



Town of Aurora  
**Sport Plan**  
January 19, 2016



# Sport Plan

Town of Aurora

FINAL

January 19, 2015

Prepared by:



## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all members of the community that have contributed their time and input to the Sport Plan. Special thanks is extended to Sport Aurora, members of Town Council and the various Town Staff who also helped to shape the Sport Plan.

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the Aurora Sport Plan is to build on current strengths and develop approaches to strengthen sport delivery to more residents in the future. The intent of the Plan is to ensure that the Town is well positioned to deliver on the promise that Aurora becomes “Canada’s most active community.” The development of the Plan included extensive consultations including a community-wide online survey; several community focus groups; and workshops with Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and Town Staff. Community input was strongly considered in the development of the recommended actions along with data regarding sport use of facilities, current research within a Canadian context and consideration of best practises evident in other jurisdictions and communities.

The key findings in the development of the Plan will be instrumental in ensuring that successes in sport development and the positive outcomes to both individuals and the community can be achieved over time:

- The Town’s population will increase to 70,200 persons by the year 2031;
- The number of older adults will increase while the youth population will show a slight decline;
- Aurora is considered relatively affluent, however 9% of the population are considered low income;
- Aurora will continue to become more culturally diverse including new Canadians from Asian countries;
- Aurora is committed to the shared leadership in sport delivery along with Sport Aurora, sport groups and community partners;
- There is a collective will to increase sport participation, celebrate sport successes and preserve the heritage and legacy of sport accomplishments; and
- Sport Tourism will play a large part in strengthening community pride and cohesion and leveraging considerable economic impacts to the community.

## Priority Recommendations

### Sport Leadership

- Develop an Aurora Sport Policy
- Expand the role of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to include sport
- Reconstitute Sport Aurora to a Sport Council and include all sports to provide “one voice for sport”;
- Hire a Sport Development Officer to implement the Sport Plan; and
- Develop a sustainability model for sport in Aurora.

### The Sport Participant

- Provide a broader ability to participate in sport through Sport Literacy training; and
- Be more inclusive with respect to persons from low income backgrounds, persons with disabilities, culturally diverse residents and ensure that females have equitable access to sport.

### Sport Promotion and Celebration

- Develop a broad based Sport Marketing and Communications Strategy to increase participation and communicate the value of sport to individuals and the community;
- Develop a long range plan for the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame; and
- Host an annual Sport Excellence Summit to continually improve sport delivery in Aurora.

### Sport Tourism

- Develop an Aurora Sport Tourism Strategy with the resources and supports provided by the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Sport Plan Purpose

A Sport Plan for Aurora was deemed a priority by the Town Council in 2015 to address the sport needs of a growing and active community and to place focus on increasing participation in sport. The local Member of Parliament, M.P. Lois Brown announced in the House of Commons in May of 2015 that Aurora is prepared to work hard to make Aurora **“Canada’s most active community.”** This will take time, energy, resources and a focussed plan(s) surrounding sport and physical activity. The focus of the Sport Plan will be to increase participation in sport through the provision of a safe, supportive and inclusive sport environment. The subsequent development of an Active Living / Physical Activity Strategy for Aurora will address the frequency, duration and intensity of residents engaged in physical activity.

A strong local community sport system relies on role clarity, a league of volunteers and sport groups, promotion and communications, a continuum of sport opportunities, sound infrastructure, coordination and celebration. Aurora has been building a strong sport system over decades and continues to see the impressive benefit to residents, families and the community. The Aurora Sport Plan sets about to create a vision for the next five years and prioritize key actions that will strengthen the sport delivery system and outcomes. The development of a successful Sport Plan relies on gaining an understanding of the needs, strengths and challenges and mapping out a realistic and achievable course for the future. Creating performance measures and annual reporting around the goals of the Sport Plan will ensure that stakeholders and partners keep priorities in focus and continue to work cohesively toward the vision by each playing their part.

## 1.2 Study Approach

The Aurora Sport Plan was completed in concert with the development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that served to assess related infrastructure needs for the future and suggest ways and means of improving service delivery. Achievable action plans must place focus and resources in the right places in order to make the required difference in the timespan of the plans.

Key phases in the development of the Sport Plan included:

Phase	Key Activities
Phase One: Plan Initiation and Review of Background Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of the Sport Plan was initiated by confirming key deliverables, the respective methodology and expectations.</li> <li>- Background research included understanding the changing demographics, sport participation and current trends within Aurora to begin to capture the context and the focus of the plan.</li> <li>- Engaging the community, experts, Town Council, staff and sport groups served to articulate the key issues and where changes could enhance sport participation, capacity and sustainability.</li> <li>- A review of National, provincial and local policies, initiatives and promising practises served to provide options as the consulting team looked to meaningful solutions within Aurora.</li> </ul>



Phase	Key Activities
Phase Two: Draft Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The development of the draft Sport Plan focussed on providing a vision, guiding principles, goals and actions and a summary of research and input.</li> <li>- The draft plan set about to ensure that Aurora's Sport Plan offered appropriate measures to address sport issues and challenges specific to Aurora</li> </ul>
Phase Three: Plan Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completion of the Aurora Sport Plan will rely on gathering stakeholder, expert and public and staff input to ensure that the Plan galvanizes the sport and related communities around the vision and actions outlined in the draft plan.</li> <li>- Suggested changes will be gathered from the community and finalization of the plan will be based on this input before the approval is sought from Council.</li> </ul>

### 1.3 Community Engagement

Community input is key to capturing the current strengths and areas that residents are proud of and as well articulating the key challenges and opportunities. The development of the Sport Plan relied on engaging and listening to the general public, sport participants, key leaders in sport, as well as Council and senior staff. The engagement opportunities to garner input into the development of the Sports Plan included:

- ✓ A Public Awareness campaign that informed the public as to the development of the Sport Plan and how to offer input.
- ✓ The Aurora Community Launch Event outline the proposed deliverables of both the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Sport Plan. Opportunities to offer input at the event were facilitated by the consulting team;
- ✓ A workshop was held with the Aurora Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to gain some understanding as to the Committee's thoughts on the strengths, challenges and opportunities to address sport and parks and recreation infrastructure;
- ✓ The Online Community Survey was developed and offered to the general public to capture their thoughts on the sport delivery system, respondents and family member participation rates and suggestions for improvement;
- ✓ Two stakeholder focus groups were held to discuss what needed to be addressed to improve sport participation and the sport delivery system in Aurora in the next 5 years;
- ✓ A workshop was held with Town of Aurora Council members and another with Town Parks and Recreation staff to discuss a vision for the future, the role that the Town plays in sport delivery and the role that stakeholders and community sport groups should play. A full examination of the strengths, challenges, opportunities and resources broadened the discussion on the sport delivery system; and
- ✓ Further discussions will take place with these key groups once a draft plan is ready for presentation and comment.



A special thanks is extended to the following groups that attended the Launch Event, Focus Group and/or submitted a Stakeholder Survey.

- Aurora Barbarians Rugby Football Club
- Aurora Diggers Girls Softball
- Aurora King Baseball Association
- Aurora Men's Slo-Pitch League
- Aurora Minor Hockey Association
- Aurora Seniors Centre
- Aurora Skating Club
- Aurora Soccer Club
- Aurora Sports Hall of Fame
- Aurora Youth Soccer Club
- Aurora Lawn Bowling Club
- Black Duck Swimming
- Central York Girls Hockey Association
- Crossfit ARK
- Ducks Swimming Club Inc.
- Evolution Gymnastics Aurora
- Kids Supergym Aurora
- Special Olympics - Aurora & Special Ducks
- Spectrum
- Sport Aurora
- Storm Volleyball Club
- The Campus Church
- Total Tennis - Timberlane
- York North Basketball Association
- York Simcoe Minor Football Association
- York Synchro

## 1.4 The Benefits of Sport and Physical Activity

### Individual

There is an increasing body of knowledge that substantiates the personal and societal benefits of participation in sport endeavours including all forms of physical activity. It is now well known that combining regular bouts of physical activity with proper dietary habits help to form healthy lifestyles that contribute to a host of physical, social and physiological benefits. Indeed, sport participation and physical activity are increasingly seen as health promotion tools in the fight against some of the most significant illnesses that plague the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Many causes of poor health in today's society, such as coronary heart disease, certain types of cancer and type 2-diabetes, can be prevented if more inactive people become active<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, sport participation and being physical activity improve an individual's well-being (physical, mental, social, and emotional status) and on a wider scale, help bring balance to the health and wellness of the broader community. Active lifestyles play an important role in advancing the quality of life measures. An active community contributes to overall quality of life including social capital, community identity and spirit, and supportive and healthy environments.

### Barriers to Sport and Physical Activity Participation

According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI), lack of time, energy and motivation are most frequently rated by Canadian adults as barriers to being active, followed by long term illness or disability, cost, feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease, lack of skill and fear of injury. CFLRI reports that women are more likely than men to highlight lack of energy or poor skills as barriers to an active lifestyle. Teenagers are more likely to cite feeling ill at ease or lack of skill. Lack of time is less likely to be reported as a barrier for older adults. In general, individuals with higher education and incomes report fewer barriers. There is a reverse correlation between the

<sup>1</sup> Buford, T. W., Anton, S. D., Clark, D. J., Higgins, T. J., & Cooke, M. B. (2014). Optimizing the Benefits of Exercise on Physical Function in Older Adults. *PM&R*, 6(6), 528-543.



significance of barriers related to skill and feeling ill at ease and community size – they are less important in smaller communities.

## Personal and Community Benefits of a Sport Friendly and Active Community

- Regular physical activity has the same impact on increasing life expectancy as not smoking. (Cooper Institute, 1989)
- The estimated annual health care costs in Canada directly attributable to physical inactivity are \$6.4 billion. (Health Canada)
- Regular activity is recognized as a key factor in reducing the risks of heart disease and high blood pressure. (Heart and Stroke Foundation)
- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of Type 2 Diabetes and Colon Cancer by 50%, and plays an important role in reducing the risk of other chronic diseases. (Journal of American Medical Association,; Journal of National Cancer institute)
- Regular activity helps maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints, and reduces the risk of osteoporosis.
- Older adults who are active enjoy a longer independent lifestyle and are less susceptible to falls.
- Physical activity and good nutrition are both vital in achieving and maintaining healthy weights.
- Even moderate regular activity, such as a brisk walk, delivers significant health benefits. (Cooper Institute)
- Regular physical activity reduces stress and promotes psychological well-being.

## The Child and Youth Inactivity Epidemic

According to the Active Healthy Kids Report Card (2015), Canada is ‘well-developed’ when it comes to opportunities for physical activity (including built environment, availability of facilities and programming and policy). Despite this fact, currently only 5% of Canadian children and youth are getting enough physical activity compared to the recommendations contained within the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

- Children are up to 40% less active than 30 years ago. (Ontario Medical Association)
- Over 2/3 of Canadian children are not active enough for optimal growth and development. (Healthy and Active Kids Canada)
- Children are becoming progressively fatter, weaker and less flexible. (CFLRI)
- The prevalence of obesity for children aged 7-13 has tripled over the last 15 years. (Tremblay and Williams)
- The average child spends 3-5 hours a day in front of some sort of screen, and Canadian children are among the highest in the world in time spent playing video games. (Canadian Medical Association Journal)
- Sedentary children are showing signs of predisposition to chronic diseases including Adult-onset (Type 2) Diabetes and heart disease. (College of Family Physicians of Canada).

- Children who spend more time in team sports reported higher self-esteem than their peers. Multi-group analyses suggest that these relations do not vary across gender, sport ability, commitment to sport or peer acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.5 The Municipal Role in Physical Activity and Sport

Municipalities are collectively one of the largest investors in Canada’s physical activity and sport infrastructure and are the owner/operators of most pools, quality sport fields, arenas, trail and bike systems, parks and recreation centres. Local recreation and parks departments provide or facilitate the delivery of a variety of programs for all age groups that promote active lifestyles and skill development. In view of the favourite physical activities of Canadian adults and youth, the significance of the municipal role becomes even clearer.



### Favourite Adult Activities

1. Walking
2. Gardening
3. Home Exercise
4. Swimming
5. Bicycling

### Favourite Youth Activities

1. Walking
2. Bicycling
3. Swimming
4. Running/Jogging
5. Basketball

The favourite activities tend to be individual and informal; basketball made the youth list primarily because of informal play in park settings rather than formal leagues. The importance of places to walk and cycle is obvious. Bikeways, pathways and safe sidewalks are a critical investment in healthy living. Even home exercise is often undertaken after a course such as yoga at the local recreation centre.

There are a host of individuals, not-for-profit groups, social agencies, private organizations and other contributors who come together to develop and support a community’s focus on promoting physically active lifestyles. Local recreation and sport volunteer organizations look to parks and recreation departments as their primary partner, and municipalities are often uniquely positioned to bring these partner organizations together. Municipalities generally work directly with school boards on joint venture development and common use of facilities agreements. Municipalities have policies and programs that emphasize accessibility to services whatever the age, gender, ability or economic circumstances of the targeted participant. Municipalities also have a variety of communication vehicles that allow them to reach and influence the general public.

Municipal parks and recreation departments encourage active lifestyles through proactive programming and the provision of indoor facilities and open spaces. It is also understood that parks and recreation departments have a far broader mandate than the promotion of regular physical activity; this mandate encompasses culture and other forms of personal expression, environmental preservation and protection, and working with community partners to address community needs and issues.

Placing a greater focus on promoting sport participation and active lifestyles is not intended to diminish or compromise these broad community roles. Rather, bringing attention to the importance

<sup>2</sup> Slutzky, Carly B. and Sandra D. Simpkins. 2009. Psychology of Sport and Exercise.



of sport participation and other healthy behaviours focuses on supporting municipal departments and community partners to plan more effectively and to carry out actions that have an even greater impact on the health and wellness of individuals and the community at large.

## 1.6 Economic Impact

### Economic Output of Sport Tourism

According to the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA), in 2012 the Canadian sport tourism industry reached \$5.2 billion in total consumer spending, up 5.3% from the previous twelve months. The domestic market continues to be the largest source of sport tourists, accounting for 84% of all spending, followed by overseas markets (10.8%) and U.S. visitors (5.3% of sport tourism revenues).

“Sport tourism continues to be significant part of the Canadian economy and tourism industry,” said Rick Traer, CSTA CEO. “The data reflects the importance of sport tourism as a grassroots economic development initiative in communities across Canada and supports our #2 ranking as a Host Nation internationally.”

### A Coordinated Focus on Sport Tourism

Communities that adopt a coordinated approach to sport tourism generally follow a logical and sequential process to attract sport events and generate an economic impact. This approach ensures that the tourism benefits of sport are always considered as important elements in strategic and economic plans prepared by the municipality or regional jurisdiction. The process normally begins with municipal staff and community minded citizens discussing opportunities to become more efficient in their collective efforts to attract sport tourists. These discussions often lead to the development of a formal sport tourism plan that includes vision and mission statements; goals and objectives; and work plans. The sport tourism plan becomes a guiding document that is as important to local decision-making as the Corporate Strategic Plan or the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Maximum economic benefit can be derived from sport tourism when sport groups, tourism agencies and private enterprise work together to create an event friendly environment that facilitates and encourages sport tourists to visit the community. This is not normally possible in the absence of an organizational framework that governs the manner in which sport organizations, tourism specialists, local government and private sector partners can work together. The structure of the framework and the development process should be consistent with local requirements, competencies and available talent.

Experts agree that the most successful sport tourism plan includes concerted effort to build capacity among local sport organizations to bid for and host events. This approach often involves establishing a structure that allows multiple sport groups to speak with a common voice and to strive for common goals. Again, communities often undertake a sequential process to develop effective and operationally sound links between tourism initiatives and the sport community. Furthermore, through the implementation of a process, sport organizations become comfortable in working with each other and gradually develop an understanding that one group’s success is not necessarily detrimental to equal levels of success of another sport. In fact, there are examples where sport groups develop strong alliances that result in the delivery of multiple sport events that may otherwise not have occurred.



The most impressive and immediate results occur in communities that demonstrate commitment to sport tourism by dedicating both human and financial resources to planning and implementation of a sport tourism plan. This usually begins as single year project funding but eventually evolves into annual budgets to pay for staff, marketing, communications and resource development.

It is noteworthy that the economic costs and benefits of sport tourism are normally distributed between the budgets of all those involved in the process. Consequently, the financial commitments to develop and execute the plan should not be solely borne by the municipality. Indeed, the plan should include a mechanism to ensure that the costs and benefits of sport tourism are shared by the sport, tourism and local government partners. The contributions of sport and sport groups typically involves the application and receipt of grants and sport event funding as well as volunteerism required to host sport events.

## 1.7 National and Provincial Trends in Sport

### Sport Participation

Statistics Canada analyzed participation in active leisure by Canadians aged 20 years and older and compared 1992 and 2005 responses. They found that active leisure participation rose during this period, at the same time that activity at work declined. Active leisure is a broad category that includes walking and jogging, exercising (e.g. yoga, weight-lifting and working-out), sports, outdoor expeditions (e.g. hunting and fishing) and cycling. More Canadians in 2005 participated in walking and jogging than in other active leisure categories. Exercising also increased, while sports, outdoor expeditions and cycling saw little to no increase in participation.

Importantly, if one considers sports to include both informal and organized sports, there was no significant decline in sports participation. If one separates these two categories, participation in organized sports declined from 45% to 28%. While those aged 15-18 have the highest rates of participation in organized sport, this also declined significantly between 1992 (77%) and 2005 (59%).

It was suggested that the aging population is most likely the dominant contributing factor to reductions in organized sport participation, as active participation in organized sport is known to decrease as one ages. As over two-thirds of the Canadian population is currently over 35 years of age, it is likely that organized sport participation will continue to decline. However, other factors contribute to the declines such as time pressures, family responsibilities, child rearing, careers, lack of interest and participation in other leisure time activities (such as watching television, other active leisure, Internet).

Research suggests that Canadians are moving away from organized sport to informal sports and other forms of active leisure. In fact, it was found that active leisure activities that required smaller slices of time and were easier to access or 'get to' had a higher probability of participation by Canadians<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Environmental Scan 2010 – Trends and Issues in Canada and in Sport, Policy Research Group, Department of Canadian Heritage



## Defining Sport

There are multiple challenges to definitions of sport. First and foremost there is the distinction between structured and unstructured activity, e.g. the difference between pick-up and league baseball. There are alternative, counter-culture activities which are also being organized into competitive formats, such as skateboarding. Some of these activities have been accepted by influential mainstream sport organizations, as with the acceptance of snowboard half-pipe and snowboard cross into the FIS and the Winter Olympic Games.

The development of these sports can stem from lifestyle or cultural influences, a natural drive for competition, and potentially a desire to innovate outside of traditional sport structures. Consequently, it can be challenging to identify what the “next new sport” (or discipline) will be, or to fully account for the impacts that these new sports and their participants will have. Because new sports are typically added onto existing sport programs, these new sports can add pressures for hosting of events (expanded timeframes, venues, equipment), for sport organizations (that may be required to take on additional disciplines), or jeopardize allocations for the inclusion of existing sports<sup>4</sup>.

Other issues influencing sport participation include:

- The rapid and continued diversification of the Canadian population poses significant challenges to the sport delivery system. As the population ages, there is a corresponding decline in sport participation. Economic disparity and cultural diversity are also causing many sports organizations to adopt new approaches and different types of sport opportunities that cater to the means and preferences of the continually changing mosaic of the Canadian populace.
- There continues to be a gender gap in sport participation – women and girls are generally less involved in sport activities and less frequently engaged in the sport community as coaches, league officials or board members or sport representatives – especially in traditional sports. The under representation of women and girls in sport is compounded if they are also part of another socio-economically challenged group such as Aboriginal Peoples or persons with a disability.
- Canada is seen as a leader in the development of a robust sport system that supports people with disabilities. Most recently, the focus has been shifting towards creating coherent sport development systems through the implementation of Canadian Sport for Life and the No Accidental Champions supplement.
- Issues of equitable access to sport opportunities and the effective implementation of equity policies continue to challenge many sports organizations. Conflicting notions of integration and segregation or adaption and accommodation will continue to play a role in sport development decisions.
- At a Federal level in Canada, there is jurisdictional separation between physical activity and sport – with physical activity being explicitly linked to public health through oversight by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This separation sometimes disenfranchises sport – especially from a funding perspective – because sport is often not considered in the same category of health improvement strategies as is physical activity.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid



## 1.8 Policy Context and Alignment

### Canadian Sport Policy

The Canadian Sport Policy (CSP) 2012 sets a direction for the period 2012-2022 for all governments, institutions and organizations committed to realizing the positive impacts of sport on individuals, communities and society. Two years in the making, and endorsed by federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation, the Canadian Sport Policy reflects the interests and concerns of 14 government jurisdictions, the Canadian sport community and of the countless other organizations and agencies that influence and benefit from sport in Canada.

The CSP is designed to be implemented by action plans developed by federal, provincial and local governments and by non-government organizations in the sport and related sectors. The CSP vision is: *to have by 2022 a dynamic and innovative culture that promotes and celebrates participation and excellence in sport.* The policy's values are: fun, safety, excellence, commitment, personal development, inclusion and accessibility, respect, fair play and ethical behaviour.

The vision together with the supporting values targets all Canadians and attempts to persuade them take part in sport "to the best of their abilities". Canadians are encouraged to learn and to use best practices in forging partnerships among those in the sport system or other related sectors such as recreation, health and education. The policy also speaks to the notion of full engagement through and by affiliated organizations such as community sport councils. The policy supports those who practice and provide sport in all its forms, including organized and unorganized sport in educational institutions, parks and sport centres of all kinds.

In June of 2012 all provincial Ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation endorsed the policy and its five broad goals:

- Introduction to sport
- Recreational sport
- Competitive sport
- High performance sport
- Sport for development

### The Ontario Sport Plan (in development 2015)

Currently in development, the government of Ontario Sport Plan is athlete centred initiatives that is intended to focus investments to ensure that the government's financial support produces benefits that are consistent with its long-term vision four sport in the province. A plan sets and three broad areas of focus:

- Participation – Goal: Ontario athletes are able to participate in safe, organized sport.
- Development – Goal: Ontario athletes receive them rights support as their skills develop.
- Excellence – Goal: currently under development.

The Plan identifies a number of benefits that should accrue to the sport sector through the implementation of the Plan's initiatives.

- Builds on the Pan Am legacy;
- Clarifies government's priorities;
- Removes duplication from funding programs;
- Provides clear measurable outcomes focused on results;

- Builds stronger relationships; and
- Better enables athletes to participate in safer sports at their desired level of interest and ability.

Over the coming months, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport will be engaged in continued planning and consultation in order to finalize the on Ontario Sport Plan. Consequently, it is possible that focus and elements of the final plan may differ from the material presented herein.

## Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015; Pathways to Wellness

Recreation provides multiple pathways to wellbeing for individuals, communities, and for our built and natural environments. Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 is a timely re-visioning of recreation's capacity for achieving wellbeing.

Recreation has the potential to address challenges and troubling issues such as increases in sedentary living and obesity, decreased contact with nature, and inequities that limit recreation opportunities for some population groups. Doing this requires a clear understanding and commitment to a shared vision, values and goals, as well as the development and implementation of action plans. The Framework provides a foundation for reflection, discussion and the development of such action plans. The Framework offers a renewed definition of Recreation:

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

This renewed focus provides the rationale for investing in an evolved recreation strategy, and describes the need for collaboration with other initiatives in a variety of sectors.

The Framework provides a new vision for recreation and suggests some common ways of thinking about the renewal of recreation, based on clear goals and underlying values and principles. The new Vision for Recreation in Canada is:

We envision a Canada in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster:

- Individual wellbeing
- Community wellbeing
- The wellbeing of our natural and built environments

The goals of the Framework are as follows:

- Foster active living through physical recreation
- Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation
- Help people connect to nature through recreation
- Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities
- Grow and sustain the capacity of the recreation field

The Framework identifies the need for collaboration among many organizations and sectors for implementation as its vision is shared in many ways with other national bodies and policies, thus providing an opportunity to share resources for the benefit of recreation across Canada.





## Canadian Sport for Life

Sport for Life (CS4L) is a movement to improve the quality of sport and physical activity in Canada through improved athlete training and better integration between all stakeholders in the sport system, including sport organizations, education, recreation and health. A key feature of CS4L is Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD), a developmental pathway whereby athletes follow optimal training, competition, and recovery regimens from childhood through all phases of adulthood.

S4L has been gathering momentum since the publication of the 2005 resource paper Canadian Sport for Life. Since 2005, every national sport organization in Canada has developed sport-specific LTAD guidelines for their athletes. Further work has been done by provincial organizations and governmental groups and agencies to promote S4L in their jurisdictions. The vision behind CS4L is to reshape how to support sport and train athletes at all levels in Canada – from children to adults, from towns to cities, from provinces and regions through to the National level. In realizing this vision, the aim is to keep more Canadians active for life with recreational sport and physical activity, and at the same time help Canadians in all sports win more medals internationally.

The seven stages of the Long-Term Athlete Development Pathway are:

- Stage 1: Active Start (Ages 0-6)
- Stage 2: FUNdamentals (Girls 6-8, Boys 6-9)
- Stage 3: Learning to Train (Girls 8-11, Boys 9-12)
- Stage 4: Training to Train (Girls 11-15, Boys 12-16)
- Stage 5: Training to Compete (Girls 15-21, Boys 16-23)
- Stage 6: Training to Win (Girls 18+, Boys 19+)
- Stage 7: Active for Life (Any Age)

The stages support the development of the ‘whole’ person (mind, body, spirit) and include the corresponding physical literacy stages. Physical literacy is defined as: the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life (Whitehead, M. 2014).

Consistent with CS4L, recreation providers play an integral role in developing physical literacy in children and youth, as well as promoting lifelong physical activity for all Canadians. Because many different institutions, agencies, and groups are involved in delivering sports and physical activity programs, CS4L recommends that recreation, education and sport clubs coordinate their efforts for the greatest welfare of the children in their programs. In the past, the sport system has been divided into silos of program delivery: recreation, sport clubs, and physical education in schools. It has been expensive and inefficient. Under the CS4L framework, recreation works together with sport to harmonize programs and create a more effective system for every citizen in Canada.

Recreation and sport can work together more closely to create seamless delivery of quality sport and physical activity programming. Here are some key areas where the CS4L model can be a guide:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Physical Literacy Program Development             | 4. Facility Planning                  |
| 2. Municipal Planning and Sport Strategy Development | 5. Access and Allocation <sup>5</sup> |
| 3. Sport Councils                                    |                                       |

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Sport For Life Web Site



## True Sport

As an independent, national, charitable organization, the True Sport Foundation has evolved over time from running a campaign that promotes drug-free sport to a foundation committed to ensuring that good sport has the opportunity to make a great difference in the lives of Canadians. In 1993, the Spirit of Sport Foundation was established as a charitable organization affiliated with the Canadian Centre for Drug-free Sport (now known as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)).

The Foundation’s charitable incorporation focused on public education, promotion, training and research to address performance enhancing drugs, health, ethics and values with strategies targeted to educational institutions, sport organizations, community organizations and the general public.

In 1996, the Foundation formed partnerships with Canada Games, Commonwealth Games Canada and Athletes CAN to assume responsibility for programs previously run by the Canadian Sport Council such as the Canadian Sport Awards and the Tariff Relief Program. The Spirit of Sport Foundation changed its name to the True Sport Foundation in 2004.

In 2014, the NFPA reconfirmed the True Sport Foundation’s objective to intentionally use values-based and principle-driven sport as a contributor to Canadian society.

The True Sport Principles express an approach to sport that the vast majority of Canadians already believe in and practice. Although widely embraced, these principles often go unspoken. So when they are violated – when people’s attitudes and actions threaten healthy and respectful competition – supporters of good sport can be caught off guard, unsure how to stand up for the sport they believe in.

The True Sport Principles are a rallying point for True Sport members — they are universal. The principles can be brought to life in any sport at any level, from playground to podium. An Olympic rowing squad can embrace these principles with the same sense of pride and purpose as an elementary school, an old-timers' league, or a community hockey arena.

For sport to be truly good and have the opportunity to make the greatest difference, all seven of these principles need to be in play at all times, working in perfect balance with one another.

**Go for It** - always strive for excellence and rise to the challenge, but never at the expense of others. Discover how good you can be.

**Play Fair** - play honestly and obey the rules, in letter and spirit. Winning is only meaningful when competition is fair.

**Respect Others** - show respect for everyone involved in creating a sporting experience, both on the field and off. Win with dignity and lose with grace.

**Keep it Fun** - find the joy of sport and have a good time. Keep a positive attitude and look to make a positive difference, on the field and in your community.

**Stay Healthy** - place physical and mental health above all other considerations and avoid unsafe activities. Respect your body and keep in shape.

**Include Everyone** - share sport with others, regardless of creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or ability. Invite everyone into sport to make it more meaningful for the whole community.

**Give Back** - always remember the community that supports your sport and helps make it possible. Find ways to show your appreciation and help others get the most out of sport.<sup>6</sup>



## Active Canada 20/20

Active Canada 20/20 is a physical activity strategy and change agenda for Canada. It responds of a broad cross-section of the physical activity community from across the country who are concerned about health and quality of life, and who are committed to addressing the urgent national need to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary living. Eighty-five percent of Canadian adults and 93% of Canadian children and youth do not achieve the minimum level of physical activity necessary to ensure long-term good health and well-being.



Active Canada 20/20 provides a vision and a change agenda to describe successful steps that, if implemented, will increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour, thereby reducing health risks and achieving the many benefits of a society that is active and healthy. It demonstrates the actions that, if undertaken at multiple levels, will strengthen Canada by making physical activity an important cultural trademark.



Its vision is: A physically active lifestyle helps define Canada and strengthens the health and social fabric of our country. Its goal is: to increase the physical activity level of every person in Canada. Active Canada 20/20 adheres to the following guiding principles:



- Adopt evidence-based strategies that target the whole population, as well as specific population subgroups, particularly those facing the greatest barriers;
- Embrace an equity approach aimed at reducing social and health inequalities and disparities of access to physical activity;
- Address the environmental, social and individual determinants of physical inactivity;
- To achieve the greatest impact:
  - a. Value, invest in and build on current evidence informed locally, regionally and nationally
  - b. Implement sustainable partnerships across sectors and between all levels of government;
- Build capacity and support training in research, practice, policy, evaluation and surveillance;
- Use a life-stage approach by addressing the needs of children, youth, families, adults and older adults;
- Advocate to decision makers and the general community for an increase in political commitment to and resources for physical activity;
- Design for inclusion and adapt strategies to accommodate varying local needs, cultures, contexts and resources;
- Facilitate healthy personal choices by making the physically active choice the easy choice<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> True Sport Web Site

<sup>7</sup> Active Canada 20/20 Web Site



## 2. Environmental Scan

### 2.1 Demographics

#### Population and Age

Statistics Canada Census data records a 31% increase in the number of residents in Aurora between 2001 and 2011, representing growth of 13,000 persons and averaging a 3.1% annualized rate of growth. Over the past ten years, most population growth has occurred areas north-east of Wellington Street and Yonge Street.

The Town's 2015 population is estimated at 56,600 persons.<sup>8</sup> As the supply of vacant developable land diminishes, the average annual rate of growth is expected to decelerate to 2% between 2015 and 2021, with a population of 68,100 projected at that time – longer-term, the forecasted 2031 population is 70,200 persons.<sup>9</sup> With ongoing development within the Aurora Northeast (2C) Secondary Plan, an area that is generally situated north-east of Bayview Avenue and Wellington Street, population growth is expected to be sustained in the north-east. Land development trends across the G.T.A. and within Aurora illustrate a transition from development of vacant greenfield areas towards intensification of established areas particularly within urban centres and corridors. The result is increased population density from a growing number of multi-unit complexes such as row homes and high rise dwellings. This will be the prevailing development trend in the Town of Aurora once its Secondary Plan areas have built out.

The median age of the Town's population is 39.5 years, comparable to the Regional median and nearly one year younger than the provincial median. The median age, however, is about two years older than the Town's 2006 Census median age and demonstrates that the population is aging as a whole. York Region growth forecasts show that aging trends will continue between now and 2021 with the greatest proportional increases associated with the Older Adult and Senior cohorts at 54% and 46% growth, respectively. These forecasts also anticipate declines of 15% and 3% in the Youth and Mature Adult cohorts, respectively. The following changes are anticipated to the age profile by the year 2021:

- The number of children up to 9 years of age is forecasted to increase by nearly 600 persons;
- The number of youth between 10 and 19 is expected to decrease by 1,200 persons;
- The young adult cohort between 20 and 34 is expected to grow by 6,300 persons;
- The number of persons in the 35 to 54 mature adult stage is forecasted to decline by 550;
- Older adults between 55 and 69 are projected to increase by 6,300 persons;
- Seniors ages 70+ are forecasted to increase by 2,100 persons.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Regional Municipality of York, Long Range Planning Branch. York Region Population Estimate, June 30, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> At the time of writing, the Regional Municipality of York is updating these forecasts through its ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review and 5 Year Official Plan Update processes, with revised forecasts targeted for public release in November 2015. The impact of revised forecasts should be considered when implementing the Sport Plan.

<sup>10</sup> York Region Official Plan Forecasts, Council approved 2009 (note: forecasts based on 2006 Census data).



Understanding where specific age groups are concentrated allows the Town and its partners to target sport development within existing areas. A recent demographic analysis of Census Tract data prepared by Aurora Public Library<sup>11</sup> reveals that:

- Areas located north-east of the Yonge Street and Wellington Road intersection have the lowest median ages in the Town, at between 34 and 36.5 years - the ongoing development of the Northeast Secondary Plan (2C) lands is likely attracting younger families. A younger than average median age of 37 was also recorded in the subdivisions located south-west of the Yonge Street and Henderson Drive intersection.
- The South/West Core area (bounded by Wellington Street, Yonge Street, and Murray Drive) had the highest median age at 46.7 years, and over 28% of its residents are 60 years and over. In fact, all areas located to the west of Yonge Street (except south of Henderson Drive) recorded median ages above the provincial median which is somewhat to be expected as these represent some of the Town's most established residential neighbourhoods.

## Household Income

According to the National Household Survey (N.H.S.), the 2010 median household income of Aurora residents was \$101,923, considerably higher than that of York Region (\$89,100) and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (\$70,365). The N.H.S. also considers approximately 9% of the Town's population to be low income, falling lower than rates for York Region (13%) and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (15%). As of 2014, 27% of Aurora households earned over \$150,000.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Town is generally considered to be a more affluent community (although it is recognized that there are a variety of income levels represented across Aurora) suggesting that based solely on income, residents are likely to be more physically active compared to other communities in York Region and the G.T.A.

## Cultural Diversity

Participation in sport can be impacted by the level of cultural diversity in a community. The N.H.S. reports that 26% of the Town's population are immigrants, considerably less than York Region (45%) and Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (46%). Over three-quarters (76%) of the Town's immigrant population arrived before 2000 meaning these individuals are likely to be well established in traditional Canadian sporting pursuits.

Immigration patterns are shifting across the G.T.A. and the rest of Canada with growing numbers of immigrants arriving from non-European countries. The N.H.S. identifies that immigrants from Europe remain Aurora's most dominant cultural group (45%), though a sizeable proportion of immigrants (34%) have arrived from Asian countries including Iran, China, and Hong Kong. Given national, provincial and regional immigration trends (Richmond Hill and Markham are notable regional examples with high populations of newcomers), it is anticipated that Aurora will continue to become more diverse as cultural diversification is expected to continue northwards into York Region.

<sup>11</sup> Aurora Public Library. June 2014. Aurora Census/Demographics Information Update. Submitted by Tim Neale and Jo-Anne Jordan.

<sup>12</sup> Town of Aurora Economic Development Office, 2014.



## 2.2 Sport Delivery in Aurora

As 2015 has been declared “The Year of Sport ”in Aurora, greater emphasis has been placed on promotion, participation, communications and the quality of the sport experience. The Town strives to foster and deliver a diverse and accessible range of sport opportunities for residents, balancing the needs of genders, varying age groups, abilities, incomes and backgrounds. The sport delivery system in Aurora is considered a shared leadership model with local government and volunteer sport groups for the most part. The sport system is made of active citizens who see the benefits of participating in sport, a supportive community of sponsors and partners, a resourceful Council/staff and a strong network of sport groups and talented volunteers. The sport delivery model combines governance, policy, best practises, equitable use of infrastructure and delivery of volunteer and for profit sport groups.

There is a broad range of sport opportunities with significant choice for Aurora residents to be engaged in; this is not to say that all sports are available in Aurora but the ones with needs identified are offered through community sport clubs and for profit sport groups.

The current sport delivery model for residents in Aurora relies sport introduction opportunities offered by the Town of Aurora through their program offerings. The Town has recently embraced a program developed through Canadian Sport for Life called Sportability. Sportability aims to teach age appropriate skills to children and youth to ensure that they have developed the skills used in various sports. Staff and some sport groups incorporate these skills into skill development within the clubs and include movements such as running, jumping and throwing and competencies such as balance, coordination, speed and agility.

The vast majority of sport opportunities are offered by volunteer and for profit sport groups utilizing appropriate facilities, fields and available spaces within the community.

Town of Aurora Community Development staff provide centralized policy, research and community development support to all affiliated member-based sport groups in the Town. Staff also permit fields and facilities in an equitable fashion to ensure that the use of all Town sport assets are maximized. The increasing volume of sport groups in Aurora coupled with growing demands for augmented level of support is straining staff’s ability to adequately service this important segment of the community.

The capital and operating budget invest in refurbishment, replacement, development of new sport assets as well as cover the annual operating costs for the most part. Sport group contribute to a percentage of the operating costs through permit fees for ice, fields, pool time etc. The Town liaises with over 40 volunteer sport groups who deliver programs and services to their respective membership. Town staff have ongoing discussions regarding sport development needs and ongoing planning with the sport groups. Sport groups include Sport Aurora – a sport collective representing the needs of over 35 organizations of the 40 that exist currently and other sport groups choosing not to be members of Sport Aurora.

### Governance

The Town of Aurora Council has the ultimate accountability for the policy decisions and support provided to address the sport needs of residents using Town facilities and fields. In its wisdom, Council has approved the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to provide ongoing guidance to Council and recognizes Sport Aurora as a major voice of sport in the community.

### a) Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Within its own Council/Committee governance model, Town Council established the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to provide advice and guidance on most matters pertaining to parks and recreation. Sport provision and respective policies are often on the agenda of the Committee to ensure that programs and services are meeting the expectations of residents and that any issues are identified before Council discusses reports and recommendations.

### b) Sport Aurora

Sport Aurora was formed to provide a voice for sport, develop sport for all age groups and abilities as well as to communicate, promote sport opportunities and celebrate sport excellence. Council and staff look to Sport Aurora to provide a collective voice for sport, although additional efforts are made to reach out to the 25% sport organizations not belonging to Sport Aurora.



## 2.3 Sport Participation Levels

It is estimated that combined the sport groups in Aurora include at least 15,000 participants and generate approximately \$2M in payments to the Town for facility permits. Strength of sport participation within the Town of Aurora is evidenced by the numerous programs offered by the municipality and dozens of sport-focused associations. While raw data does not exist that quantifies precisely how many residents are engaged in sport, other measures such as the online and stakeholder surveys, facility utilization rates, and discussions with sport organizations themselves provides some key insights. For example:

- The 20 stakeholder groups submitting a survey had a collective registration of nearly 15,000 individuals (noting that this figure also includes a percentage of non-residents due to the regional focus of certain organizations).
- 85% of online survey respondents reported that at least one member of their household participated in an organized sport(s) during the past year.
- Tens of thousands of hours are rented or programmed collectively every year at facilities such as the Stronach Recreation Complex, Aurora Family Leisure Complex, Aurora Community Centre, Aurora Seniors Centre and local sports fields. The number of hours utilized for sport and sport development in school and private facilities in Aurora is not known at this time.
- Nearly 1,800 adults, youth and children were registered in sport-focused programs delivered by the Town of Aurora in 2014, averaging a program fill rate of 76%. Thousands more registered in the Town's general recreation and fitness related programs.

## 2.4 Sport Volunteerism

Volunteerism is paramount to the planning and delivery of sport in Canada and is considered one of the largest community-driven systems that relies on volunteers to a great extent. It is recognized that government could never afford to deliver the same quantity and quality of sport opportunities that volunteer sport clubs do. Input gathered through the development of the Aurora Sport Plan indicated that volunteers are maintaining sport delivery but are increasingly harder to attract and retain for the most part. Not all groups are experiencing volunteer challenges. Requirements for screening are proving costly and sometimes considered a barrier although the necessity of screening is well supported. It was strongly suggested that an overall Volunteer Management Plan would



assist volunteer groups and the Town to attract, train, retain and recognize volunteer efforts. Stakeholder groups know that often volunteers come from supporting a child or youth engaged in the particular sport but there is duplication of effort in attracting and training volunteers. It would also be very useful to quantify volunteer hours in the sport system and quantify its economic value. Volunteer support activities include recruitment, training, communications, appreciation and recognition. Technology could assist in posting volunteer opportunities on one central website as well as the needed qualifications and link a volunteer to an organization. Software programs also provide training modules and could track volunteerism in Aurora. Volunteerism is a key area of focus for the sustainability of sport in Aurora.

## 2.5 Sport Centred Partnerships and Funding Opportunities

Most communities that have embarked on the process of developing sport plans recognize that the value of collaboration and partnerships between the vast array of people and organizations that will be involved in, or otherwise be touched by the plan. As mentioned earlier, the personal and societal benefits of sport and physical activity endeavors is not restricted to one sector. In view of the fact that health, education, culture and recreation and tourism outcomes can be produced by a robust sport plan, representatives from within each of the sectors should be considered as a potential partner in the development and implementation of sport initiatives.

In many communities, sport has a history of parochialism and as such individual sport organizations were very protective of their “turf” and patrons. However, as the sport sector in Aurora began working better together to address sport participation, constrained spending and key issues, many improvements have been evident. Through improved communications and planning it became abundantly clear that setting aside self-interests and working as a collective is far more productive and effective. Sport Aurora has worked to address philosophical linkages, communication mechanisms, joint planning systems and common implementation strategies and has strengthened the relationship between sport organizations and related sectors.

Collaborative planning and implementation can produce a strong, interconnected network of sport and recreation initiatives that are readily available to the community. Not only do these types of collaboratives produce better results, they are more efficient, effective and less costly than “going it alone.” In short, partnerships are useful in “addressing the social and environmental causes of poor health and can assist in mobilizing more skills, resources, and approaches to influence an issue beyond which any one organization could achieve by itself<sup>13</sup>.”

Sport recreation programs, events and other initiatives are funded through a variety of mechanisms. Local, provincial and national governments play the most significant role in funding sport and recreation infrastructure. While sport venue partnership models are an emerging concept, in almost every instance private or not-for-profit contributions are contingent upon some form of government investment. At a program level, funding sources are more diversified. Corporations, foundations and philanthropic organizations often link to sports to demonstrate community mindedness or because of a direct connection to their fundamental philosophies. Community fundraising has also been traditionally utilized to underwrite the development and delivery of a certain portion of sport programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Casey, M. M., Payne, W. R. & Eime, R. M. (2009). Partnership and capacity-building strategies in community sports and recreation programs. *Managing Leisure*, 14, page 168.



As in most sectors in Canada, sport and recreation has been faced with financial challenges associated with the downturn in the worldwide economy. This has precipitated the need to explore innovative approaches to fund sport and recreation endeavours so that they can remain accessible and affordable to all potential participants. Additionally, the sport environment is increasingly expected to be more accountable and hence sport organizations are now expected to operate in a prudent and businesslike fashion to protect the interests of their constituents as well as to gain the confidence of potential sponsors or funding agencies.

## 2.6 Community Input – Emerging Themes

The summary of community input account most oft repeated inputs generated with respect to sport delivery from all engagement opportunities including public meetings, public and stakeholder surveys and workshops held with Council and staff.

### Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

The following table describes the current strengths and challenges of each key area that the Aurora Sport Plan will focus on; these strengths and challenges have been summarized from all of the input received from the community, a comparison to leading practises in other jurisdiction and research.

Shared Leadership & Sport System Sustainability	
Strengths	Challenges and Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Town has declared its strong support and expectations that all residents are active and/or engaged in sport.</li> <li>- There is a positive relationship between staff, Sport Aurora and other non-member sport groups.</li> <li>- The sport community is appreciative of the support that it receives from the Town.</li> <li>- Sport Aurora had received funding from the Trillium Foundation and has introduced many improvements to the sport system in Aurora over the last three years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Trillium Foundation funding for Sport Aurora has reached the end of the three year term and fiscal sustainability needs to be addressed.</li> <li>- Not all sport organizations are members of Sport Aurora and therefore communications are fragmented to a certain extent.</li> <li>- A go forward governance structure with sport representation is needed to provide ongoing support and guidance to Council driven policies and goals.</li> <li>- While partnerships, volunteerism and sponsorships are in a positive state presently, greater emphasis will need to be placed over the next 5 years from a growth and sustainability perspective.</li> <li>- Annual funding requirements to sustain the sport delivery system require articulation and of reliable funding sources.</li> <li>- Annual performance measurement is not in place for sport to report out on participation, inclusion efforts, the results of programs and initiatives and to identify trends.</li> </ul>



## The Sport Participant

### Strengths

- Activate Aurora was developed by Sport Aurora, the Town and facilitated by the Ontario Community Sport Councils (OCSC). This program is awaiting funding and will support the forthcoming Physical Activity Strategy and includes programs to increase physical activity in children and pre-schoolers (Sport Play Day, Physical Literacy training, Summit for early Childhood educators, safe walk to School Program).
- The Seniors Centre offers ongoing sport and physical activity programs at the centre for a drop in fee of 1.00 making participation affordable. Sports and activities include badminton, Carpet Bowling, Pickle Ball, Table Tennis, Tai Chi, and a Walking Club.
- The Seniors Project (developed by a cross functional community team in concert with the OSCS) was developed to assist older adults in determining and addressing barriers to being more active more often.
- There is a range of sport choices for residents in Aurora; most age groups can be accommodated in a sport and level of participation of their choice.
- Town staff offer assistance through "Leisure Buddies" to participants requiring support in aquatics, community programs and camps.
- Special Olympics provides a range of sport choices for 90 persons with intellectual disabilities.
- The Town and varying sport clubs are ensuring that residents have the basic skills to participate in sport through the Sportability program.
- There is an Accessibility Policy in place to accommodate persons from low income backgrounds into camps and programs. Camp staff sell refreshments at summer camps and excess revenues is utilized to subsidize resident's fees for recreation and sport opportunities.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- More efforts need to be made to include a greater percentage of marginalized populations such as low income residents, persons with disabilities and isolated older adults.
- Diversity and the cultural make-up of Aurora's population is changing and more effort needs to be taken to train staff and sport leaders in reaching out and accommodating differing sport needs as well as introducing new Canadians to traditional sports.
- Greater tracking of numbers of low income participation and an emphasis needs to be made to reach out and provide accessible opportunities to low income families and residents.
- There is no overall quality assurance requirements for sport groups utilizing Town facilities to ensure that sport is safe, supportive and offered in inclusive environments.
- Better understand participation rates by age group in order to target gaps in provision and participation.
- Many children and youth would benefit from being introduced to multi-sports in order to choose the ones that they enjoy participating in without making major investments.
- Sport inclusion for marginalized populations (persons with disabilities, low income residents, emerging diverse cultures) requires training and support.
- The Sport Plan should address gender equity and why girls and youth in general drop out of organized sport.
- Many municipalities are coordinating recreational and social sport leagues for older youth and young adults. This may be an opportunity for the Town of Aurora.



## The Sport Participant

- The Town provides accessible camps and programs for persons with disabilities and receives very positive feedback about the quality of staff and the experience.
- Sport groups accommodate low income participants as well through the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program and other approaches.
- The Town provides support to new and emerging sport groups.
- The Aurora Senior’s Centre provides a range of active and sport opportunities at an affordable fee for members.
- The Aurora Community Tennis Club has organized a Pickle ball program for older adults with over 40 members to date.

## Sport Promotion & Celebration

### Strengths

- Sport Aurora produces a publication that highlights current sporting opportunities, events and accomplishments.
- The Town lists sport groups and offers sport development opportunities through the Parks and Recreation Program Guide.
- Sport related opportunities are highlighted with a red maple leaf to promote active opportunities in the Recreation Program Guide.
- The current program to celebrate sport accomplishments and recognize resident contributions include:
  - The Breakfast of Champions** – celebrates sport excellence
  - Volunteer Recognition** – awards volunteers for countless hours of involvement and contribution to sport and community.
  - Town Community Recognition Awards** – recognizes resident contributions to community life including sport.
  - Aurora Sport Hall of Fame** – recognizes, chronicles and displays the historical and current contributions to sport excellence in Aurora

### Challenges and Opportunities

- The benefits of sport should be promoted to a greater extent to create awareness and promote sport participation as well as antidotal local stories.
- Specific messaging and introductory programs should be offered for varying age groups to further develop sport and physical literacy.
- There is no one central source of sport information in Aurora that prompts residents to navigate and get involved in the sport system.
- Improved inter-Sport Club communications would maintain focus on priorities, emerging challenges and keeping focus on the Sport Plan developments and accomplishments.
- A Sport Section in The Program Guide would outline what sports are available to specific age groups and support the Sport for Life continuum.



Sport Tourism	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many of the 40+ sport clubs host competitions and tournaments on an annual basis. These events attract thousands of visitors to Aurora who generate an economic impact with local businesses and the hospitality industry.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges and Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The economic impact and number of visitors to existing tournaments and competitions has not been quantified to date.</li> <li>- There are lost opportunities in Aurora as tournaments and meets are held outside of the Town due to local restrictions (facility time and local accommodations).</li> <li>- Sport friendly facility requirements for design and to host competitions require discussion at the time that new facilities are developed or existing facilities are being retrofitted</li> <li>- Regional discussions regarding sport tourism would be timely in terms of developing a Sport Hosting and Bid Strategy in Aurora.</li> </ul>

## Sport Aurora – Sport Plan White Paper

One of the community inputs into the development of the Aurora Sport Plan is a Sport Plan White Paper developed by Sport Aurora and specifically by an appointed team named the Sport Aurora Sport Plan Advisory Committee (S.A.S.P.A.C.). There is consensus and support for the content of the White Paper by 32 sport groups currently active in Aurora. The white paper was developed in concert with the sport community including a look to other recently developed sport plans, current research and local sport group and participant input. The White Paper is thorough and addresses key areas for improvement. The development of the Aurora Sport Plan will take this input into strong consideration and include other inputs, effective practises in other jurisdictions and work to prioritize and develop an achievable sport plan over the next 5 years.

Areas of focus recommended in Sport Aurora’s Sport Plan White Paper include:

- Sport Leadership, Sport for All, Sport for Life, Celebration and Communication of Sport, Building Capacity in the Sport System, Sport Tourism and Sport Infrastructure.

The following table captures and paraphrases the key recommendations made by the S.A.S.P.A.C.

Key Area of Focus	Sport Aurora White Paper’s Strategic Suggestions
1. Sport Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The formation of a Sport Advisory Committee similar to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as part of the Town’s governance structure.</li> <li>b) The formation of a Sport Council – made up of all affiliated sport groups</li> <li>c) The newly formed Sport Council would be contracted to deliver on the 7 key areas of focus.</li> <li>d) Financial resources be developed from varying sources to support the proposed Sport Council and its work</li> </ul>



# Aurora Sport Plan

Key Area of Focus	Sport Aurora White Paper's Strategic Suggestions
2. Sport for Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) Adopt the CS4L model into all active and sport related programs – conduct an analysis of gaps</li> <li>f) Develop a Physical Literacy Action Plan</li> <li>g) Communications and promotional plan regarding sport and sport opportunities (Town's website and social media etc.)</li> <li>h) Develop and implement performance measures</li> <li>i) Share demographic and participation data to better inform all sport related decision making</li> <li>j) Focus sport and physical activity within the parks and recreation department's mission , mandate and resource allocation</li> <li>k) Develop a financial and sustainability model</li> </ul>
3. Sport for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>l) The development of an inclusive Sport Policy and a Partnership Framework</li> <li>m) An approach to the development of new sports and sport related programs</li> <li>n) The provision of supports and meeting space</li> <li>o) Develop a robust Access Policy to ensure those facing financial hardships can have barrier free access to sport</li> </ul>
4. Celebration and Promotion of Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>p) Build on current sport celebration and recognition events</li> <li>q) Track and report out on individuals and teams who are demonstrating sport excellence</li> <li>r) Leverage technology to increase participation and attendance at sport celebratory events</li> <li>s) Develop a strategic plan for the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame</li> <li>t) Emphasize sport at sport related days and events</li> </ul>
5. Building Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>u) Increase awareness on the benefits of sport and sport participation</li> <li>v) Provide opportunities (an annual sport summit) for sport organizations to share information, best practises in governance, finance etc. and share resources.</li> <li>w) Coordinate sponsorship through the business community and assist with management of volunteerism</li> <li>x) Collaborate on alternate funding programs (grants, foundations etc.)</li> </ul>
6. Sport Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>y) Develop a Sport Tourism Strategy and address community capacity (volunteerism) to host various events and tournaments</li> <li>z) Research national, provincial and local funding opportunities regarding sport tourism</li> <li>aa) Partner with the private sector</li> <li>bb) Provide incentives and assistance to local sport groups regarding sport tourism</li> <li>cc) Develop a collaborative Bid Committee with neighbouring communities</li> <li>dd) Better support each sport organization's events and tournaments</li> </ul>



Key Area of Focus	Sport Aurora White Paper's Strategic Suggestions
7. Sport Infrastructure	ee) Create an Sport Infrastructure Committee to address sport needs and design elements ff) Review facility allocation needs with actual facilities allocated as well as balanced and equitable access gg) Address equipment needs for new and emerging sport hh) Explore joint use agreements with other facility providers ii) Explore joint funding and alternate funding mechanisms for sport infrastructure jj) Discuss maintenance and repair issues annually with sport groups, users and staff to inform capital and repair and replacement plans.

Sport Aurora member organizations and other sports were actively engaged in the development of the Aurora Sport Plan and all of the suggested areas of focus are included and recommended specific actions for the 5 year span of the Sport Plan.

## 2.7 Online Community and Stakeholder Survey Results

A self-administered survey was made available to the general public between September 11 and 28, 2015. The survey was available online and in hard copy format, with a total of 817 responses received and analyzed. The following are key results from the survey (note: these should not be considered as statistically representative of community opinion).

- 85% of respondents reported participating in organized sports, with the top five sports played being tennis (61%), swimming (39%), ice sports (32%), outdoor soccer (29%), and volleyball (14%).
- Over the past ten years 43% had coached a sport while another 57% had volunteered with a sport.
- 99% of respondents also reported participating in unorganized, casual or spontaneous activities. The top five self-directed pursuits included walking (73%), tennis (56%), aerobics or weight training (54%), recreational swimming (42%), golf (40%).
- 55% of those surveyed reported that they are able to participate in parks, recreation and sporting activities as often as they would like. Among those who were unable to do so, the most frequently cited barriers included lack of desired facilities or programs (65%), lack of time (34%), programs not being offered at a convenient time (29%) or being too expensive (9%).
- 46% reported that 'all' or 'most' of their parks, recreation and sport needs are met within the Town of Aurora while 23% stated that 'some' or 'none' of their needs are being met. The remaining 31% stated that 'about half' of their needs were met locally. For persons travelling to other municipalities to meet their needs, 56% stated it was because the same program or facility was not available in the Town.

- Of the 638 requests for facilities that are not currently provided by the Town of Aurora, nearly 60% were associated with racquet sports such as tennis, pickleball, squash and table tennis. More specifically, 245 requests (38%) were expressed specifically for an indoor tennis facility while another 103 requests (16%) stated that more tennis courts in general were required.
- Survey respondents were most likely to support or strongly support further municipally funded investments in nature trails (91%), parks and open spaces (89%), tennis courts (85%) and paved multi-use trails (80%).
- The average age of survey respondents was 52, the average household size was 3.4 persons and 73% of respondents have lived in the Town of Aurora for more than five years. Using the Yonge Street/Wellington Road intersection as the centre of the Town, geographic distribution of responses consisted of 31% in the northeast, 20% in the northwest, 29% in the southwest and 20% in the southeast.



The survey also tested level of agreement with a few key statements that found:

- The majority of respondents (63%) agreed or strongly agreed that residents in Aurora can participate at a level that they are comfortable with while 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (27% were neutral). This suggests that respondents feel there are a broad range of opportunities to improve skillsets and participate competitively.
- 59% agreed that there are opportunities to learn how to play various sports while 14% disagreed and 27% were neutral, again supporting the notion that there are a number of opportunities to play.
- 50% stated that sport opportunities are well communicated while 20% disagreed and 30% were neutral, suggesting that the majority of respondents are aware of opportunities to participate.
- 50% agreed that sport opportunities are inclusive of all individuals (e.g., age, abilities, incomes, etc.) while 20% disagree and 29% were neutral, suggesting that respondents feel residents from a broad range of backgrounds can participate.
- The majority generally agrees that sport registration fees are reasonable with 49% agreement and another 30% neutral, while 20% disagreed.
- 34% believe that sports groups work well together while 17% disagreed and 48% were neutral, suggesting that respondents feel there is room for improvement in this regard.
- 31% agreed that there are an adequate number of volunteers while 22% disagreed and 48% were neutral.



## 2.8 Emerging and Key Themes

The public and stakeholder outreach has been significant in order to build a “made in Aurora” Sport Plan. The key messages and emerging themes are inspiring as there is a robust sport delivery system in place and the emphasis for the future will be to strengthen what is working well. Additional efforts will be recommended address the gaps along with a view to the long-term sustainability of the sport delivery system.

- ✓ Aurora is **committed to the sustainability of a strong sport system** that maximizes community resources and has positive health outcomes for the community.
- ✓ All efforts must be **athlete centred** and ensure barrier free access
- ✓ The **population of Aurora is changing** through an aging population, and more diversity. Different approaches will need to be made to include all residents.
- ✓ **All residents** have the right to participate and / or volunteer in sport – there is room for everyone.
- ✓ Special efforts must be taken to include **marginalized residents**.
- ✓ All stakeholders must work **better together** toward a vision of increased participation and in a safe, supportive and inclusive sport environment.
- ✓ Success will rely on **leveraging partners**, sponsors and alternate funding sources.
- ✓ Strengthened **communications and promotion** of the benefits of sport will serve as one intervention to increase participation.
- ✓ Positioning sport will require setting targets, **measuring performance** and delivering on the Sport Plan.
- ✓ It is important to **celebrate successes** and honour the heritage of sport excellence in Aurora.
- ✓ The sport community will champion the development of a **sport tourism strategy** that leverages sporting events and other bidding opportunities that result in economic benefit to Aurora.



### 3. Future Directions for Sport in Aurora

#### 3.1 Strategic Framework

The Sport Plan is based on research and consultations including information from policies and planning documents drawn from a national and provincial context, the environmental scan, public engagement activities and best practices observed in other jurisdictions. At the beginning of the Plan’s strategic framework is the **vision statement** that describes the results that will be produced by the Plan throughout its five-year lifecycle. The vision is supported by **guiding principles** that set the tone of the Plan and reflect the ground rules of how the Plan will be executed.

The next level of detail is the Plan’s **strategic goals** that will focus elements of the Plan on the most significant topic areas that emerged from inputs received during the planning process. It is noteworthy that stakeholders who participated in the consultation program strongly suggested that the Plan’s priorities be kept to a manageable number. As such, the consulting team has grouped the recommended action items under four (4) strategic goals including:

1. Sport Leadership and Sport System Sustainability
2. The Sport Participant
3. Communication and Celebration of Sport
4. Sport Tourism

#### 3.2 Vision and Guiding Principles

Vision Statement
By 2021, Aurora will have a dynamic and robust sport system that enables all Town residents to engage in meaningful sport opportunities equal to their abilities, resulting in increased levels of participation in sport. Sport in Aurora will be safe, supportive and open to all.

Guiding Principles	
Focus on the Athlete	Sport Leadership and Sustainability
<p>Sport focuses on the needs of participants and athletes; is first and foremost.</p> <p>Sport is fun and is offered in a safe, welcoming and supportive environment.</p> <p>Sport is powerful and offers lifelong benefits and life lessons.</p> <p>Sport is for all and differing efforts will be made to include marginalized and diverse populations.</p>	<p>Partners and stakeholders will work collaboratively towards a common vision for sport in Aurora.</p> <p>Sustainability of the sport system includes the full consideration of human, fiscal and physical resources.</p> <p>Building capacity in volunteers, stakeholders groups and residents will be key to a sustainable sport system.</p> <p>Celebrating sport excellence and success builds pride and cohesion in Aurora.</p> <p>Measuring performance and effectiveness will serve to improve the sport system.</p>



### 3.3 Strategic Goals

1. Sport Leadership and Sport System Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate effective shared leadership in sustaining a strong sport delivery system in Aurora</li> </ul>
2. The Sport Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase sport participation in Aurora by focussing on the needs of the participant</li> </ul>
3. Sport Promotion and Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the benefits of sport participation and recognize and celebrate sport excellence</li> </ul>
4. Sport Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Aurora’s ability to attract sport events to the Town and reap the economic impacts of sport tourism.</li> </ul>

#### 3.3.1 Goal One: Sport Leadership and Sport System Sustainability

##### Goal Statement

Demonstrate effective shared leadership in sustaining a strong sport delivery system in Aurora

##### The Role of Local Government in Supporting Sport

Similar to other municipal and local governments, Aurora plays an important role in providing and enabling sport opportunities for the community. The role of local government is to ensure that sport and related services are provided for residents in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

Typically, municipalities utilize various methods to ensure that residents can enjoy active and healthy lifestyles. Council must ensure that there is a policy framework in place and that selected approaches to service delivery are sustainable over time. Approaches must adapt to changing conditions like population growth, income disparity, diversity and varying backgrounds of residents. The role of the municipality is to anticipate and plan for these changes and develop the tools necessary to be proactive and to respond in partnership with other providers.

When it comes to advocating for and promoting sport participation, most proactive municipalities actively monitor community needs, build cohesion and a sense of purpose by all providers and facilitate collective movement toward a shared vision and mutually acceptable goals. Key elements of the municipality’s responsibilities are embracing a plan that is values driven, determining defined



policies and supports for the plan, enacting creative approaches to the development and provision of infrastructure that is important to the plan's outcomes and establishing a funding mechanism to support planning and implementation activities. The provision of dedicated staff support typically results in the achievement of milestones and a stronger sport network.

## The Role of Sport Clubs, Sport Collectives and Stakeholders

Volunteer based sport clubs and not-for-profit sport collectives often focus on the sport requirements of specific age groups or a group of participants' within certain developmental stages of the Long-Term Athlete Development Program. Private sector partners serve a variety of mandates and often employ engagement strategies with the intent of penetrating targeted segments of a marketplace. Regardless of sector or motivation, all sport service providers should be focused on providing market driven programs and supports that respond to the needs and desires of the community. This can be accomplished by organizing forums for discussions that welcome all providers; developing consistent messaging and universal training tools; and adopting a system of "one stop shopping" for services that meet the needs of age cohorts and other segments of the population.

Sport system sustainability is often an important point of discussion and successful sport collectives develop plans and realistic annual budgets to ensure that the initiatives are appropriately funded. Finally, it is a collective responsibility to monitor and evaluate the entire sport delivery system and to proactively respond to areas of required improvement.

## Key Considerations in Aurora

### Sport Leadership

At the time of the development of the Sport Plan, Aurora's sport system does not provide collective guidance and advice directly to Council. To ensure that the municipality and its stakeholder groups work together effectively with and for sport, a mechanism to directly inform Council about the needs and accomplishments of the Town's sport sector is required. Further, there is a need to coordinate the role of parks, recreation and sport in addressing the changing needs and priorities in Aurora. The emerging needs include but are not limited to inclusion of diverse populations, an increase in the older adult population, inactivity in Ontario, access for persons with disabilities and from low income backgrounds, sport tourism etc. There is a need for a coordinating committee to address plans and policies from a more inclusive lens and provide advice to Council.

Currently "one voice" for Aurora sport is non-existent - Sport Aurora lacks support from and involvement by certain high participant sport clubs. There is need for a more inclusive sport governance structure that demonstrates greater cohesion and provides a representative voice.

### Sport System Sustainability

A successful Trillium Fund application has supported the efforts of Sport Aurora over the last three years. To remain sustainable into the future, the sport system will need to establish **stable funding mechanisms** by sourcing grants available from governments, agencies, foundations, etc.; solicitation of sponsorships; establishing funding partnerships; or developing net income producing initiatives through leveraging marketable resources.

It is imperative that the roles and responsibilities of the Town of Aurora and Sport Aurora are clear and well-articulated to those in the sport system as well as potential partners in sport. Ensuring



# Aurora Sport Plan

accurate **role clarity** will assist in positioning sport in the Town and assist in resourcing the Aurora Sport Plan.

The Aurora Sport Plan contemplates a wide variety of initiatives over the next five years. However, existing job commitments of Parks and Recreation Department **staff** leaves little available capacity to address new sport driven initiatives. It would therefore be appropriate to consider the addition of a Sport Development Officer as part of the Town's staff complement.

The proposed roles and responsibilities of a Sport Development Officer (always in concert with the sport community) would include but not be limited to:

- Develop all required sport and sport development policies in concert with the sport community;
- Support the governance and sustainability of sport and report out on sport related matters;
- Clarify the role of the municipality, sport collectives and related partners in the delivery of sport in Aurora;
- Assist in strengthening current and future sport collectives such as a Sport Council;
- Ensure the most effective and efficient use of sport facilities and amenities in Aurora;
- Advance the Sport for All, Sport for Life and Club Excellence programs with related partners;
- Investigate and develop alternate revenue sources to ensure the greatest of efficiencies in the delivery of sport;
- Create one central source of information and utilize all available communications sources to promote sport and sport benefits;
- Assist in the coordination of sport celebration and recognition mechanisms in Aurora;
- Assist in the development of the Aurora Sport Tourism Strategy;
- Lead in the development and execution of an annual Sport Forum in Aurora to strength sport participation, sport excellence and advance sport initiatives;
- Advance initiatives to engage residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds in sport;
- Assist and support community groups in starting up new sport clubs and strengthening existing sports; and
- Develop performance measures to better articulate performance, benefits, participation levels and the economic impacts of sport in Aurora.

Dedicated staff resources will be needed in order to work with the sport community to achieve this critical work to advance sport in Aurora.

To support the Sport Plan over time, it will be important to create a **Sport Funding Model** that identifies and targets all existing and required financial and non-monetary resources that are available to support the Plan's initiatives. Community grants for start-up sports and the development of key resources would be appropriate.



**Partnerships** opportunities are available with organizations such as Canadian Tire, Tim Hortons, RBC and Scotiabank. These companies will fund teams or participation in sport by residents who are financially disadvantaged (most frequently children and youth).

Traditionally sport organizations have been reasonably successful in securing relationships with corporate **sponsors** to help fund their programs and services. However, requests to potential sponsors have been orchestrated by groups acting on their own accord. A coordinated sponsorship approach on the part of a number of sport organizations – indeed, all sports in Aurora - would reduce duplication, introduce portions of the sport community to new sponsorship opportunities and potentially align segments of the business sector to more actively support sport throughout the broader community.

**Volunteerism** is key to a successful sport system. Useful recent examples of creative volunteer planning can be drawn from municipal efforts in other jurisdictions. Certain municipalities are now successfully utilizing of technology to recruit and match volunteers with appropriate voluntary opportunities.

### **Promising Practises in Other Jurisdictions**

Markham and the City of Toronto offer ongoing funding and resources to Sport Councils a within their jurisdictions. The value of the resources provided to each Council is based on forecasted budgets and other projected needs of the group’s initiatives.

The Town of Collingwood is in the initial stages of developing a Sport Alliance and is finalizing a Sport Plan. The funding to support the Sport Plan initiatives has been generated through the net proceeds of the 2012 Winter Games. The Town’s Parks, Recreation and Culture staff support volunteers who form the Sport Alliance and Legacy Committee. Staff also review and approve funding allocations on an annual basis.

The Town of Richmond Hill currently uses software to augment its volunteer recruitment and monitoring processes. The software matches volunteer skills and competencies with of the skill sets required to successfully complete the volunteer opportunity. Volunteer hours are tracked and the Town is finding that the number of volunteers as well as the number of volunteer hours has increased as a result of using of the software package. As an additional benefit, Richmond Hill uses the database produced by the software to recruit volunteers for Town lead events.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Sport Leadership**

- #1. Develop an Aurora Sport Policy that outlines the role of sport in the community. The policy should specifically address the roles and responsibilities of the Town and local sport stakeholders including sport clubs and collectives, the business sector, education, public health etc.
- #2. Change the name of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to the Parks, Recreation and Sport Coordinating Committee. Expand the Committee’s mandate to include sport matters including the implementation of the Aurora Sport Plan and ensuring Town-wide priorities are addressed through parks, recreation and sport.

#3. Reconstitute Sport Aurora into a Sport Council with an expanded mandate and representation from the entire sport community. The Sport Council’s Executive Committee should be appointed through a fair and transparent democratic process.

#4. Add a Sport Development Officer as a new position in Parks and Recreation Department to implement initiatives of the Aurora Sport Plan.



## Sport Sustainability

#5. Create a Sport Funding Model utilizing the following process:

- a) Develop three year budget projections to deliver on the recommendations of the Aurora Sport Plan and identify stable and alternate funding sources.
- b) Seek Partnerships to address the financial implications of the Sport Plan to secure and retain stable and alternate funding.
- c) Develop a Sport Development Grant Program to assist groups in implementing elements of the Sport Plan as well as in their efforts to address their own sport priorities.
- d) Develop a list of sport opportunities that could benefit from sponsorships and create a mechanism that that simplifies funders’ responses to sponsorship opportunities.
- e) Create a Volunteer Development Strategy that addresses volunteer recruitment, selection, training, retention and recognition.
- f) Develop training programs and an e-tool kit that is focused on sport volunteer priorities and that provides insights into recruitment, screening, training, retention and recognition for use by sport stakeholder groups.
- g) Procure volunteer software that serves to develop a database of community volunteers and matches perspective volunteers with the opportunities that become available within the community. The software should also track the number of active community volunteers and the annual number and value of volunteer hours.
- h) Develop performance measures to capture the inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness of the sport delivery in Aurora. Annually report on the results and any impacts on plans for the subsequent year.

### 3.3.2 Goal Two: The Sport Participant

#### Goal Statement

Increase sport participation in Aurora by focussing on the needs of the participant.

#### Key Considerations in Aurora

Increasing levels of physical inactivity - which are connected to the alarming rise of childhood obesity - threatens the future health of Canadian children and youth. Experts suggest that to effectively confront this epidemic, a wide range of responsive solutions should be conceived and delivered on a coordinated basis. Frequently, these initiatives are championed by municipal governments and delivered through collective efforts at a neighborhood level.



Aurora’s sport organizations offer a number of program and services that advance the physical literacy of their constituents. The Town makes available an array of public infrastructure (community centres, arenas, a sports fields etc.) from and within which many of these programs and services are delivered. Furthermore, physical activity opportunities are available from other service providers including the education system, service clubs and other agencies and the private sector. To be fully successful, all of these programs and services should be delivered consistently and systematically in all neighborhoods throughout the Town. Programs and services should be fully available and accessible to all children and youth living in Aurora.

The Canadian Sport for Life movement has been successfully applied in communities throughout Canada to bring cohesiveness, consistency and stability to the delivery of programs and services that enhance physical literacy. A number of the Town’s existing organizations already employ the CS4L model to deliver programs ranging from introductory learn to play and basic movement skill development to more advanced sport specific skills required by proficient athletes. Sport Aurora’s program to train early child care workers and educators (which is waiting funding) is a good example of this type of grass roots educational program. Taking advantage of knowledge derived from local successes as well as lessons from other communities in creating a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to delivering the CS4L pathway would help new or less organized sport organizations in Aurora come more in line with their more sophisticated sport counterparts.

The consultation process identified Coaching Clinics as a program area that could be improved through coordination and systematized delivery. In doing so, duplication would be reduced while delivering effective training to potential coaches to be certified within their sport of choice.

The community engagement exercise that supported the Sport Plan revealed that some sport groups were not receiving equitable allocation of prime and non-prime hours in community facilities. There is a perception that the current allocation procedure is based upon historical precedent rather than a fair and transparent process of apportioning facility time to all user groups desirous of appropriate program space. It would therefore be appropriate to undertake a review of sport facility allocation policies and procedures to ensure that going forward, the allocation process is based on equitably fulfilling groups’ program space requirements based on fair and universally applied principles.

The older adult population of residents from 55 to 70+ years is expected to increase by 8,400 residents by 2021 in Aurora. This will have an implication on addressing the sport needs of older adults now and into the future. The Aurora Seniors Centre does offer Pickleball and other active pursuits and a review of the specific sport needs of older adults is appropriate in order to be prepared to meet sport needs and continue to increase sport participation

### Promising Practises in Other Jurisdictions

The Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) has implemented a variation of athlete development, which is still based on the Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD). The OSA has titled their version Long-Term Player Development (LTPD), which focuses on the development of the skills necessary to participate in soccer and then eventually compete. The OSA’s LTPD serves as a unique outline for how sport specific organizations can modify the LTAD to better align with the terminology of their own sport while still adhering to the LTAD principles.

The City of Mississauga researched the root cause of a decline in use of Malton Arena. Consultations revealed that the local community - which is largely made up of South East Asian population – had a unique problem. Parents wanted their children to learn to play hockey but were



unable to participate in the traditional league format because the kids had no hockey skills. The City organized a learn to skate and learn to play hockey program and facilitated shinny games until the budding hockey players were sufficiently skilled to be comfortable in joining a league.

The Town of Richmond Hill is comprised of diverse cultures and as such segments of its population are unfamiliar with traditional Canadian sports. To help introduce residents to new forms of activity, the Town offers introductory classes to the skill sets, rolls and protocols of sports less commonly practiced by new Canadians. These interventions are successful in that the learn-to-skate and learn-to-play hockey lessons are over prescribed.

The City of Markham has a significant Asian population and residents demonstrate dual interest in sport activities – they want to be active in sports popular in their native country as well traditional Canadian sporting activities. In response to this situation, the City has consulted with residents and stakeholder groups to understand emerging sport and physical activity needs in both of these areas. This consultation prompted the City to allocate additional space and increased support for badminton and table tennis participants. Both the Milliken Mills Community Centre and the Angus Glen Community Centre have drop in, after school and daytime opportunities for residents of all ages in both of these sports. Participation is at capacity and there is evidence of pent up demands. Of particular interest is the fact that the City hosted badminton and table tennis events as part of the Pan Am and Para Pan Games in 2015. The alignment of the local community's interest in these sports was instrumental in Markham being awarded these Pan Am events.

The City of Kitchener Community Services Department has developed an Inclusion and Athletics staff team that works with the community to identify and remove barriers to participation potential sport participants. Staff help organizations that serve persons with disabilities to a successfully navigate the sport system and to integrate with 39 sport clubs in the community. Examples of available services include individual assistance, the PAL program (Personal Assistant for Leisure), help in gaining access to existing programs, develop new sport opportunities that match local needs of the physically disabled, and work with an advisory committee to manage the Sport for the Disabled Trust Fund.

The City of Kingston created a Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) Office. The initiative was funded by the Trillium Foundation while the Office developed its sustainability model. The focus of the Office is to engage all sport delivery agents in the implementation of the concepts of sport for life, the Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) and the introduction of physical literacy into the mainstream sports. Kingston, in conjunction with 16 partner organizations, has worked to increase opportunities for sport and recreation participation, implement physical literacy in sport and recreation activities as a foundation for lifelong participation and strengthen community sport organizations. The City implemented these principles through the following programs:

- Kingston Gets Active Ambassadors whose work it is to form relationships in the community with like agencies and organizations to introduce the concepts of sport for life and physical literacy.
- Free Physical Literacy workshops for all stakeholder groups.
- Kingston Gets Active Month to promote physical activity and literacy.
- Multiple Sport Programming combining physical literacy into the introduction of various sports.



## Recommendations

- #6. Focus on the needs of athletes and sport participants by addressing the following identified actions:
- Continue to provide the Physical Literacy training for persons working and volunteering with pre-school and children's groups and expand the program to include all age groups.
  - Train staff and volunteers in working with culturally diverse groups to better understand their sport needs and look to other communities within the region that have responded to changing demographics by providing both culturally appropriate sports and an introduction to traditional Canadian sports (Markham and Richmond Hill).
  - Convene a meeting with agencies supporting persons with disabilities to better understand their needs in being included in sport in Aurora.
  - Develop a Recreation and Sport Access Policy that identifies barriers to sport participation and addresses mechanisms that can increase participation and full access for residents from low income backgrounds.
  - Work with Social Service staff from the Region of York to introduce sport opportunities and support funding for persons from low income backgrounds. Develop a brochure for Social Service workers to help their clients navigate the sport system.
  - Inventory existing participation of girls and women in sport to determine if there are any gaps in participation.
  - Assess the current provision of sports for older adults by all sectors in Aurora and work with the older adult population to address gaps and emerging sport needs.
  - Quantify participation of diverse and marginalized groups in sport and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

### 3.3.3 Goal Three: Sport Promotion and Celebration

#### Goal Statement

Promote the benefits of sport participation and recognize and celebrate sport excellence

#### Key Considerations in Aurora

Sport Aurora has developed a sport magazine specific to promote sport excellence and opportunities in Aurora. This is one excellent source of information however there is no one central source of information about all of the Town's sport opportunities. The Leisure Guide list sport groups and local papers list registration opportunities to join sport organizations.

#### Sport Promotion

Sport deserves a comprehensive a public awareness campaign to expand the level of public understanding of the many physical, social and mental benefits associated with sport participation. Consultations revealed that currently, there is not sufficient public messaging around the value and benefits of sport in Aurora. An annual promotional plan was suggested to communicate specific messages to varying age cohorts in the most effective communications medium.



Marketing, messaging and communication improvements will not happen in the absence of a coordinated effort that utilizes the expertise and energy from every possible source within the sport community. Sport promotion initiatives should seek out mechanisms that gain access to a broader array of communication channels to better promote the outcomes, programs and resources available from sport within Aurora. This could include providing links to various sport websites to allow the general public to learn more about specific sports. Also navigating the sport system and having one central portal would help to create awareness and engage more residents in sport participation.

The Aurora sport system should be aligned and coordinated with the multiple stakeholders from the many sectors that will influence the Town's success in delivering sport programs and services. Therefore, promotional and public awareness activities should be cognizant and reflective of the other sectors with which sport is affiliated. Consequently, the communications plan should focus on cross-sectoral engagement and coordination with public health, education, culture and other sectors associated with the sport delivery system.

### Sport Celebration

As stated earlier in this report, the current programs that celebrate sport accomplishments and recognize resident contributions include:

- **The Breakfast of Champions** – celebrates sport excellence and is attended by the Mayor, athletes and volunteers as well as other sport dignitaries and sport partners.
- **Volunteer Recognition** – awards volunteers for countless hours of involvement and contribution to sport and community.
- **Town Community Recognition Awards** – recognizes resident contributions to community life including sport.
- **Aurora Sport Hall of Fame** – recognizes, chronicles and displays the historical and current contributions to sport excellence in Aurora

There were no comments to change the sport recognition program currently in place other than to enhance the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame to ensure that sport heritage is captured and part of the public archives and records.

### Recommendations

#7. Develop a broad based Sport Marketing Strategy that encompasses all necessary ingredients to increase the public's general understanding of the benefits of a robust sports system. The Strategy should be the responsibility of the Parks, Recreation and Sport Coordinating Committee with assistance and support from staff. In creating the Strategy, the Committee should undertake the following activities:

- a) Inventory marketing, promotional and community messaging resources and supports available throughout the municipality, the sport community and the sport partners currently affiliated with sport organizations in Aurora.
- b) Undertake an environmental scan of sport marketing campaigns that have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions. Document the best practices drawn from these examples and prioritize the approaches that are most likely applicable to the Aurora circumstance.



- c) Adopt standardized communication messaging and language that is applicable to all sport environments.
- d) Create marketing tools and initiatives to reach as many audiences as possible and utilize an array of promotional techniques to expand the messaging reach as far as possible – e.g. traditional advertising, social media, public service announcements, communication through sports organizations, communications through sport organizations, etc.
- e) Solicit private sector participation in sport marketing through cultivating creative partnerships with local communications firms or individuals with proven marketing expertise.
- f) Consult with marketing advisors from public, not-for-profit and private sector sport or physical activity organizations that would benefit from coordinated marketing efforts. Advisors should routinely meet with appropriate members of the Sport Coordinating Committee and staff to offer advice and information about developing and maintaining the marketing strategy.
- g) Develop a long range plan for the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame that continues to capture the heritage of sport in Aurora as well as current sport excellence.
- h) Host an annual Sport Excellence Summit to strengthen cohesion and learning amongst the sport partners in Aurora.

### 3.3.4 Goal Four: Sport Tourism

#### Goal Statement

Strengthen Aurora’s ability to attract sport events to the Town and reap the economic impacts of sport tourism.

#### Key Considerations in Aurora

Hosting sport events creates the potential to generate significant economic, social and community benefits. Event hosting also contributes to sport development and can produce sport legacy that can be enjoyed by future generations. To achieve these positive outcomes, the sport community should establish a coordinated and systematic approach to searching for events that are appropriate for the community while mustering the necessary resources to effectively compete against the other communities vying for the same opportunities.

In 2008, the Greater Golden Horseshoe bid for the opportunity to host the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games. In 2009, the Pan American Sport Organization (PASO) announced that Toronto and surrounding areas were the successful proponent and that the TO 2015 Game would indeed become a reality. For the next six years the Federal and provincial governments along with 18 partnering municipalities worked diligently to organize the largest multi-sport Games ever hosted on Canadian soil. And despite early naysayers and some initial setbacks, the 2015 Games have been deemed an unmitigated success from which potential sport host communities can draw important lessons.

Aurora can take advantage of the hosting experiences of its regional neighbours and should capitalize on the significant momentum generated by the Pan Am Games. Furthermore, several



legacy items – such as volunteer networks, partnership frameworks, fundraising schemes, security plans, athlete and support accommodation strategies, etc. – can be valuably applied at a local level.

There is significant local interest by Aurora’s sport and business partners to develop a Sport Tourism Strategy in an effort to attract a greater number of sport tournaments and competitions to the Town. As has been the case in other communities, an increase in the number of events would increase the volume of visitors to Aurora which in turn would produce economic benefits to local businesses - in particular the hospitality industry.

Historically, tournaments, meets and other types of events occur in Aurora on an annual basis. However, stakeholders report that the economic benefits that accrue to the Town (or the region) from these tournaments have not been measured. Another challenge to hosting local events is that there is no hotel in Aurora which means that event participants must overnight at hotels in adjacent municipalities. The negative impact of the lack of a hotel on hosting events is a matter of conjecture as the matter has also never been effectively evaluated.

Developing a comprehensive Sport Tourism Strategy should be considered a corollary to this Sport Plan. The Sport Plan guides efforts to strengthen the sport community in Aurora while the Sport Tourism Strategy represents a detailed and strategic framework for working with the sport community and related stakeholders to successfully attract and host sport events. The Strategy should encourage coordination, collaboration and take advantage of the resources from a range of potential partners, working towards common goals for attracting sport tournaments, meets and other events to the Town.

## Recommendations

- #8. Develop an Aurora Sport Tourism Strategy. The Strategy could become an element of the broader municipal Tourism Strategy that is currently under development. Staff responsible for the Strategy should work with and through the Parks, Recreation and Sport Coordinating Committee to consult with Sport Aurora, hospitality agencies, affiliated sport and recreation associations, etc. to ensure the Strategy’s focus is sport specific. Staff should also adopt a collaborative partnering approach to ensure that the Strategy takes into account the needs, desires and resources of the local community and the surrounding region. The Strategy’s design should be sure to include agencies and organizations that provide facilities and services required to host sports events. In creating the Strategy, the staff should undertake the following activities:
- a) Make use of resources and supports available through the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA) at [www.canadiansporttourism.com](http://www.canadiansporttourism.com). For example, the CSTA has developed sport tourism planning templates, business plan templates for hosting a sports event, sport tourism economic assessment model (STEAM) and an events database. All of these materials are available on a “plug and play basis” with very little guesswork required on the part of the jurisdiction developing the tourism strategy.
  - b) Undertake an environmental scan to determine the current situation associated with the Town’s capacity to host events. This scan should take into account the physical and organizational attributes and shortcomings of the Town in terms of event hosting.
  - c) Prepare an analysis illustrating the community and economic benefits associated with a sport hosting strategy compared to the costs of planning for and implementing a hosting strategy.

- d) Based on the outcome of the environmental scan, identify categories of sport events for which the Town is best suited. This should lead to the identification of potential events for which the Town could bid. Utilizing the resources of CSTA, participate in a bidding process.
- e) Utilizing the resources of CSTA, evaluate the economic impact of existing events as well as hosting opportunities made available through the implementation of the Sport Tourism Strategy.



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# Aurora Sport Plan



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## 4. Plan Implementation and Performance Measures

### 4.1 Priorities - Years One to Five

Recommendation	Short-Term (Year 1)	Mid-Term (Year 2 – 3)	Long-Term (Year 4-5)
<b>Sport Leadership</b>			
1. Develop an Aurora Sport Policy that outlines the role of sport in the community. The policy should specifically address the roles and responsibilities of the Town and local sport stakeholders including sport clubs and collectives, the business sector, education, public health, etc.	•		
2. Change the name of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to the Parks, Recreation and Sport Coordinating Committee. Expand the Committee’s mandate to include sport matters including the implementation of the Aurora Sport Plan and ensuring Town-wide priorities are addressed through parks, recreation and sport.	•		
3. Reconstitute Sport Aurora into a Sport Council with an expanded mandate and representation from the entire sport community. The Sport Council’s Executive Committee should be appointed through a fair and transparent democratic process.	•		
4. Add a Sport Development Officer as a new position in Parks and Recreation Department to implement initiatives of the Aurora Sport Plan.	•		
<b>Sport Sustainability</b>			
5a. Develop three year budget projections to deliver on the recommendations of the Aurora Sport Plan and identify stable and alternate funding sources.	•	•	•
5b. Seek Partnerships to address the financial implications of the Sport Plan to secure and retain stable and alternate funding.	•	•	•
5c. Develop a Sport Development Grant Program to assist groups in implementing elements of the Sport Plan as well as in their efforts to address their own sport priorities.		•	•
5d. Develop a list of sport opportunities that could benefit from sponsorships and create a mechanism that that simplifies funders’ responses to sponsorship opportunities.		•	•
5e. Create a Volunteer Development Strategy that addresses volunteer recruitment, selection, training, retention and recognition.		•	
5f. Develop training programs and an e-tool kit that is focused on sport volunteer priorities and that provides insights into recruitment, screening, training, retention and recognition for use by sport stakeholder groups.		•	•



# Aurora Sport Plan

Recommendation	Short-Term (Year 1)	Mid-Term (Year 2 – 3)	Long-Term (Year 4-5)
5g. Procure volunteer software that serves to develop a database of community volunteers and matches perspective volunteers with the opportunities that become available within the community. The software should also track the number of active community volunteers and the annual number and value of volunteer hours.		•	•
5h. Develop performance measures to capture the inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness of sport delivery in Aurora. Annually report on the results and any impacts on plans for the subsequent year.		•	•
<b>Sport Participant</b>			
6a. Continue to provide the Physical Literacy training for persons working and volunteering with pre-school and children’s groups and expand the program to include all age groups	•	•	•
6b. Train staff and volunteers in working with culturally diverse groups to better understand their sport needs and look to other communities within the region that have responded to changing demographics by providing both culturally appropriate sports and an introduction to traditional Canadian sports (Markham and Richmond Hill)		•	•
6c. Convene a meeting with agencies supporting persons with disabilities to better understand their needs in being included in sport in Aurora	•		
6d. Develop a Recreation and Sport Access Policy that identifies barriers to participation and addresses mechanisms that can increase participation and full access for residents from low income backgrounds.	•	•	
6e. Work with Social Service staff from the Region of York to introduce sport opportunities and support funding for persons from low income backgrounds. Develop a brochure for Social Service workers to help their clients navigate the sport system		•	
6f. Inventory existing participation of girls and women in sport to determine if there are any gaps in participation		•	
6g. Assess the current provision of sports for older adults by all sectors in Aurora and work with the older adult population to address gaps and emerging sport needs.		•	
6h. Quantify participation of diverse and marginalized groups in sport and measure the effectiveness of interventions		•	
<b>Sport Promotion and Celebration</b>			
7. Develop a broad based Sport Marketing Strategy.	•		
<b>Sport Tourism</b>			
8. Develop an Aurora Sport Tourism Strategy.		•	



## 4.2 Measuring Performance

### Positioning Recreation in Aurora – Telling the Sport Story

Measuring performance can bring substantial benefits to any initiative in the form of greater effectiveness and continued improvements. Measuring performance is an ongoing process of determining how well or how poorly, a program, service or initiative is being delivered and/or perceived. It involves the collection of data and analysis to measure performance against pre-established targets, goals or outcomes. Performance indicators, or measures, are developed as standards for assessing the extent to which goals or outcomes are achieved, alongside already established expectations of desired levels of performance, participant satisfaction etc.

The use of benchmarks from other communities presents challenges because there are many factors that can influence results that are different between jurisdictions - demographics, subsidy policies, cost recovery targets, service provision mandates etc. The real measure is to compare sport performance year after year within Aurora to evaluate how effectively the Town and its partners have addressed the Sport Plan goals to provide meaningful expansion of the sport mandate.

A performance measurement framework is recommended as an effective tool for monitoring, capturing, and reporting information on the key goals identified in this Plan. The performance management framework is to be used to evaluate, motivate, budget, celebrate, communicate, recognize, educate and improve sport delivery.

The following framework presents measures that represent baseline requirements. This should be put in place while developing methods of demonstrating the return on the investment in the sport community as well as the municipality as a whole. For example:

- How many residents and what age cohorts are involved in sport?
- What is the investment in sport in Aurora?
- What is the value of the volunteer hours invested in sport?
- How are the varying support programs increasing sport participation?
- What is the annual value of partnerships and sponsorships?
- What is the economic impact of sport tourism in Aurora?

The answers to these and other questions can demonstrate to the public that the investments in sport are productive and contribute to the public good.

Collecting and analyzing baseline data will begin in year one. While effective measurement of the outcomes and benefit of sport is the ultimate goal, meaningful analysis will require at least three years of data to reliably identify sport trends, changes in participant satisfaction, year over year return on investments, etc.



Performance Measure Category	Measures	Description
Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operating budgets attributed to sport in Aurora</li> <li>2. Annual capital funds spent to upgrade facilities and equipment</li> <li>3. The value of volunteer hours attributed to sport</li> <li>4. Investment per capita in sport in Aurora</li> </ol>	This data provides an overview of the municipal and stakeholder investment in sport and any other alternate funding and volunteer value.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Number of hours of community spaces and programs utilized for sport use</li> <li>6. Capacity and fill-rates of sport facilities and programs dedicated to sport</li> <li>7. Age groups and abilities served - # of participants per age group</li> <li>8. Results of inclusion efforts in sport (# of participants)</li> <li>9. Economic impact of sport tourism and sport spending</li> </ol>	This information compares the return on the investment year to year and responds to the question: "How have these outputs increased through staff and stakeholder efforts?"
Efficiencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Costs avoided due to sponsorships, partnerships and alternate funding mechanisms</li> <li>11. Efficiencies (reduced costs) through the sharing of resources</li> </ol>	This data will demonstrate what has been done to become more efficient in sport delivery
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Sport participant, Sport Aurora member and visitor satisfaction levels</li> </ol>	User and visitor satisfaction levels can indicate what is being done well and what can be done to improve the athletes and visitor experience as well as within the sport system.

### Promising Practise

The City of Philadelphia undertook a study in to determine the economic value of the recreation and parks system. The study identified measurable attributes and sought to quantify their value to residents. The contribution of the recreation and parks system to reducing social service costs, reducing crime and minimizing social dysfunction, increasing tourism, helping in storm water retention and increased property values were calculated by practitioners and economists. The conclusion of the analysis was that parks and recreation facilities, programs and services elevate to resident wealth by \$729M, save residents \$1.28B, produce municipal savings of \$14.5M and increased revenues of \$23.3M. This information has been used to position the parks and recreation

system by quantifying its economic impact through increased revenues, higher property values and visitor spending.<sup>14</sup>

### 4.3 Conclusion

The summary of the key sport issues in Aurora have been synthesized to a manageable yet strategic number of goals and respective actions. The suggested priorities are mapped out into short, mid and longer term timeframes over the next five years to allow the full sport community and stakeholders to mobilize and produce desired results. Measuring inputs, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness of the sport system will allow annual target setting and tracking of progress. Performance measurement also allows for mid-Plan course corrections if targets are missed. The collective work of the Town of Aurora, volunteer organizations, the health and education sectors and private enterprise will help to advance the sport agenda in the Town to enable it to truly aspire to the title of **Canada's most active community**.

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<sup>14</sup> Harnick, Peter. 2008. How Much Value Does the City of Philadelphia Receive from its Parks and Recreation System? Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Trust for Public Land and Philadelphia Parks Alliance.