

SECTION 3. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

3.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The existing Mission Statement of the Parks and Recreation Department should be retained. Nothing has emerged from the planning process for this Master Plan that would require a rethinking or revision to the Mission Statement, which is as follows:

“Brantford Parks and Recreation Department shall ensure parks, leisure and visitors services to enrich the quality of life in Brantford, through creative partnerships with the community and through the protection of the natural environment.”

3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Master Plan’s Guiding Principles are key statements which provide direction for the Plan’s recommendations. They have been developed based on data analysis, public needs and preferences, trends, demographics, market research and extensive interviews with staff, stakeholder groups and Brantford’s partners in recreation.

1. **Focus on Target Markets** - The City shall focus the majority of its efforts on serving children (the traditional target of most City programs), youth (a neglected age group with special needs that are not being addressed in the current delivery system), seniors (rapidly growing demographic which is becoming more physically active), and special populations (those vulnerable segments of the population including, but not limited to, persons with disabilities, the homeless, immigrants, single parents and low income households).
2. **Strengths-Based Delivery System** - The City cannot do it all. It needs to work with all of its partners in recreation, ensuring that services are provided by the most appropriate agency in an effective and efficient manner.
3. **Brantford’s Volunteer Sector** - The voluntary sector will continue to provide the foundation of Brantford’s extensive recreation system.
4. **The City’s Role** - The City shall remain the coordinator and overseer of the entire recreation system and the main facility provider.
5. **Recreation Spending** - Funding shall be directed to meet the needs of target markets before all other recreation needs are met.
6. **High Quality** - Recreation programs, services and facilities are very important to Brantford residents. Brantford has produced a large number of exceptional athletes in a variety of areas due, in large part, to the quality of the recreation facilities and programming and the excellent coaches. Brantford residents want to see this trend continue; not necessarily by focussing solely on elite athletes, but by providing high quality and accessible programs and facilities.
7. **Partnership** - Maintaining Brantford’s parks and recreation system will require the efforts of the City of Brantford as well as all of its partners in recreation.

8. **Eliminate Barriers to Participation** - In partnership with the community, the City is committed to reducing and eliminating physical and economic barriers to participation in leisure activities.
9. **Accessible & Equitable Distribution of Parks and Recreation Services** - The City will continue to strive for an accessible and equitable distribution of parks and recreation services on a City-wide basis.
10. **Schools: A Key Player in Brantford's Parks and Recreation Delivery System** - The efforts of all partners in recreation, including the School Boards, the province and the City of Brantford will be required to ensure that after hours use of schools does not become a thing of the past due to increasing user fees.

3.3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Strategic Priorities of the Master Plan represent the most pressing recreation needs of the City of Brantford. These priorities provide the focus for the Plan's recommendations and are intended to guide decision-making relating to recreation in Brantford. These are the areas of the recreation delivery system that the City should focus its efforts on before all other initiatives. The City's recreation partners and other funders should also be encouraged to focus on these areas.

This analysis has also considered parks and recreation funding. For example, the amount of monies available in reserve accounts for capital projects as well as the Parks and Recreation Department's share of available municipal tax dollars have been assessed.

1. **Reinvest in the City's existing recreation facilities by developing and implementing a planned program of facility upgrades.** The community's response to the household survey indicates that this should be the City's priority. Without additional funding for parks and recreation services, the quality of the system will deteriorate. The first step in this process is to assess all of the City's recreation facilities in order to have a full understanding of their physical condition. Sufficient funding must then be allocated to upgrade existing facilities and/or develop new facilities in order to meet identified demands. One technique for funding facility maintenance and upgrades is to establish a capital conservation fund (see Section 4.12.2).
2. **Continue to pursue partnerships with private, public and community partners in the development of new facilities in order to offset the cost to the taxpayer.**
3. **Volunteer recruitment and retention.** The Parks and Recreation Department and other service providers need to assist volunteer-based organizations, which are the core of the delivery system. Historically, the City has relied heavily on volunteers and the current volunteer crisis must be addressed. Without this strong volunteer base, the City will not be able to continue to offer its citizens the tremendous range of recreation opportunities that are now available.
4. **Joint Use Agreement with the School Boards needs to be revisited.** While the fiscal pressures on the local school boards are recognized, there are a number of issues which need

to be addressed. These include user fees (potential of reassessing fees for youth groups in particular); unscheduled school usage of City playing fields and facilities and; community access to school facilities, in particular gymnasium space. This is an issue province-wide and the City of Brantford is encouraged to work with other municipalities to see that this is addressed provincially as well.

5. **Pursue a partnership with the County of Brant in developing new recreation facilities.** The need for additional playing fields, including football and soccer, has been identified in Brantford. Given that the County of Brant is also seeking to develop some new recreation facilities (e.g., arenas, sports fields and aquatic facilities), this provides an ideal opportunity for a partnership arrangement.
6. **Focus programming efforts on swimming, skating and summer camp programs.** These are the City's programming strengths. Staff have acknowledged that some of their programming efforts have not been well received.
7. **Pursue purchase of service agreements with other service providers.** The City should move towards a system whereby the best service provider should supply the needed program.
8. **Promote the quality of Brantford's recreation facilities to the public.** The City has a good supply and distribution of recreation facilities that benefit Brantford residents and also makes the City attractive for new business investment (e.g., excellent quality of life for employees) as well as for tournaments which attract tourism dollars to the local economy.
9. **Continue to invest in the City's trail system.** Walking, hiking, and cycling are favoured activities for all ages. Brantford residents consider the trails to be a significant asset and a tourism draw. The trails should be assigned a high budget priority.
10. **Plan for a new multi-purpose recreation facility including other community services to provide for the significant forecasted growth in the south-west area of Brantford.**
11. **Promote the benefits of recreation to Brantford residents.** Recreation is a core service in the City.
12. **Address the needs of youth.** This is the only real gap in programming and facilities.
13. **Priority should be given to the needs of Brantford residents.** While it is recognized that tourism and special events are important for Brantford, it is critical that the City not lose sight of the importance of meeting the needs of its own citizens.
14. **Develop a Sports and Leisure Council.** This forum would include sport and leisure service and program providers and would provide opportunity for dialogue, coordination and support.
15. **Develop a performance measurement system for recreation services which is outcome-based and Brantford-specific.**