The strategy sets the vision, approach and actions necessary to facilitate opportunities for the urban action sports of skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking.
PREFACE

Action sports are one of the fastest growing recreational activities in North America. The term action sport describes modern freestyle, individual sports that involve self-propelled vehicle manoeuvering over a course or obstacle. The most common action sports are skateboarding, BMX, freestyle mountain biking, inline skating, snowboarding and surfing.

This study focuses on the three most common action sports practiced within City of Waterloo public spaces: skateboarding, BMX and mountain biking. Participation in these sports has a broad appeal to both youth and young adults, as well as, an emerging family market, as adult action sport enthusiasts draw their children toward the sport.

The emergence of skateboard parks and bike parks in cities of all sizes is a national trend that recognizes the community value of these sports. In the City of Waterloo skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking are taking place in public spaces that are not designated for these activities. Consideration of action sport venues to serve the citizens of Waterloo is a well-supported, positive step toward increasing opportunities.

The strategy sets the vision, approach and actions necessary to guide the expansion of opportunities for urban action sports within the City of Waterloo. The plan is based upon establishment of a hierarchy of A) city-wide venues that provide the primary venues that are supported by a distribution of B) neighbourhood venues of varying sizes that are situated in areas of concentrations of youth and offer a venue within walking, skating or biking distance. The primary venues will offer a more extensive experience for all skill levels, for planned visits. The neighbourhood venues will focus on beginner to intermediate skill levels and be designed for spontaneous, easy access from home.

Venues are already established to serve as city-wide destinations for each sport. The existing facilities The City of Waterloo Skate Park on Father David Bauer Drive already serves as the primary venue for both skateboarding and BMX biking and the Waterloo Region Cycling Club manages an excellent city-wide scale mountain biking facility on the west side of the city. For most residents, some form of transportation is needed to access these two venues. As the strategy is implemented, the city-wide venues will be further analysed for opportunities to improve and/or expand as determined.

An important first step to implement the strategy is to determine venue locations that will serve the neighbourhoods. This is currently a service gap, that represents a well-researched community need that will benefit youth aged 7-15. A distribution of venues located close to
neighbourhoods will provide unstructured opportunities and support and promote physically active and healthy lifestyles for youth.

City staff have identified some candidate sites, however a robust public consultation process to further identify and evaluate potential sites will be a key step in the implementation process.

Credits:

The City of Waterloo prepared this strategy with support and expertise from the following consulting firms. The team collaborated to establish Waterloo’s first permanent skateboard and BMX park at 80 Father David Bauer Drive and guidance, research and strategy models for planning a network of action sport venues.

Advocates for skateboarding, BMX and mountain biking have reviewed and contributed to this strategy. Many thanks go to a group of dedicated action sport enthusiasts that have helped to organize and lead the drive for improved access to venues for their respective sports.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ...................................................................................................................................... 2
Executive summary .................................................................................................................... 6
CHAPTER 1 Introduction ..........................................................................................................10
  1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY: ...............................................................................10
  1.2 ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER STRATEGIES: ...............................................................10
  1.3 BACKGROUND IN / AROUND WATERLOO: .............................................................11
CHAPTER 2 Strategic Direction ..............................................................................................19
  2.1 ACTION SPORT VISION STATEMENT: .................................................................19
  2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES: ..........................................................................................19
CHAPTER 3 Site Selection Fundamentals ..............................................................................21
  3.1 SUMMARY OF FUNDAMENTALS ...........................................................................21
  3.2 SCALE HIERARCHY OF ACTION SPORT VENUES .................................................21
  3.2 SITE SELECTION CRITERIA ......................................................................................25
  3.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ..................................................................................26
  3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ....................................................................................27
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES ......................................................................28
  4.1 OBSERVATIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES ........................................28
CHAPTER 5 Recommendations ...........................................................................................31
  5.1 RECOMMENDED MODEL: ......................................................................................31
  5.2 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: ....................................................................................32
CHAPTER 6 Candidate Site Selection ..................................................................................33
  6.1 PROCESS ..................................................................................................................33
CHAPTER 7 Implementation ..................................................................................................35
  7.1 Implementation Tasks and Methods: .........................................................................35
  7.2 Financial Impact ........................................................................................................37
REFERENCES .........................................................................................................................38
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The action sports of skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking are a large and growing group and part of a national trend dominated by a range of age groups. Skateboarding and BMX biking appeals primarily to youth and young adults, while mountain biking attracts people of all ages. There is also an emerging family market as action sport enthusiasts introduce their children to these sports.

The need for designated action sport facilities was most recently observed during the community input for the Community, Culture and Recreation Services Master Plan. This strategy was prepared to guide the consideration of these facilities, based on the following vision statement.

"That the residents of Waterloo have opportunities to access skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking facilities and amenities that are planned, designed and developed specifically to accommodate action sports."

Most important is that the action sport facilities are strategically planned, designed, developed and managed to ensure that they serve the needs of the user groups and are accepted by all stakeholders. To steer the preparation of this strategy, a set of guiding principles were established as the pillars that support the proposed delivery model for action sports.

The guiding principles are as follows:

A. Corporate strategic alignment
B. Access and inclusivity
C. Optimal use of resources
D. Environmental conservation
E. Community engagement
F. Neighbourhood compatibility and enhancement

It should be noted that the community already enjoys several well designed, planned and managed venues for each action sport. This strategy looks at how to create a network of facilities that will serve the spectrum of user needs with a focus on enhancing access to venues for youth.

There are numerous opportunities for youth to participate in organized team and/or individual sports within our community. The developmental benefits of unstructured, freestyle physical
activity should not be under-estimated and recent studies support the need to create opportunities for spontaneous recreational activity for youth. This is particularly important for older youth who are less involved in traditional structured sports and are at risk of spending too much inactive time.

Action sports require regular practice to achieve proficiency. Access to action sport amenities within (or nearby) their neighbourhood will provide youth aged 7-15 with an accepted place for an unstructured, spontaneous and highly active form of physical recreation.

In fact, action sports play a vital role in the physical and psychological well-being of many young people. Neighbourhood playgrounds are dotted throughout the suburban residential areas, yet they have little appeal for youth aged 7-15.

The development of this strategy included a vigorous analysis of opportunities and challenges for establishing and/or expanding action sport venues. The analysis focused on the following five key themes:

A) Local Destination Facilities
B) Action Sport Growth
C) Neighbourhood Amenities
D) Benefits of Designated Environments
E) Youth Engagement

Review within each of these five themes produced a series of observations that contributed to the creation of a recommended strategic delivery model specific to the needs of the City of Waterloo.

The recommended model consists of a two-tier action sport venue hierarchy:

1. City-wide hubs - the primary, largest scale venue(s)
2. Neighbourhood facilities and spots – smaller venues situated nearby residential areas with high concentrations of youth.

The city-wide hubs are large venues that will draw users from throughout the community and beyond. The locations of city-wide hubs will be highly visible and easily accessible by active transportation and include a parking area. The city-wide venues will include features for the full range of skill levels – from beginner to expert. The Waterloo Skate Park, which opened in 2011, provides part of the city-wide hub needs.

City-wide hub(s) for mountain biking will be determined within the strategy implementation process. The Waterloo Cycling Club (WCC) provides an excellent mountain biking venue to
the community on lands in west Kitchener. This venue acts as a city-wide hub for mountain biking and will be further considered through consultations with the WCC.

Neighbourhood facilities and spots are smaller venues that will be incorporated into residential areas with high concentrations of youth, enabling access within a nearby walk, ride or skate. Neighbourhood facilities and spots will not require the addition of parking because they are will serve as pedestrian-scale neighbourhood assets. A facility is larger than a spot and the scale of each location is influenced by the site specifics explored during the site selection and neighbourhood stakeholder consultation processes. Neighbourhood facilities and spots may be clustered with other existing or planned neighbourhood features such as basketball, tennis or sport field amenities for the benefit of grouping activity zones for youth.

This strategy is a guide to the next steps to select and evaluate sites. Chapter 3 outlines the fundamentals of site selection to guide the process to determine and detail candidate sites that are planned and designed to fit into the neighbourhood.

Early and continued community engagement is the backbone of fostering understanding, respect and acceptance of action sport venues. Once candidate sites have been identified, it is essential that the community stakeholders have opportunities to contribute their ideas to ensure the new venues are compatible with the neighbourhood.

This strategy does not dictate the sites where action sport facilities will be implemented. Instead, it acts as a guideline and launch platform on how to address the demand for action sport facilities and amenities. The process to develop the strategy included preliminary public consultation and research into the zones of the city that demographically have high numbers of action sport participants. A number of candidate sites, within those demographic zones have been identified, however one of the first steps in the implementation process is to engage neighbourhood stakeholders in a site selection dialogue. The consultation stage is a critical step in cultivating success of the project over the long-term. A positive interaction between the sport participants and the neighbourhood is essential and will have a tremendous impact on both groups.

The strategy includes a set of recommendations linked to an implementation timeline to initiate the next steps. The recommended actions are as follows:

1) The City of Waterloo Skatepark is the primary, city-wide hub for skateboarding and BMX biking.
   a. Reinforce the Waterloo Skatepark as the central, primary, city-wide hub through promotion of the venue.
   b. Consider future community needs and opportunities for expansion of the Waterloo Skatepark in west Waterloo Park.
2) Prepare and execute a short-term implementation plan based upon existing funding allocations in the 2013-2014 budget identified for action sport venues.
   a. Identify potential short-term candidate sites.
   b. Engage stakeholders and establish priorities for each action sport.
   c. Link priorities to the existing 2013-2014 budget allocations.

3) Prepare a long-range plan to implement the action sport strategy model for a network of venues.
   a. Initiate a process to identify and prioritize a network of action sport sites.
   b. Align the priority projects with the 2016-2022 Capital Budget forecast.

4) Prepare and execute a public engagement plan for action sports.
   a. Engage action sport participants and neighbourhood stakeholders for ongoing communication, consultation and collaboration.
   b. Engage action sport enthusiasts for input regarding the design of new facilities and solicit feedback regarding operations of existing facilities to maximize accessibility and participation.
   c. Establish an easy to use, online mapping tool to identify the designated action sport venues.
   d. Enable action sport special events that will promote the sport and focus on safe sport education and training.

5) Continue to pursue partnerships and funding support.
   a. Cultivate and grow partnerships that will support the development of action sport venues and provide positive support to encourage the development of action sports as a recreational activity.

The strategy provides high-level implementation priorities that will be incorporated into a process to allocate funding to plan, build and operate the action sport venues. The 2013-2014 budget includes a funding allocation that will be aligned with the implementation of this strategy.

Partnership opportunities will be continuously explored and prospective collaborative projects will be recognized and advanced for consideration.

The strategy is the first step in unfolding the expansion of opportunities for action sports. Flexibility is built into the strategy to encourage a robust public engagement process that will help drive the detailed site selection and priorities, and enable opportunities for collaborative efforts to be fully realized.
CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY:

This strategy, developed by the City of Waterloo, provides clear direction on how to address the community’s demand for action sport facilities and amenities. Action sports addressed in this report include skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking.

The report establishes the strategic vision, approach and actions necessary to expand opportunities for action sports within the City of Waterloo.

1.2 ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER STRATEGIES:

A: City of Waterloo strategic plan 2011-2014:

The Action Sport Strategy directly supports the City of Waterloo’s Strategic Plan pillars as follows.

Sustainability & Our Living Environment

If not properly managed, soft (dirt) surface mountain biking and BMX biking can damage and deteriorate urban forests and natural areas. The Action Sport Strategy will guide the determination of appropriate, designated biking areas to protect our natural resources.

Public Engagement

The action sport strategy responds to community input gathered during public consultations for the Community, Culture and Recreational Services master plan and the development of the new Waterloo Skate Park (2011). Public engagement has been and will continue to be a foundational process to implement the Action Sport Strategy. Consultation will gather input from action sport enthusiasts and neighbourhood stakeholders as sites are determined, facilities are designed and later implemented.

Healthy & Safe Community

Action sports play a vital role in the physical and psychological well-being of many youth. The benefits of an active lifestyle are the focus of numerous studies on the decline in physical activity for youth. A designated distribution of action sport venues will support healthy, safe and active lifestyles.
Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Outdoor public spaces where neighbours can meet and socialize are integral to vibrant neighbourhoods. Action sport venues located within neighbourhoods will serve the same function for youth, as the playground does for families with young children.

B: CCRS Master Plan

The Community, Culture and Recreation Services (CCRS) Master Plan recognizes the need for action sport facilities for skateboarders.

The Master Plan recommends:

“That the City, working with user groups, undertake the development of a skateboarding plaza in a central location to facilitate the development and growth of this activity. The possible future development of smaller skateboard facilities in suburban areas also be considered in order to facilitate enhanced access to this sport.”

1.3 BACKGROUND IN / AROUND WATERLOO:

The City of Waterloo has a large and growing action sport community. This section of the strategy examines the past and present local venues used for skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking. These action sports utilize soft (dirt) surfaces and hard surfaces. Skateboarding requires a hard surface and mountain biking is typically practiced on a soft surface. BMX biking, however, is practiced on both hard and soft surfaces.

Skateboarding in Waterloo (hard surface):

1989: The City of Waterloo operated an indoor skateboard park at Albert McCormick Community Centre on the arena floor.

1990-92: The indoor park was moved to Moses Springer Community Centre, where it was operated for 2 years. It was closed and the equipment sold, due to increased operation costs and a declining number of users.

1997-98 A temporary skateboard park was opened at the original site of the Waterloo Arena, now repurposed as the Perimeter Institute.

1999-2004: City of Waterloo provided a mobile, wooden, temporary skateboard facility named the “Red Rider”, which was stored and assembled from a movable storage trailer. The mobile park was most frequently setup at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex, and was
occasionally setup at Moses Springer Community Centre. Use of the Red Rider skate park was terminated in 2004 due to equipment deterioration and safety concerns.

2009: In spring 2009 the Waterloo Public Square opened and quickly became an unintended skateboarding facility. Skateboarders enjoyed the open plaza of smooth surfaces, ramps, stairs and spectator seating. The speed and dramatic nature of the skateboarding activities at the public square provoked controversy within weeks of the opening of the new space. Restrictions were established, which further intensified the community demand for a designated skateboarding facility. Fortunately, a process to select, design and construct a skateboarding facility was well underway. The professional skateboard park design teams of VanderZalm & Associates and New Line Skate Parks were consulted on both the new skateboard park and a city-wide strategy for action sports.

2010: While awaiting the development of a permanent skateboard facility and to decrease skateboarding pressures on the public square, an alternate, temporary, asphalt-surfaced skate zone was established in the parking lot of the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex. It officially opened in June 2010. Skateboarders accepted the new temporary zone, largely because they assisted in the design and layout of the elements.

2011: In the fall of 2011 the permanent, concrete skateboard park on Father David Bauer Drive was enthusiastically received as a top-notch facility

**Action biking in Waterloo:**

The term BMX derives from Bicycle Motorcross, which originated in the 1970’s in California. This sport utilizes hard surfaces and soft surfaces, as well as several different styles of bikes. The popularity of BMX has steadily increased over the last ten years and now has a presence as a mainstream sport. The following breaks down the hard surface and soft surface variations of BMX.

**Hard Surface Biking**

Hard surface BMX biking uses specially designed bikes for performing tricks in concrete surfaced plaza-style spaces with rails, ledges, stairs and ramps. These concrete plazas are very similar to the spaces used for skateboarding and urban terrains found throughout the city.

Hard surface BMX is widespread and locations vary. The City of Waterloo Skate Park functions as a hard surface BMX park in addition to serving as a skateboard park with both groups frequenting the space.
Soft surface biking

Enthusiasts use a variety of BMX bikes are used to perform jumps and trick maneuvers on soft dirt surfaces. Woodlots with rolling hills most often serve as the venue. This intensive bike activity wears the surface down to a dirt base free of vegetation. Formal and informal BMX racing takes place on a circuit made up of a series of jumps, ramps, banked slopes and bridges.

Mountain bikes maneuver differently than BMX race bikes; however, there are similarities. Mountain bikes use soft surface trail routes with hills, rock and log jumps in a track style circuit.

City of Waterloo has not provided designated (signed) locations for mountain biking and historically has discouraged users, primarily, to prevent environmental damage to the woodlots.

Soft surface BMX and mountain biking participants are often difficult to find because they establish in municipal woodlots, off the public trail system, where there is a natural topography of soil-surfaced hills, ramps serving as jumps and wooden structures incorporated into a circuit. The west-side ESPA #19 and the McNally lands are popular venues, as well as, wooded lands throughout the city.

In the mid 1990’s the community created an unauthorized BMX bike zone at Regency Park, located at Fischer Hallman Road and Regency Drive. The area is located on natural rolling slopes in a wooded area, where the BMX and mountain bike activity takes place on a dirt surface amongst the trees. For many years, the City of Waterloo forestry team was concerned about possible damage to trees and discouraged bike activities with many attempts to restrict use of the area to protect the trees. However, the bikers were so enthusiastic about the hills and jumps it was impossible to restrict the bike activities. Fortunately, the trees are predominantly hardy Manitoba maples that have adapted to the modified site conditions, and therefore, the City of Waterloo accepted the current bike use. To this day Regency Park is not recognized as an official BMX bike zone, however, it is now an accepted activity and an example of efforts by city staff and the community to balance protection of trees with community use.

Other off-trail areas frequented by action cyclists include Leighland Park, Bechtel Park and Wintermeyer Park. Both BMX and mountain biking can be found in woodlots near most residential areas.
Regency Park, Waterloo - Soft Surface BMX Bike Spot

Nearby venues:

City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener has two permanent skate parks: the ‘Aud’ at the Kitchener Auditorium, and the newest, McLennan Park which provides for all three action sports - skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking. McLennan Park allows various styles of biking all in one location including a jump park, racetracks, free ride and a pump track. The 39-hectare park, located at 901 Ottawa St., S., Kitchener is a destination for beginner, intermediate and advanced action sports.

Kitchener also has a mobile skate park, named the ‘Doon Skatium’, which travels to a different community centre each week, making it accessible for skateboarders across the city.

In April 2012, the City of Kitchener approved a Skatepark Planning Study and the development of two more skate park sites - Fischer Park in 2014/15 and Optimist Park in 2016/17.
City of Cambridge

The City of Cambridge’s primary concrete skateboard and BMX park, named Riverside Rails, is located within Riverside Park. Cambridge also has a fee-based, indoor, all season skateboard facility located within the Duncan McIntosh Centre. The city is also in the early planning stages of introducing a circuit style freestyle bike park which will offer a combination of dirt based and hard surface track-style jumps.

McLennan Park, Kitchener

Riverside Rails, Riverside Park, Cambridge
Region of Waterloo lands / stewardship agreement with Waterloo Cycling Club

The Waterloo Cycling Club (WCC) is a volunteer based cycling organization offering mountain bike trails, events and training sessions. Through an agreement with the Region of Waterloo, the WCC established stewardship over a network of riding trails on Region of Waterloo lands within a hydro corridor, on Glasgow Street, accessed off Ira Needles Boulevard. The trails, formerly known as the ‘hydro-cut trails’, provide over 25 kilometres of free, public use, mountain biking trails. The trails are excellent quality and accommodate a range of users and skill levels. This destination venue draws users from beyond the Region of Waterloo. Volunteers maintain and manage the trails.

For more information and maps go to Waterloo Cycling Club

Waterloo Cycling Club Trails
Private facilities:

The Chicopee Ski & Summer Resort offers a local private, fee-based bike park facility, with a seven kilometre long, single track of climbs, descents, jumps and technical challenges. The park offers lessons and summer camp programs.
Region-wide distribution of action sport venues

FIGURE 1: REGION-WIDE DISTRIBUTION OF ACTION SPORT VENUES
CHAPTER 2  STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2.1 ACTION SPORT VISION STATEMENT:
“That the residents of Waterloo have opportunities to access skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking facilities and amenities that are planned, designed and developed specifically to accommodate action sports.”

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
The guiding principles are the fundamentals used to develop this strategy.

A. Corporate strategic alignment
   - align with and support city plans, master plans and strategies

B. Access & inclusivity
   - variety of opportunities
   - multi-sport venues
   - provide hierarchy of amenities for varied skill levels
   - support healthy lifestyles
   - safe places and spaces

C. Optimal use of resources
   - feasible development plan
   - financial best practices
   - best use of lands
   - best operational practices
   - flexible and adaptable

D. Environmental conservation
   - protect, enhance & sustain natural environment resources

E. Community engagement
   - engage action sport users in planning, implementation & operation
   - engage neighbourhoods
   - raise public awareness & profile of action sports
F. Neighbourhood compatibility & enhancement

- harmonize development with the adjacent neighbourhood for compatibility.
- enhance sites as they are developed
- create socially vibrant & interactive places
CHAPTER 3  SITE SELECTION FUNDAMENTALS

3.1 SUMMARY OF FUNDAMENTALS
Selection of the action sport venues is based on several fundamentals that serve as a collective starting point.

The fundamentals include:

1. Scale hierarchy → appropriate sized venue
2. Site selection criteria → determine the best site
3. Community consultation → collaborate with stakeholders
4. Environmental policy → sustain ecological features and natural heritage

3.2 SCALE HIERARCHY OF ACTION SPORT VENUES

The Action Sport facility types / sizes are accepted guidelines used by cities throughout North America.

The Action Sport facility types from smallest to largest are:

1. Neighbourhood - spot
2. Neighbourhood - facility
3. City-Wide - hub
4. Regional - destination

The actual size of a venue will be influenced by many other factors, to coincide with the contextual environment. For example, a neighbourhood spot in the City of Toronto may not be the same size as one recommended for the City of Waterloo. When planning for Action Sport opportunities as a city-wide network, it is important to consider a variety of community specific factors including: physical size of community, youth population, catchment area, extent of organized user group, etc.

Neighbourhood spot

A neighbourhood ‘spot’ venue is a small opportunity that is created as a distinct zone within a neighbourhood park or along an established trail. The spot may consist of three to five obstacles and encompasses an area up to 200m².
A spot may support users of several skill levels and may be located in residential settings or in urban spaces to offset conflict zones where some action sports are taking place in unauthorized areas. The provision of action sport spots around the city will provide small opportunities in appropriate locations.

A 200m² space, which is the largest area in this facility category, is comparable to the size of a half-basketball court, or the space of 14 parking spaces. A spot facility can be a narrow linear space along the edge of an existing trail.

Pricing of spot facilities is subject to the specific site. A bike spot uses natural material already existing at the site to construct bike jumps, while a small skate spot may include $20,000 to $50,000 in surfacing and prefabricated steel skate boarding elements. The planning process is very important in determining the cost to implement a complete and sustainable project.

Examples:

A skateboarding spot can be a simple venue built upon an existing smooth asphalt surface. Ramps with platforms will serve bmx biking in addition to skateboarding.

A series of mountain bike jumps can be built along the edge of an existing park trail.
Neighbourhood Facility

The intent of a neighbourhood facility is to provide access to a venue within a distance that is typical of walking to the local elementary school. The City of Waterloo is utilizing demographic data from the Environics Research Group to confirm the neighbourhood areas of high concentrations of children aged 5-9 and young adults aged 15-19.

Neighbourhood facilities are typically located within existing neighbourhood parks, public facility nodes and on highly visible land within close proximity to residential development. It is expected that users will walk, ride or skate to the neighbourhood facilities.

This demographic knowledge determine zones where implementation of action sport venues is a priority and to help determine the targeted size of a neighbourhood facility. Typically, neighbourhood facilities are sized between 200m² - 900m² and are developed for a range of skill levels, but primarily focused toward younger and less experienced users. In comparison, neighbourhood children’s playgrounds are generally approximately 400m² in size and several playgrounds may be accessible within a neighbourhood.

Costs of neighbourhood facilities are subject to the size and the type of facility considered. A neighbourhood sized, permanent concrete skate / BMX park would potentially cost $400-$500/m² to construct. A dirt and wood structure bike park would cost much less, pending the existing landforms.

Permanent concrete or metal equipment can be included in neighbourhood parks as play nodes for youth aged 5 and up. Ramps can be used for many purposes and can also be designed to serve as an art piece or decorative feature.
City-wide hub

Serving the needs of several neighbourhoods, a city-wide hub is approximately 900m² - 2500m² in size. This category of facility has a broad size range with the maximum size comparable to one and a half indoor hockey rinks.

Hubs are clustered with other activity nodes that attract community-wide users. City-wide hubs should be supported by amenities such as a sheltered area, washrooms, parking lot and security lighting and other nearby activities, such as access to food.

Hubs are best located in a community park or facility setting where there is an operational responsibility to manage the venue. The hub may be at street frontage or adjacent a highly visible internal roadway to a major park or recreational centre.

A city-wide hub accommodates all ability levels and depending on the overall scale of the facility, it may accommodate more than one style. The City of Waterloo Skate Park is 929m² in size, which is at the smaller end of the range for hubs. The combined planning and construction cost of the skate park was $672,000 in 2011.

Regional destination

Regional destinations are large multi-purpose facilities serving a broad community of action sport users. Regional destinations offer a cluster of action sports and other uses together in one park. The typical scale is approximately 2400m² – 4000m² in size.

This type of action sport venue requires parking, shelter, washroom facilities and an array of other supporting infrastructure.

McLennan Park, in the City of Kitchener, is an example of a regional destination. Although the skateboard park within McLennan Park is similar in size to the City of Waterloo Skate Park, its extensive bike park and other amenities serve the broader community as a regional destination.
3.2 SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Selecting the optimal locations for action sport facilities is extremely important for the success of a new project. The following criteria is organized into five theme areas that when combined, assist in identifying, evaluating and determining ideal candidate sites. Each theme is critical to the success of the project and should be used in conjunction with the other fundamentals of site selection.

1. Geographic and demographic location:

The location offers the appropriate topography and serves the proposed users within an accessible service area. There are a sufficient number of users in the service area to warrant the development of an action sport facility.

2. Community and park harmony:

The action sport venue is compatible with the existing community, neighborhood and other park uses and overall character. If necessary, there are mitigating measures for addressing incompatibility, such as setbacks and buffers to neighbors and other park uses.

3. Community and stakeholder support:

There is sufficient support within the serviced community and stakeholders that this is an acceptable location. There may be community / user group funding / in-kind support for enhancements. Other site-specific concerns can also be addressed through consultation.

4. Supporting infrastructure:

The site is supported by nearby public amenities which may include accessible pathways, access to shade, shelter, seating, parking, public transportation and washrooms.

5. Access and security:

The site is highly visible from the street. The principles and guidelines of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) will be considered as a means to assess and mitigate site risks. Sites will be selected and designed to encourage watching through a series of design techniques such as seamless connection to the street and comfortable places for the public to sit and observe the park.
3.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Action sports tend to spark a wide range of perceptions ranging between highly opposed to fully supportive. Early and continued engagement between community stakeholders – adults and young people – will bridge any misunderstandings between action sport enthusiasts and the community.

Establishing opportunities to address concerns will foster understanding, respect and acceptance of action sport venues and enthusiasts. It is important that action sport participants are able to contribute their ideas to ensure the new venues are compatible with the neighbourhood. This positive interaction between the sport participants and the neighbourhood has a tremendous impact on the success of the project over the long term.

In addition, the process to design each new facility is a unique opportunity for youth to get involved with their city and to make a difference. In many ways, the development of action sport parks provides a valuable experience for all residents to come together to connect with decision makers and engage in cross-generational dialogue.

Resources for community engagement includes 1) City of Waterloo Public Involvement: Guidelines, tools and worksheets for successful community engagement and 2) Growing Up in Cities in Canada – Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People.

The following are fundamentals of community consultation and collaboration to guide citizen engagement:

- Clearly identify a diverse list of stakeholders, both proponents and opponents, and any other stakeholder who may be affected.
- Reach the stakeholders with relevant information including options for planning, site selection, venue establishment, operations and a clear framework of how the stakeholders can influence the project.
- Clearly establish and initiate opportunities for stakeholders to provide input, as well as, listen and understand the broader stakeholder concerns. Consider the potential for an interface between polarized user groups, to encourage and foster collaborative efforts to resolve differences.
- Maintain ongoing opportunities to communicate with stakeholders to strengthen the established park-venues as safe, healthy and positive environments for all.
3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The City of Waterloo is an environment first community, committed to protecting the natural environment and practicing principles of sustainable development. This philosophy is supported by a number of policies, programs and best practices of the City of Waterloo and other governing authorities, such as the Region of Waterloo, Grand River Conservation Authority and Ministry of Environment.

Waterloo’s natural heritage is formed by the community’s diverse landscapes, landforms and living systems. Collectively they form Waterloo’s natural systems of undeveloped natural features. These natural systems contribute to the character of the city and to the quality of life of residents, in addition to serving important ecological functions.

Each element of the natural system has unique functions and attributes, in addition to different levels of significance and sensitivity, which together dictate appropriate land use, development intensity and human use.

The site selection, venue design, development and management of action sport facilities will be based on compliance with the regulatory policies, programs and best practices for protecting, sustaining and enhancing environmental, as well as natural heritage features.
CHAPTER 4   ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 OBSERVATIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This section of the strategy analyzes the opportunities/considerations for creating action sport venues. The analysis helps us to understand action sport needs and focus on the most important next steps. Each category of opportunities/challenges leads to a series of observations used to develop the strategy recommendations found in Chapter 5.

The analysis focuses on the following themes:

A: Local destination facilities
B: Continued action sport growth
C: Neighbourhood amenities
D: Benefits of designated environments
E: Youth engagement

A: Local destination venues:

The City of Waterloo responded to a demonstrated need for skateboarding facilities with the completion of the Waterloo Skate Park on Father David Bauer Drive. The Waterloo Skate Park is centrally located, easily accessible from all parts of the city and serves as the city-wide hub venue for skateboarding and BMX biking.

The park footprint is 929 m2 (10,000 ft2) in size which is the minimum size recommended for city-wide hub venues, as outlined in the site selection fundamentals section in Chapter 3 of this strategy.

The broader Kitchener-Waterloo community is served by several destination venues for skateboarding, BMX biking and soft dirt mountain biking, within a short commute. Several regional destination venues are noted in Chapter 1: Background. These venues are large facilities that attract visitors community-wide and include the necessary infrastructure and amenities such as parking areas, nearby food/beverages, washrooms and shelter.

Observation 1: Large, community destination facilities are established and accessed by a short commute within the region. Access to the existing facilities could be enhanced by promoting the facilities and transportation options.
B: Continued Action Sport Growth:

Continued growth in skateboarding, BMX and soft dirt mountain biking is anticipated for both the numbers of participants, and the demand for skill development opportunities. The new Skate Park on Father David Bauer Drive will continue to foster public interest and participation in the sport, which in turn, will result in a higher level of skill development. Demand for additional, more challenging features for the intermediate (and higher) skill level of athletes is an anticipated outcome.

Observation 2: There will be future requests for the addition of more challenging skateboarding features within the City of Waterloo and the primary flagship venue in Waterloo Park. Should funding be available it may be the most appropriate location to consider for expansion.

C: Neighbourhood amenities:

The distribution of smaller action sport amenities within walking distance of neighbourhoods is also desirable. Establishing a network of neighbourhood facilities and spots throughout the city will support broader participation by a wide demographic of users and eliminate barriers to participation. Neighbourhood facilities will serve the day-to-day needs of youth, with places for spontaneous recreation.

Observation 3: The city lacks designated neighbourhood venues offering youth a spontaneous opportunity to develop action sport skills. Youth aged seven to 15 need neighbourhood space for unstructured recreation and socializing with peers for physical and psychological well-being.

Most neighbourhoods are equipped with playgrounds within walking distance that serve as a social venue and as an outdoor space where young children gain competence, confidence and independence as they swing, slide and climb in an unstructured, free-play environment. The playgrounds provide attractive activities for children up to age five or six; however, they have little appeal for youth aged seven to 15.

Action sports require regular practice to achieve proficiency. Access to nearby action sport amenities helps youth to build skills, confidence and competency. There is an identified need to provide action sport venues to support young skateboarders, BMX bikers and mountain bikers within close proximity of their homes. Addition of neighbourhood action sport venues will provide youth with attractive opportunities to gather socially and participate in spontaneous recreation. Older youth also gain tremendous physical and psychological benefits from outdoor recreational opportunities where they can gather with peers socially in an unstructured environment.
The highest concentrations of youth aged seven to 15 are located in the suburban areas of the City of Waterloo. (Source: Environics Analytics)

D. Benefits of designated environments:

Without designated neighbourhood venues, skateboarding, BMX biking and mountain biking is practiced in public and private spaces. Not only does this activity contribute to the deterioration of park benches, concrete plazas, school facilities, woodlots and natural habitats, it often results in user conflicts and creates a negative public perception of the sports.

Observation 4: Action sports in non-sanctioned spaces often result in social conflict and the deterioration of public / private amenities and natural environments.

Observation 5. If action sport spaces are designed and designated within the municipal park / facility system, they become an accepted and respected recreational venue.

E. Youth engagement:

Involving young people in the decision making process, along-side other stakeholders, offers multiple benefits in building a positive momentum early in the planning process.

Youth who are engaged in the development of new recreational amenities will be influenced to utilize and care for the new facilities.

Observation 6. Youth engagement in planning action sport amenities is vital in building positive relationships and acceptance of the new amenity within the neighbourhood.
CHAPTER 5  RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1  RECOMMENDED MODEL:

The proposed delivery model is based upon:

A. CITY WIDE HUBS:

The City of Waterloo Skatepark is established as the city-wide hub, offering all of the characteristics of a large community wide venue with the potential for future expansion if there is a need and an opportunity. Soft surface city-wide hub biking venues may not necessarily be one, large, centralized venue, due to the site topographical requirements. The free-use of the Waterloo Cycling Club trails in west Waterloo currently offer the characteristics of a regional destination venue for mountain biking and it may be determined that soft surface BMX biking requires two or three city-wide venues to serve the community.

B) NEIGHBOURHOOD FACILITIES and SPOTS:

Neighbourhood facilities and spots will be distributed a key locations to establish a distribution of venues that will serve action sport enthusiasts from beginner to intermediate skill levels within walking distance of their homes. Ideally, the neighbourhood facilities and spots are highly visible, flexible, ‘action-sport-friendly-spaces’ where skateboarding, BMX and mountain biking are accepted. The amenity sizes will vary between ‘spot’ and ‘neighbourhood facilities’, and are best associated with other activities for youth, such as, basketball, and may double as a winter skate rink or toboggan site. An important component of the neighbourhood facilities and spots is the opportunity for youth to gather and socialize. Street frontage is highly recommended. The neighbourhood venues should be dotted throughout neighbourhoods of high concentrations of youth. Neighbourhood compatibility is a key factor during the community consultation process to determine sites and manage the built venue.
5.2 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1) The City of Waterloo Skate Park is the primary, city-wide hub for skateboarding and BMX biking.
   a. Reinforce the Waterloo Skate Park as the central, primary, city-wide hub through promotion of the venue.
   b. Consider future community needs and opportunities for expansion of the Waterloo Skate Park in west Waterloo Park.

2) Prepare and execute a short-term implementation plan based upon existing funding allocations in the 2013-2014 budget identified for action sport venues.
   a. Identify potential short-term candidate sites.
   b. Engage stakeholders and establish priorities for each action sport.
   c. Link priorities to the existing 2013-2014 budget allocations.

3) Prepare a long-range plan to implement the action sport strategy model for a network of venues.
   a. Initiate a process to identify and prioritize a network of action sport sites.
   b. Align the priority sites with the 2016-2022 budget process.

4) Prepare and execute a public engagement plan for action sports.
   a. Engage action sport participants and neighbourhood stakeholders for ongoing communication, consultation and collaboration.
   b. Engage action sport enthusiasts for input regarding the design of new facilities and solicit feedback regarding operations of existing facilities to maximize accessibility and participation.
   c. Establish an easy to use, online mapping tool to identify the designated action sport venues.
   d. Enable action sport special events that will promote the sport and focus on safe sport education and training.

5) Continue to pursue partnerships and funding support.
   a. Cultivate and grow partnerships that will support the development of action sport venues and provide positive support to encourage the development of action sports as a recreational activity.
CHAPTER 6  CANDIDATE SITE SELECTION

6.1 PROCESS

The site selection process will be determined through the analysis of four key considerations as outlined in Chapter 3 – Site Selection Fundamentals.

Staff has identified a preliminary list of potential sites that are based upon demographic data, site selection criteria and environmental considerations, however the process will not be complete until community stakeholders are engaged and consulted. The geographic areas of Waterloo with high concentrations of youth between the ages of 5-19 (based on the 2006 Census) are identified in Figure 2 on page 30. Youth concentrations are primarily found within the suburban areas, with the highest concentrations in the zones shaded in red. This strategy will guide the community engagement process to further evaluate the candidate sites for neighbourhood compatibility.

Financial capacity will be a consideration in prioritizing the implementation of the top candidate sites. Wherever possible, action sport development will be aligned with other initiatives to maximize positive neighbourhood impacts and financial efficiencies. Priority projects will be funded with the existing budget allocations in the 2013-2014 budget. Funding needs beyond the 2014 will be aligned and submitted into the 2016-2022 budget process. Staff will continue to consider opportunities for collaborative projects and other sources of funding.
FIGURE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH

YOUTH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION
Percentage of total population aged 5-19 years

Legend
Dissemination Areas (2006)
Percent of population aged between 5-19yrs
- 3% - 10.5%
- 10.5% - 16.35%
- 16.35% - 21.7%
- 21.7% - 27%
- 27% - 33%
### CHAPTER 7 IMPLEMENTATION

#### 7.1 Implementation Tasks and Methods:

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<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Cost / Budget</th>
<th>Operating / Maintenance</th>
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| A           | Recognize the City of Waterloo Skate Park as the primary, destination facility for skateboarding and BMX biking. | • Determine the City of Waterloo resource capacity for holding an annual special event on Go Skateboarding Day every June 21\textsuperscript{st}.  
• Evaluate the City of Waterloo summer skateboard camp (2012 & 2013) and establish a plan to continue and/or expand.  
• Continue capacity building and collaboration with the user groups through communications about the Action Sport Strategy and the next steps.  
• Consider the potential for future expansion within Waterloo Park for the skate park and potentially other action sport facilities. | Complete by Fall 2013  
Complete by Fall 2013.  
Complete by Fall 2013 | Manage each task within existing operating budgets. | No cost. |
| B           | Enhance community awareness and ease of access to existing, designated action sport venues. | • Review and evaluate community access to existing action sport venues, including trails, transit, parking, directional signage, mapping and social enablers.  
• Determine actions needed to enable improved awareness and access to existing venues. | Winter 2014. | $2,000. | No cost. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
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<th>Cost / Budget</th>
<th>Operating /Maintenance</th>
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</table>
| **Short-term plan to establish the phase-one venues.** | • Embark on a community consultation process for selective candidate sites to determine and prioritize feasible sites for the short-term implementation of skateboard, BMX and mountain biking venues  
• Align the candidate sites and venue design with the existing budget allocations.  
• Continue to cultivate collaborative opportunities with project partners. | Complete each task by Winter 2014. | No cost. | No operating impact. |
| | D | Implementation of the short-term plan. | | |
| | • Establish the sites identified in the two-year plan. | 2014-2016 | $53,725 | Estimated cost of $2,000 annually. |
| | E | Long-range plan to establish the city-wide action sport strategy model. | Complete by Spring 2014. | N/A | No operating impact. |
| | • Embark on a community consultation process to verify and prioritize feasible sites for proposed venues, including the size range of each venue.  
• Establish a long-range plan for proposed venues that aligns with the budget forecast. | | | |
| | F | Implement long-range plan. | Prioritize and take steps to implement the plan. | 2015-2022 | Included in the 2015-2022 Capital Forecast. Any additional funding needs to be proposed within the 2015 Budget & Forecast. | To be estimated during project planning & included in the 2015 budget process. |
7.2 Financial Impact

Funding to plan, build and operate the action sport facilities will be proposed within the regular capital and operating budget approval processes. This strategy will assist in determining the development costs, which vary, pending the type/size of venue, existing site conditions.

A neighbourhood facility or spot may cost may range between $15,000 and $50,000 depending on the site, the existing surfaces and amenities. The City of Waterloo temporary skate park, that was utilized prior to the completion of the permanent skateboard park, cost $20,000. The City of Waterloo still owns the skateboard equipment, which will be installed at one or more neighbourhood locations as the strategy, is implemented.

Dirt surface biking venues for mountain biking or BMX biking are most cost effective when established on an existing topography, and therefore the construction and operating costs are limited to increased park inspection and regular parkland operations.

Wherever possible, projects will be integrated with other capital upgrades, particularly for the neighbourhood facilities and spots. Partnership opportunities will be continuously explored and prospective collaborative projects be recognized and advanced for consideration.

Maintenance costs will estimated in advance for all proposed venues and included in the operating budget approval process. The Waterloo Skate Park on Father David Bauer Drive provides a benchmark for estimating the range of operating costs that may be scaled to apply to new projects.
REFERENCES

City of Waterloo: 2011 – 2014 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan

City of Waterloo Official Plan

City of Waterloo, Community, Culture and Recreation Master Plan

City of Waterloo: Environmental Strategic Plan (2002)

Active Healthy Kids Canada: Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth 2011

Growing Up in Canada – Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People


City of Waterloo Approved Reports:
R&L99-10 Portable Skateboard Park
R&L09-28 Waterloo Public Square - Skateboarding Update
R&L09-33 Extreme Sports Facilities
CCRS2010-06 Action Sport Facility Site Selection
CCRS2010-019 Temporary Skateboarding Zone at Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex
CCRS2010-031 Action Sport Update
CCRS2011-015 Action Sport Park - Funding
CCRS2011-019 Tender Award – RFT11-14 - Construction of Father David Bauer Drive Skatepark