seasonal aquatics staff to meet these demands (the pandemic also contributed to a shortage of lifeguards and instructors by delaying lifesaving certifications).

In reviewing the organizational structure, it becomes apparent that the staffing complement has taken on added responsibilities associated with the expansion of the LBCMC, the new soccer complex, weekly changeovers of the Spencer Park tennis/pickleball court, and the entry into municipal program delivery. There is merit in undertaking a review of staff roles, responsibilities and FTE requirements within the Parks and Recreation Department to ensure services can be delivered effectively with these added responsibilities and continued population growth potentially driving the need for new parks, facilities and services.

5.4 Volunteers & Partners

Volunteers form the backbone of Lucan Biddulph's parks and recreation service delivery system. Volunteerism is generally declining across Ontario, a trend that was observed by all organizations participating in the Master Plan's workshops. Local organizations indicated that many of the same people volunteer for different things but that some long-time volunteers are no longer able to assist to the same degree due to health, family commitments or other reasons. Service clubs, event organizers and sport providers have contributed much to Lucan Biddulph but are challenged in finding new volunteers to join their ranks.

The Township has partnerships in place that range from informal relationships to formalized agreements. Examples of potential partners (and expansion/continuation of existing partnerships) in Lucan Biddulph include, but are not limited to:

- **Other levels of government** such as Middlesex County, adjacent municipalities and First Nations communities. The Township provides space for Middlesex County Library who largely act as a community connector and provide library services; there may be an opportunity for the Township to work with the Library to provide smaller scaled programming.
- **Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and environmentally-focused organizations**, noting the ABCA and Township have collaborated on low impact developments and stormwater management facilities. Initiatives with others that build ecological capacity and climate change resiliency is something that should continue along with exploring ways to collaboratively deliver environmental education and interpretive opportunities. For example, there may be an opportunity to work with ABCA for a stream channel remediation project at Elm Street Park or pursue sustainable retrofits as such projects have been observed to achieve success in other municipalities and their respective conservation authorities.
- **Thames Valley District School Board, London Catholic District School Board and other educational institutions** noting that both school boards have indicated a willingness to work with the Township to explore opportunities that benefit students, community groups and the general public. In fact, the TVDSB recently announced that it has secured funding for a new school in Lucan and there may be an opportunity to develop a funding or joint-use agreement that could result in enhanced gymnasium, classroom/meeting room, sports field or other amenities.
- **Non-profit organizations** such as the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, Community Health Centres, the United Way, etc.
- **Local stakeholders** such as service clubs, minor sports and recreation providers, trail user groups, community associations, and BIAs.

- **The private sector** including the Township’s partner that operates the LBCMC fitness centre which is a progressive example of introducing a level of service into Lucan Biddulph that may not have otherwise existed.

5.5 Communications & Marketing

Providers of parks and recreation services educate the public and can influence participation levels depending on the effectiveness of their outreach and awareness efforts. Residents in Lucan Biddulph that do not frequently use parks and recreation facilities are less likely to be informed of upcoming events and programming opportunities that may suit their interests. Community engagement participants expressed the Township’s communication to be an area of improvement, particularly surrounding awareness for community events and available programs.

There were several preferred methods of communication suggested by community engagement participants, which is representative different age groups. For example, younger age groups may prefer social media platforms, whereas older age groups who are less likely to be using social media may prefer flyers or newsletters. Community survey respondents indicated their preferred methods of learning about facilities, programs, events, and activities in Lucan Biddulph to be through the Facebook page (79%) and Website (53%). The Township’s Community Guide has also been an effective method to promoting events and programming and is encouraged to include more community groups.

5.6 Policies & Procedures

Operations in Lucan Biddulph are becoming more multifaceted with the growth of the Township and expansion of facilities. Having formally documented policies and procedures for Township practices can guide matters related to risk and liability management, health and safety for staff and facility users, government regulations, fiscal responsibility, inter-departmental coordination, operating performance, and customer service.

Through the master planning process, arena and ball diamond users expressed a need for policies governing the approach to allocating facility times and scheduling. These are typically known as Allocation Policies and are frequently used by municipalities. Whereas allocation practices and allocation policies have tended to reflect historical times assigned to groups, progressive municipalities are preparing allocation policies that build in principles of inclusion (e.g. gender-equity, special needs, cultural groups) and quantifiable market metrics to ensure equity and efficiency. In Lucan Biddulph, Allocation Policies should prioritize local child, youth and equity-deserving user groups to support grass root and inclusive programming. User groups should be required to provide player registration data, including contact information, on an annual basis to allow inform decisions based on trends and changing needs. Annual meetings with major user groups may be used to coordinate scheduling in alignment with the policies as well as discuss challenges and opportunities that may inform periodic policy reviews.

5.7 Cost Recovery in Parks & Recreation

As the need for additional programs and services rise due to an increased population, a fiscally sustainable approach must be taken to service expansion. In accordance with provincial legislation, the Township establishes and levies fees for certain municipal services and identifies these charges through by-law. For parks and recreation services, fees are primarily associated with facility rentals for ice pads, halls and meeting rooms, municipal sports fields, and selected recreation programs. The Township's rental rates and program fees are updated periodically based on inflationary factors, while being sensitive to what surrounding municipalities are charging for similar services. Rates for parks and recreation services are not set to recover all costs in full and are instead subsidized through funds from general taxation, which is consistent with practices of most municipalities, noting the degree of subsidization varies by service.

Best practices in pricing recreation services are to understand the direct and indirect costs to deliver a particular service. With knowledge of the true costs of delivery, Township staff are in strong position to set defensible cost-recovery targets, plan future budgets, track and measure financial performance over time, and ultimately determine where efficiencies can be made. Cost information can also inform regular Pricing Policies or Studies that help a municipality ensure its financial sustainability objectives are attained.

Costing and setting fees for programs and services involves a number of steps, as follows:

1. Develop common costing principles;
2. Identify units/outputs that will be costed (e.g. cost to operate an hour of ice time, a set of outdoor swimming lessons, a week of day camp, etc.);
3. Identify cost recovery levels, where appropriate based on existing revenue streams;
4. Valuate and categorize the service by identifying the degree to which it provides benefit along a spectrum ranging from a few residents to the entire community;
5. Establish the desired level of cost recovery and fees associated with attaining it;
6. Compare fees to the market to understand potential impacts of attaining the desired level of cost recovery; and
7. Consider phasing in user fees over a period of years to mitigate any negative impacts to participation in recreational activities.

By understanding its costs, the Township puts itself in a position to make business decisions that are aligned with its corporate strategic objectives. Not all facilities or services are required to cover all or most of their delivery costs; however, there is a generally accepted philosophical continuum where services that benefit the greatest number of people are subsidized to the greatest amount whereas services that benefit only a few are charged more. Parks, recreation facilities and trails are typically viewed as a community service and some of their benefits are not easily quantified in financial terms; for example, it is difficult to quantify how financial costs are offset by improving an individual's physical health, a municipality's economic development potential and ability to recruit/retain residents by having the infrastructure in place, contributions to quality of life and environmental sustainability, and other intrinsic factors.

5.8 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a method of ensuring programs, facilities and services are delivered in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of residents, reflect industry best practices and are compliant with applicable legislation. In instances where the Township provides services directly, staff members hold Standard First Aid and CPR certification, provide a Criminal Reference Check and complete program training. In the past, training has included Parks and Recreation Ontario's HighFive program's Principles of Healthy Child Development along with physical literacy, behavioural management, inclusion and program preparation.

The growing child and teen population in Lucan Biddulph will warrant a growing understanding of youth-friendly practices. A number of municipalities have sought and attained designations as a "Youth-Friendly Community" which requires them to demonstrate alignment with a number of criteria. The program was previously administered by the Playworks Consortium whose work has now been undertaken by Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) under an Ontario Trillium Grant. PRO will refine the Youth Friendly Community designation application process and once the criteria has been either confirmed or modified, applications will once again be received after ceasing during the pandemic. PRO is also launching a related initiative for youth in rural communities to develop new skills and strengthen leadership through youth advisory councils and workshops for rural youth.

5.9 Inspections & Compliance

There are many legislative acts that govern parks and recreation services along with generally accepted best practices and procedures. Collectively and at a minimum, these ensure that spaces are kept safe, and services are delivered in accordance with fundamental rights and values. Performance measurement can be aligned, for certain services, through inspections and other means to document compliance whether through legislated or simply keeping track of service objectives.

While a comprehensive scan of inspection and compliance practices was not part of the Master Plan scope of work, the following observations and suggestions are offered that were noted through field work and scans of municipal operating practices:

- **Sports Fields:** With excellent investments in improving the supply of sports fields, the Township should consider periodic Gmax testing of rectangular fields by a qualified contractor and implement biannual soil testing of grass fields to identify compaction and ensure sufficient nutrients to for healthy turf.
- **Trails:** Inspect the trail network a minimum of once per year and resolve any hazards related to uneven surfaces, washouts, removal of debris / sweeping, damaged or missing signs and pruning vegetation along a trail.
- **Playgrounds:** Implement monthly documented inspections of all City-owned playgrounds and ensure that certified Playground Inspectors (in-house or contractors) are in place to carry out this work.
- **Splash Pads:** Visually inspect the Elm Street Park splash pad for hazards on a daily basis as a minimum during the operating season.



5.10 Service Delivery Recommendations

Recommendation	Suggested Timing
<p>R13. Engage the Thames Valley District School Board to discuss if there are ways to enhance indoor and outdoor spaces associated with the planned new school in Lucan to enable a greater degree of community use. Potential for a formalized reciprocal agreement should be explored at a minimum.</p>	2024
<p>R14. Ensure that a minimum of one staff person is trained to carry out playground safety inspections in accordance with accepted standards.</p>	2024
<p>R15. Prepare a Pricing Policy and User Fee Review for parks and recreation services that considers direct and indirect costs of operations along with establishing principles that balance cost-recovery, fiscal sustainability and inclusion.</p>	2025
<p>R16. Undertake a review of staffing roles, responsibilities and requirements within the Parks and Recreation Department in light of recent and future service expansions.</p>	2025 / 2026
<p>R17. Prepare separate Allocation Policies for arenas and sports fields in consultation with local user groups. At a minimum, these policies should include principles relating to equity and inclusion, establish priority assigned to categories of user groups and residency status, and/or contain defensible formulae that assign time based on quantifiable market factors such as player registrations by age/division.</p>	2025 / 2026
<p>R18. Continue to explore opportunities for joint projects with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority ranging from enhanced stormwater management facilities, stream channel remediation, trail network development, and sustainable park retrofits, or other initiatives.</p>	Ongoing
<p>R19. Carry out regular inspections of parks, recreation, and trail facilities based on compliance with legislation, quality assurance standards, and best practices to ensure municipal spaces are safe, enjoyable and well documented to inform infrastructure planning.</p>	Ongoing

Recommendation

**Suggested
Timing**

R20. Enhance opportunities for youth development and empowerment by pursuing designation as a Youth-Friendly Community upon re-introduction of this program by Parks and Recreation Ontario as well as incorporating Leader In Training (LIT) opportunities through employment and volunteer positions.

TBD



Section 6. Implementation

6.1 The Path Ahead

The Vision and Recommendations contained in the Master Plan are shaped by community feedback, influenced by Lucan Biddulph's socio-demographic characteristics, and informed by trends and best practices in parks, recreation, trails and sport. The Master Plan provides a sound foundation to guide planning and decision-making for the years ahead.

It is important to note that Township Council is not bound to implementing every Recommendation contained in the Master Plan and has discretion to deviate where it deems other municipal priorities or pressures may need to be addressed. The Master Plan is the first step in which needs have been defined. Township staff will use the findings of the Master Plan to build annual implementation plans in consideration of asset management plans, financial analysis, and other supplementary research as part of their due diligence. This will allow municipal administrators and decision-makers to prioritize actions through upcoming capital and operating budget processes. Township Council will have further opportunities to discuss and deliberate the Master Plan's Recommendations individually through future budgets.

As Lucan Biddulph continues to grow over the next 10 years, it will be important to revisit the Master Plan in 5 years to track progress along with areas where continued focus is needed. It will also be important to adjust and/or add Recommendations based on future market conditions and resident preferences for parks, recreation and trail services.

6.2 Funding & Implementation Considerations

Successfully implementing the Master Plan will require funding for the parks, recreation and trails system. The Township's commendable investments in its parks and recreation services will need to continue if it is to keep pace with growth and maintain existing public spaces to the standard required to be inclusive, safe, fun, flexible and useable. A new Development Charges Study prepared in 2023 can be considered and updated in the future to reflect potential growth-related funding opportunities while Township staff will undoubtedly remain apprised of external grants and funding sources that may be leveraged, as was able to be secured for the LBCMC expansion. Parkland dedications through land or cash-in-lieu will be another important tool to expand the system of recreational open space.

As part of staff-led implementation plans and Council deliberations, Recommendations will be tested against what the Township can realistically afford. Recognizing resources are finite, determining priorities is an exercise that should be revisited each year prior to the Township's capital and operating budget development exercises along with identifying and establishing consistent funding streams to build parks and facilities, operate and maintain them, and deliver needed services or programs.

6.3 Monitoring and Updating the Plan

The Township of Lucan Biddulph should regularly review and assess, and periodically revise the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ensure they remain reflective of local conditions and ultimately are responsive to community needs. This requires continuing to monitor activity patterns, tracking user satisfaction levels, dialogue with community organizations, annual reporting on implementation and short-term work plans, and undertaking a five-year update to the Master Plan. Through these mechanisms – or as a result of other internal or external factors – adjustments of resource allocations and priorities identified in this Master Plan may be required.

Internally reviewing the Master Plan requires a commitment from staff, Council, and the public. An appropriate time for this is prior to the annual budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an annual review of the Master Plan:

- review of the past year (recommendations implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing initiatives, changes in participation levels, etc.);
- review of the Master Plan to identify short term projects and priorities based on staff review and considerations (e.g., financial limitations, public input, partnership and funding potential, etc.);
- identification of issues or constraints anticipated for the coming year;
- communication to staff and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects, and upcoming projects; and
- budget requests/revisions as necessary.

6.4 Implementation Recommendations

Recommendation	Suggested Timing
R21. Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 5 years to reflect future market conditions, re-engage community groups and the public, and inform subsequent updates to the capital budgets and the Development Charges Background Study.	2029

Appendix A

Recreation Facility Inventory

Table 1 : Indoor Recreation Facility Inventory

Facilities	#	Locations
Arena	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre
Fitness Centre	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre
Gymnasium	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre
Hall / Multi-Purpose Room	2	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre, Lucan Scout/Guide Hall
Active Senior Room	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre

Table 2 : Outdoor Recreation Facility Inventory

Facilities	#	Locations
Soccer Fields	8 (8.5 ULE)	Lit: Campanelle Park Soccer Complex Unlit: Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park (2), Campanelle Park Soccer Complex (3), Granton Park (2)
Ball Diamonds	5 (6.5 ULE)	Lit: Granton Park, Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park (2) Unlit: Lions Market Street Park, Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park
Playgrounds	5*	Granton Park, Lions Market Street Park, Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park, Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park
Pavilion	4	Lions Market Street Park, Granton Park (Includes kitchen), Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park, Spencer Park
Washroom Buildings	4	Granton Park, Lions Market Street Park, Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park, Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre
Pickleball Courts	3	Spencer Park (3)
Tennis Courts	2	Granton Park, Spencer Park
Basketball / Multi-Use Courts	4	Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park, Granton Park, Spencer Park (2)
Skateboard Park / Wheeled Action Park	1*	Granton Park
Walking Track	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park
Community Garden	2	Granton Park, Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park
Off Leash Dog Park	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park
Outdoor Pool	1	Lucan Biddulph Community Memorial Centre Park
Splash Pad	1	Lucan Biddulph Optimist Elm Street Park

* Approved but not yet constructed facilities include a playground at Spencer Park and a wheeled action park at Elm Street Park.