



# Town of Aurora Parks & Recreation Services Youth Needs Analysis



## Final Report October, 2010



**dmA Planning & Management Services**

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Oct. 12, 2010

Mr. Allan Downey  
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Town of Aurora  
1 Municipal Drive  
Aurora, Ontario  
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**Re: Youth Needs Analysis**

Dear Mr. Downey:

We are pleased to provide our final report concerning the *Youth Needs Analysis* for the Town of Aurora, Parks and Recreation Services Department. The report provides a comprehensive strategy for meeting the current and future needs of the community's youth. The Strategy addresses a wide range of topics, including program and service needs, communication and marketing, policy, and required facilities. As you know, the Strategy was prepared with the active involvement of youth and a number of stakeholders familiar with youth needs. Most important in this regard, was a statistically valid survey that captured the opinions of youth in the community

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and other Parks and Recreation Services Department staff on this important assignment. We appreciate the assistance provided throughout the study process. We trust that the Youth Needs Analysis will provide the Department and the Town with the direction they require to plan for the future needs of the Town of Aurora's youth.

It has been a pleasure working with you on this assignment.

Sincerely,



Jim Morgenstern MCIP  
Principal

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Study Purpose and Process

The Youth Needs Analysis is a comprehensive review of leisure services available to residents in Aurora aged 12-18. It examines the adequacy of facilities, services, programs and delivery systems and recommends a strategy for best meeting youth recreational needs in the Town of Aurora.

The study was conducted in three phases:

- Phase One: Project Initiation and Background Information Collection
- Phase Two: Community and Stakeholder Consultation
- Phase Three: Needs Assessment and Strategy Development

A *Background Report* was prepared at the end of Phase Two and presented to the study Steering Committee for review.

### Youth Needs Assessment

The youth needs assessment identified key barriers to increasing participation in leisure and recreation programs and activities, facility and program gaps, and opportunities. The needs assessment was strongly rooted in the views and opinions of Aurora's youth. Residents aged 12-18 were involved in the study through focus groups and personal interviews, but more importantly, through a statistically valid survey. The recommendations are based on this input, the opinions of other stakeholders, including agencies and organizations serving youth in Aurora, and the experience in other comparable Ontario communities.

### Youth Recreation Strategy

The Youth Recreation strategy builds on the findings summarized in the *Background Report*, the gap analysis and the identification of barriers to recommend programs, services and service delivery approaches, and indoor and outdoor facilities and park elements to meet priority youth needs. The following are the Strategy's recommendations:

## Program Recommendations

- Recommendation 1:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should take an active and lead role in initiating the development of a Physical Activity Plan for the Town of Aurora.
- Recommendation 2:** In the short term, the Department should review all programs (i.e., Summer Camp and March Break Camps, Drop-in Programs, Supervised Playground Programs) to establish minimum guidelines for physical activity. The Department should also work with volunteer organizations, including voluntary sport and recreation groups, to ensure they understand physical activity goals and promote physical activity in their program offerings.
- Recommendation 3:** Review scheduling practices for all Town-owned and operated recreation facilities (arenas, arena floors, multi-purpose rooms, fitness centres) to provide more opportunities for drop-in physical activities (i.e., lunch time and after school pick-up or shinny hockey, afterschool basketball, roller hockey and floor hockey, after school youth-only fitness classes or workout times).
- Recommendation 4:** By improving access to appropriate and accessible facilities, provide more opportunities for youth to participate in unstructured recreation, to socialize and “hang-out” and participate in drop-in programs and activities in a safe and supervised environment.
- Recommendation 5:** Continue to monitor program trends and emerging activity interests with a view towards continuously improving and expanding the program and activity offerings for youth.
- Recommendation 6:** Identify appropriate partners and develop partnerships to provide youth employment programs and employment-readiness services (resume writing, job databanks, etc.).
- Recommendation 7:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department and the Aurora Cultural Centre should work together to develop, promote and deliver arts, cultural and heritage programs and activities of interest to youth.
- Recommendation 8:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should investigate possible partnerships to develop programs and activities that merge technology with art, in the creation and production of videos and films, computer art, digital music and photography, etc.

## Delivery System Recommendations

- Recommendation 9:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should review options to improve communication and marketing of youth opportunities through greater use of technology, including the internet and social networking sites, and improve outreach through schools and other areas where youth congregate. If a Youth Centre is developed in Aurora, a separate web page

with information on the Centre's programs, facilities, membership and volunteer opportunities should be developed, with links to Facebook (or other social media sites).

- Recommendation 10:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should provide relevant opportunities for youth to become involved in the planning, design, and development of programs, activities, and facilities of interest to them, and ensure that their input is considered in meaningful ways.
- Recommendation 11:** Aurora youth should be involved in the evaluation of services, programs, and facilities relevant to them. This could involve regular surveys (on-line, telephone, or exit surveys), comment boxes, on-line blogs, or other methods. Youth should be actively consulted on all plans and initiatives of the Town that may impact them (i.e. Trails Master Plan is a recent and current example), through surveys, focus groups, workshops, and other activities, as appropriate.
- Recommendation 12:** If a Youth Centre is developed, a volunteer program should be established to integrate high school and university student volunteers in the development and delivery of programs and in the operation of the centre.
- Recommendation 13:** The Department should review policies related to facility allocation and facility scheduling and develop a policy statement aimed at improving access and maximizing opportunities for unstructured, drop-in, and spontaneous recreation for youth at Town-owned and operated recreation facilities (arenas, arena floors, pools, multi-purpose rooms, etc.).
- Recommendation 14:** If a municipally-owned gymnasium is developed as part of an existing multi purpose recreation complex, a policy should be developed to ensure priority scheduling of this facility for youth drop-in and unstructured activities.
- Recommendation 15:** Policies and practices related to fees and charges for youth services should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that cost does not become a barrier to participation in the future, and to clearly articulate the Department's philosophy and intentions with respect to activity, program and membership fees for youth services.
- Recommendation 16:** The Town should develop specific policies for the proposed Youth Centre that outline the Department's intentions with respect to membership charges (maximizing accessibility and minimizing costs to users), outline a membership code of conduct, and identify volunteer responsibilities and level of commitment.
- Recommendation 17:** Review Parks and Recreation Services Department staff roles and responsibilities to confirm that the service delivery recommendations of this Strategy, (related to communications, policy development, partnership

development, planning and evaluation) can be implemented with the existing staff complement.

- Recommendation 18:** At such time as new facilities or services for youth come on stream, the Department should review staffing needs and increase the staffing complement dedicated to youth services, as required.
- Recommendation 19:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should dedicate resources and staff time to providing training opportunities for all staff involved with youth services, to ensure that staff is kept up-to-date on youth issues, and able to deal effectively with youth and provide appropriate services. An annual training budget should be determined and allocated appropriately, based on service priorities for the year.
- Recommendation 20:** Youth services staff should continuously be involved in trends monitoring, long range planning, and evaluation of youth needs, interests, and services.
- Recommendation 21:** Simple performance measures should be established to identify and communicate successes
- Recommendation 22:** The recommendations of this strategy should be reviewed annually and formally updated every 5 years.
- Recommendation 23:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should establish networks and maintain regular contact with a wide range of potential partner agencies in Aurora and York Region, to explore partnership opportunities and develop partnerships (i.e., shared marketing and promotion, program and service development and/or delivery, and facility use and provision) to meet youth needs for recreation and leisure.
- Recommendation 24:** Parks and Recreation Services Department staff should develop a process to evaluate potential partnerships for youth services.

### **Facility Recommendations**

- Recommendation 25:** The Town of Aurora should develop a dedicated youth lounge or youth centre, including a comfortable seating/lounge area, a games/computer area, and a teaching kitchen. The youth lounge should be developed as part of a larger multi-purpose recreation facility, with access to a wide range of indoor and outdoor recreation facility components. Access to a gymnasium would be the most important consideration; however a wide range of other recreation facility components would be of interest to youth.
- Recommendation 26:** The Town of Aurora should develop a full size gymnasium, to accommodate outstanding demand for active indoor sports for youth, user groups, and the community. The gymnasium should be developed as part

of a larger multi-purpose recreation facility, adjacent to or in close proximity to the recommended youth lounge.

- Recommendation 27:** In the short term, the Town should undertake a detailed architectural assessment and cost benefit analysis of options to redevelop or expand existing municipal recreation facilities to incorporate a gymnasium and youth lounge.
- Recommendation 28:** The Town of Aurora should investigate options to provide access to a 600 sq. ft. multi-media lab, including an open workshop space and lockable storage unit. The multi-media lab should offer equipment and components that would be used in the creation and production of videos and films, computer art, digital music and photography, etc. A full range of partnership options to address this facility need should be explored.
- Recommendation 29:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should continuously monitor emerging activity trends and best practices and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging needs through new and redeveloped facilities. Facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a very narrow market, or that provide dedicated space for an activity that is in decline should be considered for redevelopment to meet new and emerging interests.
- Recommendation 30:** The Town of Aurora should develop a Town-wide permanent skatepark to meet youth needs for unstructured, spontaneous and active recreation. The skatepark should be between 13,000 and 18,000 sq. ft., and should be designed and developed through the active participation of the Town's skateboarding enthusiasts, and the involvement of a skatepark design firm.
- Recommendation 31:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should ensure effective coordination between the Youth Recreation Strategy and the Trails Master Plan, to ensure that the recommendations address active transportation and active recreation needs of youth.
- Recommendation 32:** Youth-friendly outdoor amenities and elements should be considered during all parks and trails planning, development/redevelopment, and improvement initiatives.
- Recommendation 33:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should monitor outdoor activity trends and best practices and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging needs through new and redeveloped facilities. Outdoor facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a very narrow market or activity interest, or that provide dedicated space for an activity showing declining participation should be considered for redevelopment to meet new and emerging interests.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Study Purpose and Process

The needs, interests, and challenges of youth change with each generation, making regular evaluation of services imperative for this age group. The Town of Aurora recently completed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, largely focused on facilities, which recommended a more detailed examination of youth needs. In the summer of 2010, dmA Planning & Management Services was commissioned to work with the Town's Parks and Recreation Services Department to conduct a comprehensive review of leisure services available to residents aged 12-18. The Youth Needs Analysis examines the adequacy of facilities, services, programs and delivery systems and recommends a strategy for best meeting youth recreational needs.

The Youth Needs Analysis involved the following three phases:

**Phase One: Project Initiation and Background Information Collection.** Background information from recent studies such as the Master Plan, youth policies, existing youth programs and services, the Town's youth demographic profile and general trends and best practices were documented in a *Background Report*<sup>1</sup> and reviewed by the Steering Committee.

**Phase Two: Community and Stakeholder Consultation.** The community was involved in the study through a number of consultation activities including a statistically valid household survey of youth age 12 to 18 from randomly selected households; an online survey of agencies and organizations serving youth; focus groups with youth of different ages and program staff; and key informant interviews with municipal staff, members of Council and other study stakeholders. An online comment form was also available via the internet on the Town's website. The results of the consultation activities were summarized in the *Background Report* and reviewed by the Steering Committee.

**Phase Three: Needs Assessment and Strategy Development.** The Needs Assessment involved the identification of barriers to youth participation, gaps in existing services and issues associated with youth outreach and engagement, and opportunities to improve service delivery, based on results of the previous study phases. A Strategy was prepared with recommendations for improving and expanding recreational services for youth.

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<sup>1</sup> dmA Planning & Management Services, Sept. 2010. Town of Aurora, Parks & Recreation Services, Youth Needs Analysis: Background Report.

## 1.2. The Planning Framework

The 2006 Census recorded over 8,000 children and youth between the ages of 10 and 19, representing about 17% of Aurora's total population. Like other York Region municipalities, the Town of Aurora is experiencing rapid growth -- projecting 40% increase in population between 2006 and 2031 with a strong focus on family housing<sup>2</sup>. This anticipated growth will result in continued demand for leisure pursuits of interest to youth for the timeframe of this strategy. Aurora also has higher levels of income and education than the province as whole, aspects that positively correlate with higher degrees of participation in leisure activities. Growing ethnic diversity in the Town will also influence participation in certain types of activities, although ethnic diversity is not increasing in Aurora at the same rate as some York Region municipalities.

To keep pace with growth and change, the Town completed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in early 2010. The Plan notes that the Town of Aurora does not currently operate dedicated spaces for youth. However, to prepare for a growing demand for safe and accessible facilities and programs for youth the Plan recommends that "a detailed study should be undertaken, based on wide public consultation and a market study, to determine unmet youth needs, gaps in services to youth and the facilities required to meet the identified needs and close identified gaps."

While the Master Plan does not deal in depth with youth needs, it makes a number of recommendations for recreation facilities and services that would serve youth as well as other sectors of the community. These include: locating youth spaces in highly accessible areas, developing a business plan process that weighs the costs and benefits of developing youth space at an appropriate existing facility or as a part of a new facility, and distributing a routine youth survey to monitor demands and satisfaction with current services. The Plan also appears to support a major skateboard park (subject to additional market studies) and the continued development and improvement of skate zones and BMX parks.

While not solely related to addressing youth needs, the Plan also addresses needs for multipurpose program space and gymnasium space.

The Master Plan notes that demand for programming space has increased and indicates that "as need for additional municipal programs increase and the population grows, further demand for such spaces can be expected and may necessitate additional venues"<sup>3</sup>. The Plan does not

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<sup>2</sup> Regional Municipality of York. Planning and Economic Development Committee. April 2007. Planning for Tomorrow.

<sup>3</sup> Parks and Recreation Master Plan, p17.

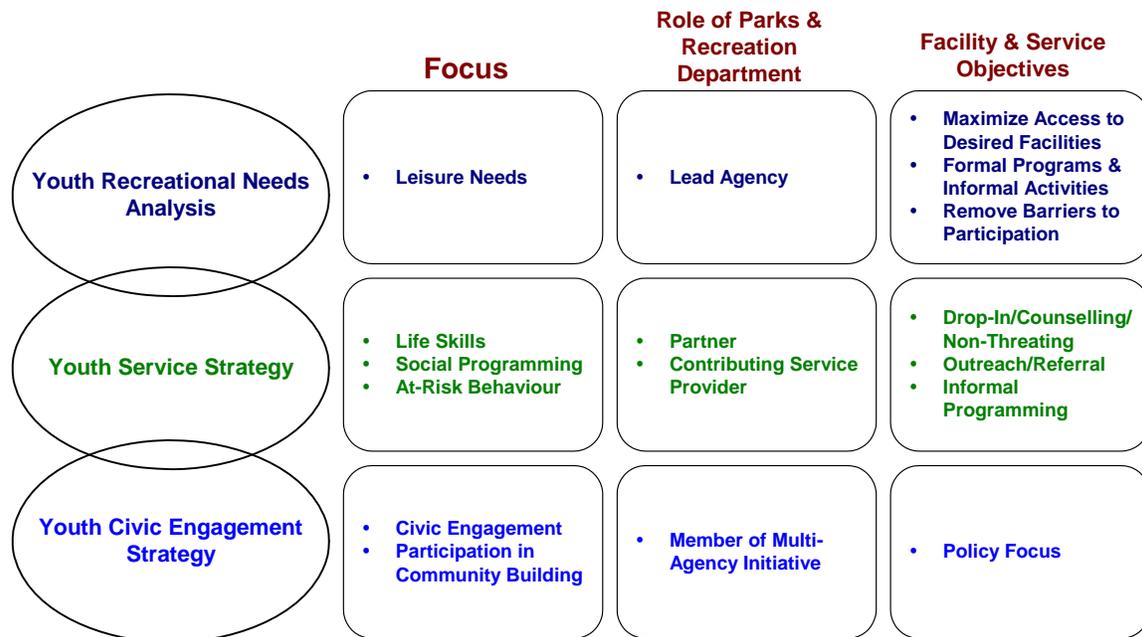
propose a level of provision for future multipurpose space or specifically address any current, unmet need for additional space.

The Master Plan identified a service level target for gymnasiums at 1 full size municipal gymnasium per 35,000 residents, as well as recommending the Town “continue to negotiate and secure long-term access to gymnasiums owned by the school boards in order to provide a secure venue for community organizations and municipal leisure programming”<sup>4</sup>. Further, it notes “if the Town is unsuccessful in securing current and long-term access to gymnasiums owned by the school boards, construction of a municipal gymnasium should be considered”.

### 1.3. Study Scope

Many Canadian municipalities have prepared strategies that address the needs of youth however the scope varies considerably. Figure 1.1 illustrates three broad types of youth strategies that can be found in the literature. We have used this to clarify the scope of the Aurora Youth Strategy.

Figure 1.1: Relationship Among Strategies



<sup>4</sup> Parks & Recreation Master Plan, pp. 21 and 68.

As indicated in Figure 1.1, municipal youth strategies might be categorized as three types, each with a different focus, role for the municipal recreation department and facility and service objectives.

The Town of Aurora is preparing a Youth Recreational Needs Analysis. The primary focus is on leisure needs, the Parks and Recreation Services Department will be the lead agency, and the objectives are to maximize access to facilities, programs and informal activities of interest to youth in their leisure time. Of course it is understood that leisure time activities contribute significantly to social objectives of relevance to youth, such as health lifestyles; self esteem and self confidence. Further, while the Parks and Recreation Services Department will play a lead role in implementing recommendations, partnerships (including some where another agency may play the lead role) will often be the preferred method of service delivery for some recommendations.

With a Youth Service Strategy the primary focus is life skills, social programming and education, and preventing or addressing at-risk behaviours. Recreation Departments play an important role in these strategies but as a partner in a multi-agency project. The initiatives that flow from these strategies have a much strong program and service than facility focus. The primary facility concern is to facilitate access to non-threatening social and informal programming venues rather than providing leisure facilities.

A Youth Civic Engagement Strategy<sup>5</sup> is a much more comprehensive initiative that addresses all aspects of the experience of youth living in the city. It is focused on civic engagement in the broadest sense and on actively involving youth not only in desired activities but in the building of community. Recreation Departments will frequently (but not always) play a central role in civic engagement strategies but always as part of a multi-agency initiative that might include various levels of government; non-government agencies and private interests. The primary outcomes are changes in policy, and related to this, new programming initiatives, governance arrangements, and partnerships. Facilities would not generally be a key consideration in these strategies.

As noted in Figure 1.1, these are related but different strategies. Communities may start with a focus on leisure in a youth recreational needs analysis and over time build upon this to incorporate elements of a social service strategy or a civic engagement strategy. This may be of interest to Aurora in the future. However, it is important to note that the focus of this report is youth recreational needs.

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<sup>5</sup> The Halifax Regional Municipality Youth Engagement Strategy is an example.

## 2. YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### 2.1. Introduction

This Needs Assessment draws upon the Phase One and Phase Two activities documenting facility and program supply, facility use and program participation, activity and service trends and best practices, and the socio-demographic characteristics and other unique attributes of the Town. The Needs Assessment also considers the findings of consultation activities documented in the *Background Report*. The Needs Assessment identifies the main barriers to increased participation and issues with youth outreach and engagement, gaps in existing facilities and services, and opportunities for improved service delivery to youth. Detailed results of the consultation activities are available in the *Background Report*.

### 2.2. Key Barriers to Participation

#### **Lack of Time**

Not surprisingly, “lack of time” was noted by most participants in the consultation process as the most significant barrier to improving youth participation in leisure activities. Just over 40% of youth participants in the household survey indicated that they are restricted from participating in leisure time activities they would like to participate in, and 38% noted “lack of time” as the most significant barrier. Youth focus group participants concurred with this finding, talking about pressures of school and school work as a leading reason for not participating more in recreation activities. Working during the school year does not appear to be a significant barrier to participation in leisure activities. In fact, survey respondents with a part-time job during the school year were less likely to indicate activity restriction (44% vs. 36% of those who work part-time during the school year). Focus group participants elaborated on this, indicating that rather than limiting leisure opportunities, part-time work often opens up new opportunities for making friends, socializing, and increasing one’s awareness of leisure opportunities available.

### **Programs/Activities Not Available**

The second most common barrier to participation was “lack of programs/activities”, mentioned by 15% of the household survey participants. While there was general agreement among all participants in the consultation program that youth in Aurora are well served by the Town, voluntary organizations and the private sector in terms of organized sports programs and leagues, most felt that other types of programs and activities of interest to youth are not as well represented. Focus group and key informants identified the need for more drop-in, unstructured activities for youth, increased opportunities for socialization, “hanging-out” with friends in a safe and supportive environment, and “casual” or spontaneous recreation as opposed to formal programs. Arts and cultural and “creative” activities were frequently mentioned as areas requiring more support, attention, and partnership development with other service providers. Employment-readiness programs and employment services for youth, as well as volunteer opportunities were areas requiring more attention and a stronger partnership focus. Youth-only program times were mentioned by focus group participants as a way to improve the appeal of existing services offered.

### **Facilities Not Available/ Suitable**

The third most frequently mentioned barrier to participation was “facilities not available/suitable”, reported by 15% of the household survey participants. More specifically, youth focus group participants and most key informants agreed that Aurora’s leisure facilities lack youth-appropriate spaces to accommodate socialization and informal recreation, and drop-in or spontaneous activities. Facility needs most frequently mentioned included a youth “lounge” or dedicated youth centre, and a gymnasium or large multi-purpose space for drop-in active indoor sports.

### **Lack of Awareness of Opportunities**

Very few telephone survey respondents consider themselves “very informed” in terms of information regarding leisure activities in Aurora (13%), while about 7 of 10 consider themselves “somewhat informed” (71%), and a further 16% consider themselves “not very informed”. Most youth focus group participants and others involved in the consultation process felt that the Department’s communication to youth could be improved, and that lack of awareness of opportunities was likely a barrier to increasing participation. “Marketing and communication efforts directed at youth” was one of the areas agency representatives responding to the on-line survey felt was most in need of improvement. Many focus group participants described traditional methods

of marketing such as the municipal Program Guide and the municipal website as relatively ineffective at engaging and attracting youth.

### **Access**

As noted in the *Background Report*, most youth participants in the consultation process agreed that it is relatively easy to get around Aurora and physical travel distances were not seen as a significant barrier to participation. The survey responses, which were statically valid for Aurora youth, address this issue. In response to an open ended question concerning barriers to participating in desired activities, only 5% identified activities being “too far from my home” as a barrier. In a separate question, youth were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement “It is easy to get around Aurora and I have no trouble getting to activities that interest me”. The responses indicated that 66% agreed, a further 21% somewhat agreed, and only 9% disagreed with the statement.

In discussions with focus group youth, distance was seen as a less significant barrier than the practice of scheduling youth activities and programs at a number of alternate locations throughout the Town, on different days of the week, and for a limited number of hours per activity. Youth involved in the consultation process are seeking consistency and a reliable schedule. They prefer a single location or focal point for the majority of youth activities, with a consistent schedule of open hours, where they can drop-in spontaneously, participate in an activity, or just “hang-out” with people their own age. Focus group participants were asked if they had a preference for the Aurora Family Recreation Complex over Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, if a dedicated Youth Lounge/Centre was developed. No strong preference emerged, and most agreed that both facilities would be equally accessible by car, public transit and active means of transportation (walking or biking) for the majority of participants.

### **2.3. Facility and Program Gaps**

The following facility and program gaps emerged through the Phase One and Phase Two activities as key issues to be addressed by this Strategy. Recommendations that address these gaps are presented in Chapter 3.0.

### **Dedicated Space for Drop-In Programs and Unstructured Recreation**

Dedicated space for youth for drop-in programs, socializing, and unstructured recreation emerged as the most significant facility and program gap identified through the consultation activities. The majority (80%) of respondents to the telephone survey indicated that they would make use of a dedicated “youth centre” in Aurora offering activities and programs for youths aged 12-18. The leading activities that respondents would like to participate in were “social activities, dance, meeting new friends, pool table, etc.” (44%). followed by “sports, general” and “gym sports programs (basketball, volleyball, ball hockey, etc.”(35% each), and “swimming” (19%). As evident from these results, and consistent with the focus group results, consultation participants were much more in favour of combining youth dedicated space with a larger recreation complex offering a wider range of activities, rather than a stand-alone facility. While it is acknowledged that the Department already runs drop-in programs in a variety of Board of Education facilities across Aurora (St. Max Kolbe Catholic SS, Dr. GW Williams SS) these are scheduled on specific days of the week or month, and do not accommodate the full range of spontaneous or unstructured opportunities youth are seeking.

### **Municipally-Owned, Accessible Gymnasium Space**

The lack of municipally-owned gymnasium space to accommodate active indoor sports was a key facility and program gap identified by the majority of participants in the consultation process. Youth focus group participants and survey respondents were interested in a range of active indoor sports activities (basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, etc.) that could be available to youth on a drop-in basis. Scheduling issues, lower priorities for community access, and cost were some of the concerns related to the use of school board gymnasiums identified by both youth and other stakeholders through the consultation activities.

### **A Town-Wide Permanent Skate Park**

Despite the availability of the a mobile “Flipside” skatepark, the permanent skateboard facility at Hickson Park, and the more basic skateboard elements available at Thompson Park, youth skateboard enthusiasts involved in the consultation activities identified the need for a more comprehensive permanent skateboard facility to accommodate a wider range of skills and abilities, from beginner to advanced.

## **Youth-Friendly and “Fun” Elements in Outdoor Parks and Trails**

Focus group and interview participants identified a number of gaps in the outdoor facilities and trail offerings of the Town. These include the following:

- A core section (east west corridor or loop) of highly accessible paved trails for in-line skating, training and conditioning, biking, and skateboarding/long-boarding
- Bouldering elements, low ropes courses, geo-caching and other outdoor adventure elements
- More introductory skateboard elements (consistent with the “skate zone” terminology in the Master Plan), developed in parks throughout the Town
- “Green gym” equipment or equivalent outdoor fitness equipment located along main trail sections or at key destinations in Town parks
- Additional sand volleyball courts, half-court basketball courts, and multi-use courts in parks throughout the Town
- Interpretive signs describing the natural history, geological or historical aspects of Aurora’s natural areas, bird watching stops, etc.

Although these outdoor elements would be accessible to everyone, they would complement the supply of opportunities for unstructured and spontaneous recreation increasingly important to youth.

## **2.4. Service Gaps and Opportunities**

### **Improved Marketing and Communication**

As discussed in Section 2.2, lack of awareness of opportunities was identified as one of the most significant barriers to increasing youth participation in leisure activities. Most participants in the consultation process felt that the Parks and Recreation Services Department could do a better job of marketing programs and services to youth. Common suggestions involved the Department making better use of the modes of communication youth are most familiar and involved with on a day-to-day basis, including the internet and social networking sites, and improving coordination of marketing with other leisure service providers.

### **Improved Outreach and Opportunities for Youth Involvement in Planning**

In previous years, a Youth Advisory Council in Aurora offered youth an opportunity to be involved in the planning of leisure services. This Council was recently disbanded due to a lack of participation. Despite this, the need to better involve youth in the planning of leisure facilities and services was identified as an important issue to be addressed by this Strategy, and is consistent with the best practices identified in the *Background Report*.

The Department is currently involved in a number of outreach activities aimed at attracting and engaging youth in its programs and activities. These include youth leadership development programs (councilor-in-training, leader-in-training, etc.), periodic school visits by youth program staff, poster boards and recreation centers and flyers distributed to schools, among others. Still, participants in the consultation process felt there was a need to improve outreach through established places where youth congregate, including schools, sporting events, community special events, malls/shopping centres, among others.

### **Increased Service Partnerships and Partnership Development**

There are a wide variety of organizations and agencies offering services to youth in Aurora, including other Town-funded organizations; volunteer organizations offering sport, recreation and/or leisure services; other public or not-for-profit agencies; and private sector providers. Most key informants and stakeholders felt the Department should place more emphasis on partnership development to reduce duplication, ensure a wide range of youth needs are addressed, and to make the best use of available resources.

## 3. YOUTH RECREATION STRATEGY

### 3.1. Introduction

The Youth Recreation Strategy builds on the findings summarized in the *Background Report*, the gap analysis and the identification of barriers to increasing youth participation, to identify priority programs, service delivery approaches and facilities to meet youth needs. Our recommendations are organized under these three headings in this section of the report.

### 3.2. Programs

The Parks and Recreation Services Department offers an impressive range of registered programs of interest to youth, including sports/athletic programs, training and skill development programs, social/entertainment/recreational programs, and arts and cultural programs. A review of registration numbers over the past 5 years indicates that these programs are serving a proportion of the youth market well: almost 3,500 youth were involved in youth-specific programs in 2009, and for most repeat programs, participation has grown over the years. The program strategy attempts to build on these strengths while addressing the gaps identified through the consultation process, our review of trends and best practices, and other research conducted in support of this Strategy.

#### 3.2.1. A Multi-Agency Physical Activity Plan

As described in the *Background Report*, childhood obesity is a growing public health concern in Canada, with an estimated 19% of youth aged 12-17 years reportedly overweight or obese in 2008<sup>6</sup>. Obesity is linked with many childhood and adult chronic health conditions. Physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles are obvious contributing factors, along with a variety of other social, health, and hereditary considerations. Unfortunately, rates of physical inactivity and the incidence of obesity are on the rise in most Canadian communities, including those in York Region.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. (2008). Canadian Community Health Survey. Body mass index, self-reported, youth, by age group and sex. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-221-x/2009001/tblstructure/1hs/1hc/hc1ybm-eng.htm>

According to recent data for the York Regional Health Unit<sup>7</sup> from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2009)<sup>8</sup>, a slightly higher proportion of York Region youth were physically *inactive*<sup>9</sup> during their leisure time compared to the Provincial rate, and rates of physical inactivity have risen since 2005. Specifically, in 2009, 31.7% of York Region youth age 12 to 19 were inactive during their leisure time, compared to 31.1% for the Province, and 28.9% in 2005. While the incidence of being overweight or obese for York Region youth was lower than the Provincial rate 2009 (14.4% for York Region compared to 20.9% for Ontario youth), this percentage has increased since 2005, most markedly for boys age 12-17 (from 13.6% in 2005 to 20.2% in 2009)<sup>10</sup>. Further, in 2005, York Region youth accumulated an average of 20.7 hours of screen time per week, which was higher than the national average and significantly higher than in 2003<sup>11</sup>.

Addressing the issues of physical inactivity and obesity requires a multi-sector approach, and usually involves collaboration among a variety of organizations and agencies to achieve success. While municipal recreation departments are key players in physical activity strategies, the educational and health sector are also important partners. Very often, increasing youth physical activity involves reaching out to and motivating a very difficult audience to reach -- those who are not currently involved in organized sports or scheduled programs, or for whom the barriers to participation may seem insurmountable. Our assessment indicates these individuals are not as well served with recreational programs in Aurora and consequently the development of a Physical Activity Plan can address important recreational and health needs. While this report deals with youth needs and some communities have developed physical activity plans focused exclusively on youth, a more comprehensive effort addressing all sectors of the community is likely warranted in Aurora.

A Physical Activity Plan is a community-wide action plan to promote physical activity among the general population. Physical Activity Plans are an initiative resulting from of the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion's *Active 2010* Strategy to increase participation in sport and physical activity in

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<sup>7</sup> The Town of Aurora falls within the geographic boundaries of the York Region Health Unit. It is acknowledged that the Health Unit covers a much larger geographic area than the Town, but more local data was not available. Minor variations may be apparent at the community level, however we expect these health indicators provide a reasonably accurate profile of the Town of Aurora.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. (2009 and 2005). Canadian Community Health Survey. Health Indicator Data Tables and Maps. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-221-x/2009001/tbl-eng.htm#nm>

<sup>9</sup> "Inactive", as defined by Statistics Canada, means that on a daily basis, the frequency, nature and duration of physical activity undertaken is not high enough to achieve health benefits.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. (2009 and 2005). Canadian Community Health Survey. Health Indicator Data Tables and Maps. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-221-x/2009001/tbl-eng.htm#nm>

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey, 2005, Reported by CFLRI, Retrieved from: <http://www.cflri.ca/sites/default/files/node/591/tables/ScreentimeCanada.pdf>

Ontario<sup>12</sup>. Five keys to successful activity plans, as outlined in the Province's resource manual, include: successful collaboration of a number of different agencies, close ties to other strategies and plans of all community partners, clearly stated and achievable outcomes, a clear process for evaluation, and a long term perspective.

Aurora's Physical Activity Plan should be the result of collaboration among agencies representing the recreation, education, and health sectors, and involving all levels of government, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector. The Town's parks and recreation, planning, and transportation departments, regional and local health authorities, social service providers and local hospitals, school boards, teachers and parent councils, not-for-profit and voluntary sports and recreation organizations, community clubs and agencies, and private sector sponsors and health and fitness providers would all be relevant community partners. The scope of the plan should include a process for community and stakeholder consultation; strategies to address program, policy, social marketing and communications, technology and infrastructure needs; and a process for implementing, monitoring, and updating the plan. The development of a Physical Activity Plan is a high priority to be addressed in the short term<sup>13</sup>.

As a first step, prior to the completion of the Plan, the Department should also review its current program offerings across the board for youth to ensure that opportunities for healthy physical activity are maximized. This involves reviewing current program plans, for example the mix of activities at recreational camps or playground programs, and ensuring they incorporate minimum requirements for physical activity. Similarly, volunteer sport and recreation providers should be encouraged to adopt physical activity guidelines for their programs.

**Recommendation 1:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should take an active and lead role in initiating the development of a Physical Activity Plan for the Town of Aurora.

**Recommendation 2:** In the short term, the Department should review all programs (i.e., Summer Camp and March Break Camps, Drop-in Programs, Supervised Playground Programs) to establish minimum guidelines for physical activity. The

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<sup>12</sup> In 2005, dmA Planning & Management services prepared a resource manual on behalf of the Ministry of Health Promotion for use by communities preparing Physical Activity Plans, and has been actively involved in assisting communities across Canada to prepare plans.

<sup>13</sup> The Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport's "Healthy Communities Fund" provides financial assistance to municipalities preparing strategies that address health risk factors, including physical inactivity. This may be a possible funding source and should be pursued.

Department should also work with volunteer organizations, including voluntary sport and recreation groups, to ensure they understand physical activity goals and promote physical activity in their program offerings.

### **3.2.2. Increased Opportunities for Unstructured and Drop-In Recreation**

A priority need that emerged from the consultation activities was the lack of opportunities for unstructured recreation for youth, including opportunities to socialize, “hang-out” with friends, and for youth to participate spontaneously in a variety of activities of interest, on their own time and on a flexible schedule. While the Town and other service providers do a commendable job of providing scheduled programs in sports and recreation, the need for more drop-in and unscheduled opportunities was apparent. Activity participation trends support the consultation findings, indicating growing demand for drop-in and unscheduled activities of interest to youth, as well as the facilities that support these types of activities. Facility needs and opportunities are discussed more fully in a subsequent section of this report; however the specific activity trends are worth mentioning here. In terms of active indoor sports, growing demand for youth-oriented activities such as drop-in basketball, volleyball, in-line hockey, floor hockey, shinny/pick-up hockey, among others, is projected<sup>14</sup>.

Fitness and wellness activities experiencing increasing participation include child and youth yoga (becoming very popular in many private sector and school settings); mindfulness martial arts, family or intergenerational wellness programs (mother and daughter yoga or Nia classes, father and son kick-boxing, family self-defence, family tai chi, etc.); and nutrition or healthy living activities (such as drop-in cooking classes).

Employment skills and employment readiness programming emerged as a program area of interest to youth, and one that may requires more attention in Aurora. While Parks and Recreation Departments are not traditionally the providers of these types of services, increased service partnerships in this area would be of benefit, particularly if these types of services were offered at a youth dedicated space or a space where youth congregate. Discussions with providers of these services indicate a willingness to explore enhanced partnership opportunities.

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<sup>14</sup> Although not identified specifically in the Town's recent Master Plan, outstanding demand for youth-oriented basketball programs and activities was documented during the initial phases of this study, as demonstrated through wait-listed activities for the past 5 years.

As noted in the introduction to the report, a distinction can be made between youth recreational and social services. While most recreational programs will address important social objectives including healthy lifestyles and issues associated with self-esteem, image and confidence, some youth will also require support surrounding potentially at risk behaviours. This strategy is focused on recreational needs however, youth were asked about youth-at-risk programming. Focus group participants were clear that programs directed to youth-at-risk, such as drug counselling/awareness, sexuality counselling/awareness, etc. should not be offered in the same space as recreation and leisure programs, however many felt there was a role for a youth drop-in centre to provide referral and informal mentoring around these issues.

**Recommendation 3:** Review scheduling practices for all Town-owned and operated recreation facilities (arenas, arena floors, multi-purpose rooms, fitness centres) to provide more opportunities for drop-in physical activities (i.e., lunch time and after school pick-up or shinny hockey, afterschool basketball, roller hockey and floor hockey, after school youth-only fitness classes or workout times).

**Recommendation 4:** By improving access to appropriate and accessible facilities, provide more opportunities for youth to participate in unstructured recreation, to socialize and “hang-out” and participate in drop-in programs and activities in a safe and supervised environment.

**Recommendation 5:** Continue to monitor program trends and emerging activity interests with a view towards continuously improving and expanding the program and activity offerings for youth.

**Recommendation 6:** Identify appropriate partners and develop partnerships to provide youth employment programs and employment-readiness services (resume writing, job databanks, etc.).

### **3.2.3. Improved Access to Arts and Cultural Opportunities**

Early in 2008, the Town of Aurora commissioned a study to investigate the development of an arts and cultural centre in an 1886 heritage building formerly known as Church Street School in downtown Aurora. The resulting business plan recommended the establishment of a not-for-profit corporation to manage and operate the centre, with significant funding and support from the Town. The Aurora Cultural Centre was opened early in 2010, with the mandate of engaging the community, developing programs and partnerships, and generally providing a focus for arts,

cultural and heritage programming in the Town. The activities of the centre include arts shows and sales, historical displays, community events and workshops, receptions, concerts, and, most recently, instructional programming in creative, performing, and visual arts.

The fall of 2010 will see the first instructional programs launched at the Centre. These include a number of programs geared directly to youth, including hip-hop dance instruction, arts clubs and contemporary dance. While not directed specifically to youth, other workshops and program offerings are also available to youth (Journaling for Life, Wireworks Jewellery workshop, etc.). According to the Centre's Programming Coordinator<sup>15</sup>, youth age 12 to 18 will continue to be a target market, and the program offerings to this group will expand as the Centre develops more fully.

As noted in the needs assessment, arts, cultural and creative programming is an area of particular interest to youth and an area where current programs are likely not fully meeting needs. In addition, some of the youth that would be attracted to arts programming may not be interested in the sports programming that is currently well represented in Aurora. Consequently, expanded programming in this area will likely reach out to new markets and more fully engage all youth in Aurora during their leisure time.

The Aurora Cultural Centre is funded by the municipality and has been identified as a major provider of arts and cultural services. Consequently, the centre will play an important role in meeting youth arts and culture needs. We assume that the Cultural Centre's programming will be developed in a manner that complements other public and private sector program providers to avoid duplication and make the best use of available resources and as such a partnership between the Centre and the Parks and Recreation Services Department is an important initiative. According to staff, the Cultural Centre is interested in offering programs in partnership and has already partnered with the Aurora Public Library on a number of initiatives. Staff and the Cultural Centre have indicated an interest in working with the Parks and Recreation Services Department in all areas related to youth programming, shared communication and marketing, joint promotion of programs, program development, and facility sharing. The Parks and Recreation Services Department and the Aurora Cultural Centre should work together to identify potential areas of partnership, minimize duplication and expand programming to meet the arts and cultural needs of Aurora's youth.

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<sup>15</sup> Telephone Discussion with Jane Taylor, Program Co-ordinator, Aurora Cultural Centre, Sept. 9 2010.

**Recommendation 7:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department and the Aurora Cultural Centre should work together to develop, promote and deliver arts, cultural and heritage programs and activities of interest to youth.

An area of programming that is currently not well represented in Aurora, and which trends and consultation activities suggest is of growing interest to youth, is the merging of technology, the arts, and popular media in the creation of videos and films, computer art, digital music, digital photography, etc. Multi-media labs that accommodate these creative types of activities are an emerging facility component in many public libraries, secondary schools, and community recreation facilities. The Town should investigate opportunities to provide programs and activities in this area, either through a partnership with the Aurora Cultural Centre, the local school boards, the Aurora Public Library, or other interested partners.

**Recommendation 8:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should investigate possible partnerships to develop programs and activities that merge technology with art, in the creation and production of videos and films, computer art, digital music and photography, etc.

### 3.3. Delivery System

#### 3.3.1. Youth Communication and Engagement

Youth identified lack of awareness of opportunities as one of the most significant barriers to increasing participation in leisure activities. Youth felt that the traditional means of communication (municipal Program Guide) were not effective for youth and that communication and engagement methods of the Department could be improved. Focus group participants suggested greater use of technology; such as improved web pages with youth-focused content, and the use of social networking sites (Facebook links, etc.) to market youth programs and services. Other suggestions included improved outreach to schools and other areas where youth congregate. The Parks and Recreation Services Department should review options to improve communication and marketing of youth opportunities through greater use of technology, including the internet and social networking media, and improve outreach through schools and other areas where youth congregate (other recreation facilities, parks, malls, etc.). If a Youth Centre is developed in Aurora (as recommended in this strategy), a separate web page with information on the Centre's programs and activities, facilities, membership and volunteer opportunities should be developed.

**Recommendation 9:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should review options to improve communication and marketing of youth opportunities through greater use of technology, including the internet and social networking sites, and improve outreach through schools and other areas where youth congregate. If a Youth Centre is developed in Aurora, a separate web page with information on the Centre's programs, facilities, membership and volunteer opportunities should be developed, with links to Facebook (or other social media sites).

Best practice research supports youth involvement in the planning and delivery of services for youth, however some of these activities are more successful in some settings than in others. In Kitchener, for example, a Youth Committee of Council (KYAK) provides input on youth-oriented programs and initiatives, and KYAK members are active participants on a number of other committees and working groups across the organization<sup>16</sup>. We understand that a similar Committee was recently disbanded in Aurora due to lack of interest; however, Council recently created two youth Councillor positions and these individuals participate in regular Council meetings. Whether as a member of a Committee or a youth representative on Council, the primary focus is to provide

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<sup>16</sup> As a most recent example, a committee of KYAK members have been developing a YouTube Video to promote volunteer opportunities within the City.

comments from a youth perspective on a wide range of municipal issues. The current Youth Councillor positions in Aurora appear to address this objective in a manner that has been more successful than the previous committee.

While we see no purpose in re-establishing a formal committee to advise the Parks and Recreation Services Department on youth issues, we strongly support youth engagement in projects that affect them. This approach was also supported by the youth focus group participants in this study. They felt that Aurora youth were more likely to get involved in specific projects that interest them. Examples might include workshops and design workshops involving Aurora skateboarders, designers, architects, and Town staff in the development of a new skatepark, a committee of youth volunteers and staff planning the month's drop-in programs for a new Youth Centre, etc. Youth should also be continuously involved in evaluating and improving services, through a variety of means such as surveys (on-line surveys, post program evaluation surveys) comment drop boxes, on-line comment forms, etc. Finally, youth can and should be engaged in service delivery through volunteer opportunities. The Barrie Youth Centres, for example, rely heavily on youth volunteers (High School and University Students), who fulfill their volunteer requirements while actively contributing to the operation and activity offerings of these centres. In summary, youth should be involved in all stages of planning, design, development, and evaluation of facilities and services of interest to and relevant to them.

**Recommendation 10:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should provide relevant opportunities for youth to become involved in the planning, design, and development of programs, activities, and facilities of interest to them, and ensure that their input is considered in meaningful ways.

**Recommendation 11:** Aurora youth should be involved in the evaluation of services, programs, and facilities relevant to them. This could involve regular surveys (on-line, telephone, or exit surveys), comment boxes, on-line blogs, or other methods. Youth should be actively consulted on all plans and initiatives of the Town that may impact them (i.e. Trails Master Plan is a recent and current example), through surveys, focus groups, workshops, and other activities, as appropriate.

**Recommendation 12:** If a Youth Centre is developed, a volunteer program should be established to integrate high school and university student volunteers in the development and delivery of programs and in the operation of the centre.

### 3.3.2. Policies for Youth Services

The Parks and Recreation Services Department does not have specific policies directly related to youth services or identifying youth as a priority group. While there may be policies related to facility allocation and scheduling, these do not specify priorities with respect to users. The gap analysis and program recommendations of this report point to the need for additional access for youth to appropriate facilities for drop-in, unstructured and spontaneous activities. To facilitate this, the Department should review existing facility allocation policies and practices and develop a policy statement that improves youth access to Town-owned facilities for unstructured, drop-in and spontaneous activities. Examples could include after-school shinny or pick-up hockey and increased free skating time in the Town's arenas, more recreational swim time in the Town's pools, drop-in basketball, roller hockey and floor hockey on arena floors, after school youth-only fitness classes or workout times. If a municipally-owned gymnasium is developed as part of an existing multi purpose recreation complex (see Section 3.4), a policy should be developed to ensure priority scheduling of this facility for youth drop-in and unstructured activities at peak times for youth (after school and early evening).

Facility allocation policies that guarantee access for unstructured, unorganized (non-league) programming are an essential component of the youth strategy. They will also likely be identified as requirements if the Town develops a physical activity strategy. In situations where prime time access to facilities is at a premium and organized users are requesting additional access for their programs, it is a challenge to reserve time for unstructured use. It is for this reason that an effective policy must be developed and implemented.

**Recommendation 13:** The Department should review policies related to facility allocation and facility scheduling and develop a policy statement aimed at improving access and maximizing opportunities for unstructured, drop-in, and spontaneous recreation for youth at Town-owned and operated recreation facilities (arenas, arena floors, pools, multi-purpose rooms, etc.).

**Recommendation 14:** If a municipally-owned gymnasium is developed as part of an existing multi purpose recreation complex, a policy should be developed to ensure priority scheduling of this facility for youth drop-in and unstructured activities.

Cost was not considered a significant barrier to youth participation in recreation and leisure activities in Aurora, and the majority of focus group participants felt that youth program and activity costs were reasonable and affordable. Many of the Department's youth programs currently are free, or the Department charges a nominal fee to cover the cost of program materials. Future drop-

in or unstructured activities should be provided for free or at low cost, to ensure maximum participation. Policies and practices related to fees and charges for youth services should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that cost does not become a barrier to participation for youth in the future, and to clearly articulate the Department's philosophy and intentions with respect to activity, program and membership fees for future youth services.

**Recommendation 15:** Policies and practices related to fees and charges for youth services should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that cost does not become a barrier to participation for youth in the future, and to clearly articulate the Department's philosophy and intentions with respect to activity, program and membership fees for youth services.

If a Youth Centre/Lounge is developed, as discussed further in section 3.4, the Town will require policies related to youth membership fees, volunteer engagement and responsibilities, and code of conduct for members. With the exception of a nominal membership fee<sup>17</sup>, the majority of programs and activities of the Centre should be offered to youth for free.

**Recommendation 16:** The Town should develop specific policies for the proposed Youth Centre that outline the Department's intentions with respect to membership charges (maximizing accessibility and minimizing costs to users), outline a membership code of conduct, and identify volunteer responsibilities and level of commitment.

### **3.3.3. Staffing and Staff Training Needs**

The scope of this investigation did not involve an operational review to determine current staff roles and responsibilities, or a review of the capacity of existing staff to assume greater responsibility in areas outlined by this Strategy. We have no reason to believe that existing staff members involved with youth services are not fully occupied with their current roles and responsibilities. The Strategy makes a number of short term service delivery recommendations (related to communications, policy development, partnership development, planning and evaluation) that would need to be implemented by existing staff. It will be necessary to confirm staff capabilities to undertake these responsibilities and this may require a review and reallocation of existing roles and responsibilities.

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<sup>17</sup> Other centres charge membership fees in the range of \$20.00 per year for access to all drop-in and unstructured activities. The benefits of charging a membership fee include obtaining emergency contact information on participants, and having participants read and sign a "code of conduct" agreement.

**Recommendation 17:** Review Parks and Recreation Services Department staff roles and responsibilities to confirm that the service delivery recommendations of this Strategy, (related to communications, policy development, partnership development, planning and evaluation) can be implemented with the existing staff complement.

We expect the Department's staff committed to youth services will need to increase in the future to respond to both population growth and the additional facilities and programs recommended in the Strategy. The development of new facilities recommended in this Strategy (i.e. Youth Centre/Lounge, gymnasium), should be the trigger for increasing the staffing complement dedicated to youth services.

**Recommendation 18:** At such time as new facilities or services for youth come on stream, the Department should review staffing needs and increase the staffing complement dedicated to youth services, as required.

Youth issues are complex and multi-dimensional, and staff working with youth require specific skill sets and a high level of knowledge and understanding of youth interests, needs and priorities to successfully work with and engage this population. It will be increasingly important for staff working with youth in Aurora to keep up-to-date on issues important to youth, trends and best practices in youth service provision, and emerging activity trends and interests. The cultural diversity of Aurora's population will continue to increase bringing new opportunities and challenges in terms of youth involvement and engagement. Sensitivity training related to special needs populations, facilitation skills and skills in conflict resolution, training in providing referrals to other social services agencies, skills in mentoring, and volunteer management training are examples of areas where more training may be required in the future.

**Recommendation 19:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should dedicate resources and staff time to providing training opportunities for all staff involved with youth services, to ensure that staff is kept up-to-date on youth issues, and able to deal effectively with youth and provide appropriate services. An annual training budget should be determined and allocated appropriately, based on service priorities for the year.

### **3.3.4. Planning and Continuous Improvement of Youth Services**

To support the priority initiatives outlined in this strategy, the Department should continuously monitor trends and engage in long range planning and evaluation of youth needs, interests, and services. Department staff should monitor activity trends and best practices through participation in

conferences, visiting new/innovative projects, and monitoring trade journals and umbrella organization websites. It would also be advisable for the Department to develop simple performance measures to track progress in implementing this Strategy and to track changes in service delivery over time. Performance measures such as the following might be tracked:

- Increase in the number of youth programs, activities or participants;
- Total number of new youth initiatives or activity hours;
- Total number of youth volunteers involved with service delivery;
- Total number of partnerships with other organizations to provide youth services;
- Number of youth volunteer hours, and participant hours.

Youth needs and interests in recreation programs and activities should be continually explored, and mechanisms should be in place to evaluate the success of activities and initiatives and to provide input to program and service improvements. Simple measures could include such things as:

- A comment drop-off box at the entrance/exit to youth focussed and park amenities;
- A short survey for program, activity, or drop-in participants to indicate overall satisfaction, what they liked, didn't like, and areas for improvement
- An annual on-line comment form to solicit ideas for new programs or activities;
- Seasonal workshops with youth to determine program and service priorities
- Project specific workshops and activities to solicit input on new facilities, programs and services

This type of information can be used to determine changes to the program/service/activity mix, areas where new marketing strategies are warranted, to improve financial and service-related performance, and to assist in policy development. This type of performance-related data can also be used by the Town to help communicate the benefits of youth services to Council and to the community.

**Recommendation 20:** Youth services staff should continuously be involved in trends monitoring, long range planning, and evaluation of youth needs, interests, and services.

**Recommendation 21:** Simple performance measures should be established to identify and communicate successes

**Recommendation 22:** The recommendations of this Strategy should be reviewed annually and formally updated every 5 years.

### 3.3.5. Stronger Partnership Focus

A consistent theme of the consultation activities was the need for the Parks and Recreation Services Department to assume a stronger role in partnership development around youth services. Partnerships can bring a range of benefits, including sharing of resources and expertise, expanding opportunities, and minimizing duplication. For these reasons, this strategy supports a stronger partnership focus for the Department in the area of youth service delivery. We recognize, however, that partnership investigation and development takes staff time and resources, and that effective partnership agreements require strong leadership and a commitment to joint service delivery. It is not within the scope of this study to identify specific staff roles and responsibilities related to partnership development, however a first step would be to identify potential partners for high priority facility and service needs identified in this study. The range of potential partners could include (but not be limited to) other youth service providers in Aurora, other public or quasi-public service providers such as Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, Public and Catholic School Boards, health service providers, service clubs and organizations, volunteer groups, and the private sector. The Department should develop an evaluation process and criteria to evaluate potential partnerships. Evaluation criteria could include (but are not limited to) the following considerations:

- Does the partnership meet an identified need or service gap (as outlined in the Youth Needs Analysis or the Parks and Recreation Master Plan)?
- Is the partnership consistent with the Town and Department's service philosophy and mandate, strategic plan and future vision?
- Does the partner bring resources to the partnership that will clearly benefit the Town and the service recipients (financial, organizational, capital, etc.)?
- What are the resource expectations and implications for the Department/Town as a result of the partnership?
- Does the partnership leverage other resources that may not be otherwise available to the Town (grant opportunities, human resources and other expertise, etc.)?
- Does the partnership minimize risk to the Department and the recipients of the service and expand the program and activity opportunities for youth?

**Recommendation 23:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should establish networks and maintain regular contact with a wide range of potential partner agencies in Aurora and York Region, to explore partnership opportunities and develop partnerships (i.e., shared marketing and

promotion, program and service development and/or delivery, and facility use and provision) to meet youth needs for recreation and leisure.

**Recommendation 24:** Parks and Recreation Services Department staff should develop a process to evaluate potential partnerships for youth services.

### 3.4. Facilities

This section of the Strategy identifies facilities and facility components to meet youth needs. The following sections describe each facility component, and identify possible ways to combine these elements. Where warranted the Parks and Recreation Services Department should investigate opportunities to develop the recommended facilities and spaces in partnership with others. The facility components recommended:

- Were strongly supported by youth focus group participants, household survey participants, interview participants, and case study contacts;
- Are consistent with recreational and social trends that indicate growing demand for the programs and activities that could be accommodated with these facilities;
- Appear to correct current deficiencies in Town owned and operated facilities (as identified in the recent Master Plan) and do not duplicate existing resources;
- Were supported by the Parks and Recreation Services program staff; and
- Increase the supply of facilities available for new and expanded leisure programming consistent with the socio-demographic and growth characteristics of the community, activity trends, and best practices.

#### 3.4.1. Indoor Facilities and Facility Components

##### **Dedicated Space for Drop-In Programs and Unstructured Recreation**

As mentioned in the needs assessment, the lack of a dedicated space for youth for drop-in programs, socializing, and unstructured recreation emerged as a significant facility gap identified through the consultation activities. While the Department regularly accesses high school gymnasiums and other facilities on a scheduled basis (one day per week or month) to offer these services, these facility arrangements are only partially addressing the need. Youth activity trends and best practices support the provision of Town-owned and dedicated spaces for drop-in and unstructured activities, available to youth on their schedule and in a spontaneous and unstructured

way. A dedicated youth lounge is recommended to meet the needs of Aurora youth for socializing, unstructured recreation, and youth-focused activities.

To better define the nature of the facility component and the types of activities and programs that can be accommodated, we contacted a number of municipalities who offer dedicated youth spaces. Among the more successful examples are youth centres provided by the City of Barrie. The City runs two youth centres, each with a slightly different mandate and focus. The Holly Youth Centre is a 1,700 sq. ft. youth lounge within a larger multi-purpose recreation facility that also includes a leisure pool, twin-pad arenas, full-size gym, fitness centre, aerobic rooms, a multi-purpose room and smaller program rooms. The youth lounge includes comfortable tables and chairs, 6 computer stations, a games room, and a teaching kitchen. Youth centre members also access the gymnasium and other components of the centre through scheduled drop-in and activity offerings.

The Maple Avenue youth centre in Barrie is a stand-alone facility that includes a youth lounge, games room, full-size gym, computer room (11 computers), and teaching kitchen. According to the City's youth recreation programmer, each youth centre has a slightly different clientele and focus: the Holly Youth Centre has more of a recreation/leisure focus, experiences more regular and repeat use (average Wed. evening 30 youth, Friday night 140 gym users), and attracts a slightly younger market (11-18). The Maple Ave. Youth centre is located in Barrie's downtown core and attracts a slightly older crowd (13-19). While the leisure programming of the two centres is similar, the Maple Ave. centre tends to provide more referral services for youth requiring assistance, intervention, counseling, and other social services. Use of the centre is more sporadic, and the gymnasium is the most heavily used component, primarily for drop-in basketball for older teens. According to youth programming staff, the Holly Youth Centre is Barrie's model for providing youth services in the future, and a similar facility is in the planning stages as part of a new multi-purpose recreation complex to serve population growth. While youth programming is also offered by the City through a number of school board gymnasiums now, the Department's preferred model for the future is municipally-owned and dedicated youth space as part of multi-purpose facilities.

In contrast to the Holly Centre model, where a youth centre and gymnasium are combined as part of a multi-purpose facility, the Newmarket Youth Centre is a stand-alone facility that includes a youth lounge, a computer lounge, an indoor skatepark, classroom space, and a gymnasium. The Newmarket Youth Centre concept was initially focused almost exclusively on youth recreation needs and programmed by the Youth Centre; however ongoing issues with staffing and operating

costs have necessitated a partnership agreement with the York Region Catholic District School Board during daytime hours to help offset costs.<sup>18</sup>

These examples highlight the differences between a stand-alone youth centre, and one that is combined as part of a larger multi-purpose facility. The benefits of combining a youth centre in a larger multi-purpose facility include:

- increased opportunities for cross-programming (e.g. youth programs operating in an aquatic facility this is part of a larger complex)
- increased convenience for the user who can access a number of facility components under one roof and participate in a variety of programs and activities in one visit
- significantly lower capital, operating and staffing costs for the municipality;
- greater levels of use as a result of increased foot traffic through the building and increased drop-in usage
- the ability to provide specialized facilities of significant interest to youth but that could not be supported by the youth market alone (e.g. the multi-media lab discussed elsewhere in the report).

Given the positive experience in Barrie, a dedicated youth lounge as part of a larger multi-purpose facility is recommend to partially address youth leisure needs in Aurora. Options for providing this space could involve redeveloping spaces within an existing multi-purpose recreation facility, or adding a dedicated youth lounge to an existing multi-purpose recreation facility.

**Recommendation 25:** The Town of Aurora should develop a dedicated youth lounge or youth centre, including a comfortable seating/lounge area, a games/computer area, and a teaching kitchen. The youth lounge should be developed as part of a larger multi-purpose recreation facility, with access to a wide range of indoor and outdoor recreation facility components. Access to a

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<sup>18</sup> The Town of Newmarket recently entered into an agreement with the York Catholic School Board for daytime student use of the facility and its components to cover ongoing operating costs. Newmarket Youth Centre partnership with York Catholic District School Board, July 2009, retrieved from: [newmarket.ca/towngovernment/pages/town-government.aspx](http://newmarket.ca/towngovernment/pages/town-government.aspx)

gymnasium would be the most important consideration, however a wide range of other recreation facility components would be of interest to youth.

### **Town-Owned, Accessible Gymnasium**

In addition to a dedicated youth lounge, the lack of a full size gymnasium controlled by the Town was identified in our study as a significant facility gap. Youth consultation participants were interested in a range of drop-in indoor sports activities (basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, indoor soccer, etc.) that can only be addressed through access to a full-size gymnasium. Staff, community sports group representatives, and other stakeholders identified a number of issues related to use of school board gymnasiums, including scheduling issues, lower priorities for community uses, cost, service disruptions, and distance to travel. Case study contacts we spoke with felt that a full-size gymnasium was the most important indoor facility component for meeting youth recreation needs. Both of the Young Peoples Centres in Barrie, and the Newmarket Youth Recreation Centre include access to gymnasium space. The gymnasium at the Holly Community Centre in Barrie is used by the Young Peoples Centre on a regular basis for a variety of scheduled and drop-in activities, however it also accommodates a range of other programs of the Centre, community uses, and use by community sports groups. As mentioned, the gymnasium at the Newmarket Youth Centre is now used by an alternative school during daytime hours, through an agreement with the Separate School Board that helps offset ongoing operating costs.

As noted earlier, the Town's recent Master Plan recommends a facility provision level of 1:35,000 population for municipally owned gymnasias (indicating an immediate need for one municipal gym) and acknowledges the difficulties of accessing school facilities. However, the Plan also seems to suggest that the Town should only build municipally owned gymnasias if it is "unsuccessful in securing current and long-term access to gymnasiums owned by school boards". The Master Plan provides no documentation concerning outstanding demand for gym space among organized sport and recreation providers in Aurora, but implies there is outstanding demand. Our study did not duplicate the Master Plan and consequently did not investigate current and future demand amongst the population at large for gym space. However, experience in virtually every other municipality on Ontario would indicate growing demand because of the increasing popularity of basketball, volleyball, badminton, floor hockey (among other sports) for both league and unstructured participation. Furthermore, although the situation varies, it is customary in all municipalities to experience restrictions on community access to school space (and in many municipalities fewer school gyms because of declining enrolment or school consolidations).

Another significant consideration with respect to gym time is the growing demand for daytime access to major recreation facilities (in a society where leisure time is more flexible and daily schedules are less likely to be oriented around child responsibilities). These three considerations, in combination with the flexibility of well designed gym space to accommodate a wide range of community activities and cross-programming (eg. swim and gym programs) has resulted in a significant expansion in the supply of municipally owned and programmed gymnasia. Indeed, it would be very unusual for a municipality in Ontario (or elsewhere in Canada) today to build a major facility like the Stronach Centre without a gym. We expect there is community demand for gym space and this would be necessary for full utilization because youth alone will not accommodate all available time. A gym, as part of a major recreation complex, is therefore required to serve both youth and, we expect, community needs.

To meet youth needs for active indoor sports, the Town of Aurora should investigate options to develop a full size gymnasium at a municipal multi-purpose recreation complex. This could involve redeveloping space at an existing recreation complex (Aurora Family Leisure Complex), or adding a gymnasium component to an existing complex (Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex). The scope of our study did not include recommending a preferred location for a new youth centre and we have not considered relative costs or other implications associated with building and site constraints. However, based on community input and our observations, the benefits of redeveloping space at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex are its central location and proximity to other secondary schools and other recreational resources. In addition, considerations include the fact that the fitness area/multi-purpose space was originally designed as a gymnasium and could be converted without expanding the facility. Other spaces within the facility lend themselves well to developing a youth lounge/youth centre, but would likely necessitate moving and reconfiguring staff office and storage space. The fitness centre that occupies the gymnasium would have to be relocated to another facility such as the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. The advantages of developing a new gymnasium at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex include being associated with a new, state of the art facility. Recommended facility components (gymnasium and youth lounge) would require an addition to the facility.

Regardless of which facility is ultimately chosen, consideration should be given to developing the gymnasium in close proximity to the recommended youth lounge. The gym should be available for youth related activities on a scheduled and drop-in basis, however it should also accommodate a wide range of community programs and rentals by community groups. A detailed architectural

assessment and cost benefit analysis of these two facility options is recommended for the short term.

**Recommendation 26:** The Town of Aurora should develop a full size gymnasium, to accommodate outstanding demand for active indoor sports for youth, user groups, and the community. The gymnasium should be developed as part of a larger multi-purpose recreation facility, adjacent to or in close proximity to the recommended youth lounge.

**Recommendation 27:** In the short term, the Town should undertake a detailed architectural assessment and cost benefit analysis of options to redevelop or expand existing municipal recreation facilities to incorporate a gymnasium and youth lounge.

### **Multi-Media Lab**

The gap analysis identified a lack of opportunities for youth interested in “creative” activities that merge art and technology in the development of videos and films, computer art, digital music, digital photography, etc. These needs and interests were identified through the consultation activities and through a review of trends and best practices of other leisure service providers. To accommodate these creative activities, the Town should investigate opportunities to partner with the Aurora Public Library, the Aurora Cultural Centre, the local School Boards, and other service providers to develop or access appropriate facility space, or to jointly develop this facility component within a municipal recreation facility. If developed within a municipal recreation facility, the multi-media lab should be developed in close proximity to the recommended youth lounge and gymnasium.

**Recommendation 28:** The Town of Aurora should investigate options to provide access to a 600 sq. ft. multi-media lab, including an open workshop space and lockable storage unit. The multi-media lab should offer equipment and components that would be used in the creation and production of videos and films, computer art, digital music and photography, etc. A full range of partnership options to address this facility need should be explored.

### **Other Indoor Facility Components to Meet Emerging Trends and Interests**

A range of other facility interests were identified through the consultation activities and the review of activity trends and best practices, however none emerged as immediate priorities to meet youth needs. The Parks and Recreation Services Department should continuously monitor activity trends and best practices, and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging facility needs through new and redeveloped facilities. Existing facility components should also be evaluated to determine if they meet demonstrated needs and the Department's service objectives. Facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a very narrow market, or that provide dedicated space for an activity that is in decline should be considered for redevelopment, upgrading, or removal. As an example, many municipalities have redeveloped underutilized squash courts as activity or program areas to meet emerging interests such as indoor climbing/bouldering walls, low ropes courses, child play spaces, arts studio spaces, and general multi-purpose space.

**Recommendation 29:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should continuously monitor emerging activity trends and best practices and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging needs through new and redeveloped facilities. Facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a very narrow market, or that provide dedicated space for an activity that is in decline should be considered for redevelopment to meet new and emerging interests.

### **3.4.2. Outdoor Facilities, Park and Trail Elements**

#### **Permanent Town-Wide Skateboard Park**

Outdoor facilities that meet youth needs for unstructured and spontaneous recreation, that appeal to youth by association with popular culture and media, that provide loose affiliation with an "in" crowd, and that provide elements of risk, excitement and fun will continue to be popular among this age group. Although the Town of Aurora provides a temporary/movable skateboard feature, and a larger facility at Hickson Park, youth involved in the consultation process felt that these facilities are too limited to appeal to more advanced skaters, and in the case of Hickson Park, lack design elements of interest to advanced skaters and an opportunity for flow or continuity. Carefully designed major skateboard parks can address needs for unstructured recreation, and other needs for physical activity, socialization, and recreation. Because of this, skateboard parks are increasingly included in a municipality's recreation inventory. Relevant and recent examples include a 16,000 sq. ft. skateboard park in the City of Hamilton (2009), a 16,000 sq. ft. park in the

City of Belleville (2008), a 14,500 sq. ft. skateboard park in Chester NS (2008), a 12,000 sq. ft. park in Huntsville (2008), a 19,000 sq. ft. park in Halifax Regional Municipality (2006), a 13,000 sq. ft. park in Niagara Falls (2005) and a 16,000 sq. ft. park in Quinte West (2003)<sup>19</sup>. While not as common due to the need for ongoing staffing and operating cost implications, municipally-owned indoor skateboard parks do exist (Town of Newmarket Youth Centre). In the case of Newmarket<sup>20</sup>, the Separate School Board has recently entered into an agreement with the Town to access the Youth Centre facilities during daytime hours to partially address issues with ongoing operating costs.

To address the needs for unstructured and spontaneous recreation for youth, the Town should develop a major permanent concrete skateboard park of between 13,000 and 18,000 sq. ft. Youth skateboard enthusiasts should be actively involved in all of the planning and design stages for the facility. Assuming a base construction cost of \$45/sq. ft.<sup>21</sup>, the initial capital cost is estimated at \$585,000 to \$810,000. Consideration should be given to locating the proposed skatepark in a Town-wide or community park adjacent to a new or existing multi-purpose recreation facility, or another location where noise and disruption impacts on adjacent residences can be minimized. Other location considerations include accessibility via public transit and active transportation routes (trails, pathways), and maximizing use by clustering other youth-focused facilities in a similar location.

**Recommendation 30:** The Town of Aurora should develop a Town-wide permanent skatepark to meet youth needs for unstructured, spontaneous and active recreation. The skatepark should be between 13,000 and 18,000 sq. ft., and should be designed and developed through the active participation of the Town's skateboarding enthusiasts, and the involvement of a skatepark design firm.

## **Paved Trail Linkage**

Youth participants in the consultation process identified the lack of a core section (east-west corridor or loop) of highly accessible paved trails or bike lanes on roadways that could be used for in-line skating, training and conditioning, biking, skateboarding/long-boarding. This was consistent

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<sup>19</sup>Compiled from a number of sources, including: Recent project list of Spectrum Sk8 Parks, available at: <http://www.spectrum-sk8.com/index.php>; telephone interview with youth recreation programmer, City of Niagara Falls, Sept. 20, 2010; Van der Zalm and Associates municipal skatepark project list, available at <http://www.vdz.ca/>

<sup>20</sup> Telephone conversation with Gail Aitkens, Program Supervisor, Town of Newmarket, Sept. 20, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Assumes a design/build process, contracted out to a recognized skatepark design firm.

with consultations during the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan process, identifying trails (28%), and specifically paved, multi-use trails (19%)<sup>22</sup> as top priorities for municipal spending. Paved trails and designated biking lanes on roadways are initiatives that promote active living and active transportation options, and are consistent with best practices in municipal planning in Ontario. The Town of Aurora is currently in the process of developing a Trails Master Plan, and a strategy to promote active transportation options is one anticipated outcome. The Parks and Recreation Services Department should ensure that the recommendations of the Youth Recreation Strategy are consistent with and do not duplicate those of the Trails Master Plan, and that the Trails Master Plan takes the Youth Recreation Strategy recommendations into consideration. Developing and promoting opportunities for active transportation and developing trail and pathway linkages between major recreation destination points are some of the important considerations related to trails planning that arose out of the Youth Needs Analysis.

**Recommendation 31:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should ensure effective coordination between the Youth Recreation Strategy and the Trails Master Plan, to ensure that the recommendations address active transportation and active recreation needs of youth.

### **Youth-Friendly and “Fun” Elements in Outdoor Parks and Trails**

A range of other outdoor park elements and outdoor facility interest were identified through the consultation activities, however none emerged as immediate priorities to meet youth needs. There were many suggestions for park trail amenities and improvements that are youth-friendly and that would support spontaneous recreation and physical activity. Some suggestions include the addition of Green Gym® equipment along trails and at key community park locations, more sand volleyball courts in community parks, more outdoor multi-purpose courts, additional ½ court basketball courts, and improved opportunities for BMX biking. The Parks and Recreation Department should consider these types of youth-friendly amenities and elements during parks and trails planning exercises, as well as parks and trail development and improvement initiatives. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified service level targets for some (basketball courts, for example) but not all of these amenities, and these should be used where feasible to evaluate park specific opportunities. Consideration should be given to mitigating potential impacts associated with these

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<sup>22</sup> Town of Aurora, Parks & Recreation Master Plan, Presentation to the Leisure Services Advisory Committee, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, August 21, 2008

types of amenities (noise, disruption, etc) by avoiding neighbourhood park locations and by consolidating a number of amenities at central locations.

**Recommendation 32:** Youth-friendly outdoor amenities and elements should be considered during all parks and trails planning, development/redevelopment, and improvement initiatives.

### **Other Outdoor Facility Components to Meet Emerging Trends and Interests**

The Parks and Recreation Services Department should continuously monitor outdoor activity trends and best practices, and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging facility needs through new and redeveloped outdoor facility components. Continuous evaluation of outdoor facility components is also recommended, to determine if demonstrated needs and the Department's service objectives are being met. Outdoor facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a narrow activity range, or that provide dedicated space for an activity that is in decline should be considered for redevelopment, upgrading, or removal, and new and emerging facility components should be considered. As an example, many municipalities have redeveloped underutilized tennis courts to address emerging activity needs, and have developed half-court basketball standards, paved multi-use courts, beginner skatepark elements, ball and roller hockey courts at these sites.

**Recommendation 33:** The Parks and Recreation Services Department should monitor outdoor activity trends and best practices and evaluate opportunities to meet emerging needs through new and redeveloped facilities. Outdoor facility components that are under-utilized, that serve a very narrow market or activity interest, or that provide dedicated space for an activity showing declining participation should be considered for redevelopment to meet new and emerging interests.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION

### 4.1. Implementation Schedule and Resource Requirements

Table 4.1 describes the implementation timeframes and implementation priorities, based on a 5 year implementation schedule.

Table 4.1 Implementation Timeframes

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<b>High (H)</b>	• To be acted upon immediately and fully implemented in 1-2 years.
<b>Medium (M)</b>	• To be initiated as soon as possible but fully implemented within a 5 year timeframe
<b>Ongoing (O)</b>	• To be acted on immediately and on an ongoing basis.
<b>Long (L)</b>	• To be implemented as resources allow, or as other supporting actions are in place.

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Table 4.2 documents the recommendations by service area and indicates a general level of priority and timeframe and resource requirements. Resource requirements and high-level cost estimates are provided, where applicable, based on 2010 costs. These costs are based on industry averages and are to be confirmed with further study. Land acquisition and site development costs are not included in these estimates. It should be noted that all costs shown in Table 4.2 would not necessarily be borne by the Town. Identified capital cost impacts or new operating costs may be augmented by alternative funding sources (partnerships, grants, sponsorships, community fundraising, donations, etc.) and these should be fully explored to offset the municipal contribution.

Table 4.2 Implementation Schedule

Program Recommendation	Priority	Resource Requirements/Comments
1. Coordinate a Physical Activity Plan	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/Committee time if done internally. \$20-35,000 if facilitated by a consultant. Provincial funding may be available.</li> </ul>
2. Physical Activity Requirements	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
3. Review Scheduling	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
4. Improve Access for Unstructured Activities	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time, See also R14 &amp; R26</li> </ul>
5. Continually Improve Programs and Services	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
6. Explore Partnerships	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
7. Partner with Aurora Culture Centre	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
8. Explore Partnerships for Technological/Creative Pursuits	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
Program Recommendation	Priority	Resource Requirements/Comments
9. Develop Communications Plan	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time. Additional budget may be required depending on communication techniques adopted</li> </ul>
10. Involve Youth in Planning	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/youth involvement</li> </ul>
11. Consult with Youth	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/youth consultation</li> </ul>
12. Develop Youth Centre Volunteerism Program	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/youth volunteers</li> </ul>
13. Update Facility Allocation Policy	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>

Table 4.2 Implementation Schedule

14. Develop Policy on Priority Use of Gym	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
15. Continually Review and Update Fee Policy	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
16. Develop Youth Centre Policies	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
17. Review Staff Roles and Responsibilities for Implementing the Strategy	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
18. Review Staffing Needs as New Facilities/Programs/ Services are Developed	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
19. Provide Staff Training Opportunities	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/annual training budget in the order of \$5,000 to occasionally bring in external experts or fund external training</li> </ul>
20. Continually Monitor Program and Activity Trends	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
21. Develop Performance Measures to Track Outcomes	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
22. Review Recommendations Annually and Update Every 5 Years	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time/ possible consulting involvement in 5 year update. If a consultant, assume \$25,000 if other recommendations have been acted upon</li> </ul>
23. Develop Partnerships for Youth Services	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
24. Develop a Partnership Evaluation Process	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time</li> </ul>
<b>Facility Recommendation</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Resource Requirements/Comments</b>
25. Develop A Dedicated Youth Lounge	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,700 sq. ft. @ 300.00/sq. ft. = \$510,000 for new construction, plus customary allowances for design fees, contingencies etc. Costs may be lower for redevelopment or existing spaces</li> </ul>
26. Develop a Full-Size Gymnasium	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8,500 sq. ft. @\$250/sq.ft = \$2.1M for new construction, plus customary allowances for design fees, contingencies etc.</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2 Implementation Schedule**

27. Undertake Cost Benefit Assessment of Multi-Purpose Facility Options	H	▪ \$40,000 Architect study - consulting budget
28. Investigate Media Lab Opportunities	M	▪ Staff time, costs to be determined
29. Redevelop Indoor Facilities to Meet Emerging Trends	O	▪ Staff time, facility costs to be determined
30. Develop a Major Permanent Skatepark	S/M	▪ \$585,000 to \$810,000 contractor design/build construction cost, begin planning/youth involvement immediately
31. Coordinate Trails Planning Efforts and Active Transportation Initiatives	O	▪ Staff time
32. Develop Youth-Friendly Amenities in Outdoor Parks	O	▪ Staff time, costs to be determined
33. Redevelop Outdoor Facilities to Meet Emerging Trends	O	▪ Staff time, facility costs to be determined

## 4.2. Process for Monitoring and Updating the Strategy

Progress on the implementation of the Youth Strategy’s recommendations should be monitored on an ongoing basis, and reviewed on an annual basis, to identify those recommendations that have been successfully implemented, those that are in progress, and those that may need to be adjusted to better reflect ongoing priorities or changing environmental conditions. In addition to regularly monitoring and updating recommendations, formal procedures should be developed that describe a process for staff reporting and incorporating implementation priorities into the annual budget process of the Department.

After five years, the Strategy should be formally reviewed and updated to ensure that it still reflects youth needs, interests and priorities and the service goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Services Department.