



# INDOOR COMMUNITY SPACE STRATEGY

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# A VISION TO 2034



**Community spaces are where Waterloo residents come together to play, compete, exercise, learn, create, and connect. To be enjoyed by all, they must represent the communities that use them. That means the spaces offered must grow with the community and change as it changes.**

The Indoor Community Space Strategy (ICSS) is a 10-year roadmap of transformational change. It includes recommendations on how to improve existing facilities, how to increase access and minimize barriers and how to plan for the future.

All facilities that are owned and operated by the City of Waterloo with extensive public use are included in the scope of this Strategy. Facilities with long-term leases are excluded.

The ICSS complements other ongoing projects at City of Waterloo facilities, including work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve accessibility for people with disabilities, and future planning for the City's approach to sport, recreation, and leisure and leisure programming.

This Strategy is intended to support the growth and change necessary for the City's facilities to keep up with the community over the next decade and beyond. It also prepares the City for funding opportunities to improve our facilities.

All of the community spaces included in this plan are situated on the land traditionally cared for by the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe and Neutral Peoples. We acknowledge and appreciate the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge and philosophies of the Indigenous People with whom we share this land today.

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# SCOPE OF THE **INDOOR COMMUNITY SPACE STRATEGY**

The City of Waterloo owns, uses, and operates a wide range of high-quality community facilities. Indoor community locations across the City provide spaces for residents to engage in sport, recreation, leisure, community connections, arts, and cultural-based activities.

To focus the ICSS project on community benefit and ensure recommendations are feasible within the 10-year timeline, the plan focuses on City facilities that are:

- Owned by the City of Waterloo;
- Operated by the City of Waterloo; and,
- Used for one or more of the following purposes:
  - Sports,
  - Recreation and leisure,
  - Neighbourhood and community gatherings,
  - Arts and creative industries activities,
  - Community and sport group storage,
  - Special events including cultural celebrations, festivals, tradeshow, banquets, and performances, and
  - Museum space for storage, exhibition, programming, and offices.

In addition to community spaces that are owned and operated by the City of Waterloo, certain spaces that are owned by the City and leased to other organizations are also included in this Strategy. Leased spaces are included in scope if:

- The lease agreement is slated to expire soon; or,
- The leased space is located in a facility used for any of the purposes listed above.



As a result, the following City-owned spaces were reviewed as part of the ICSS project:

Facility in Scope	Primary Uses
1. 404 Wing Rotary Centre	Limited community storage on premises, half of the building used by 404 K-W Wing R.C.A.F.A
2. Albert McCormick Community Centre	Ice pads, community rooms, community storage and office space
3. City of Waterloo Museum	Museum exhibition, programming, and collection storage
4. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Building (former Westmount fire station)	Community storage
5. Erbsville Community Centre	Currently used for storage, opportunity for future community use via redevelopment
6. Fire Station 2	Meeting rooms, limited community storage
7. Fire Station 4	Meeting room
8. Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre (Bechtel Park)	Indoor turf field, office space
9. Manulife Sportsplex & Healthy Living Centre (RIM Park)	Ice pads, gymnasium, indoor turf field, programming rooms, community rooms, meeting rooms, banquet hall
10. Moses Springer Community Centre	Ice pad, meeting room, outdoor pool
11. Rink in the Park	Home of KW Granite Club
12. Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex	Ice pad, indoor swimming complex, programming rooms, community rooms, gymnasium, walking and running tracks
13. Visitor and Heritage Information Centre	Storage space, programming/exhibition area



## WHY WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

### Indoor community spaces promote healthy communities

Indoor community spaces contribute to the physical health and wellness of a community by providing spaces to meet, create, and recreate. The interactions that happen in these spaces also support strong community connections and a sense of belonging.

Research highlights that indoor community spaces provide several benefits for the community. Notably, these spaces:

#### PROMOTE INCREASED ACTIVITY AND RECREATION;

- ✓ Improve the mental and physical health of residents;
- ✓ Support strong and healthy community connections;
- ✓ Encourage resident independence and self-organized activities;
- ✓ Enhance neighbourhood identity and increase social connections to place;
- ✓ Foster inclusion and reflect the diversity of the community;
- ✓ Encourage creative activities;
- ✓ Reduce health care, social service, and police/justice costs;
- ✓ Support year-round activities and connection opportunities;
- ✓ Enhance climate resiliency; and
- ✓ Support economic generation, job creation and tourism.

Ice pads, gymnasiums, pools, and indoor turf-fields are essential for youth and adult participation in sport. Some of the facilities within scope of the project host tournaments and meets, which bring in competitors from other communities and contribute to sports tourism in Waterloo. The economic benefits of sports tourism can be considerable, especially for the hospitality and accommodations sectors. Facilities can also host non-sport events like trade/craft shows and exhibitions, which give local artisans and other industries a platform to market their goods and provide their services to the wider community.





## They are a municipal responsibility

There are often few or no alternatives to publicly owned indoor community spaces. This is particularly true for large facilities with indoor pools and ice pads. Alternatives that do exist tend to focus on one or two activities and can be too expensive for many people to afford to participate regularly. Further, most public facilities are the responsibility of the municipal level of government. It is up to cities to invest in this infrastructure if they are to gain the tangible and intangible benefits of vibrant community spaces.

## Waterloo is growing and changing

There is no precedent overarching strategy at the City of Waterloo for its indoor community spaces. To provide recommendations that are relevant and within the realm of possibility, the ICSS team explored the overall challenges and opportunities related to indoor spaces.

Waterloo is one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada. Increasing population density means more recreational amenities are needed. These amenities must also reflect Waterloo's diverse community.

While Waterloo's population is growing, its borders are not. There is limited land available for development, making it difficult for the City to acquire new plots to build amenities on.

Funding is another challenge that most municipalities in Ontario are facing. Cities cannot fully fund infrastructure on their own without significant loans or lengthy reserve plans, so projects require collaboration with every level of government.

The City needs to make significant investments for people with disabilities to have equal access and safety in facilities. Some facilities are more accessible than others, but most need improvement.

Many existing facilities, like in other municipalities in Ontario, are aging. This can increase the cost of upkeep.

Waterloo is also working towards reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to do its part in the fight against climate change. Additional infrastructure, whether it is a new building or an addition, will represent an increase in emissions. Retrofitting existing facilities could reduce the overall environmental footprint of City spaces.

Responding to these issues simultaneously can realize cost savings. For example, there may be opportunities to respond to several issues, such as aging infrastructure and greenhouse gas emissions, at the same time. This can reduce the overall cost as well as the length of time community access may be impacted during renovations.



# WHAT INFORMED THIS PLAN

## Community and Staff Engagement

This plan was heavily informed by community and staff engagement which consisted of facility tours, interviews and reviews by City staff, and a public engagement survey.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH STAFF

The ICSS Project Team met with 29 City of Waterloo staff members representing several related program areas. Staff were invited to share their experiences with the facilities on a variety of topics, including activity programming, facility management, concerns shared by user groups, and barriers faced by equity-deserving groups. This initial engagement phase helped the project team understand the history of the facilities in scope and form an idea of facility needs based on staff expertise and their ongoing conversations with user groups and the public.

The project team also connected with staff through tours of the facilities. During tours, staff shared insight on how spaces are used, opportunities for improvements, and other important operational information to inform the plan.

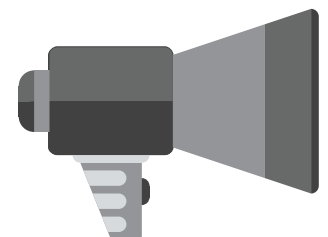
### ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

Following staff engagement, an online survey was open to the public. The survey asked respondents about their experiences using facilities, what they would like to see improved and what they thought was important for community spaces to have. 544 responses were submitted. Feedback provided by the community aligned with information provided by City staff in many areas. Some key themes emerged from the public engagement survey, including:

- Interest in added amenities and diverse programming.
- Support for more welcoming and comfortable spaces.
- Interest in updates to aging facilities.
- Concern regarding the level of accessibility for people with disabilities.

Community members also provided valuable insight into their experiences using indoor community spaces. For example, we learned that:

- Most people using community spaces do so at least once per week.
- Many people using indoor community spaces use a personal vehicle to travel to facilities.
- Most users find facilities clean and tidy.





- Multi-use facilities (those that feature more than one major amenity such as ice pads, pools, or gymnasiums) are the most frequently visited facilities.
- Indoor swimming pools, ice pads and gymnasiums are the most popular amenities.

## RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GATHERING

In addition to the information gathered through staff and public engagement, the Project Team also conducted research into emerging trends and best practices related to indoor community facilities and analyzed data. This included:

- Reviewing former strategies, plans and other work done by the City in the past, such as:
  - Community, Culture, and Recreation Services Strategy (2008)
  - Waterloo Museum Strategy (2015)
  - Older Adult Recreation Strategy (2015)
  - Waterloo Memorial Recreation Centre Engagement (2017)
  - Recreation Program Review (2020)
- Conducting socio-demographic analysis: Evaluating how Waterloo's population is forecasted to grow and diversify helps the City of Waterloo develop recommendations that meet the needs of the community now, and in the future.
- Conducting facility booking data analysis: Reviewing how current facilities are booked and used provides insight into potential gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Conducting jurisdictional research and trend analysis: Understanding trends impacting other municipalities and their efforts to provide indoor community space, helps the City of Waterloo prepare relevant and effective recommendations.

## The Path Forward: Recommendations for Indoor Spaces

Based on the engagement, research, and data analysis, the following recommendations have been developed to support enhanced use and access of Waterloo's community spaces. The recommendations are divided into three broad categories:

- **SECTION ONE:** Policy and Organizational Recommendations
- **SECTION TWO:** Facility Recommendations
- **SECTION THREE:** Future Recommendations



A  
10 YEAR  
ROADMAP



## SECTION ONE: POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This section details recommendations for changes to the policy and policy positions relating to the provision and community use of indoor spaces. Unlike recommendations made by facility, these recommendations apply to all facilities and are much more generalized.

### Community Benefit and Sustainability

Indoor community spaces are costly investments. Upfront capital costs can be substantial and ongoing operating costs, including staffing, are considerable. These costs can be partially offset by user fees and charges.

While partial cost recovery enables sustainability, community benefit warrants equal consideration. Community benefit is the intangible or tangible value residents receive from investments by the City. For example, indoor community spaces can be used for recreation, which in turn contributes to healthier communities. In the context of indoor community spaces, community benefit should be measured in terms of how many people use a space and to what extent it contributes to community health and vibrancy.



#### Recommendation

- 1.1 Consider community benefit when deciding the types of spaces to invest in and the rates charged for usage. Community benefit should be balanced with revenue generation.

### SPACES FOR ALL

Community spaces should be representative of the communities that use them. They should be vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive for all. These spaces and facilities should also have up-to-date technology available to the community. No one should feel excluded or uncomfortable in community spaces.

Population data shows that Waterloo is becoming increasingly diverse and an attractive place for immigrants. The 2021 census indicated that roughly 36% of Waterloo residents are either immigrants or non-permanent residents. We heard through public engagement that City facilities can feel institutional and not welcoming, especially to equity-deserving people.



Incorporating inclusive and accessible features across City facilities will take years and will not happen concurrently. Moving forward on them will also depend on available funding. All principles should be considered when investing in a new space or reinvesting in an existing place.



### Recommendations

- I.2 Reduce the “institutional” feel of facilities by introducing public artwork and improving interior finishes.
- I.3 Engage with Waterloo’s diverse communities when redesigning or designing a facility.
- I.4 Provide universal and gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms at all facilities. This should be done in tandem with other work at the facilities to realize cost savings.
- I.5 Raise the level of accessibility to a consistent level across facilities and prioritize accessibility needs in new builds by using the Accessibility Design Standards for Municipal Facilities and Public Spaces (under development).
- I.6 Consider cultural needs in the design of spaces and resource needs for equity deserving community members.
- I.7 Encourage the design of spaces that are useful to communities surrounding the facilities.
- I.8 Invest in up-to-date technology to support community use of facilities.

## MAXIMIZING USE

Community use is the best indicator of return on investment in indoor community spaces. The most sustainable way to maximize community use is by purposefully designing spaces that are suitable for multiple uses. Analysis of reservation data and feedback from staff highlight that most large amenities, such as ice pads, gymnasiums, and indoor turf fields, are at capacity during primetime hours. In contrast, smaller spaces such as meeting rooms are experiencing a downward trend in usage. Some spaces are not used to their capacity due to a single user group having exclusive access to it. Rental fees can also be a factor. The City will need to respond to each of these issues to maximize space.



### Recommendations

- I.9 Transition from designating spaces, including change rooms, to any one organization, team, or user group. Exceptions could be made if an organization.
- I.10 Consider all possible uses for a space in the design phase and ensure that features are included (proper flooring, size, amenities, etc.) that allow for a variety of activities.
- I.11 Refrain from building spaces that are for a single purpose or use and focus on developing flexible multi-use space.
- I.12 Consider filling low usage time slots with drop-in and/or free use programming such as open skates, open gym use, and free community meeting room bookings.
- I.13 Examine usage trends and respond to growing demands for emerging sports and activities.
- I.14 Explore options for repurposing spaces with the lowest usage rates.

## Affordability, Funding and Allocation

Community spaces are governed by policies and procedures that outline how much should be charged for space, who gets priority when booking spaces and how much funding is allocated to subsidize the cost of space.

### COST OF BOOKINGS

Cost can be a significant barrier that prevents organizations or community groups with modest financial resources from using spaces.

Some user groups have switched to other space providers and often cite cost as a reason. Smaller gathering spaces such as meeting rooms and community rooms are underused. Reducing the cost of reserving these spaces will help encourage increased use.



#### **Recommendation**

- I.15 Review the current pricing model and consider balancing revenue generation with community benefit and use.

### FUNDING AND SUBSIDIES

Organizations that are affiliated with the City are eligible for the Facilities Rental Discount (FRD) program. Through this program, affiliated organizations may book spaces for 50% of the regular cost, with the difference being covered by a fund administered through the City.

The rate of the discount (50%) is slightly higher than those offered by comparable municipalities. The program does not consider financial need when distributing funds.

The FRD program only applies to one group per sport or activity, so newer organizations do not qualify. When evaluating the allocation of the FRD discount, data highlights that most funds are used by a small number of organizations. With limited capacity to increase the total funding amount, it would be helpful to explore how to better distribute funds to more organizations.



#### **Recommendation**

- I.16 Review the Facility Rental Discount program and consider incorporating financial need into the allocation process and expanding the program to apply to non-affiliated non-profits to support increased access, particularly by equity-deserving groups.

## SPACE ALLOCATION

The City's Space Allocation Policy sets the standard for how organizations are prioritized when it comes to booking spaces. The current policy is dated.



### **Recommendation**

- I.17 Review the Space Allocation Policy to encourage equitable access to spaces for community benefit, especially during prime hours.

## STORAGE

Storage needs are difficult for the City to meet at most facilities. While space is limited, there is also an informal approach to how storage is allocated that may not include written agreements. Some storage spaces are not being used efficiently. A consistent approach to storage will improve access.



### **Recommendations**

- I.18 Design an organized approach to storage that includes reasonable fees for storage, prioritization based on levels of use and bulk of equipment, and proximity to the location of use.
- I.19 Configure storage spaces to maximize usage, including storage shelving or racking, and security features so more than one group can use a storage room.





## SECTION TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACILITIES

This section provides an analysis of how specific City facilities can be improved to maximize community benefit. Major facility alterations, such as expansion or reconfiguration, require feasibility studies and further community engagement. All recommendations are contingent on available funding, including from grants, and may be initiated beyond the 10-year window of this Strategy.

### Manulife Sportsplex and Healthy Living Centre (RIM Park)

Opened in 2001, the Manulife Sportsplex and Healthy Living Centre is the City's largest sports and recreation facility. It's home to a large field house that can be divided into three smaller fields, two gymnasiums, three Olympic-sized ice pads, a figure skating ice pad, as well as a banquet hall and several meeting rooms. The Sportsplex is also home to the Waterloo Public Library's Eastside Branch.



#### Key Considerations

- Storage is not well organized and insufficient for groups using the space.
- All ice pads, fields, and courts are at or near capacity during prime hours.
- Meeting rooms are not as well used and lack some features to be truly multi-use.
- There are not enough change rooms and gender-neutral spaces to support the use of the ice pads, especially during tournaments.
- The stage space in the gymnasium is seldom used and usage requires the entire gymnasium.
- The facility is heavily focused on sports and recreation and does not have proper spaces for arts, creative and cultural uses.



#### Recommendations

- 2.1 Increase storage capacity by reconfiguring the current setup and explore options for constructing additional storage spaces.
- 2.2 Explore options for enhancing the use of spaces for arts, creative and cultural uses (silt traps in rooms for visual arts, etc.).
- 2.3 Explore options for providing additional change room space.
- 2.4 Make aesthetic upgrades throughout, including adding public art and improving interior finishes.
- 2.5 Consider options for activating the stage space in the gymnasium.





## Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex and Community Pavilion (WMRC)

Originally built in 1993, the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex and Community Pavilion (WMRC) is a large multi-use recreational facility that features an Olympic-sized ice pad surrounded by a running/walking track. In 2021, a major renovation/expansion was performed to add a community pavilion, a gymnasium space, two fitness/programming rooms, and a secondary walking track (with two lanes).

### ⇒ Key Considerations

- The aquatic centre is at operational capacity. Data and staff feedback highlight that its booking schedule is consistently full, especially during peak hours.
- The aquatic centre requires some accessibility upgrades, particularly a lift and a more accessible ramp. A suitable option has not been identified.
- The indoor running track requires resurfacing. Use of the track can also be disrupted by arena spectators, which risks injury to track users and spectators.



### Recommendations

- 2.6 Invest in enhancing accessibility of the aquatic centre and adding required pool lifts (continue to explore alternative lift options available). Privacy features should be added to improve the experience of user groups who do not feel comfortable in an exposed space with mostly glass walls.
- 2.7 Add public art throughout WMRC.
- 2.8 Resurface the indoor running track at WMRC.
- 2.9 Explore options for activating underused spaces at WMRC, such as the large main corridor and meeting rooms.



## Albert McCormick Community Centre (AMCC)

AMCC has grown since it opened in 1973 as a single ice pad arena. An assembly area with meeting rooms was added in 1982 and an additional rink was built in 1990. AMCC is primarily used for ice sports, but it also has administrative offices, community spaces and storage for organizations. The Waterloo Public Library operates its McCormick Branch out of the East Wing of AMCC.



### Key Considerations

- The two ice pads are well-used. Other spaces have additional capacity.
- There is not enough storage space for users at AMCC.
- Poor insulation leads to excessive condensation around the rinks in the fall and spring. In the summer, it is too hot to use the rink floors for camps and other programming. This is currently being addressed through a federal grant.
- There is no universal washroom at AMCC. This is currently being addressed through a federal grant.
- The facility does not meet the needs of the neighbourhood it is situated in.
- The facility looks dated and feels unwelcoming to some users, including those that live in the surrounding area.
- Sports team offices are underused and appear to mostly be used for long-term storage.
- AMCC is situated next to a hydro corridor and has water infrastructure on site, both of which limit expansion opportunities.



### Recommendations

- 2.10 Modify spaces at AMCC to allow for a wider variety of community uses, including arts, creative and cultural activities.
- 2.11 Expand storage where possible and groups that use spaces at AMCC should be given priority.
- 2.12 Continue to advance in improvements for temperature regulation in the ice pads.
- 2.13 Construct a universal washroom on the main floor of AMCC.
- 2.14 Consider the wants and needs of its surrounding community when redesigning spaces at AMCC.
- 2.15 Make aesthetic improvements such as public art to improve the atmosphere and environment of AMCC.
- 2.16 Consider alternate uses for sports team office space.

## Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre at Bechtel Park

The Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre at Bechtel Park is an indoor fieldhouse with one turf field. It also features some general-use office space that has been used by an affiliated organization and is surrounded by Bechtel Park's many fields and courts.

### ⇒ Key Considerations

- The Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre was built on land that was given to the City for the purposes of becoming a cemetery. As the Parkview Cemetery adjacent to the fieldhouse continues to grow, it will eventually require the fieldhouse to be replaced by burial plots.
- The change rooms and washrooms at the facility are not accessible.
- A vehicle ramp into the fieldhouse causes annual flooding of the turf every spring. This damages the turf and makes the fieldhouse unusable for a couple of weeks.
- The space looks and feels dated. Temperature control, especially heat in the summer, is a concern.
- The turf field is currently being replaced.

### 👍 Recommendations

- 2.17 Consider the anticipated future growth of Parkview Cemetery when assessing any future investment in the Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre.
- 2.18 Explore options for multi-sport use of the field.
- 2.19 Explore modifying the change room layouts and washrooms to make them accessible.
- 2.20 Address the flooding issue caused by the vehicle ramp by leveling the ramp out or improving drainage.



## Rink in the Park

Rink in the Park was built in 1978 and used as a skating arena until it was converted into a curling facility in 1998. Rink in the Park also features change rooms with lockers and showers, referee change rooms, elevated viewing/dining areas, washrooms, a bar/restaurant, and a banquet hall with a full-service kitchen. It is leased to the KW Granite Club.



### Key Considerations

- The facility is aging.
- The primary use of the site is for curling, mainly offered through the K-W Granite Club, though external groups also book the ice sheets. Additionally, other organizations are using meeting and events spaces on a rental basis.
- There are no opportunities to build additional recreation infrastructure without substantial redevelopment.
- The presence of an LRT stop and accessible transit in close proximity to the facility makes this site ideal for a multi-use facility.
- Considerable accessibility upgrades are needed.
- The kitchen does not have proper ventilation for full-scale use.



### Recommendations

- 2.21 Explore options for redeveloping Rink in the Park into a multi-use facility
- 2.22 Limit investments in the current facility while new opportunities are explored.
- 2.23 Consider the prime location when exploring redevelopment and consider ways to create synergy with the adjacent Waterloo Park and LRT stop.
- 2.24 Work with the KW Granite Club on creating opportunities for improved community use of the building in the short and medium term, and communicate with the Club about any plans for future long term changes to Rink in the Park, including supporting options for the KW Granite Club's future.

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## 404 Wing Centre

The 404 Wing Centre was built in 1975 and underwent remodelling that was completed in 1990 when the City took ownership of the building. Since that time, it was used for City-led older adult programming and by some community groups, but these activities have moved to the Community Pavilion at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Centre. 404 Wing Centre is also home to the 404 K-W Wing, which is a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada and leases half of the building from the City.



### Key Considerations

- The building has an irregular shape with ceilings that are too low for some activities.

- The location is not easy to get to by public transit. It is also in an industrial area, which limits foot traffic.
- Expansion opportunities for the building are limited due to the proximity of a hydro corridor.
- The structure is aging and requires modernization.



### Recommendations

- 2.25 Initiate a feasibility study to determine possibilities for and restrictions on redeveloping the site.
- 2.26 Inform the 404 K-W Wing and Old Salts Canoe Club of any major changes or developments to the facility, as they are long-time tenants/users.

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## City of Waterloo Museum

The City of Waterloo Museum occupies a 4,000 square foot space in Conestoga Mall. This space contains offices for Museum staff, exhibition space, and storage space. Additional storage space is rented at an offsite facility. The location has ample parking space, is accessible by transit, and has low upkeep costs.



### Key Considerations

- The Museum is at capacity and cannot expand at its current location. Far more space is needed to provide the desired programs for the community and schools. The 2015 Museum Strategy recommended this action and demand for programming has grown in the years since.
- There are no opportunities to expand the current space.
- In-space washroom has limited accessibility, patrons must travel significant distance for universal washroom access.
- The space has flexibility for design of exhibitions but that has some limitations for accessibility features.
- All of the Museum's activities take place in spaces that are not owned by the City. The Museum is dependent on landlord-tenant relationships.



### Recommendations

- 2.27 Relocate the Museum to a space that can accommodate its current and growing needs, is on a public transit route, and located near other amenities.
- 2.28 Explore options for converting the space at Conestoga Mall to be used for arts, creative or cultural uses.

## Visitor Information Centre

The Visitor Information Centre is a replica of an old train station located in Uptown Waterloo. The site offers tourism information to visitors as well as public washrooms and free Wi-Fi from May to October. The space is used to support events (such as Lumen, Winterloo, and markets) and programming. Arts and creative groups in the area have also booked the space in the past to host small events. External bookings of the space are managed by the City of Waterloo's Arts and Creative Industries team.



### Key Considerations

- The building is too small to host any large indoor activities.
- The basement, which is used for storage, is prone to flooding. It is also has a steep and narrow set of stairs, which prompts safety concerns.
- There are no accessible washrooms in this location.



### Recommendations

- 2.29 Do not significantly invest in the building unless considerable community benefit can be identified.

## Moses Springer Community Centre (MSCC)

MSCC was built in 1968 and underwent a significant renovation in 1996. It primarily operates as a single ice pad arena, but also features an outdoor pool that is open in the summer months. MSCC also has one small community room and administrative offices used by City staff.



### Key Considerations

- MSCC is built on a hill and much of the land around it is a floodplain. These factors limit expansion opportunities for its footprint.
- The arena space has condensation issues during early fall and late spring.
- The outdoor pool has a short operating season.
- Aside from the outdoor pool, the facility is not well used by the surrounding neighbourhood.
- Accessibility upgrades are needed.



### Recommendations

- 2.30 Explore feasibility of adding an amenity with a longer operating season than the current outdoor pool. This could include enclosing the pool for year-round use or adding a second ice rink.



- 2.32 Improve path connecting MSCC to the transit stop on Lincoln Road (install lighting, clear overgrowth, etc.) to enhance connection with surrounding neighbourhood.
- 2.32 Explore opportunities to make the facility more useful to the community.

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## Erbsville Community Centre

The Erbsville Community Centre was built as a school in 1962. It was renovated in 2006 for use by the YMCA, which provided early years services from it. Occasionally, it was used as an election polling station. Erbsville Community Centre is currently used for storage. The structure sits on a sizeable parcel of land and most of it is undeveloped.



### Key Considerations

- The facility is dated, and the layout still resembles that of a small school (child-sized bathrooms, classrooms). These factors limit what the facility could be used for without substantial investment.
- The location is not easily accessible by public transit or active transportation.
- No sidewalks for several kilometres
- Accessibility upgrades would be needed.



### Recommendations

- 2.33 Explore options for redeveloping the Erbsville site. Possibilities include an indoor turf field with adjacent outdoor fields or a gymnasium with adjacent outdoor field.
- 2.34 Work with Grand River Transit to increase access to the site if it is redeveloped.

## EMS Building (Former Fire Station 2 on Westmount Road)

The EMS Building is referred to as such because it is currently used for the Region of Waterloo's EMS operations. Originally constructed in 1968 as a fire station, it is also used for storage by community groups.



### Key Considerations

- The building is located on a floodway designated by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). This complicates expanding the footprint of the building.
- User groups cannot be given direct access to the building for safety reasons to support the EMS use. City staff must be on site to provide access to user groups.
- The building is dated and not easily configurable for public use.



### Recommendations

- 2.35 Phase out community storage at the EMS building due to challenges around access. Assistance in finding new storage space should be offered to the groups currently using the building.
- 2.36 Consider options for reconfiguring the facility if it is no longer needed for EMS or fire purposes.

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## Fire Station 2 (Columbia Street)

Built in 2003, Fire Station 2 is primarily used by Waterloo Fire but also features a board room that affiliated groups can reserve and use. The station has a large basement with a classroom space (for meetings and other small events), an office space, and storage.



### Key Considerations

- Staff must be present to allow access to the building. This can be an issue when administrative staff are not on duty and firefighters are responding to a call.
- The basement space can only be reached by stairs and has limited opportunities for public use, namely meetings and presentations.



### Recommendation

- 2.37 Allow continued community use of the existing spaces at Fire Station.



## Fire Station 4 (University Ave)

Fire Station 4 was built in 2013. It features a small meeting room that can be booked for community use. The building is close to RIM Park.



### Key Considerations

- Staff must be present to allow access to the meeting room.
- No safe street crossing nearby.
- Significant distance from bus stops.



### Recommendation

- 2.38 Continue to allow use of the meeting room while also promoting the availability of rooms at nearby RIM Park.



## SECTION 3: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

This section addresses the current and upcoming needs of Waterloo based on comparative data and standards that guide how to plan for future development. Going forward, this section will be supplemented by community interest, societal trend, and demographic trend data through the upcoming Sports, Recreation and Leisure Strategy Project.

### Standards of Provision

Standards of provision provide a target for how many facilities a City should provide based on population. This measure helps municipalities evaluate access to facilities and identify areas for investment.

As each municipality is diverse, there are no universal targets for standards of provision. Municipalities opt to develop individualized targets based on their unique communities and experiences. The target standards of provision outlined in the analysis below, were developed by considering the following information:

- Average standards of provision across comparable municipalities;
- Waterloo's current standard of provision, and
- Community expectations.

The City's current and future standards of provision were calculated by considering City-owned assets and projected populations included in this report. Future standards of provision were calculated for the year 2041. While this is beyond the 10-year scope of the ICSS, the findings will help staff develop thoughtful recommendations that meet the future needs of the community.

While this measurement shows that the City of Waterloo is meeting, exceeding, and not-meeting certain targets, the recommendations that can be drawn from this measure alone are limited. In addition to standards of provision, other factors including reservation rates, participation trends, user feedback, and staff insight, should be considered when determining whether to invest in additional facilities. When standards of provisions are considered alongside other measures, this tool can be an effective way to help forecast community need.



## GENERAL USE ICE PADS

The City of Waterloo currently has seven general use ice pads located at recreation facilities across the city. A list of facilities and the corresponding number of ice pads is included below.

Facility	Number of Ice Pads
Albert McCormick Community Centre	2
Moses Springer Community Centre	1
RIM Park	3
Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>

These ice pads are designed for a range of sports including hockey, power skating, ringette, speed skating, and sledge hockey. When the ice is removed in the spring and summer seasons, these spaces are conducive to other types of activities including inline skating, lacrosse, bocce, summer camps, events, cultural celebrations, festivals, tradeshow, large meetings, dry-land training, and more.

As shown in the table below, Waterloo is currently exceeding the target standard of provisions. However, with the anticipated population growth, by 2041 the City will no longer meet the target standard of provision. This data implies that although there is not an urgent need to invest in additional ice pads; as the population continues to grow there may be demand for more ice in the future.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>1</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>2</sup>
1 ice pad per 17,348 residents	1 ice pad per 20,295 residents	1 ice pad per 22,286 residents	1 per 18,000 residents

<sup>1</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Burlington, City of Brantford, and the City of Oshawa. Standards of provision were calculated by dividing the total population of a City (2021), by the number of City-owned assets. These values were calculated for each City and averaged.

<sup>2</sup> Published targets in other cities: Brantford 1 per 16,500 residents, Burlington 1 per 16,000 resident, Oakville 1 per 14,000.

## FIGURE SKATING ICE PADS

In addition to general use ice pads, the City of Waterloo also provides an ice pad that is specifically designed for figure skating with shortened boards and special markings. Since this is a highly specialized type of facility, there are no standards of provision to evaluate across comparable municipalities.

As there are no comparable municipalities that provide this specialized facility, it is difficult to develop a target standard of provision. Moving forward, the City should monitor the needs of the Kitchener Waterloo Skating Club (KWSC) to ensure there is sufficient access to space for their members.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities
1 ice pad per 121,436 residents	1 ice pad per 142,063 residents	No accepted standards.

## GYMNASIUMS

The City of Waterloo currently offers two gymnasiums at recreational facilities. The list of facilities are included below. The large gym at RIM Park can be divided into four smaller gyms with retractable walls; interested users can choose to book individual gyms or the entire space. These multi-use spaces support a variety of different recreational activities, including basketball, indoor soccer, pickleball, volleyball, and badminton. Although these spaces are used for sports, they can also be used for special events, tradeshow, and performances.

Facility	Number of Individual Gymnasiums
RIM Park	4
Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex	1
TOTAL	5

Based on the current population, the City of Waterloo is meeting the target standard of provision. However, with the forecasted population growth, by 2041 the City will no longer meet the standard of provision. This information implies that the City of Waterloo should explore investing in additional gymnasium space in the future. This information should be referenced against other factors including utilization rates, participation trends, resident feedback, and staff insight, to fully evaluate if additional gymnasiums are needed. Current booking rates suggest that additional gymnasiums are needed.



2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>3</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>4</sup>
1 individual gymnasium per 24,287 residents	1 individual gymnasium per 28,413 residents	1 individual gymnasium per 24,917 residents	1 individual gymnasium per 25,000 residents

## INDOOR SWIMMING POOL

The City of Waterloo currently has one large indoor swimming complex located at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex (WMRC). This facility features a shallow splash area, a space for diving, a 25M lane pool, a warm pool, and a water slide. This large complex can be booked by individual area or reserved in entirety.

Based on standards of provision, shown in the table below, the City of Waterloo is not providing an adequate number of indoor swimming pools. This data implies that the City of Waterloo should explore investing in an additional indoor aquatic complex soon.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>5</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>6</sup>
1 indoor pool per 121,436 residents	1 indoor pool per 142,063 residents	1 indoor pool per 66,767 <sup>7</sup> residents	1 indoor pool per 65,000 residents

Prior to investing in a new indoor swimming pool, this finding should be evaluated against other factors including utilization rates, participation trends, user feedback, and staff insight, to fully determine if an additional facility is necessary. Other pools offered across the Region and pools provided by other organizations (for example post-secondary institutions and the YMCA) should be considered in the decision-making process.

<sup>3</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Burlington, City of Brantford, and the City of Oshawa.

<sup>4</sup> Published targets in other cities: Brantford 1 per 20,000-50,000, Oakville 1 per 50,000, Halton Hills 1 per 50,000.

<sup>5</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Burlington, City of Brantford, and the City of Oshawa.

<sup>6</sup> Published targets in other cities: Brampton 1 per 60,000, Brantford 1 per 50,000 residents, Oakville 1 per 32,000.

<sup>7</sup> Some indoor swimming pools are full complexes like the facility offered in Waterloo, whereas others are lane pools. This should be considered when reviewing this figure.



## INDOOR TRACKS

The City of Waterloo currently has two indoor tracks that can be used for running and walking. Both facilities are located at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex (WMRC). One track features six-lanes and surrounds the ice pad at the facility; this space is commonly used for running, jogging, and walking. The second track has two lanes and borders fitness studios; this smaller facility is conducive for walking activities. Due to the size and use restrictions of the second track, it is recorded as half a track for the purpose of this calculation (calculation based on the City of Waterloo providing 1.5 tracks).

Based on comparable municipalities and the City of Waterloo's current standard of provision, the target of one track per 100,000 residents was used for the purpose of this analysis. Based on the current and projected population, the City will continue exceeding the target standard of provision. Despite meeting the standard of provision, the City of Waterloo should continue to evaluate community demand for track space and assess how the new two-lane track is being used. As tracks are particularly valuable when co-located with other facilities, such as ice pads and gymnasiums, as they can be designed around the perimeters, future developments of these facilities should consider the impacts of adding a track surrounding the spaces.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>8</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>9</sup>
1 track per 80,957 residents	1 track per 94,709 residents	1 track per 149,755 residents	1 track per 100,000 residents

<sup>8</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Brantford, and the City of Oshawa.

<sup>9</sup> No generally accepted standards.

## INDOOR TURF FIELDS

The City of Waterloo currently provides two large indoor turf fields at RIM Park and the Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre at Bechtel Park. Both indoor fields can be divided into three smaller fields with retractable netting.

Facility	Number of Individual Fields
Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre	3
RIM Park	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>

When evaluating the City of Waterloo against comparable municipalities, the City is currently exceeding standards of provision. Even with the population growth anticipated by 2041, the City will continue meeting the standards of provision. This finding implies that the City does not need to invest in additional turf fields in the short or long term. However, it is recommended that the City maintain the existing stock of indoor turf-fields to ensure they remain in safe and working condition; this may involve replacing the turf and making structural improvements at the Manulife Soccer and Sports Centre at Bechtel Park. Usage data suggest more indoor turf fields are needed.

In many communities, indoor turf facilities are operated in partnership with local soccer clubs or private organizations to reduce the municipality’s responsibility regarding construction and/or operating costs and to maximize usage. There may also be interest from the private sector and/or the education sector to consider a partnership of some form.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>10</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>11</sup>
1 indoor field per 121,436 residents	1 field per 23,478 residents	1 field per 104,690 residents	1 per 20,000 residents

<sup>10</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, and the City of Oshawa.

<sup>11</sup> No generally accepted standard across municipalities.

## DEDICATED OLDER ADULT SPACE

The City of Waterloo currently offers dedicated older adult space at the WMRC. The space for older adult programming, the Community Pavilion, includes several spaces such as general programming rooms, fitness studios, a games rooms, lounge areas, staff offices, and a room used for an adult day program and other purposes lunchroom. This new space was completed and opened for use in early 2022.

Across comparable municipalities, the City of Waterloo is exceeding the standard of provision for older adult centres. This finding implies that the City should not add an additional older adult centre soon. As the City's older adult population continues to grow, the City should continue to evaluate the standard of provision and assess community need.

2021	2041	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>12</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>13</sup>
1 space per 32,945 <sup>14</sup> residents over age 55	1 space per 38,541 <sup>15</sup> residents over age 55	1 space per 43,894 residents over age 55	1 space per 40,000 residents over age 55

## DEDICATED ARTS AND CREATIVE FACILITY

Several municipalities own and operate community centres that are specifically designed to support art programming and special events. These spaces are different from recreational facilities and often have features like studio space, exhibition/gallery areas, and theatres.

2021	Standard of Provision across Comparable Municipalities <sup>16</sup>	Target Standard of Provision <sup>17</sup>
n/a	1 space per 141,610 residents	1 per 140,000 residents

<sup>12</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge, City of Guelph, City of Burlington, and the City of Brantford.

<sup>13</sup> No generally accepted standard across municipalities.

<sup>14</sup> Based on data from the 2021 Census

<sup>15</sup> Population calculated using a moderate four percent growth rate per five year period.

<sup>16</sup> Comparable municipalities include the City of Cambridge and the City of Guelph.

<sup>17</sup> No generally accepted standards.

While the City of Waterloo currently owns several art and creative-based spaces (The Button Factory and Clay and Glass Gallery), the City does not have a designated arts centre that they operate (provide programming and manage community rentals). Some comparable municipalities, like the Cities of Guelph and Cambridge, provide one of these spaces for their entire population. Based on this, the City of Waterloo could consider investing in community spaces that focus on arts and creative industries.

Extensive consultation with arts and creative user groups would be required to ensure the new space meets the needs of the community.



### **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Prioritize the construction or facilitate the access to a new indoor pool.
- 3.2 Prioritize the construction or facilitate the access to at least one ice pad.
- 3.3 Prioritize the construction or facilitate the access to at least one gymnasium.
- 3.4 Consult with sport and recreation groups and surrounding communities to ensure the parameters for new amenity needs are met.
- 3.5 Prioritize opportunities for provision of space for arts and creative industries.
- 3.6 Consult with arts and creative industries groups and surrounding communities to ensure space needs are met.

## **CO-LOCATION AND ITS BENEFITS**

In the context of indoor community spaces, co-location involves locating two or more major amenities in one facility. Co-locating amenities can reduce the overall footprint of facilities in cities and offer a more efficient alternative to single-use facilities.

Co-locating ice pads allows for shared use of equipment, including mechanical equipment. Pairing one or more ice pads with amenities that require heating, like a gymnasium or pool, can create synergies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Keeping ice pads frozen involves removing heat from an arena. Indoor pools need to be kept warm through heating. Some systems can leverage the warm air being removed from a co-located ice pad to heat a pool.



### **Recommendation**

- 3.7 Co-locate amenities wherever possible to maximize efficiency and keep the environmental footprint of facilities as low as possible.

## LOCATION AND LAND

Some cities use a “community centre” approach to indoor community spaces, with facilities spread out equally across the municipality. Waterloo’s model features larger facilities that draw users from across the City. When exploring new builds, the City should prioritize locating sites away from current facilities but easily reached by public transportation. Waterloo’s west side does not have a major recreation facility and should particularly be examined for land acquisition opportunities.

However, the City’s rapid expansion has made vacant land scarce. If suitable land becomes available elsewhere in Waterloo, it should be considered for acquisition even if it will not address the service gap on the west side. Opportunities for land acquisition might have to be acted on years in advance of planned construction. In that case, vacant land could be used as a temporary park until the City is ready to move forward with building a facility.



### Recommendations

- 3.8 Seek out land for purchase to build community centres with amenities mentioned in recommendations 3.1-3.4.
- 3.9 Set aside funding for future land acquisitions.
- 3.10 Explore options to provide temporary public spaces (i.e. parks) if construction will not begin for several years.

## CONSIDER COMMUNITIES

The standards of provision should inform the major amenities to be constructed, but facilities should be designed with the surrounding neighbourhood in mind. These features should complement the “anchor amenities” such as rinks or pools and can include community rooms, small gymnasiums, lounge space or culture-specific amenities. Adequate staffing levels are necessary to provide such spaces.



### Recommendation

- 3.11 Conduct special engagement sessions with surrounding neighbourhoods to determine their needs and desired features in new builds.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND PLANNING

Partnering with other institutions such as school boards, post-secondary institutions, and local industries, can help address space issues. Any investment in a shared public space by the City should see a fair return for community use. Spaces should be accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to diverse community groups, and fees should be similar to those charged by the City. Spaces should be located near public transit.



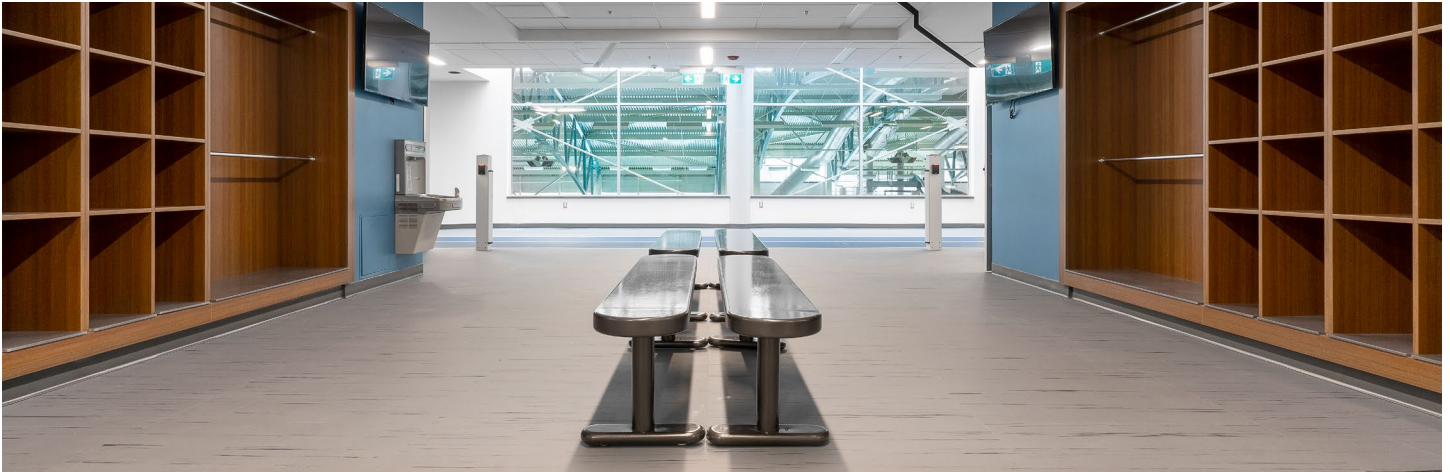
### Recommendation

- 3.12 Partnership investments should yield positive opportunities for community use. Partnerships should be especially leveraged to meet growing demands for activities that cannot be enjoyed at existing city facilities.





# MOVING TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

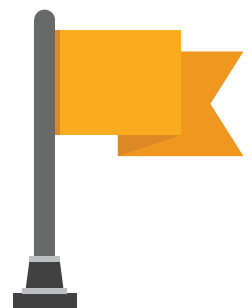


The recommendations made in this Strategy require differing levels of investment in terms of both time and money. The implementation timeline considers the priority of a recommendation based on community need but also recognizes that projections must be realistic and reflect the complexity of some projects. For example, new builds take far longer to complete than policy updates or most renovations. Given the uncertainty surrounding building extensions and new builds (structural feasibility, land availability, funding availability, etc.), this rollout of implementation should be considered fluid and flexible. As Waterloo continues to grow, needs will expand with this growth, creating a need for action and implementation now to avoid falling behind with budget planning and community access.

## POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made in Section One do not include building infrastructure. As such, they do not require significant resources to implement and can be done by City staff with community and user group engagement. Therefore, it is suggested that they form the starting point for the implementation of the ICSS.

Policy staff should lead this implementation, working closely with interested and affected areas across City government. Depending on the changes, engagement with interested and relevant parties may be required.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACILITIES

These recommendations are more complex and require a prudent approach to implementation. Public engagement will be required for each project and should go beyond online surveys (focus groups, town halls, etc.).

It might be useful to “map out” the possibilities of each facility by initiating feasibility studies for each far in advance of proceeding with any projects. These studies could determine the maximum footprint of the buildings and identify any barriers to expansion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE BUILDS

Before new builds can occur, land must be found that is suitable for development. The City should continue to monitor opportunities for acquisition and be prepared to purchase suitable plots should they become available.

## SPORT, RECREATION AND LEISURE STRATEGY

This strategy will be integrated into a broader Sport, Recreation and Leisure Strategy. The Sport, Recreation and Leisure Strategy will replace 2008’s Community, Culture and Recreation Services Plan and include a holistic consideration of community recreation, such as City-run programming, community development approaches, and the provision of outdoor field space.





# INDOOR COMMUNITY SPACE STRATEGY

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