

APPENDIX H

RESOURCE STRATEGY

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Project #8: Resource Strategy: This project involves the renewal of existing, or formulation of new, policies and procedures directed to enhancing the resources for implementing the Master Plan’s recommendations.

Collectively, the consultation process for the Master Plan revealed that there is:

- strong community support for both more and improved parks, trails and amenities;
- limited support for consolidating parks and / or reducing services in these spaces;
- limited support for increasing user fees and property taxes to finance service development;
- need for the Town to rationalize expenditures in service delivery.

The Town is working towards greater cost-effective and responsive service delivery in all areas, which was the purpose of the 2017 Service Delivery Review conducted by WSCS Consulting Inc. The report referred to a previous recommendation by KPMG in 2012 that expenditure reductions by the Town should include “decreasing service maintenance at parks and outdoor facilities [and] increasing user fees for some services such as harbor and ice rentals” (p. 8). The report indicated that the municipality had moved in this direction. It also noted, “the Town’s workforce has declined over the past 5 years” (p. 8). Expectations regarding spending limits or restrictions do not align with

those related to new or improved public services as expressed in the Master Plan’s community survey - and services cannot be expanded without the necessary resources.

In keeping with the Service Delivery Review’s focus on improving the manner in which services are provided, and its finding that “there has been an historic under-investment in developing new policies and processes” (p. xii), this strategy addresses the need for policies and procedures directed to ‘resourcing’ the Master Plan’s recommendations. It looks at clarifying the role of the Town in service delivery, and opportunities related to financing and to indirect support.¹

One area of service for which the Town now has documented parameters is special events, which are - and will continue to be - important to the municipality’s economy and use of parks and open spaces. The Delivery Review noted, “one cannot say enough about the success of the tourism, special and cultural events that the Town has managed over the past few years. These events attract young and old from many walks of life and bring vibrancy to the Town” (p. ix).

The Town recently finalized and published a Special Events Application Form. It provides specific direction on the parameters and requirements for holding special events on

¹ The Service Delivery Review includes recommendations related to improved policies and procedures for all of the Town’s services, many of which are also related to parks and recreation. Those discussed here, however, are specific to the services addressed in this Master Plan.

municipally owned outdoor property. While the Application necessarily focuses on process, it contains elements of policy that convey the Town's position in relation to special events in general. In future updates to this document, the Town may wish to consolidate these elements in a single section that precedes the detailed application and outlines overarching policy. As a relatively new initiative, monitoring the Application's implementation will also identify areas where more clarity or detail might be required in future versions of the document.

There are other areas in which the Town should consider developing policy. These related to the municipal role in service delivery, volunteers, user fees, donations and other procedures and practices. Each of these areas is discussed below in more detail.

ROLE OF MUNICIPALITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

These types of policies are more global in nature, and articulate the values or position of the municipality in its approach to delivering all services. While not common, a policy on the role of the municipality in recreation program delivery can help clarify its position for the public in relation to other service providers and its activities within its own sphere. An example of this type of policy, from Strathcona County, is available at:

<https://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/at-lls-001-016recreationprogramdelivery.pdf>

While this particular example is very detailed, it provides a useful outline of the entire community recreation system, the role of each sector within the whole, and the application of criteria for county provision of services. This last item is important to service planning and monitoring, which is an essential activity - whether or not it is set out formally in policy. As noted elsewhere in the Master Plan, Township-specific criteria to evaluate the efficacy of service provision are important to ensuring limited resources are put to their best use.

VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS

Recent years have shown an increasing trend to engaging volunteers in the development, maintenance, and stewardship of parks. Volunteering can range from single events or tasks such as removal of an invasive species, tree plantings, or a seasonal cleanup of all park spaces to more formal ‘friends of’ groups that have an ongoing role in specific parks. The 2014 Toronto Park People: Park Friends Group Guidebook (p. 5) describes the role of these organizations as follows:

Park friends groups serve in an advisory and supportive capacity to the work of [the municipality]. They provide an independent, knowledgeable and “on the ground” voice for the residents of a community and the users of a park about conditions, programs and needs for the park. They can also supplement the work of [the municipality] by helping jumpstart and fundraise for park improvements and supplementing core maintenance and park programming (e.g. park clean up day, community picnic in the park). [At the same time, the municipality] and ultimately, the elected representatives on...Council, have the final decision making authority for the park.”

The Town of Midland should consider developing its volunteer sector to support work to be done in its parks and trails, through a formal policy and the promotion of volunteer opportunities on its website.

The Township of Tiny has a comprehensive Volunteer Management (adopted in 2011) that provides the framework for staff to develop and maintain a high quality volunteer sector based on articulated values and principles, and

supported by recruitment and management standards, and procedures related to protecting both program participants and volunteers (e.g., risk assessment, interview process, reference and police record checks, where applicable to position). The Volunteer Management policy is supported by a detailed Volunteer Orientation Handbook that sets out all relevant information for volunteers including the policy, expectations, and detailed procedures. Volunteer opportunities are posted on the Township’s website.

COMMUNITY AFFILIATION

Community affiliation policies describe the services available from the municipality to registered community groups in providing their program and services. Although not-for-profit community groups or organizations must be registered to receive municipal assistance, registration does not guarantee support. A standard, typically annual, registration / application process for eligible groups interested in municipal assistance “affiliates” them with the municipality, and establishes a formal, consistent process for reviewing requests and monitoring policy effectiveness. Municipal staff review the applications and make recommendations to Council for approval. The support provided is typically in-kind, with funding provided through a separate policy or policies. The extent of services available to affiliated groups depends on the capacity of the municipality to provide them.

The policy specifies criteria for affiliation and the services available to affiliated groups. Requirements for affiliation include items such as delivering programs and services that align with municipal goals/objectives (e.g., Parks and Trails Master Plan, Accessibility Plan, etc.); non-profit group operating by a volunteer board or executive committee; identifying group as either adult or youth focused - if a greater emphasis is placed on youth activities (family based activities could be considered youth for the purposes of the policy); membership/participation in the group must be available to all residents in the community; criteria to measure the merit of the group’s programs/services (e.g., does not duplicate existing programs/services, fosters physical activity/healthy lifestyles, etc.);

being based in the municipality with a majority (51%) of participating members residing within its boundaries.

Benefits to affiliated groups might include:

- facilities and equipment: free or proportionate discounted fees for use of facilities, spaces, equipment; access to designated schools through agreements negotiated by the municipality;
- marketing and promotion: distribution of approved promotional materials at municipal facilities and assistance with contacts for the local media; free listing in the parks and recreation program guide;
- grants and insurance: assistance from municipality in securing liability insurance; assistance with sourcing potential grants; assistance with completing applications for non-municipal grant programs (e.g., Ontario Trillium Foundation, private sector, etc.);
- leadership training and development: course rebates for community volunteer development to a maximum of \$50./person/course to a maximum of \$200/group/organization per year, provided the course is a core component of the organization/group’s mandate, with priority being given to certain courses;
- events: assistance with developing a marketing/advertising plan and economic impact survey and analysis; use of municipal such as: portable event fencing, garbage cans, etc.; delivery and pick up of municipal equipment.

While the Town of Midland already provides support to local volunteer groups, these services are not formally documented. The groups that responded to the survey indicated interest in additional support from the Town in developing and providing parks-based programs (e.g., advertising and promotion, volunteer recognition, and communicating with parks and recreation services). Policy of this type can be used to provide clarity, awareness and consistency in terms of the range of support services available to volunteer groups and what they must do to be eligible to be, and remain, affiliated. It can also be used to combine the various aspects of support in a single policy, and can be structured to simplify its application over time. Specifying support in terms of, for example, percentage discounts on facility rentals, can help simplify fee schedules that change on a regular basis.

Town of Caledon Community Group Affiliation Policy:

https://www.caledon.ca/en/live/resources/parks-rec/Community_Development/Community_Group_Affiliation_Policy.pdf

Town of Parry Sound Community Affiliation Policy:

<http://www.parrysound.ca/en/play-here/resources/community-affiliation-policy.pdf>

City of Brantford Parks and Recreation Affiliation Policy:

<http://www.brantford.ca/pdfs/5.5.5%20CD2013-050%20Affiliation%20Policy%20and%20Appendices.pdf>

USER FEES

(<https://www.midland.ca/PublishingImages/townhall/bylaw/By-law%20No.%202013-62.pdf#search=user%20fees>)

The Town's By-Law 2013-62 establishes "a composite fee schedule for services and activities provided or done by the Parks and Recreation Department within the Town of Midland."

The by-law sets out the percentages of costs to be recovered through user fees for each category of use/users: minor sports/youth groups/school (45%); senior not for profits (50%); adult not for profits (55%); private/commercial groups (100%).

The fees shown currently on-line were in effect until April 2016, and need to be reviewed. The Town should also consider developing a formal user fees policy to provide the underlying rationale for fee structures based on the municipality's goals and objectives in service provision. It will provide the framework for balancing the need for fiscal responsibility in providing services within a mandate to optimize recreation opportunities for community residents. In reviewing fees and developing a user fees policy, the Town should

While referring only to indoor facilities at the NSSRC, the Service Delivery Review indicated, "The key service is to provide fair and equitable access to ice surfaces, arena floors, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, and community facilities and rental contracts. Providing reasonable rates for facility use. Many out of town residents and groups utilize this

facility and it is well known in the area. There are no specific fees for utilization by outside municipalities" (p. 54). It is unclear, however, whether or not the Review recommends the introduction of a premium on non-resident use of services. In our view, consideration should be given to the fact that current agreements with surrounding municipalities preclude non-resident fees both ways and that this approach works well and seamlessly, given the regional nature of the service market.

Although current fees subsidize youth and minor sports (we assume this includes all up to the age of 18) and seniors and so demonstrate that the Town's mandate in service provision focuses on these population groups, there is no provision made for priority allocation of facility time among users. This consideration relates primarily to sports fields, on which there pressure may emerge to accommodate both youth and adult groups during desired prime-time. Should demand for sports fields begin to outstrip supply in the future, there may be reason to develop policy that gives children and youth minor sports groups priority access to facilities.

COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAMS

Many municipalities have instituted Commemorative Tree and Bench Programs to offset the costs of park amenities while providing residents the opportunity to commemorate people or events. A sample of municipal programs revealed some that encompass a potentially broad scope for community financial support, which is reflected in their names.

The City of Greater Sudbury's Parks Services Donation and Memorial Program allows the public to "make donations to commemorate a special person, a momentous occasion or simply donate as a philanthropic gesture to beautify a community park. Donations towards the purchase of park enhancements or memorial gifts can include: park benches, trees (hardwood and conifers), bike racks, picnic tables, sun shelters, sports equipment (basketball standards, tennis nets, soccer goals, etc.), playground structures, other options to be discussed with Parks Services." The policy also notes that donations for parks amenities are guided by site-specific plans.

Strathcona County's Parkland Memorial Program (2017) notes:

"The Parkland Memorial Program provides individuals, groups and organizations with the opportunity to beautify Parkland in Strathcona County by planting trees or installing Parkland Amenities in remembrance, observance or acknowledgment of an appropriate event, occasion or individual. Approval of applications will be based on esthetic considerations, improvements to the

level of service to our Parkland users and with the intention of facilitating planned development in our Parkland. "Amenity" means any bench, table, park furnishing or other structure or development that increases the physical or material comfort of the park. It may include a memorial plaque."

Understandably, these policies do not include the costs of participating since they will vary, depending on what is being donated. Some municipalities include fees in their policies. The Town of LaSalle's Memorial Program (2017) charges the following:

Bench fees:

- new bench and plaque \$1,800 + HST
- engraved plate only on existing bench \$1,000 + HST

Tree species fee:

- various (outlined in application form) \$600 + HST
- engraved plaque only on existing tree \$200 + HST

Memorial bricks can also be purchased for \$100.00

The City of Windsor's fee for a tree alone is \$500 (includes tree, planting, watering, mulching and trimming), and for a tree and bronze plaque is \$1,080. The City of Kingston charges the same for memorial trees and \$869.42 for memorial benches.

DONATION PROGRAMS

With the exception of the City of Greater Sudbury (noted above) that includes an option to “simply donate as a philanthropic gesture to beautify a community park”, memorial programs reviewed are related to specific items. A more general donation program could also be considered in Midland, although parks and trails would be only one of a number of areas to which residents could donate. The City of Toronto includes an opportunity to donate to specific service areas in its tax mailouts.

This Voluntary Contribution program notes, “You can make a voluntary contribution (donation) to support a variety of City programs and services that matter to you. You can make a donation in any amount from \$1 up to \$50,000 [which include]: children; youth and parenting; history art, and culture; parks, gardens and beaches.” These are only four of 12 categories listed on the insert, including general revenues.

In Midland, a donation category to ‘parks, trails and beaches’ could be further refined to allow contributions to be directed to a specific project, park, beach or trail segment, signage, etc.

Although it represents a different type of donation, opportunities for corporations or qualified individuals to contribute professional services and/or materials for parks or facilities projects could be part of such a policy.

OTHER PROCEDURES/ PRACTICES

Partnerships are now considered essential in the area of municipal service development, and were noted in the Service Delivery Review. “A key focus for the Town must be to move to more customer centered services while supporting new initiatives through good planning and partnership building” (p. iii); partnerships with other community’s agencies and governments is paramount to providing new and expanded services and funding...If the Town can share resources in certain areas, it may be able to expand its events and initiatives” (p. ix). The Service Delivery Review also noted the need for Town departments to work more collaboratively in, for example, delivering special events (p. 67).

The report notes partners to the Town in recreation and cultural events (p. 67) as well as with regional organizations and neighbouring municipalities. Potential new partnerships with other public agencies, not-for-profits (including volunteer program providers), and the private sector, should be identified and pursued in improving or expanding parks and trails infrastructure and/or amenities.

While policy can be developed to articulate the municipality’s position and principles with respect to partnerships, each agreement needs to be individually designed to optimize and protect the interests of the parties involved.

Service monitoring and evaluating are also key functions to ensuring demand and supply are aligned and that services offered are achieving intended objectives. This is an ongoing function

that should be formally tied to implementing and regularly updating the Master Plan. Ongoing tracking and monitoring external funding opportunities, in a shifting landscape, is also important to ensuring any available financing is pursued to augment municipal resources.