

Municipality of
Bluewater

DRAFT

**Recreation Master
Plan**

October 2022

Prepared for the Municipality of Bluewater, October 2022.

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Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation and as an opening statement to this Recreation Master Plan, we recognize that the Municipality of Bluewater is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Neutral peoples and is connected to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and its resources by the Great Lakes in peace.

We also acknowledge the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regards to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 ½.

As settlers, we recognize the long history of this traditional territory and that recreation activities have been occurring on these lands and waters by Indigenous Peoples long before the establishment of European settlements. We recognize First Peoples’ continued stewardship of the land and water as well as the historical and ongoing injustices they face in Canada. We accept responsibility as treaty people to renew relationships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people through reconciliation, community service and respect, and to care for the land peacefully and respectfully as stewards of its past, present and future.

Acknowledgements

We thank all community members who shared their ideas, aspirations and insights through public and stakeholder consultation.

In particular, we are appreciative of the following individuals who contributed their time, knowledge and expertise to the development of the Municipality of Bluewater Recreation Master Plan:

Maggie Off, Manager of Facilities

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Contents

1.0 Introduction	1	7.0 Water Access Points	119
1.1 Introduction	2	7.1 Overview of Current Supply	120
1.2 Goals	2	7.2 Key Directions for Parks and Open Spaces	120
1.3 Process	3	7.3 Water Access Point Recommendations	121
2.0 Context	4	7.4 Marina	125
2.1 Geographic Context	5	8.0 Trails.....	129
2.2 Socio-demographic Profile	7	8.1 Overview of Current Supply	130
2.3 Relevant Plans and Studies	10	8.2 Key Directions for Trails	134
2.4 General Trends in Recreation	10	8.3 Trail Recommendations	136
3.0 What We Heard	20	9.0 Service Delivery	139
3.1 Consultation Activities	21	9.1 Municipal Role and Organization	140
3.2 Consultation Highlights	22	9.2 Policies and Procedures	149
4.0 Programs and Events	25	9.3 Service Planning & Evaluation	163
4.1 Key Directions for Programming and Events	26	9.4 Partnerships, Collaborations and Agreements	166
4.2 Community Centre and Arena Programming	31	9.5 Communications and Promotions	171
4.3 Community Hall Programming	36	10.0 Implementation	173
4.4 Programming Parks and Outdoor Spaces	39	10.1 Introduction	174
5.0 Facilities	45	10.2 Considerations	174
5.1 Overview of Supply	46	10.3 Anticipated Costs and Timing	176
5.2 Key Directions	47	10.4 Building Conditions Assessment Costs	198
5.3 Indoor Facilities	48	Appendix A: Consultation Report	201
5.4 Outdoor Facilities	74	Appendix B: Programs Inventory	225
5.5 Facility Planning	82	Appendix C: Facilities Inventory	245
6.0 Parks and Open Spaces.....	85	Appendix D: Refrence Policies.....	253
6.1 Overview of Current Supply	86		
6.2 Key Directions for Parks and Open Spaces	91		
6.3 General Parks and Open Space Recommendations	92		
6.4 Major Park Recommendations	100		
6.5 Neighbourhood Park Recommendations	113		
6.6 Parkette Recommendations	115		
6.7 Parcels for Potential Future Use Recommendations	116		

List of Figures

Figure 2-1: Municipality of Bluewater’s Geographic Context and Settlement Areas	5
Figure 2-2: Average annual volunteer hours	11
Figure 5-1: Hensall Heritage Hall	73
Figure 6-1: Map of parks in Bluewater	87
Figure 6-2: Bayfield Pier Beach	101
Figure 6-3: Pioneer Park	102
Figure 6-4: Howard Street Beach Parking Lot	103
Figure 6-5: Howard Street Beach Access	103
Figure 6-6: Clan Gregor Square	104
Figure 6-7: Bayfield Arena and Agricultural Park	105
Figure 6-8: Stanley Community Centre Park	106
Figure 6-9: Houston Heights Beach Access	107
Figure 6-12: Houston Heights Beach Playground	108
Figure 6-10: St. Joseph Beach	108
Figure 6-11: St. Joseph Beach Parking Lot	108
Figure 6-13: Zurich Lions Park	109
Figure 6-14: Zurich Arena and Park	110
Figure 6-15: Bluewater Hay Municipal Park and Beach	112
Figure 6-16: Map of Open Space Parcels in Bluewater	117
Figure 8-1: Location of Existing Trails	131
Figure 8-2: Existing and Proposed Trails	135

List of Tables

Table 2-1: Communities in the Municipality of Bluewater	5
Table 2-2: Population Data for Bluewater and Huron County	7
Table 2-3: Age Distribution for the Populations of Bluewater, Huron County and Province of Ontario in 2021	8
Table 2-4: Current and Projected Populations for the Municipality of Bluewater and Huron County up to 2036	8
Table 2-5: Projected Age Distribution for the Population of Huron County	9
Table 5-1: Comparative Variables Description	51
Table 5-2: Comparative Variables Application	52
Table 5-3: Indoor Facilities Needed in Bluewater	57
Table 5-4: User Groups' Indoor Facility Needs	58
Table 5-5: Stanley Community Centre Gym Use 2019 and 2021	60
Table 5-6: Summary of Hensall Heritage Hall Lease	65
Table 5-7: Summary of Bayfield Town Hall Lease	66
Table 5-8: Ball Diamond Hours of Use 2019	74
Table 5-9: Ball Diamond Hours of Use 2021	75
Table 5-10: Canadians Who Played Tennis at Least Once a Week During the Tennis Season in 2018	80
Table 6-1: Current Supply of Parks	88
Table 6-2: Proposed Parks Classification System	93
Table 6-3: Parks by Settlement Area	95
Table 6-4: Parcels for Potential Future Use Recommendations	116
Table 7-1: Water Access Points Strategy	122
Table 8-1: Existing Trail Supply	132
Table 9-1: Department Staffing Needs	143
Table 9-2: User Group Interest in Additional Municipal Support	144
Table 9-3: Resident Household Support for Service Development	146
Table 9-4: Summary of Existing Policies	149
Table 9-5: Key Individual and Policy Contributions to Healthy, Active Living	154
Table 9-6: Resources for Policy Development	156
Table 9-7: Organizational Contributions to Successful Partnerships	167
Table 9-8: Organizational Costs of Partnerships	169
Table 10-1: Cost Summary of the Recreation Master Plan's Recommendations	175
Table 10-2: Recreation Master Plan's Implementation Strategy	177
Table 10-3: Summary of Capital Costs from Building Condition Assessments 2022	199

1.1 Introduction

The Recreation Master Plan was developed to guide Council and staff in strategic management and decision-making in the provision and sustainability of parks and services for the Municipality of Bluewater. It provides direction for managing and developing infrastructure, resources and investment over a 15-year horizon to 2037.

As an overarching direction, the Master Plan assumes that, “The Municipality will continue to support the development and maintenance of recreational facilities, the acquisition, maintenance and beautification of public parks and the development of recreation programs in accordance with community needs and the availability of resources” (Official Plan 2021. s.7.4.8. p. 28).

1.2 Goals

The goals of the Municipality of Bluewater’s Master Plan are to:

- Engage the public, community groups, associations, businesses, elected officials, staff and other key stakeholders in identifying future parks, facilities, recreation and cultural program needs.
- Identify the approach and related strategies needed to create an integrated service environment in which residents can pursue a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Assess the current state of the Facilities Department in the delivery of recreation and leisure services to the community.
- Identify gaps in service delivery, key priorities and areas for optimization .
- Set priorities for capital investment in existing and new infrastructure.
- Create an accessible, affordable and implementable Recreation Master Plan.

1.3 Process

The process of developing the Recreation Master Plan spanned from February to October 2022 across the following four phases:

Phase 1: Background Review

The first phase involved reviewing background documents, collecting data, interviewing municipal Council and staff, and establishing the current context for recreation in Bluewater, including inventories of programs and events, facilities, parks, trails, beaches, water access points and open spaces.

Phase 2: Public and Stakeholder Consultation

A suite of engagement activities were conducted to discuss with community members the current and future state of programs, events, parks, trails, facilities, beaches and water access points in the Municipality. Residents were consulted through a telephone survey, an online survey and dedicated project page on the Huron County Connects website and user groups were engaged via an online survey and one-on-one interviews over Zoom. A Consultation Report detailed the findings of Phase 2.

Phase 3: Assessment

Phase 3 focused on conducting needs assessments for programming and events, recreation facilities, parks, trails, beaches, water access points and open spaces through analysis of the background research, consultation findings and emerging trends. Phase three also included further interviews with user groups, external agencies, and potential partners. The results of this work, including recommendations in each area of service, was documented in a draft Master Plan for community review and comment.

Phase 4: Recreation Master Plan

The final phase involves revising the draft Master Plan and presenting it to the community, stakeholders and municipal staff and Council before preparing the final Master Plan.

In 2001, the Townships of Hay and Stanley were amalgamated as the Municipality of Bluewater. The Municipality now comprises three primary settlement areas in the villages of Bayfield, Hensall and Zurich as well as other smaller hamlets as noted in Table 2-1.

Key Considerations for Major Settlement Areas

Hensall

- Many families
- Not expected to experience significant population growth over the term of the Plan
- Nine minute drive to facilities and parks in Zurich
- Key non-municipal organizations that contribute to recreation in the area include the Hensall Heritage Hall Committee, Huron County Library, Hensall Agricultural Society, and Hensall Kinsmen.

Zurich

- Many families
- Not expected to experience significant population growth over the term of the Plan
- Nine minute drive to facilities and parks in Hensall
- Key non-municipal organizations that contribute to recreation in the area include the Friends of Hay Town Hall, Huron County Library, Zurich

Agricultural Society, Zurich Lions, Beanfest, and a number of residents that organize volleyball and pickleball.

Bayfield

- Will see the most growth in the Municipality over the term of the Plan (the Phase 1 expansion of the Wastewater Treatment plan will allow for an additional 371 dwellings, to be developed over the next 15 - 20 years).
- Currently an older, retiree-based population, but that will likely shift to more younger (families) with the subdivision growth occurring.
- Bayfield is a popular tourist destination.
- Key community organizations that are involved in providing recreation services, including Bayfield Facilities Initiative Team (BFIT), Bayfield Arena Community Partners Association (BACPA), Bayfield Lions, Bayfield Agricultural Society, Bayfield Centre for the Arts (BCA), Bayfield Optimist Club, Bayfield Marina, Bayfield Town Hall Committee, Pioneer Park Association, and Bayfield River Valley Trails Association.

2.2 Socio-demographic Profile

2.2.1 Current Population

Data from the 2021 census (see Table 2-2) indicates the population of the Municipality of Bluewater is 7,540, and Huron County is 61,366. The Municipality’s median after-tax household income is slightly higher than the County average, at \$74,500. Similarly, Bluewater has a smaller proportion of low-income households (9%) compared to Huron County (11.7%).

Table 2-2: Population Data for Bluewater and Huron County

	Municipality of Bluewater	Huron County
Population	7,540	61,366
Median after-tax income of households in 2020 (\$)	\$74,500	\$70,000
Prevalence of low income based on the Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT) (%)	9.0%	11.7%

Source: 2021 Canadian Census

Table 2-3 shows the age distribution of the Municipality’s population relative to Huron County and Ontario’s populations in 2021. In comparison to the County as a whole, Bluewater has smaller proportions of residents under the age of 44 and over 75, and a larger proportion of population between the ages of 45 and 74.

Table 2-3: Age Distribution for the Populations of Bluewater, Huron County and Province of Ontario in 2021

Age Group	0-4	5-14	15-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+	Total
Bluewater	395	700	1,125	1,020	1,480	2,080	745	7,545
Percent of Total	5.2%	9.3%	14.9%	13.5%	19.6%	27.6%	9.9%	100%
Huron County	3,415	6,980	9,665	9,385	10,925	14,345	6,655	61,370
Percent of Total	5.6%	11.4%	15.7%	15.3%	17.8%	23.4%	10.8%	100%
Ontario	683,515	1,568,280	2,672,455	2,819,400	2,876,010	2,471,070	1,133,210	14,223,940
Percent of Total	4.8%	11%	18.8%	19.8%	20.2%	17.4%	8%	100%

Source: 2021 Canadian Census

2.2.2 Future Growth

Table 2-4 illustrates the current and projected populations for the Municipality of Bluewater and Huron County from 2021 to 2036. Bluewater is expected to grow by 13.7% (1,030 people) by 2036, whereas the County as a whole will grow by 16.2% (9,953 people).

Table 2-4: Current and Projected Populations for the Municipality of Bluewater and Huron County up to 2036

Year	Municipality of Bluewater	Huron County
2021	7,540*	61,366*
2026	7,904**	66,834***
2031	8,301**	69,124***
2036	8,570**	71,319***

Sources: *2021 Canadian Census, **Permanent Population Projections from 2016 Municipality of Bluewater Development Charge Background Study, and ***Ontario Population Projections Update, 2019-2046

Table 2-5 illustrates the projected age distribution of the population for Huron County from 2021 to 2036. The projections show an aging population, with the proportion of people over the age of 75 increasing substantially. All other age groups decline in proportion, with the exception of teens/young adults aged 15 to 29, which will increase. The same patterns, particularly the population aging, is expected for Bluewater as well.

Table 2-5: Projected Age Distribution for the Population of Huron County

Age Group	0-4	5-14	15-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+	Total
2021 Population	3,415	6,980	9,665	9,385	10,925	14,345	6,655	61,370
Percent of Total	5.6%	11.4%	15.7%	15.3%	17.8%	23.4%	10.8%	100%
2026 Population	3,511	7,553	11,253	10,205	10,942	14,758	8,612	66,834
Percent of Total	5.3%	11.3%	16.8%	15.2%	16.4%	22.1%	12.9%	100%
2031 Population	3,556	7,620	11,936	10,362	10,964	14,304	10,382	69,124
Percent of Total	5.1%	11%	17.3%	15%	15.9%	20.7%	15%	100%
2036 Population	3,681	7,742	12,525	10,501	11,324	13,358	12,188	71,319
Percent of Total	5.2%	10.8%	17.6%	14.7%	15.9%			

2.3 Relevant Plans and Studies

A number of relevant plans, studies and agreements were considered in developing the Recreation Master Plan, including:

- Municipality of Bluewater 2016-2021 Strategic Plan
- Bluewater Official Plan (consolidated July 2021)
- Huron County Economic Development Plan
- Municipality of Bluewater 2016-2019 Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Bluewater Zoning By-Law
- Bayfield Settlement Area Secondary Plan
- Bayfield Business Expansion
- 2019 Bayfield Complex Feasibility Study
- Facility Review Report 2013
- Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan 2019-2023
- Fees and Charges By-Law
- Strategic Asset Management Policy and Plan
- Building Condition Assessments (Draft 2022)
- Bluewater Marina Operating Agreement
- Municipal Facility Lease Agreements
- Service Delivery Review, 2020

2.4 General Trends in Recreation

2.4.1 Declining Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a key feature of thriving communities across Canada. For many, the contribution of resources often in the form of time, labour, skills or charitable donations is a demonstration of community and civic engagement. According to the 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (GSS-GVP), Statistics Canada reported that 8 in 10 (or 79%) of Canadians aged 15 years and older, reported volunteering either formally or informally.¹ In addition to the social benefit volunteers provide, other research has also reported that volunteers feel an enhanced sense of worth, self-confidence and self-esteem.² However, although the public, non-profit and grassroots sectors continue to expand, and the demand for volunteers remains, formal volunteering has steadily declined in Canada over the last decade.³

1 Formal volunteering is defined as: "Activities conducted without pay on behalf of a group or organization, at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey." Informal volunteering is defined as: "Activities conducted without pay not on behalf of a group or organization, at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey." [https://www.volunteertoronto.ca/news/572191/Data \Release-74-of-Canadians-Volunteer-Informally-.htm](https://www.volunteertoronto.ca/news/572191/Data%20Release-74-of-Canadians-Volunteer-Informally-.htm)

2 S. Baines and I. Hardill, "At Least I can Do Something: The Work of Volunteering in a Community Beset by Worklessness," Social Policy and Society 7, no. 3 (2008): 307-17

3 <https://www.cardus.ca/research/communities/reports/vulnerable-sector-check-costs-remain-a-barrier-for-volunteers/>

Volunteer Demographic and Engagement Trends

Demographically, volunteer trends have largely remained consistent. According to the same 2018 survey by Statistics Canada, younger generations are generally more likely to participate in both formal and informal volunteer opportunities than older generations. However, although older Canadians within the 73 to 100 year age cohort were less likely to volunteer formally, they were the most likely to contribute the most volunteer hours.⁴

The underlying motivations for volunteering notably differ among age cohorts. Key motivating factors for younger generations, namely Generation Z (ages 15-22) are related to improving future employment prospects.

The completion of education and graduation requirements which mandate volunteering through co-op and community service is a notable factor. For Millennials (ages 23-37), Generation X (ages 38-58), Baby Boomers (ages 53-72) and Matures (ages 73 +), the development of skills, and "a desire to support a political or social cause, or religious or spiritual beliefs"⁵ are more relevant motivational factors for volunteering. The GSS-GVP 2018 also provides interesting insight into what types of organizations attract high levels of volunteer engagement. Sports and recreation organizations were identified as having the third highest levels of engagement, with hospitals and religious organizations ranking the highest.

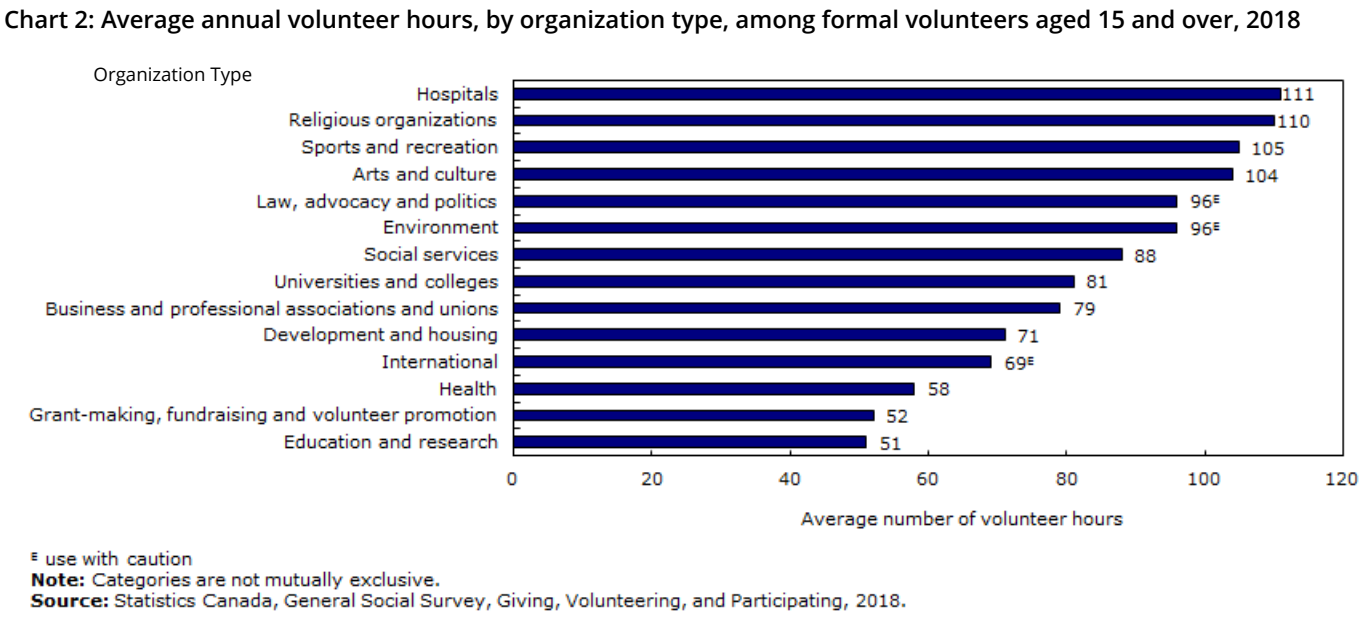


Figure 2-2: Average annual volunteer hours

4 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/210423/dq210423a-eng.pdf?st=IX4H5phw>

5 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/210423/dq210423a-eng.pdf?st=IX4H5phw>

2.4.6 Arts, Culture & Heritage

Public Art

Public art is often used to increase the vibrancy and attractiveness of parks, while supporting local artists and artisans. The curation of public art can help establish the artistic identity of municipalities by foregrounding local histories through commemoration, highlighting natural and ecological features, and introducing temporary artistic interventions that align with community and culturally relevant events (i.e. festivals).

Municipalities and public agencies sometimes mandate (through policies, design guidelines, etc.) that art be part of all projects either as stand-alone pieces or design-integrated, with a predetermined percentage of the construction budget being assigned to public art. For example, organizations and institutions ranging from municipalities to business associations and districts, have engaged in the development of public art master plans to help guide these efforts and fortify a distinct sense of place. The scale of artistic commissions can range from independent pieces of artwork, to a larger constellation of public art works to create an outdoor gallery - a space for local artists to display their works in art exhibitions on a rotating basis. Infrastructure such as, but not limited to paving, fencing, lighting, seating, signage/wayfinding and planting can also be designed in an artistic way while still accomplishing their utilitarian functions.

Huron County Cultural Plan, 2020-2023

The growing interest in developing public arts and culture has already been demonstrated by Huron County through the The Huron County Cultural Plan 2020-2023. The plan outlines a series of key goals and actions to advance these opportunities, and identifies the development of a 'Public Art Program'.

Built, Natural, and Cultural Heritage

Heritage is an area that is of interest to both residents and visitors. Each community has unique heritage features that contribute to creating a sense of identity and can form the basis of programming and events with a heritage focus. Broadly, a shift towards a more holistic approach to heritage that encompasses and acknowledges the relationship and conflict between environment and society has begun to take place²⁷. This advancement in concepts of heritage work towards connecting and responding to critical issues related to climate change, biodiversity extinction, governance and management strategies, and the centering of Indigenous traditional knowledge approaches to develop 'values-based policies'²⁸.

"The divide between nature and culture has been acknowledged as one of the foundational features of Western ontology that bedevil the realm of natural heritage conservation (Harmon 2007). As a result, many countries created separate policies for natural and cultural heritage conservation, including different administrations that apply different legislation, methods, languages, scientific disciplines, and practices. In protected areas, proposed integrated approaches to bridge this divide—for example the creation of eco-museums where ethnology, anthropology, and conservation

converge—have had a rather limited impact. The more recent introduction of cultural values and bio-cultural conservation approaches may offer new ways forward in bridging the nature-culture divide in natural heritage conservation (Maffi and Woodley 2010; Verschuuren et al. 2010; Apgar, Ataria, and Allen 2011; Pungetti, Oviedo, and Hooke 2012)."²⁹

In part, grassroots conservation and heritage organizations such as historical societies, 'friends of' organizations, and charities play a key role in supporting the longevity of significant heritage education and preservation. The development of natural heritage programs including educational walks or sessions to learn about the flora, fauna, landscapes, and stewardship practices can have a lasting impact on the experience of parks and recreation experiences for all ages.

27 <https://www.getty.edu/publications/heritagemanagement/part-two/10/>

28 <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.getty.edu/publications/heritagemanagement/part-two/10/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1661954986740875&usg=AOvVaw2Gc7AT9vjODzEgeQzIfXyK>

29 <https://www.getty.edu/publications/heritagemanagement/part-two/10/>

5.1 Overview of Supply

The Municipality of Bluewater provides a number of facilities that are scheduled for sport and recreation programs, some of which are used casually at other times. These include community centres with arenas, small halls, a gym/hall combination, public libraries, and ball diamonds. They are largely concentrated in the communities of Zurich, Hensall, Bayfield, and Varna - providing each settlement area with access to active recreation spaces. At the same time, facilities are largely replicated in each community, which is a legacy of the former townships that make up the Municipality - each of which provided its residents with the same recreation infrastructure that was current at the time. For the most part, facility use in each community is well below potential capacity.

The arena/community centres in the four communities noted above are the major recreation facilities in the Municipality. They are 'traditional' in design and range in age from 18 to 55 years, with three of four exceeding 35 years old. These four facilities alone are forecasted to require over \$5.5m in lifecycle replacement capital costs over the next 15 years, excluding costs to achieve full AODA accessibility¹.

Overall, the existing supply comprises a limited range of facilities by type, especially when trends are considered. As older facilities of more 'traditional' design, they are less multi-functional than state-of-the-art spaces that are amenable to today's recreation program/activity interests. There are also several gaps in supply in relation to current recreation interests.

5.2 Key Directions

The assessment of need for individual facility requirements during the term of the Master Plan integrates the following key directions:

- rationalizing facility supply in relation to need, which focuses on demand vs. community desires/preferences
- determining future facility provision in relation to the financial capacity of the Municipality to sustain it while diversifying opportunities for community recreation
- balancing provision across the Municipality in an equitable manner
- ensuring a consistent and evidenced-based approach to future facility planning

This assessment addresses the need for facilities that are scheduled for structured programming/organized activity. Parks-based facilities and amenities for casual, self-directed use are discussed in section 6.0. The assessment for scheduled facilities is presented under the following main headings: indoor facilities, outdoor facilities, and facility planning.

¹ September 2022 Building Condition Assessment Reports. WalterFedy

These findings align with those reported in the 2019 Bluewater Bayfield Complex Feasibility Study (Monteith Brown, p. 19) for the community as a whole, as reproduced here:

Table 4: Top 10 Indoor Recreation Activities Requested for the Municipality of Bluewater

All Respondents

- 1. Fitness centre (with equipment)
- 2. Fitness studio (for group classes)
- 3. Indoor walking track
- 4. Indoor Pool
- 5. Indoor soccer
- 6. Basketball
- 7. Curling
- 8. Gymnasium for indoor sports
- 9. Large and medium-size multi-purpose space
- 10. Indoor racquet courts

Thirty-three percent (33%) or 17 of 51 facility/park user groups in the Master Plan survey reported growth in membership/participation levels will generate need for additional access to facilities in the next 5 to10 years. Reported need for greater use of indoor facilities is shown in Table 5-4.

Table 5-3: Indoor Facilities Needed in Bluewater

Telephone Survey Respondents (total = 43)	%(#)	Online Survey Respondents (total = 312)	%(#)
workout / fitness centre / cardio centre	37% (16)	workout space/gym	53% (166)
group fitness class areas	14% (6)	swimming pool	34% (105)
pool / aqua classes / bubbles	12% (5)	multi-purpose/ community space	27% (85)
multi-purpose room	10% (4)	courts (tennis, pickleball, badminton, racquet)	22% (68)
indoor track	7% (2)	walking track	15% (48)
seniors' area	5% (2)	gym (assumed to mean gymnasium)	7% (21)
daycare / play area	5% (2)	pilates/yoga/fitness studio	9% (28)
meeting rooms/area	5% (2)	meeting space	4% (11)
banquet hall	4% (2)	multi-component recreation complex	3% (10)
youth (drop-in) centre	2% (1)	seniors' facility/space	2% (5)
		curling rink	2% (5)
		ice pad/rink/arena	1% (4)
		arts/crafts/music studio	1% (4)

