

SECTION 5. PROGRAMMING

5.1 OVERVIEW

Programming is an important component of the City's recreation and leisure delivery system. Programs include both organized, scheduled activities as well as spontaneous or "drop-in" activities which cover a broad range of interests including sports, social, artistic and educational interests.

The following provides an assessment of the leisure programs and program providers that are available in Brantford. This assessment addresses programming issues that have been identified including duplications, gaps, strengths, weaknesses and priorities.

5.2 PROGRAMMING: WHO DOES WHAT?

In Brantford, programs are offered by a range of providers including the public sector (e.g., the City of Brantford), the not-for-profit sector (e.g., YMCA-YWCA, the Boys & Girls Club and minor sports organizations) and the private sector (e.g., The Athletic Club). Table 5-1 illustrates the City's program providers as well as their primary target markets and programming areas.

Table 5-2 categorizes leisure activities by age group which are, or are expected to become, the most popular activities for each age group or market segment. While this is a generic listing of leisure activities drawn from the Consultant's own depth of experience and the trends literature, by and large, these opportunities are now available in Brantford.

It is evident from Table 5-1 that there is a broad range of organizations in Brantford which deliver program opportunities to the community. The area best served appears to be physical activities for children and adults. The one notable "gap area" is youth.

5.3 CITY OF BRANTFORD: PROGRAMMING STRENGTHS

The programming areas in which the City excels include the learn to swim and learn to skate programs as well as its summer camp programs. This is supported by the registration data which was reviewed as part of this analysis. All three program areas indicate high participation levels. Staff also confirmed the success in these areas. The City should focus its efforts on these program areas and identify the partners in the community who can fulfil other programming needs.

**Table 5-1
Program Providers in the City of Brantford**

Sector	Organization	Primary Market Served							Program Areas				
		Pre-School	Children	Youth	Adults	Seniors	Families	Disability	Physical Activities	Arts & Culture	Education	Special Interest	Life Skills
Public & Quasi-Public	City of Brantford	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Brantford Public Library	X	X		X	X					X	X	
	School Boards		X	X					X		X	X	
	Mohawk College			X	X				X		X		
Not-For-Profit & Voluntary	YMCA-YWCA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
	Boys & Girls Club		X	X		X			X			X	X
	Affiliated Groups	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
	Minor Sports Associations	X	X	X					X				
	Youth Resource Centre			X					X				X
	Service Clubs		X				X		X			X	
	Neighbourhood Associations	X	X	X	X		X		X				
	Special Events	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Private	Fitness Clubs			X	X	X			X				
	Ethno-Cultural Groups	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
	For-Profit Recreation/Leisure Organizations	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	

Source: Monteith Planning Consultants, 2003

**Table 5-2
Leisure Activities for Various Age Groups**

Pre-School (0-4)	Children (5-9)	Youth (10-19)	Adults (20-54)
waterplay swimming climbing (play equipment) arts, crafts & music developmental programs	swimming walking cycling waterplay in-line skating organized sports - soccer, hockey, baseball, basketball, figure skating skateboarding day camps music & dance gymnastics	swimming walking cycling skateboarding in-line skating organized sports - soccer, hockey, baseball, basketball, figure skating, badminton, volleyball day camps drop-in programs leadership training/social recreation music & dance adventure (extreme sports; e.g., rock-climbing)	walking & jogging aerobics & fitness golf gardening organized sports - hockey, baseball continuing education/self improvement cultural programs nature appreciation
Seniors (55+)	Families	People with Disabilities	Special Populations
walking swimming golf wellness activities gardening nature appreciation cultural programs arts, crafts, games, classes, clubs tours & trips continuing education	swimming skating special events walking, hiking, cycling cultural activities	varies by age & disability swimming inclusive programs specialized programs	varies by type & level of need but may include low-cost programs, social services, ethnic services, organized sports, etc.

Source: Monteith Planning Consultants, 2003

5.4 WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

The City cannot do it all. Brantford has a number of excellent public, not-for-profit and private sector organizations that contribute to the program opportunities in the City. The key is identifying the best provider to supply the programs that will meet the recreation and leisure needs of the community. For example, the Boys and Girls Club have indicated that their strength lies in serving the needs of the City's youth. In comparison, the City has not been terribly successful in this area. The City's Fall Registration Summary Report indicated a number of youth program cancellations (e.g., Halloween Hijinks, Junior Jazz, Leader in Training and Pumpkinfest Party). If the City provided the Boys and Girls Club with an opportunity to offer youth programs at its community centres, this programming gap could potentially be addressed. It was noted, for example that youth from the Eagle Place area are bussed to the Boys and Girls Club.

The City, as recommended in Section 4, should consider moving towards implementing a “strengths-based” delivery system for its programming. Under this system, the City would enter into purchase of service agreements with the provider who is best suited for the job. The City’s current arrangement with the Neighbourhood Associations is a step towards a “strengths-based” delivery system. In this case, the neighbourhood associations have been identified as being the best provider for developing the outdoor rinks and providing skating opportunities at the local level.

Over time, as the best possible providers are identified or come forward to offer their services, the City’s programming role should evolve, continuing to focus on its programming strengths (swimming, skating and summer camps) while acting more as an overall program co-ordinator and facilitator. The City would also be responsible for filling any identified programming gaps. The expectation is that over time, the City’s programming role would be reduced.

Recommendation: ***That the City refocus its programming efforts on being a facilitator and coordinator rather than a direct programmer.***

5.5 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

It would appear that the City has not established any formalized process for program research and planning. Staff at the various community centres establish their own program offerings in isolation of one another. Decisions regarding what programs should be offered, eliminated, expanded or reduced need to be formalized based on a standardized, agreed upon approach that would include an evaluation of the following:

- participation rates;
- waiting list information;
- space availability;
- instructor availability;
- financial considerations;
- responsiveness to activity trends;
- needs of target markets;
- public input, etc.

Recommendation: ***That the City establish a formalized process for program research and planning which would consider participation rates, waiting list information, space availability, instructor availability, financial considerations, responsiveness to activity trends, needs of target markets, and public input.***

5.6 PROGRAM DELIVERY ISSUES

While the Parks and Recreation Department is currently one of the key players in the delivery of programs in Brantford, program statistics confirm that the City struggles to find the right program offerings. This is not a problem unique to the City of Brantford. Programming in this era is a very complex business. There are more leisure opportunities available to Canadians today, including

internet based and home based leisure and fitness opportunities that compete directly with any structured programming. Market research and effective programming planning as noted above are the keys to success.

5.6.1 Lack of Coordination

At the present time, each community centre establishes its own programs and pricing. The various centres in effect are competing with one another. For example, Branlyn, Eagle Place and Woodman Community Centres all offer the “Alphabet Kids” program at the same time. No doubt, there is the aspect of convenience to parents in offering the program close at hand. However, other age or interest groups could be served if there was some discussion whereby only one or even two of the centres offered this program. The end result is that many programs are being cancelled due to a lack of participants or are running with very few participants and consequently are operating at a loss. Staff indicated that, while the City tracks the amount of revenue generated by a program, it does not track how much it actually costs to run the program.

5.6.2 Duplication

Program duplication is occurring both internally (as noted above), as well as externally (with other service providers). The staff at the various community centres need to work together to co-ordinate their program offerings and again concentrate on strengths. For example, the Library has a strong literacy and pre-school/early learners focus. Possibly, the lack of interest in “Tales for Tots” is an indication that the City may not be the right provider of this program.

5.6.3 Income Levels Major Factor Influencing Participation

Why are some programs not attracting participants? As noted in the trends section, income is a factor that influences recreation participation. Children from lower income households are less likely to participate in organized recreational activities and the same applies to adults. While the City does have a subsidy program for children, there is no subsidy program for adults (see also Section 4, User fees and Subsidies).

5.6.4 Leisure Trends

The availability of “distance learning” (e.g., courses available on the internet) means that there is less reliance on outside facilities for meeting the community’s recreation and leisure needs. Also, given the “lack of time” issue as well as the availability, affordability and variety of home based fitness equipment, people are opting to participate in more home based leisure activities. Building on the aspect of convenience, walking, hiking and cycling are favoured fitness activities in Brantford. There are other trends, namely the active living/wellness movement. At the Gretzky Centre, the City has introduced a new programming initiative called “Back to Basics” which emphasizes, relaxation, health and self improvement, learning and education, social/group participation, fun and entertainment and family time. As a new area, there are no statistics to

indicate whether the program is attracting people back to the Centre. If successful, this may prove to be another “strength” for the City. Much depends on the quality of the instructor.

The household survey results indicated that 72% of respondents feel that the City should not reduce its level of involvement in programming. However, given the City’s track record in programming as well as the leisure trends which may be impacting on participation levels, it is recommended that the City move towards a “strengths-based” delivery system wherein the best provider would supply the program.

Recommendation: *That the City encourage a greater level of communication among staff who are responsible for providing municipal programs in order to ensure a co-ordinated approach.*

Recommendation: *That the City determine what the actual cost is of running its programs and establish a minimum number of required participants in order for the program to run.*

5.6.5 Age Structure of Target Markets

Through the consultation process, it has been evident that the needs of the City’s youth are not fully being met. In reviewing the program offerings, it was noted that some of the City’s programs have combined youth and adults as a program target market. Experience has shown that youth do not want to associate with adults – anytime or anywhere! They want their own, casual, drop-in programs and space. With the pressures of school, part time jobs, etc., the last thing youth want is to be slotted into a specific time or space, with an adult or with a younger age group.

Other than pre-schoolers (under the age of 5), the City’s Leisure Guide does not distinguish between school aged children and teens/youth. The offerings range from age 6 -12, 7-12, 13+, 12-17 and 15-18. It is recommended that a clear distinction be made between children and youth programs. Children’s programs should be geared to those aged 6-9.

Based on experience, youth programming, in order to be successful, should be further subdivided into the following age groups: ages 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18. No 16 year old wants to be seen with a 12 year old. These classifications have been successfully applied in other communities. Program format (registered vs. unstructured) may also be an issue.

Recommendation: *That the City should consider offering programs based on the following suggested age groups:*

- *Pre-schoolers - 5 years and under*
- *Children - ages 6-9*
- *Youth - ages 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18*
- *Adults - 18+*
- *Seniors - 55+*

5.6.6 Leisure Activities Guide - Affiliated Groups

At the present time, only municipal programs are listed within the program guide. In an effort to co-ordinate the recreation and leisure delivery system in Brantford, all service providers including affiliated groups, minor sports organizations, etc. should be included within the guide. As previously recommended in Section 4.5.2, the City should encourage community and sports organizations to advertise in the Leisure Activities Guide. Furthermore, a reduced or special advertising rate should be offered to these key service providers.

5.6.7 Programming Gaps

1. Youth

As previously indicated, the programming needs of Brantford youth are not being met. This was identified through the “Youth Speak Out” (January 2002) focus group meeting, the household survey results, as well as through the community consultation process.

In attempting to bridge this gap, efforts should be concentrated on increasing the number of casual, drop-in opportunities for youth. Basketball is ideal as a drop-in or pick-up sport. Given that today’s youth are experiencing many of the same “time crunches” that adults are experiencing, the last thing they want is more structure.

Youth also want to have their own space. Staff have advised that renovations are planned for Eagle Place Community Centre. As part of the facility renovations, consideration should be given to providing suitable drop-in space for youth as recommended in Section 6 - Facilities.

The specific program suggestions arising out the “Youth Speak Out” focus group session included more dances (age segregated opportunities), more low or no cost team and after-school sport opportunities (e.g., basketball), more arts and cultural opportunities (e.g., cooking, painting, art), more casual drop in activities such as coffee houses, card/board game nights, battle of the bands, book clubs, etc.

Determining the right mix of programming requires direct input from youth. The City is changing the role of the Anti-Vandalism Task Force and Co-ordinator position to that of Youth Co-ordinator. The cautionary note is that the City should not rely completely on formal structures such as a Youth Council as those driven to participate on a youth council may not represent all interests. Informal sessions with youth should also be the basis of programming planning.

Recommendation: *That youth programs be developed, with input from youth, that allow for more drop-in opportunities, including open gym time and other unstructured activities.*

Recommendation: **That the City consider developing youth drop-in space at Eagle Place Community Centre.**

2. Preschoolers

There may be a gap in the programming opportunities for pre-school aged children. Through the household survey, the public rates recreational opportunities for pre-schoolers to be better than those for youth and people with disabilities, but worse than those for children, adults, and seniors. The City's Program Registration Summary Report also indicates relatively low participation levels.

The City needs to do more market research to determine the needs of pre-school aged children (e.g., more drop-in programs like play groups, more physical activities like kinder-gym, etc.).

Recommendation: *That the City undertake more research to identify the programming needs of pre-school aged children.*

3. Seniors

Brantford's seniors are currently very well served by the program offerings at the Brantford Seniors Centre as well as through the seniors clubs at the local community centres. However, given the trend towards more active seniors and the fact that the seniors population is expected to continue to significantly increase in size, the City needs to ensure that the current level of programming is maintained and enhanced.

The City may also need to assist seniors in organizing more active sports opportunities. For example, in the City of London, an organization by the name of "Huff'n'Puff" serves as an umbrella group for variety of activities ranging from line dancing to ice hockey. A survey distributed at the Brantford Seniors Centre and at the community centres would provide an excellent indication if such programming efforts are needed in Brantford.

Recommendation: *That the City ensure that programming opportunities for seniors continue to meet the growing needs of this target market.*

Recommendation: *That the City investigate the need for additional active programming for seniors.*

5.6.8 Other Issues

1. Program Feedback: Exit Survey

In order to get feedback on the programs that are currently being offered as well as to get ideas for future programs, anyone who participates in a program at a City facility should be asked to fill out an exit survey. The survey could cover topics such as program satisfaction and possible improvements, etc. This would allow for direct feedback on what does and does not work well.

Recommendation: *That the City develop an exit survey that would be completed by individuals who participate in programs at City facilities.*

2. Gender Equity

The City needs to ensure that there is a balance of opportunities for both sexes. This is part of a larger issue, that being the need for the City to establish a gender equity in recreation services policy (see Section 4.5.7).