

# TOWN OF ESPANOLA **PARKS & RECREATION** STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

**FINAL REPORT: August 2017** 









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# **Executive Summary**

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan for the provides a comprehensive and sustainable multi-year framework of short (1-3 years), medium (4-6 years) and longer-term (7+ years) priorities of the development and enhancement of sport and recreation as well as community quality of life in the Town of Espanola. Many of the recommendations contained in this Master Plan can be expected to extend well beyond the time horizon of 10 years – particularly as it relates to decisions regarding capital investment and plans.

This Plan is the first of its kind for the Town of Espanola. Triggers which necessitate changes in facilities and services are based on a balance of factors. With population and demographics changes, as well as changes in the delivery of programs and services, it has become imperative to evaluate the Town's recreation delivery system – that is, identify the issues, opportunities and challenges.

This Plan was informed by consultation with the public, stakeholders, Town staff and Council as well as an analysis of Town's assets, facility revenues and expenditures, facility conditions and standards of provision based on population and participation data.

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan is a municipal guidance document designed to further effective planning, budgeting and implementation of the stated goals, objectives and corresponding actions outlined herein.

#### The Vision

The long-term vision for recreation in Espanola is as follows:

"An active and vibrant community that maximizes its existing built/natural assets to provide exceptional leisure opportunities and quality services for residents and visitors".

The Plan identifies key issues and opportunities and is positioned on the following principles:

- 1. Investment in recreation for resident retention and attraction (i.e. youth and families);
- 2. Addressing the needs of an aging population through recreation planning;
- 3. Enhancing the utilization of existing assets through investment, creative programming and partnerships;
- 4. Adopting an asset management approach to investment in infrastructure that reflects prudent capital investment this includes consideration for replacing, decommissioning and/or repurposing assets where warranted;

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- 5. Ongoing monitoring of community demand for events, new sport and activities and where possible, accommodating such demand through the multi-use of assets (that is, through the creation of 'recreation destinations');
- The provision of quality services in a responsive manner as well as the development and implementation of policies and protocols that enhance the user experience with facilities; and,
- 7. A balancing approach to fee setting that encourages broad community participation in recreation and which recognizes the value of assets.

#### A Supportive Policy Environment for Recreation

This Plan has been developed within the context of a supportive policy environment for recreation. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council's report A Framework for Recreation in Canada – 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing outlines goals that position the provision of recreation as central to the physical and social wellbeing of all residents. In addition, the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) and the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario (2011) note the importance of an equitable distribution of parks, open space, trails and recreation services in order to promote healthy living. On a more local level, the Town's Strategic Plan (2013) envisions Espanola as a place where residents are involved in community life, through various recreation programs, parks and playgrounds. The Official Plan (2010) also realizes the needs of residents, stating that recreational activities should accommodate the needs of residents and that the Town should strive to provide a healthy and high quality of life for all. Espanola's Active Community Charter proposes that partnerships should be sought at workplaces, child-oriented settings and in community decision making in order to promote active living.

#### **Summary of Recommendations**

The Plan's recommendations aim to ensure long-term and efficient provision of recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) and are based on an evaluation of existing utilization and demand, facility conditions, capital and operating costs/impacts and acceptable standards of facility provision. The Plan recognizes the Regional Recreation Complex and Arena as a potential community hub that could benefit from the following:

- Enhanced multi-use of spaces for a range of indoor activities;
- Taking advantage of the co-location of both indoor and outdoor functions with the Espanola Library to achieve mutual business planning and administrative objectives through partnerships for events, program development, and space utilization, as may develop over time;
- The exploration of the full suite of partnerships to develop the program offer at the facility; and,
- Enhanced marketing initiatives, which may include working with surrounding municipalities to promote activities and events at the Complex, as well as locally.

This Plan is designed to guide Council and municipal decision-makers in addressing priorities for planning and investment in recreation. Staff and Council of the Town of Espanola will need to further evaluate and investigate the feasibility of implementing individual recommendations/actions on an annual basis as part of the municipal planning and budgetary process. A summary table of the implementation plan is provided below.

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
Facil	ities		'	
1	Continue to annually fund and maintain a			
	capital reserve for the Regional Recreation			
	Complex.			
2	Routinely (i.e. every 5 years) undertake a			
	comprehensive building condition assessment			
	for the Regional Recreation Complex (arena,			
	pool, and other building aspects).			
3	Invest in capital improvements for the			
	Regional Recreation Complex Arena.			
4	Continue to invest in necessary capital			
	improvements/maintenance for the Regional			
	Recreation Complex Indoor Pool.			
5	Continue to maintain fitness and racquet sport			
	facilities at the Regional Recreation Complex			
	and monitor trends in participation over time.			
6	Evaluate opportunities to introduce new and			
	active indoor uses within existing			
	meeting/multi-purposes spaces at the			
	Regional Recreation Complex (e.g. indoor			
	playground).			
7	Continue to invest in the maintenance of the			
	Regional Recreation Complex soccer field and			
	the Queensway soccer field (lines, cutting etc.)			
	to ensure availability for play.			
8	Progressively evaluate requests for lighting at			
	the Regional Recreation Complex soccer field			
	where there is significant demonstrated			
	demand for extended play at this facility (i.e.			
	growth in registrations, teams and/or			
9	tournament hosting opportunities).  Continue to invest in the maintenance of the			
9	Regional Recreation Complex outdoor track.			
10	Develop and initiate a consultation process			
10	regarding the potential to decommission 1			
	unlit ball diamond (Diamond C) at Red			
	McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields.			
	iviccal triy ivicinional Athletic Fields.		<u> </u>	

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term	Medium-Term	Longer Term
1.1	Cubicat to mublic compultation and a decision	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	7-10+ Years
11	Subject to public consultation and a decision			
	to implement the decommissioning of			
	Diamond C, initiate a campus planning			
	exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields including public consultation			
	regarding the option to repurpose newly			
	available land at this site for other/new			
	recreation uses including a skate/BMX park,			
	repositioned/enhanced play area etc.			
12	Continue to invest in necessary capital			
12	improvements at the Red McCarthy Memorial			
	Athletic Fields including wash/changeroom			
	upgrades.			
13	Continue to maintain the lease for public use			
	of the Espanola Golf & Country Club tennis			
	courts and implement measures to monitor			
	demand for the use of this facility.			
14	Continue to maintain the existing outdoor ice			
	rink at Pinegrove Park and invest in necessary			
	capital improvements for this facility.			
15	As part of a campus planning exercise for the			
	Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields,			
	evaluate the opportunity to decommission the			
	beach volleyball facility at this location to			
	accommodate new recreational uses			
	potentially via a formal multi-use half court			
	facility (for youth basketball, volleyball and			
	other uses).			
16	Subject to consultation and confirmation of			
	demand, the Municipality may seek to			
	decommission the Yocom Park Playground and			
	opt to dispose of this parkland via the sale for			
17	residential uses			
17	As part of a campus planning exercise for the			
	Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields			
	evaluate the opportunity to re-			
	locate/reconfigure the existing playground at this site to allow for more suitable distance			
	from the baseball diamonds at this location.			
18	Any evaluation of the potential to re-locate			
10	the existing playground at the Red McCarthy			
	Memorial Athletic Fields should also consider			
	the opportunity to (re)invest in modern and			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
	accessible playground infrastructure at this site.	10010 2 0	1001010	7 20. 100.0
19	Develop a playground replacement strategy. Any play structure that has reached a 14-year age trigger should be phased for replacement immediately.			
20	Work to extend the Al Secord Fitness Trail from Queensway Avenue to Mead Boulevard Park. This should include investment in wayfinding signage and trail markings as required.			
21	Support the Ontario Trails Strategy and leverage any related funding as may become available in future years to develop local trail infrastructure (e.g. building fences and ongoing maintenance).			
22	Linked to trail development priorities, the Town of Espanola should seek to develop and implement a fulsome active transportation plan for the Town.			
23	Work with the community, local service clubs and the Clear Lake Stewardship Association to create a concept plan for park improvements at Clear Lake Beach.			
24	Work with Environment Canada to develop and initiate a plan for shoreline improvements to facilitate community and visitor access to water at this park.			
	ice Delivery, Policies & Programs			
25	Develop a Recreation and Leisure Guide for the Town. This may be an online/digital information tool with hardcopies located in key municipal facilities.			
26	Linked to the above, programming notifications and changes may be provided via print calendars published in the Town's newsletter as well as Library communication channels.			
27	Develop partnerships with surrounding municipalities to promote the digital and hardcopy Recreation and Leisure Guide as means of enhancing the promotional reach of this document and increasing awareness and			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term	Medium-Term	Longer Term
	utilization of the Toury's facilities and	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	7-10+ Years
	utilization of the Town's facilities and			
28	Building on the current ActiveNet system,			
20	explore the opportunity to implement a			
	comprehensive online, publicly-accessible			
	recreation program registration and facility			
	booking tool on the Municipal website to			
	allow for ease of registration and access to			
	facility rental information.			
29	Review and update the Espanola Field			
23	Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy.			
30	Review and revise application forms for field			
	and ice rentals to reflect changes to the			
	Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice			
	Allocation Policy.			
31	Establish a Special Events Policy for the Town			
	of Espanola that outlines how and under what			
	circumstances the Municipality may support a			
	local event.			
32	Undertake a detailed User Fee Study to			
	confirm the true cost of service for the			
	delivery of recreation (facilities and programs).			
33	In completing a User Fee Study exercise,			
	ensure rate setting is informed by established			
	principles for cost recovery and subsidization			
	and is linked to the categorization of priority			
	users as outlined in the Espanola Field			
	Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy.			
34	Progressively explore and implement creative			
	pricing strategies to enhance the utilization of			
	facilities (e.g. an 'all-in' affordable youth pass			
	for access to select swim and fitness class			
	options/bundles, 'free' bonus access to			
	programs for multi-pass			
	purchases/membership renewals etc.)			
35	Re-evaluate the existing Reciprocal Agreement			
	for Facility Use between the Town of Espanola			
	and all School Boards. Working with the			
	School Boards, the Town should assess the			
	effectiveness, cost and other programming			
	implications associated the agreement.			
36	Develop and initiate a customer service			
	monitoring system to annually assess			
	resident/user needs and requisite			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
	improvements to the Town's recreation service delivery model.			
37	Continue to track program and facility bookings/registrations on an annual basis, working with organized user groups to collect			
	data and monitor changes in registration by sport (i.e. demand for sport) and market conditions over time.			
38	Develop and initiate a Recreation Planning Committee comprised of key service delivery partners as a collaborative forum to investigate linked opportunities to promote events (e.g. festivals) and develop new programs and activities in keeping with the principles of this Master Plan.			
39	Continue to work with community partners such as the Lions Club and Tim Hortons to provide free public skates/swims and other affordable recreational activities for residents.			
40	Explore opportunities to facilitate the use of the arena floor in the summer for community-led/driven activities such as cheerleading camp and/or the temporary conversion of the space for use as an indoor Skate/BMK Park.			
41	Explore options to develop and initiate walking club and trail run programs with the implementation of recommendations to extend the Al Secord Fitness Trail.			
42	Work with the District Health Unit and Hospital to explore opportunities to accommodate mobility fitness, stretching, aqua therapy at the Regional Recreation Complex. New programming options may facilitate out-patient wellness support.			
43	Explore opportunities to work with Espanola Library to deliver joint programming/camps to ensure child literacy on all levels (physical and cognitive).			

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# 1 Recreation Master Plan: Fundamentals

#### 1.1 What is a Recreation Master Plan?

A Recreation Master Plan is a municipal guiding document that provides a long-term vision, as well as goals and objectives for the provision of facilities and services relating to parks and recreation. Sierra Planning and Management was retained by the Town of Espanola to develop a Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan for the municipality. This document is the first of its kind for the Town.

### 1.2 Master Plan Horizon and Plan Development Process

The purpose of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to develop a comprehensive framework of the planning and development needs and priorities for recreation facilities, programs, parks and open space for the next 5 to 10 years. Ongoing changes in population and demographics, as well as the landscape of delivery of programs and services, has resulted in the need for an evaluation of the Town's recreation delivery system. In accomplishing this, the process of developing this Master Plan required:

- Public consultation and stakeholder outreach as well as Town staff and Council
  engagement. This include an online survey and community workshop as well as
  telephone interviews with key stakeholders as required;
- An analysis of local, regional and provincial demographic and leisure trends, as well as best practices in other communities;
- A town-wide review of existing assets (including facility conditions, revenues and expenditures, utilization, planned capital investment and standards of provision on a population and participation basis);
- An analysis of strategic plans, policies and priorities (local, regional, and provincial) to develop long-term recreation recommendations that enable the Town to take full advantage of programming, investment and partnership opportunities;
- A compilation of the community's vision of recreation and evaluation of service level changes required to actualize goals in consideration for future demographics projected, recreation trends and socioeconomic conditions;
- Historic and forecasted population dynamics and demographic change and the impact of this on the delivery of recreation;
- An understanding of the current municipal delivery model for recreation including levels of investment in the sector; and,
- The identification of gaps and opportunities for the provision of facilities, services and programs that may be addressed through the recommendations of the Master Plan.

Exhibit 1 outlines the Master Planning process that was undertaken for this project.

Exhibit 1: Master Plan Project Process



# 1.3 How does it relate to Council's Strategic Priorities (and other policies)?

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is developed within a positive and supportive policy environment for recreation. In 2015, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council released *A Framework for Recreation in Canada - 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing.* The report positions recreation as being central to all facets of wellbeing: individual wellbeing, community wellbeing and the wellbeing of natural and built environments. The five goals identified in the framework provide guidance for all recreation providers and related stakeholders to consider – these goals include: fostering active living through physical recreation, increasing inclusion and access to recreation for marginalized populations, helping to connect nature through recreation, ensuring the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage recreation, and ensuring continued growth in the recreation field. This framework's vision of enhancing wellbeing and the holistic approach to sustaining recreation practices aligns with the overall goals of this Master Plan.

At the provincial level, the Ontario *Planning Act* supports the adequate provision and distribution of recreational facilities and also identifies requirements for parkland conveyance through Bill 73. Similarly, the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) states that active communities should be promoted by "planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources" (Section 1.5.1, Provincial Policy Statement, 2014).

In 2011, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs released the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario (2011), which provides growth policy guidance with a specific focus on long-term sustainability in the following themes: Economy, People, Communities, Aboriginal Peoples, Infrastructure and Environment. The provision of parks and recreation facilities in Northern Ontario communities like Espanola has the ability to strengthen each of these focuses. The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario states that municipalities are encouraged to "support and promote healthy living by providing for communities with a diverse mix of land uses, a range and mix of employment and housing types, high-quality public open spaces, and easy access to local stores and services" (Section 3.4.3, Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, 2011).

On a more local level, the Town of Espanola's Official Plan (2010) states that the Town will strive to provide a healthy and high quality of life for all its residents. For example, walking and cycling trails will be developed to connect shoreline areas and existing parks, and other important physical features will be developed where possible. With regard to open spaces, the Town shall provide a balanced range and distribution of "active and passive cultural and recreational activities and facilities to accommodate the needs of residents" (Section 4.6(a, f), Town of Espanola Official Plan, 2010).

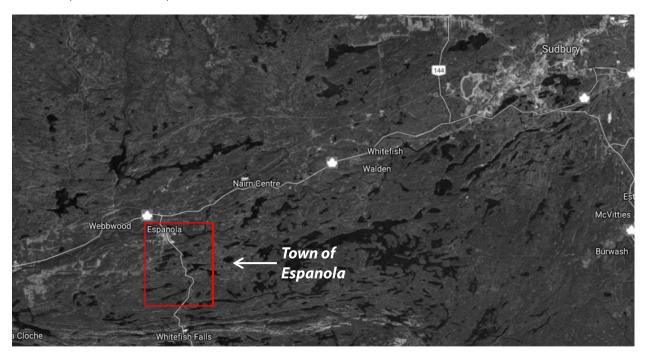
The Espanola Strategic Plan (2013) further realizes the vision of the Official Plan's position on enhancing parks and recreation. For example, a goal in the Strategic Plan is to have a safe and healthy community where residents are involved in community life, enabled by an active community charter, subsidized recreation programs, parks, playgrounds and community gardens. The creation of the Espanola Active Community Charter proposes that in order to promote active living, partnerships should be sought at workplaces, child-oriented settings and in community decision making.

# 2 Regional & Municipal Context

# 2.1 Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile (Current/Historic)

The Town of Espanola is located just outside of the Greater Sudbury Region, along the Spanish River. The town is situated on Highway 6, just south of the Trans-Canada Highway (Hwy. 17).

Exhibit 2: Espanola Location Map



Source: Sierra Planning and Management

Over the last 2 census periods, the Town of Espanola has experienced a decline in population and is expected to continue to experience aging. For a community of its size, Espanola functions as a service area to nearby mainland communities, as well as Manitoulin Island. Statistics Canada identified that as of the 2016 Census, the Town of Espanola had a population of 4,996 permanent residents, which represents a 7% decline from the 2011 Census population of 5,364.

Exhibit 3: Age Distribution Comparison for the Population of the Town of Espanola, 2006-2016

	2006	% of Population	2011	% of Population	2016	% of Population
Children, under 9 years	470	8.8%	485	9.0%	455	9.1%
Youth, 10-19 years	775	14.6%	675	12.6%	515	10.3%
Young Adults, 20-29 years	415	7.8%	545	10.2%	550	11.0%
Adults, 30-44 years	1,000	18.8%	865	16.1%	805	16.1%
Adults, 45-64 years	1,690	31.8%	1,835	34.2%	1,590	31.8%
Older Adults, 65 and over	900	16.9%	960	17.9%	1,085	21.7%
Total	5,320		5,365		4,996	

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 2016



The chart above identifies a historic pattern of growth in the town's older adult population and decline in other segments of the population. Despite this, children and youth remain an important cohort, with approximately 19% of the town's population being under the age of 20 years as of 2016.

80-84 70-74 60-64 50-54 ■ %Male 40-44 ■ %Female 30-34 20-24 10-14 0-4 5 15 10 5 0 10 15

Exhibit 4: Age Distribution Comparison for the Population of the Town of Espanola, 2016

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 2016.

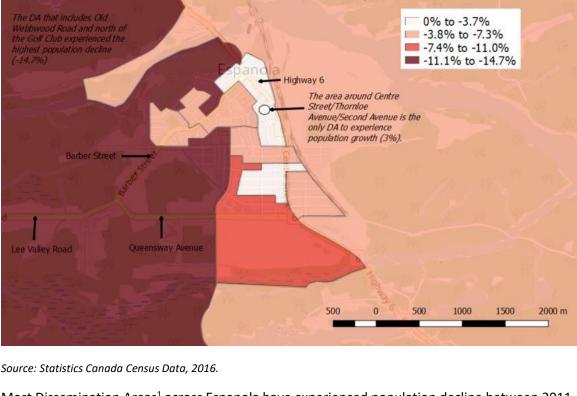
Espanola's median after-tax family income in 2011 (based on latest available census data) was \$68,332 – slightly lower than Ontario's median after-tax family income of \$71,000. In 2012, Financial Post Markets Canadian Demographics projected an average household income of \$73,092 for Espanola – this compares to \$65,259 for Manitoulin Island and \$78,172 for Greater Sudbury. Average household income in Espanola is higher than the average for Northeastern Ontario, through lower than the Provincial average. The town's residents spend a comparable amount of their disposable income (that is, income available after essential expenses on food, shelter, etc.) on recreation when compared to Greater Sudbury and slightly more than the average for Northeastern Ontario.

Exhibit 5: Projected 2015 Average Household Income and Disposable Spending for Residents of Espanola, Northeastern Ontario and the Province

Recreation Spending Per Capita (2015) for Comparable Northern Ontario Municipalities					
Espanola Kapuskasing Cochrane Hearst					
Total Expenses for Parks & Recreation	\$1,682,257	\$2,457,025	\$2,693,498	\$1,737,900	
Population (2016 Census)	4,996	8,292	5,321	5,070	
Spending Per Capita	\$336.72	\$296.31	\$506.20	\$342.78	

Source: Canadian Demographics, Financial Post Markets, 2012.





Population Change between 2011-2016, Town of Espanola, by Dissemination Area

Exhibit 6: Most areas in Espanola experienced population decline between 2011 and 2016

Most Dissemination Areas<sup>1</sup> across Espanola have experienced population decline between 2011 and 2016. In particular, the areas to the west of Mead Boulevard experienced the highest population decline. Neighbourhoods east of Centre Street/Highway 6 surrounding the Regional Recreation Complex and schools, as well as residential areas adjacent to the Red McCarthy fields and Espanola Mall, have experienced marginal growth in population (See Exhibit 6). This indicates that at the level of geographic neighbourhoods, population decline in Espanola is not town-wide. Residential areas of the town that have experienced growth are generally well located near to retail and other services, including major recreation facilities. That is, complete neighbourhoods (specifically, residential areas that offer educational, health, social, and recreational services) are an attraction for young families and help to sustain populations. Municipal investment in recreation should be viewed as part of the Town's strategic priorities for resident retention and attraction.

#### **Age-specific Dynamics**

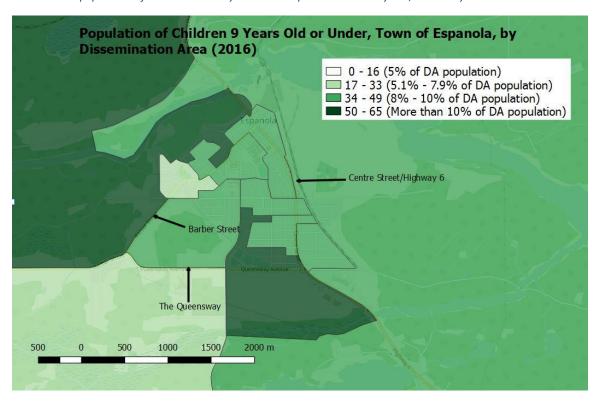
Statistics Canada defines a Dissemination Area (DA) as a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent dissemination blocks. It is the smallest standard geographic area for which all census data are disseminated.



For the purposes of this report, the age definitions are as follows:

- Children (ages 0-9 years);
- Youth (ages 10-19 years);
- Adults (ages 20-64 years); and
- Older Adults (age 65 years and over).

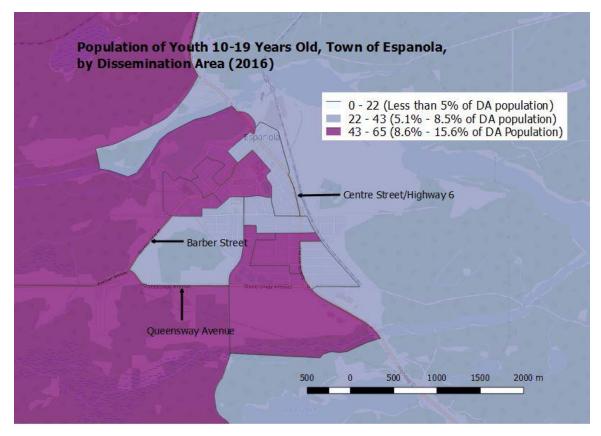
Exhibit 7: The population of children under 9 years old in Espanola is relatively low, but evenly distributed



Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 2016.

In general, children and youth represented around 19% of Espanola's 2016 census population. The northwest and southeast portions of Espanola have higher concentrations of children than the rest of the town – children made up over 10% of the population in the residential areas south of Second Avenue and Mead Boulevard, and Queensway Avenue and Mead Boulevard.

Exhibit 8: Distributions of Espanola's Youth Population (10-19 Years)



Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 2016.

Youth between the ages of 10 and 19 years old accounted for approximately 10% of the total population of Espanola. Similar to the population distribution of children, there are higher concentrations of youth in the residential areas south of Second Avenue and Mead Boulevard, and Queensway Avenue and Mead Boulevard. In addition, higher concentrations of youth can be found in portions of the community surrounding school areas and the Recreation Complex.

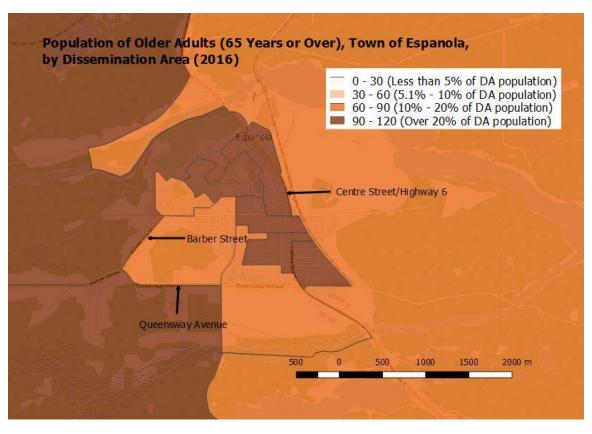


Exhibit 9: The number of older adults in Espanola is more concentrated in the town centre

Source: Statistics Canada Census Data, 2016.

The older adult population is a growing segment of Espanola's overall population. In 2016, older adults, meaning those 65 years old and over, accounted for 21.7% of the town's population, whereas in 2011, older adults made up 17.9% of the population. Higher proportions of older adults are generally found throughout the town centre, as well as on the outskirts of the urban area west of Barber Street and south of Queensway Avenue.

# 2.2 Projected Population Change

Since 1991, Espanola has continued to experience a marginal decline in its population. This trend is forecast to continue over the next 19 years to 2036 (see Exhibit 10).

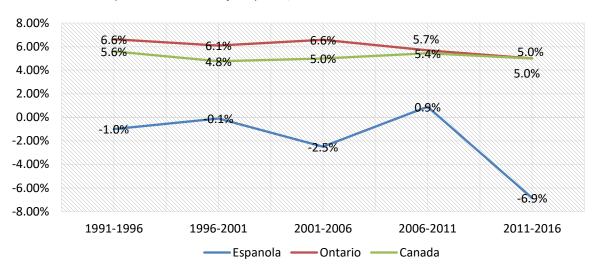


Exhibit 10: Historic Population Growth Rates for Espanola, the Province and Canada 1991-2016

Source: Statistics Canada Census 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016

While Espanola has experienced population decline over the past two decades, both Ontario and Canada have observed population growth (at a rate of approximately 5%). The Town of Espanola's Official Plan has provided population projections to 2036, estimating a gradual decline in population of approximately 47 people over 15 years. It should be noted, however, that the actual 2016 Census population (4,996 persons) is lower than the projection by the Town's Official Plan (2016 Draft).

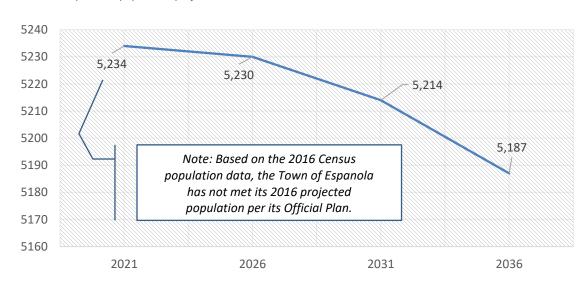


Exhibit 11: Espanola's population projections between 2021-2036

Source: Town of Espanola Official Plan (Draft, 2016)



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The availability of recreation programming and facilities is a part of the quality of life equation for the wellbeing of the public. Specifically, investment in recreation and leisure opportunities should support active lifestyle for all groups as well as key target populations such as youth and seniors. Investment in recreation should be viewed as part of the Town's strategy to curb/stem future population decline in Espanola.

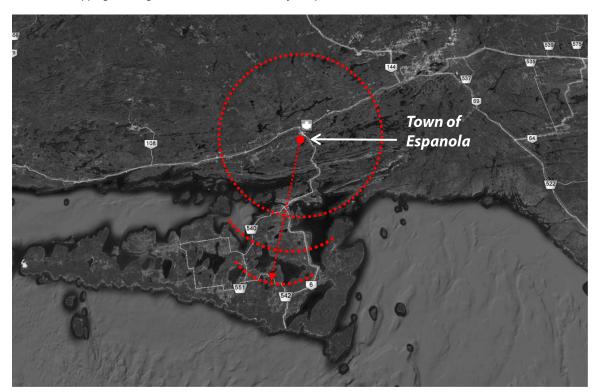
# 3 Defining the Level of Service for Recreation

# 3.1 Service Area & Market Draw for Recreation in Espanola

The primary service area for recreation is the Town of Espanola and its residents, comprising a population of approximately 5,000.

An assessment of the historic utilization of the Regional Recreation Complex (in particular the indoor pool), indicates this facility has a broader market draw which extends beyond the boundaries of the municipality to include surrounding communities within a 20 to 30-minute drive-time east and west of the town and as far south to include Manitoulin Island (accounting for an estimated 19,765 population including town residents).

Exhibit 12: Mapping showing the recreation service area for Espanola based on a 30-minute drive-time



Locality	2016 Census Population
Town of Espanola	4,996
Communities within a 30-minute drive-time of the town	14,769
Total Market area for Recreation	19,765

Source: Sierra Planning and Management based on Statistics Canada 2016 Census Data

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Taking the above into consideration, as it relates to recreation, the town is, and is expected to continue to, function as a regional centre/service provider in Sudbury District, particularly since it is the only area outside of the City of Greater Sudbury which offers indoor aquatics.

The market draw for recreation facilities and services in Espanola will be important in considering future opportunities to enhance program performance, facility utilization and the approach the fee setting over the period of this Master Plan. Recommendations as outlined in the remainder of this document evaluate these prospects.

#### 3.2 Role of the Town

The Town of Espanola's Leisure Services Department is the core municipal agent for the planning, administration and delivery of recreation facilities, services and programs, playing a significant role in the direct delivery of leisure programming within the Regional Recreation Complex. The work of the Department is supported by Public Works which is responsible for the maintenance and management of outdoor recreation assets such as playgrounds, parks and sports fields.

As it relates to recreational service delivery, the Town of Espanola has historically played a more significant role in the direct delivery of leisure programming. Over the years, staffing reductions have resulted in a loss in the Leisure Service Department's programming/staff complement. As such, the Department scaled its efforts to deliver a reduced roster of programs (mostly centered on aquatics). With a shift from more robust involvement in the direct provision of programming, the Department strongly supports a Community Development Model of recreation provision; and balances its operations with the facilitation of programs and services led by other organizations/non-profits within municipal facilities. The Town remains the key provider of publicly-accessible recreational facilities.

# 3.3 Role of Community Partners

The Town of Espanola partners with community-based organizations that rent out / utilize space in the Town's facilities to provide recreation programs and services, engaging residents of all ages in a variety of activities. A summary of the programming provided by community partners / organizations is provided below:

#### Hockey/Skating

Ice sports in Espanola are provided through a variety of leagues and organizations. Examples of hockey and skating partner groups include the Espanola Express Jr. A Hockey Club, Minor Hockey, Pond Hockey, Sportsman League, Figure Staking, Lumbago, and Goodtymers.

#### **Summer Sports**

Summer sports leagues are often provided by community organizations in Espanola. These include minor ball, minor soccer, ladies' baseball, and men's baseball leagues.

#### **Community Program Partners**

The Town of Espanola works closely with a number of community partners and organizations to provide a variety of programs. These are typically provided through team sponsorships (I.e. Tim Hortons hockey sponsorships), event hosting (i.e. free skates), etc. Examples of community partners include the Lions Club, Family Health Team, Sudbury & District Health Unit, Queensway Pentecostal Church, Tim Hortons, Our Child Our Future (Sacred Heart daycare).

# 4 Current Inventory of Parks, Open Space and Recreation Assets

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan and its recommendations are centred on the municipal supply assets (that is, those recreation facilities that are within the ownership and control of the Town of Espanola). The Municipal recreation asset base includes:

- 1 single pad arena;
- 1 25 m, 6 lane indoor pool;
- 4 ball diamonds;
- 2 soccer fields (natural);
- 1 athletic track;
- 10 park spaces; and
- A 1.325 km walking and fitness trail.

In addition to the municipal supply of facilities, there are a range of facility types delivered by the private and volunteer sector as well as local schools. Private facilities generally include forprofit fitness facilities while school assets mostly comprise gymnasia with limited/restricted availability for community use.

There are currently 5 schools in Espanola – 2 Public Schools (elementary and secondary), 2 French Catholic Schools (elementary and secondary), and 1 English Catholic School (elementary). An outline of the schools and their recreation-related assets is provided below.

Exhibit 13: School Board-owned Recreation Facilities in the Town of Espanola

School	School Board	Recreation Assets
Espanola High School	Rainbow District School Board	1 gymnasium
Ecole Secondaire Catholique Franco-Ouest	Le Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario	1 gymnasium
A.B. Ellis Public School	Rainbow District Board	1 gymnasium, 2 playgrounds
Sacred Heart School	Huron Superior Catholic District School Board	1 gymnasium, 1 baseball diamond, 1 basketball court, 2 playgrounds
L'ecole St. Joseph	Le Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario	1 gymnasium, 1 playground

Both secondary schools — Espanola High School and Ecole Secondaire Catholique Franco-Ouest - are housed in the same building at the corner of Mead Boulevard and Spruce Avenue and are located adjacent to the Regional Recreation Complex. The high schools have two gymnasiums altogether, but do not have any outdoor recreation facilities — students utilize the facilities available at the nearby Recreation Complex. A.B. Ellis Public School is located across the street from the high schools and includes a gymnasium, as well as two small playground areas for students. L'ecole St. Joseph is located further away from the town centre, south on Mead Boulevard and has one small playground area. Sacred Heart School is also located on Mead

Boulevard, just south of the high schools. The Sacred Heart School property has a number of recreation assets, including a baseball diamond, a basketball court, and two small playground areas for students.

The Town of Espanola is currently engaged in Reciprocal Agreements for Facility Use with the local school boards (e.g., Huron Superior Catholic District School Board). The agreement outlines the terms for municipal use of school facilities and vice versa, and is assessed in Section 8.1.1 (Policies and Protocol) of this report as part of the Recommendations.

The relatively limited base of recreation facilities within the school supply emphasizes the importance of the municipal supply of facilities.

# 5 Recreation Needs

The following section provides an overview of the current standards of recreation facility provision in Espanola and target standards based on communities across Ontario of comparable population size.

# 5.1 Existing and Target Standards

This Master Plan establishes provision of standards which provide a general guideline for determining present and future facility needs based on population and participation thresholds. In general, standards form part of the basis for determining needs and comprise a broader analysis including the condition and utilization of assets. These standards were developed through the following analysis:

- Existing service standards in the Town of Espanola;
- Existing community demand for and utilization of recreation facilities; and,
- Standards of provision in other comparable Ontario communities.

The result is based on facility provision targets or standards specific to the unique attributes of the Town of Espanola.

Presented below is an overview of standards of recreation facility provision (by type of facility) in the Town of Espanola, assessing the ratio of supply of amenities based on total population and registered participants, as appropriate. The supply is based on publicly owned facilities only, as the majority of non-municipal supply of recreation facilities are gymnasium spaces (provided in schools).

# 5.2 Population-based Standards

Population-based target standards of facility provision were established using population data from Statistics Canada 2016 Census Data. These standards are most appropriately applied to those facilities historically developed in response to community-wide and/or town-wide needs (such as arenas, indoor aquatic facilities, etc.), as detailed in Exhibits 15 through 17 below.

Exhibit 14: Population Based Standards - Outdoor Facilities

		Population					Comparable Target
Facility	Town Ownership	2016 <sup>2</sup>	2021³	2026	2031	2036	
Outdoor Fa	Outdoor Facilities		1				
Outdoor Ice/ Sport Pad	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 4,000 to 5,000 residents

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Forecast population is based on estimates of the Town of Espanola Official Plan (Draft, 2016)



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2016 Population data reflects the actual 2016 Census figure as published by Statistics Canada

		Population				Comparable Target	
Facility	Town Ownership	2016²	20213	2026	2031	2036	
Outdoor Fac	cilities		1	per populo			
Athletic Track	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	Not applicable
Soccer Fields	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	1 per 2,000 to 5,000 residents
Football Fields	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 5,000 to 7,000 residents
Ball Diamonds (Lit)	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	1 per 4,000 to 5,000 residents
Ball Diamonds (Unlit)	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	1 per 2,000 to 3,000 residents
Tennis Courts*		-	-	-	-	-	1 per 4,000 to 5,000 residents
Beach Volleyball Court	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 4,000 to 5,000 residents
Play Structures*	6	833	872	872	869	865	1 within 500 to 800 metres of all built-up residential area without crossing any major barriers
Designated Outdoor Fitness Areas	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	Not applicable
Trail	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	Not applicable
Beach	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	Not applicable

Exhibit 15: Population Based Standards – Parkland and Open Spaces

	Total	Acreage	Hectares	<b>Current Town Standard</b>	Comparable Target
Town/Regional Parks	5	23.1	57.9	11.6 hectares per 1,000 residents	Not applicable
Community Parks	2	2.6	6.5	1.3 hectares per 1,000 residents	1.1 hectares per 1,000 residents
Neighbourhood Parks	3	1.0	2.4	0.5 hectares per 1,000 residents	0.4 hectares per 1,000 residents
Total	10	26.7	66.7	13.4 hectares per 1,000 residents	2 to 4 hectares per 1,000 residents

Exhibit 16: Population Based Standards – Indoor Facilities

		Population				Comparable Target	
Facility	Town Ownership	2016 <sup>4</sup>	2021 <sup>5</sup>	2026	2031	2036	
Indoor Facilities		1 per population					
Arena	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 10,000 to 12,000 population
Pool	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 15,000 to 20,000 population
Fitness Space(s)	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	Not applicable
Meeting Rooms	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	Not applicable
Squash Courts	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	Not applicable

# 5.3 Participation-based Standards

Participation standards reflect the scale and specificity of demand for such activities which may be influenced by a range of locational, demographic, historic, and even ethnic dynamics. Sierra Planning and Management undertook an assessment of local level participant and team registrations by sport. Where participation data was available, participation-based standards were established.

Participation-based standards are typically based on minor sport registration due to the data limitations related to adult participation. These standards represent only one measure of consideration for the future provision of facilities, and does not speak to issues related to the quality or condition of facilities.

Exhibit 17: Participation Based Standards – Indoor Facilities

	Participation Standards	Comparable Target		
Facility	2016 Current			
Indoor Ice Pad	1 ice pad per 247 participants	1 ice pad per 450 to 700 registered minor participants		
Ball Diamonds	1 ball diamond per 55 registered minor participants	1 per 80 to 100 registered participants		
Soccer Fields	1 field per 93 registered minor participants	1 per 60 to 100 registered participants		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Forecast population is based on estimates of the Town of Espanola Official Plan (Draft, 2016)



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> 2016 Population data reflects the actual 2016 Census figure as published by Statistics Canada

# 6 Community Aspirations

A series of community input activities has formed the basis of understanding of resident needs and aspirations for recreational opportunities in the Town of Espanola. These include:

- The 2016 Town of Espanola Citizen Survey (500 persons, aged 18 years and older, were interviewed via telephone);
- The February 2017 Community Workshop for the Master Plan assignment; and,
- Other public feedback provided electronically via email and via the online comment submission tool available through the project webpage for the Master Plan.

Several important themes emerged from the public input activities. These themes are identified and described below.

#### Theme: Build on Existing Community Assets

Most respondents felt that recreation is a service that should continue to be provided by the municipality. Recreation has been, and is expected to continue to be, deemed a core service of the Town and was one of the top 5 priorities for future investment cited by respondents, including activities for youth (7%), and affordable recreational activities for seniors (4%). Providing the recreation amenities for people of all ages and abilities (including older adults and young families) is often a key factor in deciding where they will locate either in retirement or to start a family.

Building on the assets that currently exist in the town (i.e. parks, trails, Recreation Complex, etc.) was important to many resident, who identified outdoor assets and recreation services/Recreation Complex among the greatest assets the Town has to offer.

Rank % of Respondents **Community Asset** 1 21% Friendly community 2 18% Domtar Mill 3 11% **Outdoor assets** 4 Recreation services / complex 6% 5 4% The Hospital 5 4% Attractiveness of the Town

Exhibit 18: Town's Top 5 Greatest Assets

Source: 2016 Espanola Citizen Survey Report, Oracle Poll Research.

It is evident that residents utilize a wide variety of recreation facilities within Espanola; in fact, 86% (431 individuals) of respondents to the Citizen Survey indicated that they used a recreation facility in the town within the past year, and participated in recreational programming and special events. Those facilities most used by residents (within the last year) included:

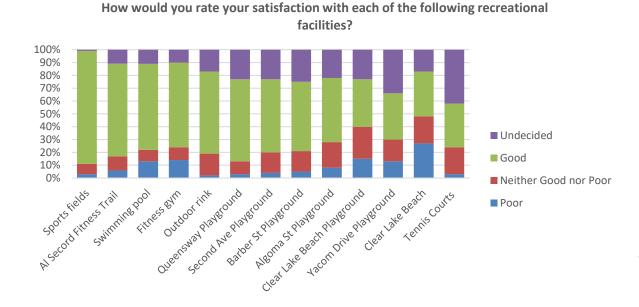
Exhibit 19: Popular facilities residents utilized within the last year

% of Respondents	Recreation Facility
41%	Al Secord Fitness Trail
40%	Sports Fields
37%	Swimming Pool
37%	Special Events
33%	Fitness Centre
28%	Queensway Playground
24%	Barber Street Playground
24%	Clear Lake Beach
24%	Algoma Street Playground
23%	Outdoor Rink
18%	Second Avenue Playground
14%	Clear Lake Beach Playground
9%	Yocom Drive Playground
6%	Squash Courts
4%	Tennis Courts

Source: 2016 Espanola Citizen Survey Report, Oracle Poll Research.

Overall, 82% of residents indicated that they are generally satisfied with the parks and open spaces provided by the Town. In general, respondents indicated those recreational facilities that they were most satisfied with were the sports fields, while the facilities provided at Clear Lake Beach (including the beach facility and the playground) were identified as having the lowest satisfactory rating among respondents.

Exhibit 20: Resident Perspectives on Recreation: 2016 Oracle Poll Citizen Survey



Source: 2016 Espanola Citizen Survey Report, Oracle Poll Research.



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Future priorities for recreation planning in Espanola, as identified by residents, included lowering rates or fees to access activities or facilities; youth programs or activities; more walking or bike trails / bike lanes; more sporting events; a dog park; AN accessible playground; BMX / skateboard areas; and an improved beach area or water access. Alternative uses of the arena floor during the summer months was also identified as a potential opportunity in the future.

#### Theme: Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing was very important to many residents. Residents indicated that providing the means for the community to actively participate in healthy choices should come from the Town, and be offered through a variety of means (indoor/outdoor, active/passive, etc.).

Provide welcoming spaces and user-friendly tools for people of all ages to interact in active, passive, social and group activities. Additional or improved outdoor activities and spaces for residents and families to enjoy together was important to residents, while winter activities were identified as lacking.

It was also important to many residents to increase the number of events held throughout the year, whether large or small, to keep the community socially engaged, participating and proud of their community. Another suggestion included providing more public access to the water through the development of a public boat launch or fishing pier at Clear Lake.

#### Theme: Accessibility

Making all facilities (buildings and parks) accessible for all ages and abilities was identified as an important theme moving forward, meaning the inclusion of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements. Ensuring compliance with AODA and the Ontario Building Code (OBC) when facilities and amenities are built new, replaced or renovated is now legislation.

In addition, keeping the public parks and trails clean and in good repair is important in enabling and encouraging people to continue to use them.

#### Theme: Focus on Programming

The provision of affordable programming for children, adults and older adults was identified as a vital role for the municipality; this was based on the indication that there is currently a lack of programs offered for children and young adults in particular. Registered programs such as swimming lessons, yoga, or art classes, summer camps, and drop-in programs such as a knitting group, youth centre, or pick-up basketball were suggested as potential programs that could be offered. Some suggestions indicated that more programs could be offered by local community groups, associations, or partners, supported by the Town by utilizing the existing recreation facilities including parks, open spaces, trails and the Complex.

#### Theme: Partnerships

Tying in with the previous theme related to programming, developing strategic partnerships with local service clubs, and other groups, was identified as an important theme for the provision of recreation in the future. Some residents suggested that partnerships with municipalities in the surrounding areas could also be beneficial to the residents of Espanola.

This could take the form of providing programming on a more "regional" level with each community focusing on certain or specialized program offers. Cross promotion, that is promotion of programs and facilities occurring within the surrounding municipalities, was also suggested as an important factor to improve the Town's delivery of recreation services.

Providing affordable spaces to these partners to enable the hosting of programming was also an important consideration that was identified by residents.

Other suggestions included corporate involvement in recreation facilities, and joint use agreements with schools for the sharing of facilities and equipment. It should be noted that joint use agreements with local schools are already in place (see Section 4 for details).

#### Theme: Town Resources and Communications

Many respondents indicated that better communication between the Town and user groups was needed in order to help the user groups become more successful with the Town's assistance (i.e. advertising opportunities, etc.).

Other suggestions included:

- Investing in and utilizing facility booking software so people can book online;
- Providing more information on the website and keeping it up to date, specifically
  information related to upcoming events, programs or camps, and locations of facilities
  (i.e. public fishing locations, pet friendly trails, etc.);
- Better maintenance of existing facilities and amenities; and,
- Committing more Town resources to recreation programming.

# 7 A Central Role for Recreation

This Master Plan is a municipal guidance document for future investment in recreation. The Plan outlines a series of short, medium and longer-term priorities for investment in facilities, services and programs owned and/or delivered/operated by the Town of Espanola over a 10-year timeframe. The Plan and its recommendations are based on the following vision, goals, and set of key principles for planning and investment.

# 7.1 Key Principles

The key principles guiding the recommendations of the Master Plan read as follows:

- 1. Investment in recreation for resident retention and attraction (i.e. youth and families);
- 2. Addressing the needs of an aging population through recreation planning;
- 3. Enhancing the utilization of existing assets through investment, creative programming and partnerships;
- Adopting an asset management approach to investment in infrastructure that reflects prudent capital investment – this includes consideration for replacing, decommissioning and/or repurposing assets where warranted;
- Ongoing monitoring of community demand for events, new sport and activities and where
  possible, accommodating such demand through the multi-use of assets (that is, through the
  creation of 'recreation destinations');
- 6. The provision of quality services in a responsive manner as well as the development and implementation of policies and protocols that enhance the user experience with facilities; and,
- 7. A balancing approach to fee setting that encourages broad community participation in recreation and which recognizes the value of assets.

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# >> Vision & Goals for Recreation in Espanola

7.2 VISION: An active and vibrant community that maximizes its existing built/natural assets to provide exceptional leisure opportunities and quality services for residents and visitors

# **7.3 GOALS:**

1



**Building a healthy community** 

Defining the Town's parks and waterfront areas (e.g. destination parks)



4

2



Making recreation accessible for all

Maximizing partnerships for efficient service delivery



5

3



Green space linkages via active transportation and trail planning



6

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### 8 Recommendations

A basic premise of this Master Plan is to ensure the long-term and efficient provision of quality recreation facilities – sufficient in scale and uses to meet the needs of the current and future population – as well as the development of sustainable strategies to achieve this.

The following recommendations pertain to a range of recreation facilities (indoor and outdoor) in the town – actions for which have been determined based on an evaluation of existing utilization and demand, facility conditions, capital and operating costs/impacts and acceptable standards of facility provision. As such, the recommendations give balanced consideration to:

- The existing scale of use of facilities (that is, whether specific types of amenities offer a town-wide level of servicing, or are community-serving in nature);
- The overall quantity and geographic distribution of facilities weighed against appropriate population-based (in some instances specific age cohorts) and participation-based targets; and
- Target standards of facility provision for the Town of Espanola.

### 8.1 Indoor Facilities

### 8.1.1. Arena

The Town of Espanola's Regional Recreation Complex opened in 1999 and comprises the municipality's only arena facility. The Regional Recreation Complex arena is a single-pad arena. The facility is 18-year-old and is observed to be in relatively good condition. The arena has an anticipated lifespan of 50 years which may be extended by routine repairs and maintenance.

### **Utilization & Building Condition**

Arena ice at the Regional Complex is available from late August to April. Based on total available ice, utilization is estimated at 51%. An analysis of prime-time utilization indicates around 67% of prime-time ice is used, with the most significant pressure on prime-time slots occurring during the period of January to March. Based on utilization, there appears to be no significant pressure on arena ice at the Regional Recreation Complex to warrant investment in an additional ice surface in Espanola over the period of this Plan.

With respect to current building conditions, no major capital investments have been warranted for the arena and broader complex since its construction. The Town has recently established a capital reserve for this building in recognition that planning for future repairs is an asset

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Based on 2014 (latest available) ice use statistics provided by the Town's Leisure Services Department

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Based on 2014 (latest available) ice use statistics provided by the Town's Leisure Services Department

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management necessity. This practice should continue over the life of this Plan and beyond in keeping with best practice in asset management. At present, there are no pressing building condition items that would warrant consideration for investment in new/replacement indoor ice. Consultation with ice users indicated issues with the quality of the ice surface, sound system and the need for heating in the spectator seating area. The suitability of change rooms to meet player needs was also identified as warranting attention. This Plan recommends the completion of a full building condition assessment for the Regional Recreation Complex and Arena to confirm current maintenance requirements as this aspect of work has not previously been completed for this facility. The arena and Complex is expected to continue to age. Routine building condition assessments (i.e. every 5 years), inclusive of capital cost estimates for individual improvement items, will allow the Municipality to appropriately plan for future capital requirements on an annual basis.

#### **Provisions Standards**

The Master Plan establishes target standards of 1 indoor ice pad per 10,000 to 12,000 population and 1 ice pad per 450 to 700 registered minor participants. These standards are in keeping with provision targets of communities of comparable size across the Province. Based on this, no new additional ice surfaces are required in the Town of Espanola.

Exhibit 21: Population-Based Standard of Provision for Ice

	Ownership	Population				Comparable Target	
Facility	Town	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	
Indoor Ice Pad	1	4,996	5,234	5,230	5,214	5,187	1 per 10,000 to 12,000 population

Exhibit 22: Participation-Based Standard of Provision for Ice

	Participation Standards	Comparable Target
Facility	2016 Current	
Indoor Ice Pad	1 ice pad per 247 participants	1 ice pad per 450 to 700 registered minor participants

The plan for the Regional Recreation Complex and Arena rests on enhancing the function of this facility as a community hub that offers social, civic, recreational and cultural opportunities. Prospects for this include:

- Enhanced multi-use of spaces for a range of indoor activities;
- Taking advantage of the co-location of both indoor and outdoor functions with the Espanola Library to achieve mutual business planning and administrative objectives through partnerships for events, program development, and space utilization, as may develop over time;
- The exploration of the full suite of partnerships to develop the program offer at the facility; and,

• Enhanced marketing initiatives, which may include working with surrounding municipalities to promote activities and events at the Complex, as well as locally.

Section 8.4 of this Master Plan makes recommendations to accomplish this.

### **Recommendation 1**

Continue to annually fund and maintain a capital reserve for the Regional Recreation Complex to help address future capital maintenance requirements that may occur over time.

### **Recommendation 2**

Routinely (i.e. every 5 years) undertake a comprehensive building condition assessment for the Regional Recreation Complex (arena, pool, and other building aspects). This should comprise order of magnitude costs for improvement items to assist the Municipality with capital budgeting for this facility.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Invest in capital improvements for the Regional Recreation Complex Arena as may be required over time. The short-term focus should be on expanding the range of programming opportunities associated with this facility in order the enhance revenue generation and utilization of this asset. (See Section 8.4.3: Programming)

### 8.1.2. Indoor Aquatics

The indoor pool at the Regional Recreation Complex is the only one of its kind in the Sudbury District (that is, outside of the geographic boundaries of the City of Greater Sudbury). As a result, this facility has attracted utilization from residents within a 30-minute drive-time of the town including Manitoulin Island<sup>8</sup>.

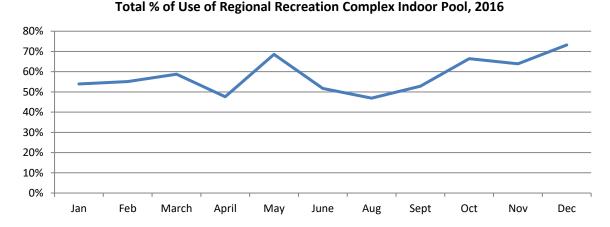
### **Utilization & Building Condition**

Similar to the arena, no major capital investments have been warranted for the pool since its construction. Based on facility age (18 years) and known condition, there appears to be no infrastructure requirements for new investment in indoor aquatics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Note: this is not the case for the arena at the Regional Recreation Complex which largely has a local user base.



Exhibit 23: Current Utilization of the Regional Recreation Complex Indoor Pool



Source: Data provided by the Town of Espanola Leisure Services Department

In terms of the current and historic utilization of this asset, the pool recorded a total of 1,898 booked hours in 2016. The pool is closed during the month of July due to historic underutilization during this peak summer month. On average, the pool has a total utilization rate of 58% with prime-time use as high as 68%. The pool experiences important use during non-prime time hours on weekdays due to school programming. Based on current operations, the current facility is sufficient to meet community needs.

The Town of Espanola does not have a competitive swim team, however, memberships and participation in aquatic programs has continued to increase over the past 3 years. This is a positive precedent for future programming and performance.

### **Recommendation 4**

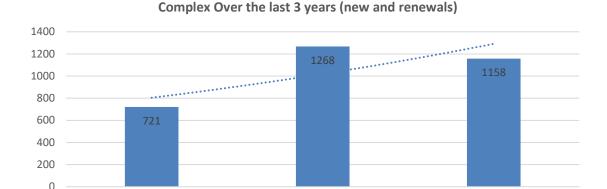
Linked to Recommendation 3, continue to invest in necessary capital improvements/maintenance for the Regional Recreation Complex Indoor Pool.

The short-term focus should be to expand the range of programming opportunities associated with this facility in order the enhance revenue generation and utilization of this asset. This may include extending the summer operations of the pool via the exploration of creative programming solutions such as water polo, a temporary floating obstacle course etc. (See Section 8.4.3: Programming for other recommendations). Staffing and other resource implications of options will need to be evaluated.

### 8.1.3. Indoor Fitness and Racquet Sport

Other major indoor amenity components at the Regional Recreation Complex include the fitness centre and squash facilities. In general, fitness and squash memberships have increased over the 3-year period from 2014 to 2016.

Exhibit 24: Trends in Annual Fitness Memberships at the Regional Recreation Complex



2015

2016

Annual Fitness Memberships Purchased at the Regional Recreation

Source: Data provided by the Town of Espanola Leisure Services Department

2014

These facility spaces are deemed to be ancillary to the arena and indoor pool and offer complementary recreational experiences for residents. In the case of Espanola, Municipal involvement in the delivery of fitness recognizes an existing gap in the recreation service market in the private and volunteer sectors. Specifically, fitness opportunities as provided by the Town cater to youth, adults and seniors with an emphasis on providing family-friendly fitness opportunities in comparison to other niche market fitness services provided in by private sector. Growth in the use of these facilities indicates there is market/resident base in the community that demands this service. It is expected that recommendations to broaden the utilization base of the Complex (as outlined within this document) will similarly result in heightened community awareness and utilization of these facilities.

### **Recommendation 5**

Linked to Recommendation 4, continue to maintain fitness and racquet sport facilities at the Regional Recreation Complex and monitor trends in participation over time to ensure the fitness offer/programs at the Complex are responsive to community/user needs. (See Section 8.4.3: Programming for further recommendations)

The maintenance of fitness and squash amenities at the Complex will be important in providing residents with a range of options for unorganized participation in recreation. National and Provincial trends indicate informal fitness opportunities are growing in demand across Ontario and Canada and are of particular interest to youth, commuting populations, shift-workers, and residents with otherwise busy and unpredictable lifestyles.

# >> Non-traditional Indoor Uses: Precedent Imagery





**Indoor Playgrounds** 





Temporary Indoor Skatepark (multi-purposed arena floor)

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### 8.1.4. Meeting/Multi-purpose Spaces

The Regional Recreation Complex comprises 2 meeting/multi-purpose spaces – 1 small hall as well as a larger space that is used for fitness classes and small events. These spaces present a range of opportunities for program hosting. The Municipality should continue to seek opportunities to creatively use these spaces. Municipalities across Canada have sought to animate traditional multi-use/community centres by investing in non-traditional indoor uses such as indoor playgrounds and indoor climbing walls. Considerations of these alternatives may extend the range of indoor play uses available to residents (particularly children) on a year-round basis without compromising the integrity of these spaces for traditional event rentals and other activities. Further, the addition of new indoor play uses will also present new rental opportunities including birthday parties.

### **Recommendation 6**

Evaluate opportunities to introduce new and active indoor uses within existing meeting/multi-purposes spaces at the Regional Recreation Complex. These uses should be temporary/adaptable in nature to accommodate occasional rentals for a variety of events and may include consideration for an indoor playground.

### 8.2 Outdoor Facilities

### 8.2.1. Track & Soccer Fields

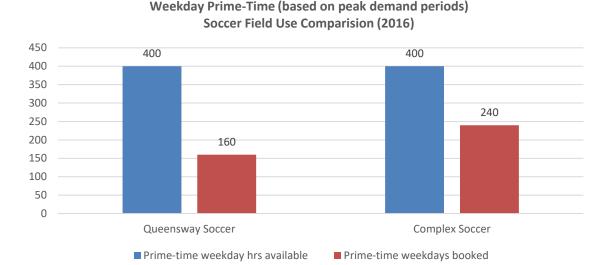
The Town owns and maintains 2 soccer fields: The Regional Recreation Complex soccer field and the Queensway soccer field. Both facilities are well-maintained and in good condition.

The current (2016) standard of provision based on the municipal supply of assets is 1 soccer field per 2,498 residents (this is comparable to other communities across Ontario). When considering the market for soccer fields, participation standards better reflect resident demand for these assets. As of 2016, Espanola had a participation standard of 1 soccer field per 93 registered minor participants, compared to 1 soccer field per 80-100 registered minor participants observed across the Province. Based on comparable standards of provision (population and participation), no new soccer field locations are warranted in Espanola.

### Utilization

There does not appear to be any significant utilization pressure on municipally-owned soccer fields. Weekend use of fields is limited to tournaments and not regular practices. In general, weekday use of these assets consists of school use during the day and user group (e.g. minor soccer) activities in the evenings.

Exhibit 25: Current Prime-Time Utilization of Soccer Fields



Source: Data provided by the Town of Espanola Public Works Department

Prime-time use of fields is generally defined as weekdays 4:00pm to 9:00pm based on peak booking hours. An analysis of current and historic utilization shows there is no significant pressure on prime-time field hours to warrant any additional investment in new soccer fields. Additionally, minor soccer registrations have declined by 8% (15 registrants) in the past 3 years. Should Espanola experience population as projected by its Official Plan, based on the current minor participation rate for soccer, the town is unlikely to observe significant growth in demand for minor soccer to warrant investment in an additional soccer field.

Exhibit 26 above indicates a potential loss of one field can be expected to hinder prime-time play and is likely to result in an inability to meet the current demand for field time. It is recommended that the Town's current supply of soccer fields be maintained over the life of this Master Plan.

The existing outdoor track at the Regional Recreation Complex continues to support school athletic activities.

### **Recommendation 7**

Continue to invest in the maintenance of the Regional Recreation Complex soccer field and the Queensway soccer field (lines, grass cutting, etc.) to ensure availability for play.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Town has received requests for the implementation of lighting at the Regional Recreation Complex soccer field. The value of such investment should be considered over the long-term where there is significant demonstrated demand for extended play at this facility (i.e. growth in registrations, teams and/or tournament hosting opportunities).



### **Recommendation 9**

### Continue to invest in the maintenance of the Regional Recreation Complex outdoor track.

### 8.2.2. Ball Diamonds

The Municipal supply of ball diamonds is centrally located at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields and comprises 4 ball diamonds:

- Ball Diamond A (Lit);
- Ball Diamond B (Lit);
- Ball Diamond C (Unlit); and,
- Ball Diamond D (Unlit).

The Town's standard of provision for ball diamonds is as follows:

Exhibit 26: Population-Based Standard of Provision for Ball Diamonds

		Population			Target		
Facility	Town	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	
Ball Diamonds (Lit)	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	1 per 4,000 to 5,000 residents
Ball Diamonds (Unlit)	2	2,498	2,617	2,615	2,607	2,594	1 per 2,000 to 3,000 residents

Exhibit 27: Participation-Based Standard of Provision for Ball Diamonds

	Ownership	Participation Standards	Target
Facility	Town	2016 Current	
Ball Diamonds	4	1 ball diamond per 55 registered minor participants	1 per 80 to 100 registered participants

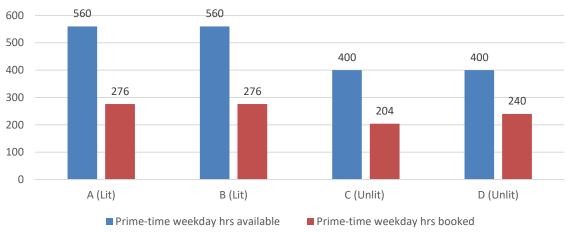
Comparable population and participation standards indicate the town has an oversupply of ball diamonds and could decommission one ball diamond. It should be noted that minor baseball registrations have grown by 36% (58 players) over the past 3 years. Should Espanola experience population change as projected by its Official Plan, based on the current minor participation rate for baseball, the Town's standard of provision for ball diamonds is not expected to alter significantly.

### Utilization

In terms of utilization, prime-time use of these facilities is estimated at 52% based on weekday time periods in peak demand for bookings (defined as 4:00pm to 11:00pm on weekdays for lit fields and 4:00 pm to 9:00pm between May and August), as illustrated in the chart below.

Exhibit 28: Current Utilization of Ball Diamonds





Source: Data provided by the Town of Espanola Public Works Department

When considering true prime time availability of these facilities (which includes day-time use on weekends and the extended hours of play supported by lit fields) prime-time utilization of these assets is lower. Similar to soccer fields, there is no regular weekend use of ball diamonds over the available season. Weekend use of these facilities are generally limited to occasional tournaments.

Standards as well as current and historic utilization indicate that Espanola has an over-supply of ball diamonds and may decommission one unlit ball diamond (which may serve to shift and improve utilization of the other remaining assets). The table below illustrates the potential impact of decommissioning 1 unlit ball diamond. Utilization across the remaining facilities can be expected to increase to as much as 77%.

Exhibit 29: Estimated Impact on Field Utilization/Demand with the Potential Loss of Ball Diamond C at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields

	Prime-time Weekday Hrs Available	Estimated Hrs Booked	Est. Utilization
Diamond 1 (lit)	560	344	61%
Diamond 2 (lit)	560	344	61%
Diamond 3 (unlit)	400	308	77%

Any decision to decommission a ball diamond should be predicated on consultation with facility user groups and the public. Diamond C would be the likely candidate for decommission due to its irregular size and current utilization.

There are benefits to maintaining a complex of ball diamonds (for tournaments and practices). The retention of 3 ball diamonds at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields will continue to allow for this. A decision to decommission one unlit ball diamond would allow land area at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields to be repurposed to accommodate other/new recreation uses in this location. Public consultation activities as part of the Master Plan process identified a range of interests in new sport and activities. These included the following: skate/BMX park, splash pad and an accessible playground — all of which may be evaluated as part of future consultation should the Town determine to proceed with decommissioning.

### **Recommendation 10**

Develop and initiate a consultation process regarding the potential to decommission one (1) unlit ball diamond (Diamond C) at Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields. This process should involve consultation with existing users such as Minor Baseball.

### 8.2.3. Outdoor Rink, Courts & Alternative Play

#### **Recommendation 11**

Subject to the results of Recommendation 8 above and a decision to implement the decommissioning of Diamond C at Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields, initiate a site/campus planning exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields including public consultation regarding the option to repurpose newly available land at this site for other/new recreation uses including a skate/BMX park, repositioned/enhanced play area, etc.

### **Recommendation 12**

Continue to invest in capital improvements at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields including washroom/change room upgrades and other improvements as required (with only essential investment to Diamond C in lieu of a decision on the future of this asset).

### **Tennis**

The Town of Espanola does not own any outdoor tennis courts. The Municipality has a lease arrangement with the Espanola Golf & Country Club to allow for free public access and use of these facilities in the summer. While there was no identified need for municipal investment in the development of outdoor tennis courts during the Master Plan consultation process, the principle of maintaining community access to these facilities via lease arrangement to allow the broadest possible access to the sport should continue over the life of this Plan.

### **Recommendation 13**

Continue to maintain the lease for public use of the Espanola Golf & Country Club tennis courts and implement measures to monitor demand for the use of this facility.

### **Multi-use Courts**

The outdoor ice rink at Pinegrove Park is informally used for basketball in the summer. The use of this asset for multiple recreational activities/sports should continue to be encouraged.

### **Recommendation 14**

Continue to maintain the existing outdoor ice rink at Pinegrove Park and invest in necessary capital improvements for this facility.

### **Beach Volleyball**

The Town of Espanola maintains one beach volleyball court at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields. Utilization of this facility is understood to be relatively low. As part of the campus planning exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields the Municipality may evaluate whether this asset should be removed from the inventory in entirety to provide additional parkland area for new recreational uses and/or accommodate a formal multi-use half court facility (for basketball, volleyball and other uses).

### **Recommendation 15**

As part of a campus planning exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields, evaluate the opportunity to decommission the beach volleyball facility at this location to accommodate new recreational uses potentially via a formal multi-use half court facility (for youth basketball, volleyball and other uses).

### 8.2.4. Playgrounds

The Town of Espanola owns and maintains 6 playgrounds/play structures within its existing park inventory:

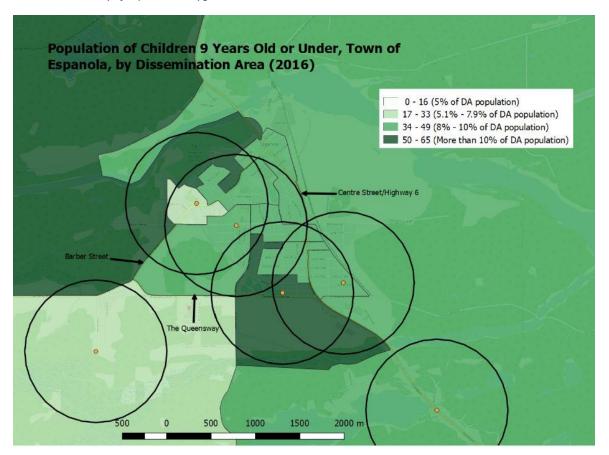
- 1. Pinegrove Park Playground
- 2. Sherwood Park Playground
- 3. Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields Playground
- 4. Algoma Park Playground
- 5. Clear Lake Beach Playground
- 6. Yocom Park Playground



Sierra Planning and Management

Provincial and comparable standards for the provision of playgrounds are typically 1 playground within a 500-800 m radius of urban/built residential areas. With respect to the current level of provision in the Town of Espanola, the map below illustrates the geographic coverage of facilities based on an 800 m (approximately a 10-minute walk) radius from each location.

Exhibit 30: Inventory of Espanola's Playgrounds with 800m Walk Radius



### LEGEND

Play Structure
800m Radius

In general, the built-up residential area has good geographic service coverage by playgrounds. The Pinewood and Sherwood Park playground locations are understood to be the most utilized play structures. Based on geographic service standards and targets established by this Plan, no new playground locations are warranted over the Master Plan timeframe.

There are 2 play structures provided beyond the built residential area of Espanola:

- Yocom Park Playground; and
- Clear Lake Beach Playground.

The provision of playgrounds in geographically-dispersed areas beyond the built residential area is likely the result of a municipal response to historic need. However, this does not reflect best practice in playground provision which supports the location of these assets in proximity to areas with concentrated populations and households. This is to ensure the highest level of serviceability of these assets.

This Master Plan recognizes the opportunity to consolidate municipal playground locations beyond the built-area. Clear Lake Beach is an identified Destination Park (see Section 8.3.1 of this Plan) and due to the specialty function of this park as a resident and tourist attraction, the retention of a playground in this location is recommended.

The Yocom Park Playground is located on the outskirts of a trailer park and is understood, based on discussion with Town staff, to not be well utilized. The results of the 2016 Citizen Survey indicate there is some use of this playground. The level of community use and demand for this facility requires confirmation in the short-term period of this plan. Subject to consultation with the residents of the trailer park to confirm the level of use and demand for this facility, the Town may seek to decommission the playground in this location.

### **Recommendation 16**

Subject to consultation and confirmation of demand, the Town may seek to decommission the Yocom Park Playground and opt to dispose of this parkland via the sale for residential uses considering the oversupply of total parkland in the Town (see Section 8.3: Parks, Trails and Open Space).

In so doing the Town will consolidate its park locations as well as its maintenance efforts and costs. The proceeds from the sale of the property may be directed to a reserve for Town-wide parkland improvements.

With respect to the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields Playground, the potential removal of one unlit ball diamond at Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields will present an opportunity to re-locate the existing playground at this site to allow for a more suitable distance from more active uses at this park — specifically the ball diamonds. Due to safety concerns for playground users, nets have been installed around the adjacent ball diamonds to prevent baseballs from entering the children's play area. Park redevelopment and concept planning activities as outlined in this Master Plan may allow for this matter to be rectified via investment in an enhanced and reconfigured play area at this site.

### **Recommendation 17**

Subject to the results of Recommendations 9 and 13 above, as part of a campus planning exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields, evaluate the opportunity to relocate/reconfigure the existing playground at this site to allow for more suitable distance from the baseball diamonds at this location.

### **Recommendation 18**

In keeping with principles of this plan and linked the recommendation above, any evaluation of the potential to re-locate the existing playground at the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields should also consider the opportunity to (re)invest in modern and accessible playground infrastructure at this site. This includes consideration for potential capital partners (e.g. District Health Unit, local organizations/clubs) as well as funding opportunities from upper levels of government.

### **Recommendation 19**

Develop a playground replacement strategy. Any play structure that has reached a 14-year age trigger should be phased for replacement immediately.

## 8.3 Parks, Trails and Open Space

### 8.3.1. Parkland

Espanola has a significant base of parkland – totalling 26.7 acres (66.7 hectares) of land. Roughly 90% of available parkland contains active uses including sport fields, outdoor rinks, etc. Approximately 10% of the municipal parkland asset base may be described as passive park space.

The Town's Official Plan does not classify parkland. As part of this Master Plan process, municipal parkland was classified based on form, function and level of service as follows:

Exhibit 31: Classification and Current and Target Standards of Provision for Parkland

	Total	Acreage	Hectares	<b>Current Town Standard</b>	<b>Comparable Target</b>
Town/Regional Parks	5	23.1	57.9	11.6 hectares per 1,000 residents	Not applicable
Community Parks	2	2.6	6.5	1.3 hectares per 1,000 residents	1.1 hectares per 1,000 residents
Neighbourhood Parks	3	1.0	2.4	0.5 hectares per 1,000 residents	0.4 hectares per 1,000 residents
Total	10	26.7	66.7	13.4 hectares per 1,000 residents	2 to 4 hectares per 1,000 residents

Three park locations have been identified as future Destination Parks based on the development potential at these locations to enhance and facilitate interconnected/linked recreational experiences. These include:

- Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields;
- Clear Lake Beach Park; and,



### • Mead Boulevard Park.

Destination Parks across the Province are community attractions which typically offer: 1) unique experiences (e.g. botanical gardens, heritage parks/showcases); 2) comprise civic/social/event infrastructure of varying scales; 3) support co-located sport and recreation infrastructure (e.g. sport fields, trails, multi-use sport pads, outdoor rinks); and 4) support both passive and active uses for recreation and culture.

Section 8.2 of this Plan outlines campus master planning/destination park planning opportunities for Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields. The following is a graphic illustration of these opportunities which have not been approved and remain subject to consultation.

Exhibit 32: Illustration of potential redevelopment concept for Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields (not approved and subject to consultation)

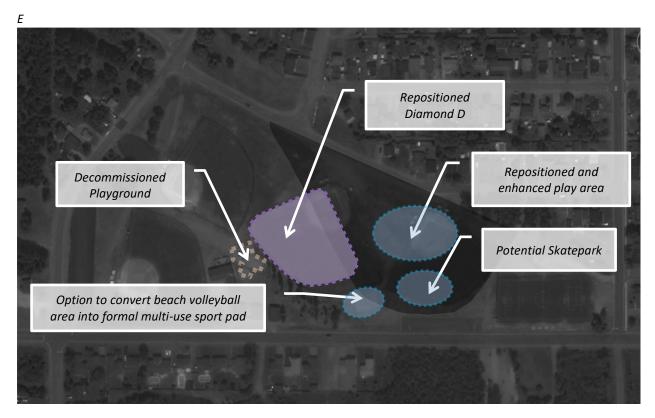


Illustration by Sierra Planning & Management

Future planning for Clear Lake Beach and Mead Boulevard Park center around trail and beach development opportunities as identified in the section below.

Sierra Planning and Management

### 8.3.2. Trails

The Al Secord Fitness Trail (1.325 km) runs along Highway 6 from Queensway Avenue to Clear Lake Beach. Existing municipal investment in Al Secord Trail is a positive precedent and has included the addition of fitness equipment along the trail. Limitations of the existing trail include a lack of continuity and connections to other existing recreation assets and its relative inaccessibility to neighbourhoods.

Mead Boulevard Park contains a paved walking trail loop. Future opportunities comprise the extension of the Al Secord Fitness Trail from Queensway Avenue to provide linkages to the Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields and connect directly to the existing walking trail loop at Mead Boulevard Park. This will create a series of inter-connected recreation assets and a looped trail system through the western portion of the town. This option supports principles of community walkability (recognizing that portions of the Highway 6 are not conducive to trail user safety).

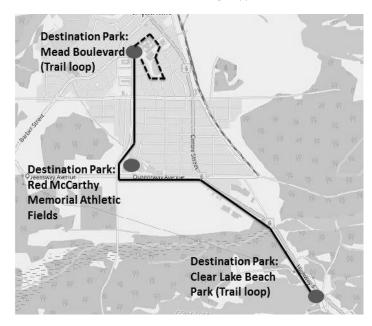


Exhibit 33: Future Trail Linkage Opportunities

Illustration by Sierra Planning and Management

# >> Destination Parks: Precedent Imagery

Naturalized Playground



Special Event Infrastructure



**Landscaping and Vegetation** 





**Sports Fields** 



The extension of the Waterfront Trail from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust will present additional opportunities for the Town of Espanola. The Waterfront Trail will traverse along Barber Street in Espanola and north along Highway 6 to Sudbury. The extension of the Al Secord Trail to Mead Boulevard Park will present a longer-term opportunity (potentially as a secondary phase) to connect an extended Al Secord Trail from Mead Boulevard Park to the Waterfront Trail. This may facilitate other local economic development opportunities by encouraging cycle tourists to take advantage of the local trail system and stop-over in Espanola.

### **Recommendation 20**

Work to extend the Al Secord Fitness Trail from Queensway Avenue to Mead Boulevard Park. This should include investment in wayfinding signage and trail markings as required. As part of future phasing, explore the opportunity to extend the fitness trail from Mead Boulevard Park to the planned Waterfront Trail along Barber Street.

### **Recommendation 21**

Support the Ontario Trails Strategy and leverage any related funding as may become available in future years to develop local trail infrastructure (e.g. building fences and ongoing maintenance).

#### **Recommendation 22**

Linked to trail development priorities, the Town of Espanola should seek to develop and implement a fulsome active transportation plan for the Town, taking advantage of available funding from upper levels of government as may be available over time.

### 8.3.3. Beach Area

Clear Lake Beach Park is a 1.14-acre site located off Highway 6 along Clear Lake. The Al Secord Fitness Trail links the Beach Park to the town's urban area. The park itself comprises a

# >> Trail Development: Precedent Imagery





Multi-Use trails separated from roadway





Clearly delineated pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular zones





small beach area, an outdoor fitness area, a public change room, playground area, and public green space. The future development of this park may include:

- Shading (built structure / natural vegetation);
- The completion of Al Secord Trail by means of a walking loop within the Beach Park;
- The potential addition of a lookout gazebo for weddings, trail walkers, photography, etc.

The Town should work with the community, local service clubs, and the Clear Lake Stewardship Association to develop future design concepts for the Beach Park.

Exhibit 34: Clear Lake Beach Park Development Opportunity

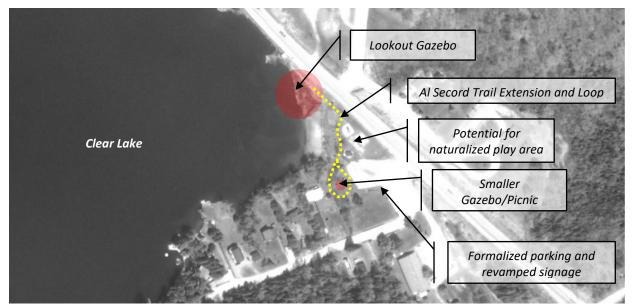


Illustration by Sierra Planning & Management

With respect to destination park and trail development, all assets may be subject to phased planning and development based on future availability of capital funding.

### Recommendation 23

Work with the community, local service clubs and the Clear Lake Stewardship Association to create a concept plan for park improvements at Clear Lake Beach. Future opportunities to be evaluated include:

- The addition of shading (built structure / natural vegetation);
- The completion of Al Secord Trail by means of a walking loop within the Beach Park;
- The potential addition of a lookout gazebo for weddings, trail walkers, photography, etc.

### Recommendation 24

Work with Environment Canada to develop and initiate a plan for shoreline improvements to facilitate community and visitor access to water at this park.

# >> Beach Area Development: Precedent Imagery





**Lookout Gazebo** 



**Natural Play Structure** 



**Pathways and Rest Node** 





**Boardwalk and Beach Area** 

## 8.4 Service Delivery

Key trends that have emerged in service delivery methods for recreational and sport programming include:

- Volunteerism National trends show a decline in volunteerism. However, those who
  volunteer are doing so on a more frequent basis;
- Performance measures Recreation sector performance measures are increasingly shifting from outputs to outcomes (shift from output measures such as capital costs, number of registrants to outcome measures such as how the program benefited the community and health indicators);
- Partnerships Communities are increasingly entering into partnership agreements with community groups and the private sector to maximize cost efficiencies;
- User and rental fees Rising user and rental fees are increasingly raising the cost of participation. This is a particular challenge for communities in the inclusion of target groups; and,
- Structure of Recreation/Sport Participation Demand for unorganized and drop-in activities on the rise.

Programs and service delivery are, in some respects, the 'softer-side' of recreation operations but which have significant impacts on community health, wellness and quality of life. As previously identified, the Town of Espanola maintains a community development model for recreation delivery. That is:

- The Town is the facility and program provider of first-choice where little to no options exist in the private and/or volunteer market to adequately service the needs of the community; and
- As it relates to event hosting and other activities/programs delivered by the volunteer sector (e.g. minor sport) the Municipality plays a supportive role through the provision of access to facilities.

Other service delivery functions include the marketing and promotion of Municipal and volunteer-run programs and activities.

### 8.4.1. Marketing and Customer Service

This Master Plan makes recommendations to improve the programming options available to the community. This change is expected to be incremental, largely-driven by partnerships and will require a series of administrative, communications and marketing efforts to enhance the viability of solutions. The effectiveness of the Community Development Model for recreation as well as new program delivery will require the Town to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to service delivery, and places the onus on the Municipality to:

- Engage in partnership development across user groups and organizations including volunteer groups;
- Develop mechanisms to monitor the ability of programs and partnerships to meet the needs of the community;
- Facilitate community-based programming and access to programming not only through space provision but also through:
  - o Marketing and communications, ensuring public access to information;
  - Engaging in outreach and advocacy to target sensitive groups (including lowincome residents and seniors); and,
  - Quality assurance and evaluation systems and mechanisms to monitor performance in service delivery.

### **Recommendation 25**

Develop a Recreation and Leisure Guide for the Town. This should be an online/digital information tool with hardcopies located in key municipal facilities. The Guide should include activities and programs at the Regional Recreation Complex, Library programming, local events and volunteering-led leagues/activities.

The production of this booklet may be a joint venture/initiative with the Espanola Library to facilitate cost-sharing. Advertising revenues and corporate sponsorship may also serve to offset costs associated with producing this booklet.

### **Recommendation 26**

Linked to the above, programming notifications and changes may be provided via print calendars published in the Town's newsletter as well as Library communication channels.

### **Recommendation 27**

Linked to the above, develop partnerships with surrounding municipalities to promote the digital and hardcopy Recreation and Leisure Guide as means of enhancing the promotional reach of this document and increasing awareness and utilization of the Town's facilities and programs.

### **Recommendation 28**

Building on the current ActiveNet system, explore the opportunity to implement a comprehensive online, publicly-accessible recreation program registration and facility booking tool on the Municipal website to allow for ease of registration and access to facility rental information.

Combined, the Recreation and Leisure Guide as well as a public online program registration interface will serve to enhance resident access to recreation information and may lessen the demand on staff time to provide in-person booking/registration support.

### 8.4.2. Policies and Protocols

Municipal by-laws and policies guiding the delivery of recreation also impact service delivery, operational performance and community access to recreation. With respect to community access to recreation and participation in activities, the following by-laws/protocols guide the delivery of recreation facilities and programs:

- Town of Espanola Field Allocation Policy;
- Town of Espanola Ice Allocation Policy; and,
- The Town of Espanola Fees and Charges By-law.

Each of the above documents is a positive administrative/operational precedent for the Town. Recommendations of this Master Plan serve to enhance the implementation of these policies and, in so doing, create greater efficiencies in the delivery of facilities services and programs.

### **Facility Allocation Policies**

The implementation of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the Town of Espanola presents and opportunity to evaluate the gaps in the protocols for facility allocation. Both the Field Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy feature the following provisions:

- A hierarchy of prioritized groups for facility use (Town programming and minor sport use being first priorities for facility time);
- Clear cancellation policies and stipulation against the transfer or subletting of field time;
- Clear policies around the process for ice allocation and the management of scheduling conflicts; and,
- Clear cancellation policies and stipulation against the transfer or subletting of field time.

However, the language/provisions of the policies are inconsistent across the documents. Additionally, there is limited language about the responsibilities of rental groups to the Town as a facility provider.

Review and update the Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy and, where appropriate, seek to standardize the language and provisions of the documents to include:

- The requirements for all rental groups to report registration figures on an annual basis or at the point of the first rental application for the year. This will serve as a built-in monitoring tool and will allow the Leisure Services Department to track the market demand for sport and recreation on an on-going basis.
- Outline clauses regarding the use of assets for special events to clearly define the responsibilities of groups as renters and event hosts versus those Town as a facility provider.
- Outline policies for the reallocation of ice or field time to regular users in instances where displacement occurs due to tournament or event hosting.

### **Recommendation 30**

Linked the above, review and revise application forms for field and ice rentals to reflect changes to the Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy.

### **Recommendation 31**

Establish a Special Events Policy for the Town of Espanola that outlines how and under what circumstances the Municipality may support a local event. In all instances, eligible events should support/reflect Municipal corporate policies and values.

### Fees and Charges & Cost Recovery

In 2016, the Town of Espanola budgeted \$1,824,260 in operating dollars for recreation. This amounts to \$365 per capita and is in keeping with municipal investment in the sector for comparable Northern Ontario Communities<sup>9</sup>.

Exhibit 35: Comparison of Municipal Spending per Capita on Recreation for Comparable Northern Ontario Communities

Recreation Spending Per Capita (2015) for Comparable Northern Ontario Municipalities					
	Espanola	Kapuskasing	Cochrane	Hearst	
Total Expenses for Parks & Recreation	\$1,682,257	\$2,457,025	\$2,693,498	\$1,737,900	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Comparable communities, as illustrated, reflect municipalities in Northern Ontario that are similar in population to Espanola and which own/operate/deliver facilities of similar scale to the Town of Espanola (e.g. indoor ice and aquatics)



	Espanola	Kapuskasing	Cochrane	Hearst		
Population (2016 Census)	4,996	8,292	5,321	5,070		
Spending Per Capita	\$336.72	\$296.31	\$506.20	\$342.78		
Sources: Annual Operational Budgets for the respective Municipalities, Statistics Canada 2016 Census Population Data						

Recreation Spending Per Capita (2015) for Comparable Northern Ontario Municipalities

Municipal cost recovery for recreation is estimated at 25% based on the Town's 2016 Operating Budget. The completion of a User Fee Study may address the appropriateness of the current level of cost recovery for recreation which at present is relatively low. The Town's 2015 Service Delivery Plan, recommends that user fees be established based on a standard cost recovery percentage for all municipal facilities (of up to 50% to maintain affordability).

### **Recommendation 32**

Undertake a detailed User Fee Study to confirm the true cost of service for the delivery of recreation (facilities and programs). The study should clearly define programs, use and services which warrant subsidization as well as identify those items for which full cost recovery is warranted in keeping with best practice.

Schedule A of By-law No. 2489/12 outlines Leisure Service Rates levied by the Town. Fee categories as detailed in the current by-law are inconsistent with the classification of users identified in the current Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy. For example, there are no rental rate categories for individual ice rentals or commercial/for-profit ice rentals as allowable under the Town's Ice Allocation Policy. Under the current Fee By-law, corporate/for-profit ice users may rent ice at the same subsidized rate as adult group users. This is not considered to be best practice. For-profit users should be required to pay ice rental fees at comparable market rates.

### **Recommendation 33**

In completing a User Fee Study exercise, ensure rate setting is informed by established principles for cost recovery and subsidization and is linked to the categorization of priority users as outlined in the Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy. This should include defined rates for School Board use of these facilities whether or not these rates are levied based on presiding agreements.

### **Recommendation 34**

Progressively explore and implement creative pricing strategies to enhance the utilization of facilities (e.g. an 'all-in' affordable youth pass for access to select swim and fitness class options/bundles, 'free' bonus access to programs for multi-pass purchases/membership renewals etc.)

### **Joint Use Agreements with School Boards**

The Reciprocal Agreements for Facility Use between the Town of Espanola and the local School Boards define the terms of Municipal use of school facilities and vice versa. Under the current agreement, the Town may have non-chargeable use of school facilities (interior and exterior) outside of school hours and during the summer. Non-chargeable school use of Municipal facilities (interior and exterior) is limited to daytime/non-prime hours.

The benefits of this agreement are not being fully realized by the Town of Espanola. There is no Municipal use of School Board facilities as the Town does not offer any community programming out of these spaces (during the summer or otherwise). The School Boards receive the full benefit of these agreements at a cost to the Town. In 2016, school use of municipal soccer fields and the track at the Regional Recreation Complex amounted to an estimated \$10,000 in waived rental fees under the agreements. In addition to local fields, the school use of municipal facilities also includes the indoor pool at the Regional Recreation Complex (this also results in foregone rental revenues to the Municipality).

The terms of reciprocity under the current joint use agreements are not being met as conditions of the Agreements provided that the free use of school/municipal facilities for recreation by the respective parties is subject to such use being truly reciprocal with each party using equal time and without "undue financial costs". Considering this, the Town should re-assess the effectiveness and cost implications of these agreements.

### **Recommendation 35**

Re-evaluate the existing Reciprocal Agreements for Facility Use between the Town of Espanola and the local School Boards. Working with the School Boards, the Town should assess the effectiveness, cost and other programming implications associated with the agreements. Subject to the results of this assessment, Council at its discretion, may discontinue the current agreements and phase-in rental fees for school use of its facilities.

### 8.4.3. Program Development & Partnerships

The Town's roster of programs largely comprises fitness and aquatic options delivered out of the Regional Recreation Complex including:

- Red Cross classes;
- Aquafit programs;
- Fitness classes (e.g., Spin, Squash);
- Various levels of swimming: baby and infant, child; and,
- Other opportunities such as public and family swims as well as drop-in and membership options.

Recreation programs and memberships generated approximately \$154,000 in total revenues in 2016 for the Town. Due to an inability to isolate costs associated with programs from the

current municipal budget, current cost recovery for this aspect of municipal service cannot be confirmed.

A review of historic program performance shows an active response to market demand by the Leisure Services Department. Specifically, registrations are monitored and programs that are not well utilized are rationalized/discontinued. Currently, the Department does not deliver programs during the summer period. Discussions with staff indicate a few challenges in this regard including:

- Constrained resources (i.e. human and financial resources) to support these opportunities; and,
- A reduction in the municipality's summer time population was observed to impact summer program registrations.

There is a strong co-relation between programming and the revenue generation capacity of facilities. With respect to outdoor facilities such as soccer fields and ball diamonds, the programming of these facilities is delivered by user groups such as minor soccer. With respect to indoor facilities, the Town's arena is closed during the summer months. While the arena floor is generally available for rentals – little, if any, of this activity has been observed. Likewise, the indoor pool facility is also closed during the month of July.

Based on the above, it is observed that the Regional Recreation Complex is not operating at optimal capacity. Over the short to medium term of this plan, the development of program (hosting) opportunities should be prioritized to generate enhanced utilization.

The Leisure Services Department should continue to monitor and evaluate the success of its programs by tracking annual changes in registrations by activity. There will also be the need to track demand for new sport and activities to ensure the Department is responsive to changing needs in the community. This may be done though the development and implementation of a customer service monitoring strategy.

### **Recommendation 36**

Develop and initiate a customer service monitoring system to annually assess resident/user needs and requisite improvements to the Town's recreation service delivery model. Progressively address methods to improve the system over time. Strategies may include the following:

- The utilization of online and hardcopy customer satisfaction surveys, maintenance alerts and other timely reporting mechanisms should be evaluated.
- Regularly evaluate developments in recreation service delivery by annual staff report and establish performance measures to gauge success/improvement over time.

### **Recommendation 37**

Continue to track program and facility bookings/registrations on an annual basis, working with organized user groups to collect data and monitor changes in registration by sport (i.e. demand for sport) and market conditions over time.

With respect to program development and accommodating new opportunities, the following are options to be explored with potential community partners (as have been identified through the Master Plan consultation process).

### **Recommendation 38**

Develop and initiate a Recreation Planning Committee comprised of key service delivery partners as a collaborative forum to investigate linked opportunities to promote events (e.g. festivals) and develop new programs and activities in keeping with the principles of this Master Plan. This should include key organizations directly involved in the delivery of leisure and recreation services in the Town such as the Family Health Team, Sudbury & District Health Unit etc.

### **Recommendation 39**

Continue to work with community partners such as the Lions Club and Tim Hortons to provide free public skates/swims and other affordable recreational activities for residents.

### **Recommendation 40**

Explore opportunities to facilitate the use of the arena floor in the summer for community-led/driven activities such as cheerleading camp and/or the temporary conversion of the space for use as an indoor skate/BMK park.

### **Recommendation 41**

Explore options to develop and initiate a walking club and trail run programs with the implementation of recommendations to extend the Al Second Fitness Trail.

### **Recommendation 42**

Work with the District Health Unit and hospital to explore opportunities to accommodate mobility fitness, stretching, and aqua therapy at the Regional Recreation Complex. New programming options may facilitate out-patient wellness support.

### **Recommendation 43**

Explore opportunities to work with Espanola Library to deliver joint programming to ensure child, adult and seniors literacy on all levels (physical and cognitive). For example: Physical activity/fall prevention for seniors under the Health Unit's Stand Up Program may be dually accommodated by the Library and Complex.

### Case Studies: Trends in Connecting Library Programming to Recreation

As libraries continue to evolve, programs and services to address community needs, digital materials, as well as options which link physical and cognitive literary, continue to be explored. For example, Lawrence Public Library (Kansas, USA) has initiated a Bookworms and Waterbugs program consisting of story time at the library and concluding with an hour of swimming at the aquatic centre. A similar activity has been previously piloted by the Espanola Library.





# 9 Implementation

The Master Plan is based on a 5 to 10-year planning timeframe. Some recommendations are expected to extend well beyond this time horizon – in particular, those involving capital planning, the timing for which can only be estimated based on further assessment of funding sources.

On the other hand, a number of the recommendations regarding programs and services represent actions that once initiated, are expected to remain in place over the full life of this Master Plan and beyond. This includes those procedural and policy-based changes recommended in Section 8 of this Plan.

This plan is designed to guide Council and municipal decision-makers in addressing priorities for planning and investment in recreation. However, recommendations related the development of facilities and repurposing of existing ones – require detailed consideration of how these required changes will come about – that means further public consultation, design and concept planning, but also an assessment of the technical feasibility of repurposing.

Staff and Council of the Town of Espanola will need to further evaluate and investigate the feasibility of implementing individual recommendations/actions on an annual basis as part of the municipal planning and budgetary process.

# 9.1 Approach to Capital Planning

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan is a municipal guidance document designed to further effective planning, budgeting and implementation of the stated goals, objectives and corresponding actions outlined herein.

This Master Plan establishes principles and recommendations for future investment in capital and planning for recreation. These principles and recommendations are based on established municipal priorities and policies, community feedback, an assessment of the current condition, use and performance of municipal recreation facilities and assets and is the primary basis on which future capital planning decisions for recreation should be made.

Future requests for municipal investment in the development of new recreation facilities should be evaluated in light of the priorities and recommendations established in this Master Plan. Specifically, this Master Plan outlined priorities for investment and maintenance for various type of municipal recreation assets and detail the timing and process for implementation as deemed feasible and which should take precedence of any request for investment in new recreation facilities that may arise over the life of this Plan. More specifically projects which compromise or conflict with the principles of this Plan should not be considered. The Town of Espanola may consider future partnerships for capital projects outlined in this Master Plan, this may include community groups that are willing fundraising partners.

Other aspects to be considered when evaluating unforeseen capital requests for facilities include:

- The availability of capital funding from upper levels of government and other sources to support the development of new assets;
- The maintenance and operating costs associated with new investment; and,
- The appropriateness and availability of Town-owned land for the requested facility development (i.e. land acquisition should be an additional financial requirement). This Master Plan speaks to the direction for the development of specific-sites, and site development at these locations should be in keeping with recommendations of this Plan.

### 9.2 Establishing a Capital Reserve for Facilities

The Town of Espanola does not currently have a corporate policy with respect to the achievement of a capital reserve related to its capital assets. For all municipal capital assets that represent sunk costs over time, the creation of a capital reserve from operations will help to pay for necessary renovations and the replacement of major building components as these facilities continue to age.

With new facilities, the Town of Espanola should align itself with other municipalities within the Province that have attempted to consistently apply the principles of a capital reserve to be built into the operating finances of the facilities in question. This represents forward planning which is essential to long-term sustainability and should be central to any asset management plan. For practical reasons, it is often not possible to operate a capital reserve on the basis of the expected lifecycle of a building as this represents a significant annual allocation to such reserves. However, we would suggest that following common practice in other municipalities, 1-2% of the original capital cost of buildings/assets be allocated to a capital reserve(s) on an annual basis.

In addition, the operating savings arising from the decommissioning and repurposing of selected assets over the course of the Plan should be allocated to a capital reserve(s) as a means to bolster the level of funding necessary to apply for future capital priorities.

# 9.3 Timing Framework

The following outlines the timeframe for the implementation of Master Plan recommendations based on short, medium and long-term priorities:

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
Facil	ities			
1	Continue to annually fund and maintain a capital reserve for the Regional Recreation Complex.			
2	Routinely (i.e. every 5 years) undertake a comprehensive building condition assessment for the Regional Recreation Complex (arena, pool, and other building aspects).			
3	Invest in capital improvements for the Regional Recreation Complex Arena.			
4	Continue to invest in necessary capital improvements/maintenance for the Regional Recreation Complex Indoor Pool.			
5	Continue to maintain fitness and racquet sport facilities at the Regional Recreation Complex and monitor trends in participation over time.			
6	Evaluate opportunities to introduce new and active indoor uses within existing meeting/multi-purposes spaces at the Regional Recreation Complex (e.g. indoor playground).			
7	Continue to invest in the maintenance of the Regional Recreation Complex soccer field and the Queensway soccer field (lines, cutting etc.) to ensure availability for play.			
8	Progressively evaluate requests for lighting at the Regional Recreation Complex soccer field where there is significant demonstrated demand for extended play at this facility (i.e. growth in registrations, teams and/or tournament hosting opportunities).			
9	Continue to invest in the maintenance of the Regional Recreation Complex outdoor track.			
10	Develop and initiate a consultation process regarding the potential to decommission 1 unlit ball diamond (Diamond C) at Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields.			
11	Subject to public consultation and a decision to implement the decommissioning of			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term	Medium-Term	Longer Term
		Years 1-3	Years 4-6	7-10+ Years
	Diamond C, initiate a campus planning			
	exercise for the Red McCarthy Memorial			
	Athletic Fields including public consultation			
	regarding the option to repurpose newly			
	available land at this site for other/new			
	recreation uses including a skate/BMX park,			
12	repositioned/enhanced play area etc.  Continue to invest in necessary capital			
12	improvements at the Red McCarthy Memorial			
	Athletic Fields including wash/changeroom			
	upgrades.			
13	Continue to maintain the lease for public use			
13	of the Espanola Golf & Country Club tennis			
	courts and implement measures to monitor			
	demand for the use of this facility.			
14	Continue to maintain the existing outdoor ice			
	rink at Pinegrove Park and invest in necessary			
	capital improvements for this facility.			
15	As part of a campus planning exercise for the			
	Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields,			
	evaluate the opportunity to decommission the			
	beach volleyball facility at this location to			
	accommodate new recreational uses			
	potentially via a formal multi-use half court			
	facility (for youth basketball, volleyball and			
	other uses).			
16	Subject to consultation and confirmation of			
	demand, the Municipality may seek to			
	decommission the Yocom Park Playground and			
	opt to dispose of this parkland via the sale for			
	residential uses			
17	As part of a campus planning exercise for the			
	Red McCarthy Memorial Athletic Fields			
	evaluate the opportunity to re-			
	locate/reconfigure the existing playground at			
	this site to allow for more suitable distance from the baseball diamonds at this location.			
18				
18	Any evaluation of the potential to re-locate the existing playground at the Red McCarthy			
	Memorial Athletic Fields should also consider			
	the opportunity to (re)invest in modern and			
	accessible playground infrastructure at this			
	site.			
	JIC.			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
19	Develop a playground replacement strategy. Any play structure that has reached a 14-year age trigger should be phased for replacement immediately.			
20	Work to extend the Al Secord Fitness Trail from Queensway Avenue to Mead Boulevard Park. This should include investment in wayfinding signage and trail markings as required.			
21	Support the Ontario Trails Strategy and leverage any related funding as may become available in future years to develop local trail infrastructure (e.g. building fences and ongoing maintenance).			
22	Linked to trail development priorities, the Town of Espanola should seek to develop and implement a fulsome active transportation plan for the Town.			
23	Work with the community, local service clubs and the Clear Lake Stewardship Association to create a concept plan for park improvements at Clear Lake Beach.			
24	Work with Environment Canada to develop and initiate a plan for shoreline improvements to facilitate community and visitor access to water at this park.			
Servi	ice Delivery, Policies & Programs			
25	Develop a Recreation and Leisure Guide for the Town. This may be an online/digital information tool with hardcopies located in key municipal facilities.			
26	Linked to the above, programming notifications and changes may be provided via print calendars published in the Town's newsletter as well as Library communication channels.			
27	Develop partnerships with surrounding municipalities to promote the digital and hardcopy Recreation and Leisure Guide as means of enhancing the promotional reach of this document and increasing awareness and utilization of the Town's facilities and programs.			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term	Medium-Term	Longer Term
#	neconiniendation(s)	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	7-10+ Years
28	Building on the current ActiveNet system,			
	explore the opportunity to implement a			
	comprehensive online, publicly-accessible			
	recreation program registration and facility			
	booking tool on the Municipal website to			
	allow for ease of registration and access to			
	facility rental information.			
29	Review and update the Espanola Field			
	Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy.			
30	Review and revise application forms for field			
	and ice rentals to reflect changes to the			
	Espanola Field Allocation Policy and Ice			
	Allocation Policy.			
31	Establish a Special Events Policy for the Town			
	of Espanola that outlines how and under what			
	circumstances the Municipality may support a			
	local event.			
32	Undertake a detailed User Fee Study to			
	confirm the true cost of service for the			
	delivery of recreation (facilities and programs).			
33	In completing a User Fee Study exercise,			
	ensure rate setting is informed by established			
	principles for cost recovery and subsidization			
	and is linked to the categorization of priority			
	users as outlined in the Espanola Field			
	Allocation Policy and Ice Allocation Policy.			
34	Progressively explore and implement creative			
	pricing strategies to enhance the utilization of			
	facilities (e.g. an 'all-in' affordable youth pass			
	for access to select swim and fitness class			
	options/bundles, 'free' bonus access to			
	programs for multi-pass			
25	purchases/membership renewals etc.)			
35	Re-evaluate the existing Reciprocal Agreement for Facility Use between the Town of Espanola			
	and all School Boards. Working with the			
	School Boards, the Town should assess the			
	effectiveness, cost and other programming			
	implications associated the agreement.			
36	Develop and initiate a customer service			
30	monitoring system to annually assess			
	resident/user needs and requisite			
	improvements to the Town's recreation			
	service delivery model.			
	Service delivery model.			

#	Recommendation(s)	Short-term Years 1-3	Medium-Term Years 4-6	Longer Term 7-10+ Years
37	Continue to track program and facility			
	bookings/registrations on an annual basis,			
	working with organized user groups to collect			
	data and monitor changes in registration by			
	sport (i.e. demand for sport) and market			
	conditions over time.			
38	Develop and initiate a Recreation Planning			
	Committee comprised of key service delivery			
	partners as a collaborative forum to			
	investigate linked opportunities to promote			
	events (e.g. festivals) and develop new			
	programs and activities in keeping with the			
	principles of this Master Plan.			
39	Continue to work with community partners			
	such as the Lions Club and Tim Hortons to			
	provide free public skates/swims and other			
	affordable recreational activities for residents.			
40	Explore opportunities to facilitate the use of			
	the arena floor in the summer for community-			
	led/driven activities such as cheerleading			
	camp and/or the temporary conversion of the			
	space for use as an indoor Skate/BMK Park.			
41	Explore options to develop and initiate walking			
	club and trail run programs with the			
	implementation of recommendations to			
	extend the Al Secord Fitness Trail.			
42	Work with the District Health Unit and			
	Hospital to explore opportunities to			
	accommodate mobility fitness, stretching,			
	aqua therapy at the Regional Recreation			
	Complex. New programming options may			
	facilitate out-patient wellness support.			
43	Explore opportunities to work with Espanola			
	Library to deliver joint programming/camps to			
	ensure child literacy on all levels (physical and			
	cognitive).			

TOWN OF ESPANOLA

PARKS & RECREATION STRATEGIC

MASTER PLAN