



Township of Woolwich Committee of the Whole Agenda

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Council Chambers - Hybrid with YouTube Livestream

24 Church Street West, Elmira ON, N3B 2Z6

Chair: Councillor Nathan Cadeau

Pages

1. **Public Resolution to Move into Closed Session - (6:00 P.M.)**

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich convenes in closed session on Tuesday, November 5, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in accordance with section 239 (2) and (3.1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, for the purposes of considering the following:

- a. Personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees (Heritage Committee Appointment);
- b. A proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board (Property Matter);
- c. For the purpose of educating or training the members (Event Education Matter); and
- d. Labour relations or employee negotiations (Negotiation Matter).

2. **Public Resolution to Reconvene in Open Session (7:00 P.M.)**

That Council reconvenes in open session.

3. **Land Acknowledgement**

4. **Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest**

5. **Items to Come Forward from Closed Session**

6. **Public Meetings**

7. Presentations

7.1 Housing Needs Assessment Presentation

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Presenter: Tim Welch Consulting

7.1.1 DS34-2024: Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report

16

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report DS 34-2024 respecting Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report, receive the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment and direct staff to incorporate the recommendations into future development initiatives.

8. Delegations

Instructions for Delegations

1. You have a maximum of 7 minutes to speak unless Council or the Clerk has set a different time. There will be a timer on the screen and you will hear a warning when you have 1 minute and when your time is up.
2. Once you are finished, please wait for questions of clarification from Council. When there are no more questions for you, virtual delegates please turn your microphone and camera off again and in-person delegates may return to their seat. You are welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting or leave when you want.
3. Council discussion and debate will start when all questions of clarification have finished.

8.1 Request for Temporary Change of Land Use to Add Soccer Fields (2388 Shantz Stn. Road)

8.1.1 Delegate: Dr. Jasdeep Rai

9. Unfinished Business

10. Consent Items

Items listed under the Consent Agenda are considered routine, and are enacted in one motion in order to expedite the meeting. However, any Council member may request one or more items to be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate discussion and/or action.

Resolution:

That the following consent items be received for information:

10.1 Items for Approval

10.2 Items for Information and Public Notices

10.2.1 Municipal Information for Liquor Sales Licenses - Rural Roots 85

11. Items Pulled From the Information Package

12. Staff Reports and Memos

12.1 R07-2024: Parks and Recreation Master Plan 87

Attachments to be added to Revised Agenda

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report R07-2024 respecting the 2024 Parks and Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

1. Approve the 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and endorse the strategic directions set out in the plan (Attachment 1);
2. Approve in principle, the need for a community park and multi-use recreation facility in Breslau and to report back to Council with a recommended site by 2028;
3. Approve in principle, the need for additional parkland and outdoor amenities in Elmira and direct staff to develop a parkland acquisition strategy by 2028;
4. Adopt the new Parks Classification system into the Township Official Plan and the Landscape and Design Guidelines; and
5. Direct staff to include the necessary policies in the Township's Official Plan and to subsequently prepare a Parkland Dedication By-law for Council's consideration in 2025 to permit the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu as a condition of development or re-development as well as using the alternative requirements, as provided for in section 42 of the Planning Act

13. Other Business

13.1 Council Reports/Updates

13.2 Outstanding Activity List as of Thursday, October 31, 2024

195

14. Notice of Motion

15. Adjournment

Resolution

That the meeting adjourns.

All decisions made at a Committee of the Whole Meeting are subject to ratification at the following Council Meeting.

This meeting is being live streamed to the Woolwich Township YouTube account and a recording will be published following the meeting. Live meetings will appear on the home page once the live stream has started which may be shortly after the scheduled start time. If you don't see a live video, please be patient and try reloading the page.

To submit comments or participate in the meeting or if you have any questions about the content or outcome of this meeting, please contact the Council and Committee Support Specialist at 519-669-6004 or councilmeetings@woolwich.ca

Should you require an alternative format of any documents within this agenda package, please contact the Council and Committee Support Specialist at 519-669-6004 or councilmeetings@woolwich.ca



Township of Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment

Committee of the Whole Meeting
November 5, 2024

TWC
tim welch
consulting inc



Agenda

1. Project Overview
2. Housing Needs Assessment Findings
3. Action Plan Recommendations
4. Questions

Phases and Timelines



The Housing Continuum



Housing Needs Assessment Findings

Population & Housing Growth Forecast

- The Township has seen an 8.0% increase of population over the last census period
- It is growing at a higher rate than the province (5.8%), but not as high as Waterloo Region as a whole (9.9%)
- The population is expected to grow to 28,500 residents by mid 2024 and 36,433 residents by the year 2034
- The employment growth is expected to remain steady through to 2034
- As of the 2021 Census, over 23% of the population of the Township of Woolwich is aged 60 or above
- This points to a need for seniors housing with accessible design considerations as this population continues to age and mirrors a need throughout much of the province of Ontario
- The Township also has a high population of children, with 27.2% of people under the age of 20
- This reflects the larger number of families in the community, as well as larger family sizes, and affects Woolwich's housing needs, specifically unit sizes and types of dwellings

Income & Housing Tenure

- Woolwich has a noticeably higher share of high-income households as compared to the province of Ontario average
- 49% of households earning \$100,000 or more per year after tax (36.5% in Ontario)
- 13% of households earning less than \$40,000 per year after tax (19.1% in Ontario)
- As of the date of data collection for the 2021 Census, there were a collective 998 purpose-built rental units in the Township of Woolwich and Township of North Dumfries (reported together by CMHC)
- The 1,505 renter households in Woolwich by itself, identified through Census data, suggests that many renter households live in secondary rental units (e.g., rented ownership households, duplex apartments, accessory apartments, or non-registered rental spaces)
- The disparity between renter households and purpose-built rental units indicates the importance of the Township of Woolwich encouraging the development of rental units
- Current and past vacancy rates in the Township of Woolwich are significantly lower than that, estimated to be at around 0.7% across all unit types in 2023. Vacancy rates below 3 can drive up rents as tenants compete for fewer units.

Affordability Challenges

- Housing costs (ownership and rental) are deeply unaffordable for those making minimum wage or in receipt of Ontario Works or ODSP
- There is significant a disparity between renter households and purpose-built rental units; Woolwich may need to continue to add new purpose-built rental units in the future
- Of 9,005 households, 540 were found to be in core housing need (6%) as of 2021 (12.1% in Ontario)
- 13.7% of households in Woolwich were found to be living in unaffordable dwellings, with 18.4% living in unaffordable, unsuitable, or inadequate housing

Acute Needs

There is an **acute need** for:

- Attainable ownership housing, including modest units within reach of first-time home buyers and those looking to downsize.
- Rental housing at various price points, including deeply affordable RGI units.
- Fully accessible 1 and 2-bedroom rental units, as well as larger 3-bedroom+ rental units to accommodate large families and multigenerational households.
- Attainable row housing, ground level units in stacked towns and medium to higher density apartments with accessibility features targeting older adults.
- Infill developments and subdivisions with increased housing density and a variety of unit types (e.g., stacked towns, duplexes, and ARUs).

Housing Action - Strategic Priority

Areas Identified

Nine recommendations across four strategic priorities have been identified that support the outcome of increasing the supply of affordable and attainable housing:

- 1. Advocacy, Awareness & Outreach**
- 2. Policy & Zoning**
- 3. Innovation**
- 4. Monitoring & Process Improvements**

Action Plan Recommendations

Initiative	Description	Comments
Leverage the Development Liaison Committee to Gather Feedback & Share Resources	Local developers willing to meet with municipal staff and “talk through” some proformas to determine types and combinations of units to be incorporated into new subdivisions or infill projects	This could be added to the workplan and agendas for the Development Liaison Committee, and sample subdivision layouts developed with a diversity of building typologies that are workable for local developers.
Host a System Integration Summit	Connect private, non-profit and gov’t organizations with the aim of developing inter-sectoral partnerships that would enable local service agencies, non-profits and developers to leverage existing assets to build more housing	Stakeholder engagement highlighted a need for increased cross sectoral engagement and partnerships. Leveraging local assets and knowledge pertaining to supportive housing and support services could better serve populations with special needs and promote housing stability and create additional residential units within the Township.

Action Plan Recommendations

Initiative	Description	Comments
Greater Collaboration with Region of Waterloo	Enhance ongoing collaboration with the Region and engage in joint advocacy at the Provincial and Federal levels.	No single level of government can solve the housing supply challenges alone. Enhance continuous and ongoing collaboration with the Region to ensure alignment and efficiency in addressing housing and homelessness issues. Joint advocacy for stronger rent control measures at the provincial level could support legislative changes that would have a positive impact on renters within the Township.
Development of a Surplus Lands Disposal Policy or Procedure	The Township can develop a Surplus Lands Disposal policy or procedure for adoption by Council and consider the use of municipally owned sites for high-impact community projects.	Township staff should maintain a short-list of high-impact community projects that would address gaps identified in the Housing Needs Assessment. These could include, but are not limited to, below market rate seniors' housing, deeply affordable housing and RGI units, modest accessible units, and larger family-sized rental units and attainable ownership units.

Action Plan Recommendations

Initiative	Description	Comments
Enact Municipal Capital Facilities By-Law	By-law allows creation of an agreement to create relationships with external parties to deliver services on behalf of the municipality.	Assistance for municipal capital facilities from a municipality can include: granting or lending money; transferring or leasing property; guaranteed borrowing; and property tax exemptions or reductions
CIP Enhancements for Affordable Housing	Community Improvement Plan (CIPs) can be used as a tool to offer incentives that encourage development of affordable housing, renovations and conversions of properties from non-residential to residential.	The project area should align with the new settlement area boundaries in their entirety, ensuring that all developers have access to the program and that affordable housing is not concentrated in certain areas within the villages.

Action Plan Recommendations:

Initiative	Description	Comments
Promote and Accept a Range of Housing Models	Promote and allow more housing types that serve vulnerable populations to ensure affordable options are available to all in the community.	Encouraging alternative forms of housing construction such as manufactured housing, prefabricated housing, and tiny homes can expand housing options available in the community.
E-Permitting System and Integrated Software for Housing Development	The implementation of an E-permitting system through an online portal for development applications, permit issuance and fee payments to increase staff capacity as required.	System enhancements may increase capacity for Township staff to manage the volume of planning applications in a timely fashion and increase ease of circulation to commenting agencies.
Develop Tracking Tools to Monitor Progress	Develop tools for evaluation of the housing goals and objectives and inform strategic priorities for the Township of Woolwich.	Staff will be able to use these tools to assess progress and inform actions to ensure return on investments.

Thank You!

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Development Services Staff Report

Report Number:	DS34-2024
Report Title:	Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report
Author:	Jonathan Delli Colli, Junior Planner - Housing
Meeting Type:	Committee of the Whole Meeting
Meeting Date:	November 5, 2024
eDocs or File ID:	DM 128281 and 128282
Consent Item:	No
Final Version:	Yes
Reviewed By:	Deanne Friess, Director of Development Services
Final Review:	Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report DS34-2024 respecting Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report, receive the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment and direct staff to incorporate the recommendations into future development initiatives.

Background:

In 2023, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation introduced a funding program for municipalities across Canada, known as the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). This program aims to support efforts that expand housing availability and foster the creation of affordable, diverse, and inclusive communities while prioritizing low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

In February 2024, we were informed by CMHC that our funding request was approved for a total of \$6,724,742.20, allocated over the next three years.

The Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken to provide a comprehensive understanding of the housing challenges and opportunities within the Township. Tim Welch Consulting (TWC) was retained to lead this initiative, bringing expertise in data collection, analysis, and stakeholder engagement. This assessment provides key insights into housing demand, affordability, and future growth, offering a roadmap to address these critical issues. As we move forward with other initiatives, the findings from the Housing Needs Assessment will be key in ensuring that a range and mix of housing is available, to help create inclusive, resilient communities.

Comments:

The Housing Needs Assessment underscores the urgent need to diversify the housing stock due to population growth, demographic shifts, and rising costs. The Township's housing market is under pressure, with limited types of housing causing affordability issues, especially for renters and seniors. This assessment seeks to align future growth with the needs of current and future residents by expanding the housing continuum. The following are the recommendations from the report.

1. Utilize the development liaison committee to gather feedback and share housing resources, fostering collaboration with developers.
2. Host a “Meeting of the Minds” summit, facilitating cross-sectoral engagement for supportive housing and development.
3. Collaboration with the Region of Waterloo to address housing needs in partnership.
4. Develop a surplus lands disposal policy, optimizing land for residential development.
5. Adopt a municipal capital facilities by-law to encourage investment in housing.
6. Create a community improvement plan focused on affordable housing and brownfield redevelopment.
7. Promote and accept a range of housing models, encouraging diversity in housing options.
8. Implement an e-permitting system, streamlining building permit and planning application processes.
9. Develop tracking tools to monitor housing goals and progress, ensuring a return on investment and continued reporting

Interdepartmental Impacts:

While not substantial, departments will need to allocate resources as needed to implement the report's recommendations.

Financial Impacts:

There are no financial impacts at this time related to the receiving of the recommendations. However, some of the proposed recommendations may have financial implications if staff choose to proceed with specific initiatives. If these initiatives move forward, a detailed financial assessment will be conducted, and the associated costs will be presented to Council for consideration and approval.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

The Housing Needs Assessment is a foundational step toward achieving the Township's Strategic Plan goals by addressing key community priorities:

- Supports Economic Sustainability: By identifying current and future housing needs, the assessment ensures that housing supply aligns with community growth and

economic development, making Woolwich an attractive place for businesses and workforce retention.

- **Enhances Community Well-being:** The assessment promotes diverse housing options, including affordable and rental housing, which improves quality of life for residents across various income levels and life stages.
- **Fosters Community Engagement:** Public input and stakeholder consultations during the assessment reflect the Township's commitment to transparent and responsive leadership, ensuring that housing strategies meet the evolving needs of the community.
- **Promotes Inclusivity and Resilience:** The focus on housing accessibility, affordability, and sustainability helps build a resilient and inclusive community that is prepared to adapt to changing demographic and housing market demands.

Conclusion:

The Housing Needs Assessment provides a detailed analysis of current and future housing needs in Woolwich Township, identifying key gaps and opportunities to guide planning and policy decisions. It aligns with the Township's strategic goals of promoting economic sustainability, enhancing community well-being, and fostering inclusivity. It is recommended that Council receive and endorse the Housing Needs Assessment, enabling the Township to develop policies that engage community housing developers, support diverse and affordable housing, and address the evolving needs of residents, ensuring a resilient and inclusive community.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment 2024



Township of Woolwich

Housing Needs Assessment

September 2024

Prepared by



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Township of Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

The Township of Woolwich, situated north-east of Kitchener-Waterloo within the Region of Waterloo, Ontario, has been experiencing significant population growth over the past several decades. This has resulted in substantial pressure on the local housing market.

Demographic shifts, increased housing costs, and the availability of a mostly limited type of housing are all important considerations affecting the Township of Woolwich's housing situation.

The Township is at a critical juncture for considering how to broaden the types of housing stock along the housing continuum, evaluating their role in addressing the significant housing needs, and planning for future growth in a way that will best meet the needs of all its current and future residents.

This Housing Needs Assessment was prepared for the Township of Woolwich by Tim Welch Consulting Inc. in the summer of 2024 and provides a comprehensive analysis of the current and future housing requirements of the Township. The detailed demographic data and housing metrics shared within are intended to guide public sector decision-making in land use planning, building, and administrative initiatives.

The objectives of the Housing Needs Assessment were to:

- Examine the needs across the entire housing continuum;
- Identify gaps in the provision of housing; and
- Suggest some municipal strategies to help meet current and future needs.

The findings within this Housing Needs Assessment are aimed at guiding future policy and development decisions to address the housing challenges in the Township of Woolwich. They have also informed several recommendations for action outlined in Section 6 of this same report that the Township may wish to consider as a means of addressing existing needs and gaps in housing stock across the housing continuum.

Overall, the report highlights the importance of collaboration between local governments, developers, service agencies, and residents to create a balanced and inclusive community with a complete housing continuum that meets the needs of current and future residents of the Township of Woolwich.

1. Background

This Township of Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment was prepared in the summer of 2024. It provides background housing and demographic data intended to inform public sector decision making around land use planning, building, and other administrative initiatives with the broader goal of enhancing the Township's housing stock over the coming years to ensure it meets the needs of current and future residents. It was compiled using 2021 Census data, CMHC rental market statistics, Building Department data, and figures from the 2024 Development Charges Background Study of the Township of Woolwich, completed by Watson & Associates Economics Ltd. Extensive community outreach was also undertaken as part of this report, the findings of which are summarized in **Appendix A “What We Heard” Community Engagement Report**.

The Township of Woolwich is a growing and prosperous area municipality within the Region of Waterloo. The primary settlement areas are the towns of Elmira, Breslau, and St. Jacobs, with smaller rural villages of Conestogo, Heidelberg, Maryhill, North Woolwich, Bloomingdale, Weissenburg, West Montrose, Floradale, Winterbourne, and Zuber Corners, situated throughout the Township. The Region of Waterloo, as the upper tier municipality, functions as the Service Manager for the Township of Woolwich, providing coordinated access to social housing, programs and services across the region.

The Township of Woolwich has experienced consistent growth over the past two decades, driven in large part by its immediate proximity to the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. As of the 2021 Census, Woolwich had a population of 26,999 living in 9,359 of its 9,556 total private dwellings, a change of 8.0% from its 2016 population of 25,006. Despite its population growth and corresponding increases in housing stock, it is not exempt from the affordability challenges being experienced across the province. Residents are feeling the effects of the current housing pressures, especially those from more vulnerable populations. The rural nature of most of the Township also adds an additional challenge to facilitating access to housing options.

The Township of Woolwich was a recipient of 2023 Federal Housing Accelerator Fund dollars. The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) is a program under the National Housing Strategy which aims to support municipalities in removing barriers to housing development and support local initiatives to build more homes, faster. This Housing Needs Assessment, by identifying gaps in existing housing stock and highlighting emergent and future needs, endeavours to provide the data needed for well-informed land use planning, building, and other administrative initiatives that remove barriers to

development and ensure the appropriate forms of housing are constructed to meet local need. Section 6 of this same report outlines several actions that the Township may wish to consider undertaking to streamline new residential development and provide complementary community services, ensuring that the housing continuum serves the needs of Woolwich residents and that everyone is able to find a home to call their own.

1.1 Defining Affordable Housing

In undertaking this Housing Needs Assessment, the Township of Woolwich is assessing the entirety of its housing stock to determine existing gaps, not limited to affordable or attainable housing. That said, in today's market, it is helpful to consider definitions of affordability to provide clarity around the range of housing types that exist in any given community and what common definitions utilized throughout this report and in the field of housing in general really mean.

Definitions around affordability tend to fall into one of two categories: income-based or market-based. Income-based definitions of housing affordability look to household income; housing is considered affordable if it costs less than a certain percentage of annual household income. In Canada, this benchmark is typically 30% of a household's after-tax income. Market-based definitions define affordability in relation to average or median rents and sale prices in a market area. Housing at or below average or median market rents or sale prices is considered affordable. Income or market-based definitions of affordability are selected for different policies or programs depending on its objective, target audience, and the impact it is intended to have.

Not all affordable housing is social and/or subsidized. There is a need for housing that is within reach for persons working at modest wages. This may also be referred to as "workforce housing" or "attainable housing".

1.2 The Housing Continuum

The Housing Continuum (see Figure 1 below) is both a model that describes the range of housing options based on income and the form of housing, from homelessness to market housing, as well as a tool to evaluate the state of housing in a community. Individuals may move along the continuum at different points in their lives based on life circumstances. This is not necessarily a linear path. Ideally, every community will have housing options available at all points on the continuum to meet the varying needs of its current and future residents. In instances where current housing stock does not provide appropriate housing options, the housing continuum can be used to identify where the gaps in supply exist.

Things that may influence the ability of a municipality to provide housing along the continuum include population, demand, available funding, zoning, community support and neighbourhood opposition.

Figure 1: The Housing Continuum



Source: CMHC

1.3 The Wheelhouse Model

Developed by the City of Kelowna, the Wheelhouse model (Figure 2) is an alternative way of looking at housing options where housing needs are organized circularly. While the housing continuum suggests a linear progression towards market homeownership, the Wheelhouse recognizes that housing needs can move in any direction depending on one’s life circumstances. It also recognizes that ownership may not be an end goal nor achievable for certain individuals or households, and the importance of a variety of housing options for a diverse and inclusive housing system.

Figure 2: The Wheelhouse Model



Source: City of Kelowna

Affordability of housing should not come as a sacrifice to two other important functions of housing: 1) Appropriateness and 2) Safety. Appropriateness of housing is determined by having enough bedrooms for everyone residing in a home per the National Occupancy Standard¹. Safe housing is housing that does not require major renovations or repairs and meets local, provincial, and federal building and public health codes. In the demographic analysis that follows for the Township of Woolwich, affordability data has been compiled primarily by economic family structure. In statistics, a household and an economic family are distinct concepts that are used to measure and analyze different aspects of a population's structure and economic well-being.

A household refers to a group of people who live together in the same dwelling and share common living arrangements. A household can consist of one person living alone, a family group, or unrelated individuals living together. It is a broader concept that encompasses both family and non-family living arrangements. In household statistics, individuals are grouped based on their residence and living arrangements.

In contrast, an economic family, also known as a family unit, is a more specific concept that focuses on the economic interdependence of individuals living together. An economic family consists of a group of two or more individuals who live in the same household and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law partnership, or adoption. It includes both nuclear families (parents and their children) and extended or multi-generational families (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.).

The main difference between a household and an economic family is that a household represents a broader group of people living together, regardless of their relationship or economic interdependence, while an economic family specifically focuses on related individuals living together and sharing economic resources.

¹ The National Occupancy Standard was created in the mid-1980s by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. It provides a common reference point for “suitable” housing, meaning how many people a given dwelling unit might accommodate given the number of bedrooms. The National Occupancy Standard is **not** a rule, regulation, or guideline for determining if a given dwelling unit can be rented to or occupied by a given household but rather, is used to determine housing needs and conditions at the community, regional and national levels. CMHC, “National Occupancy Standard.” *CMHC SCHL*, 19 July 2022.

2. Demographic Analysis

2.1 Population

The Township of Woolwich has seen an 8.0% increase in population over the last five-year census period. The population in 2016 was 25,006 and by 2021 it had reached 26,999. The Township of Woolwich is growing at a noticeably higher rate than the province (5.8%), but not as high as Waterloo Region as a whole (9.7%) over the last five-year census period. The population increase in Woolwich between 2011 and 2016 was also 8.0%, showing a steady rate of growth in the municipality, which will have implications for the Township's current and future housing needs.

Table 1: Reported Census Population 2016 – 2021

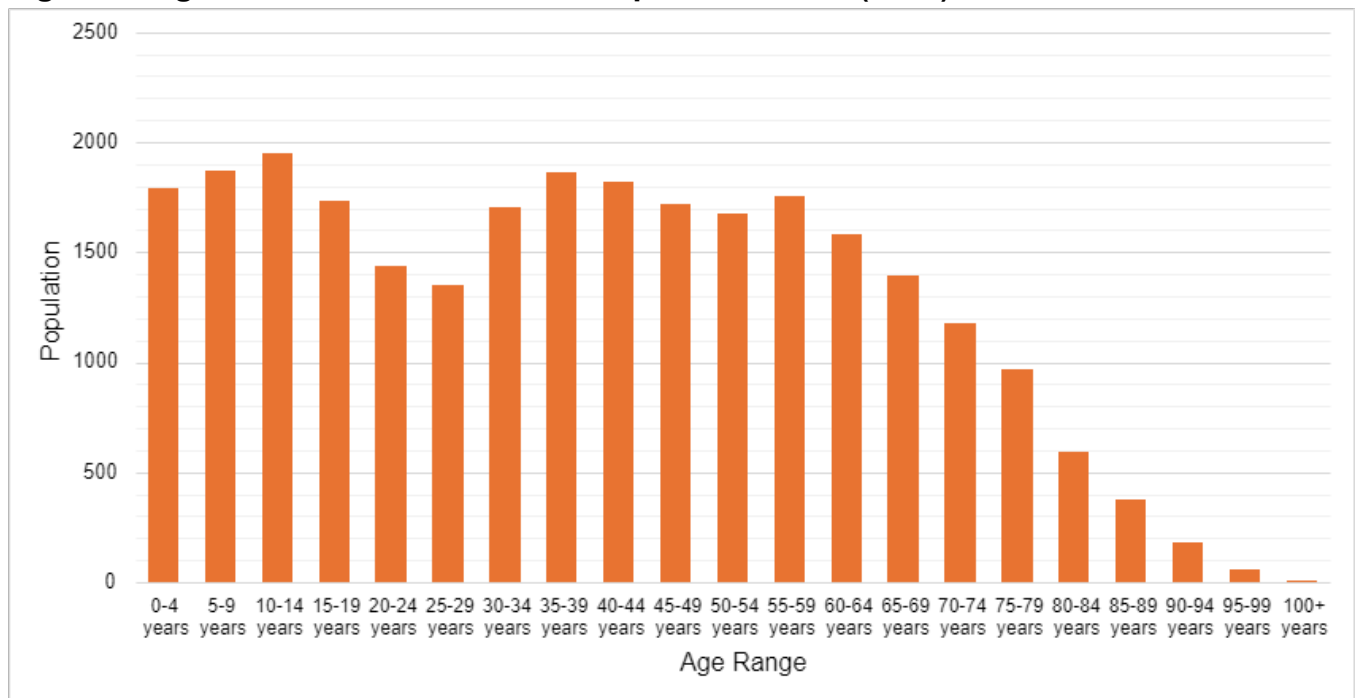
Reporting Year	2011	2016	2021
Population	23,145	25,006	26,999
Percent change over past 5 years	n/a	8.0%	8.0%

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

The Township of Woolwich has a slightly younger age profile when compared to the provincial average, with 17.6% of the population over the age of 65, compared to 18.5% for all of Ontario. Woolwich's median age is 40, which is also lower than the provincial median average of 42 years of age.

As of the 2021 Census, as illustrated in Figure 3, over 23% of the population of the Township of Woolwich is aged 60 or above. This fast-growing demographic group points to a need for seniors housing with accessible design considerations as this population continues to age. This mirrors a need throughout much of the province of Ontario. However, what is unique for the Township of Woolwich, is that it also has a high population of children with 27.2% of people under the age of 20. The high number of children reflects the larger number of families in the community, as well as larger family sizes. This unique demographic makeup affects Woolwich's housing needs, specifically unit sizes and types of dwellings.

Figure 3: Age Distribution in the Township of Woolwich (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Per the 2024 Development Charges Background Study of the Township of Woolwich, conducted by Watson & Associates Economics Ltd., the population of the Township of Woolwich is expected to grow to 28,500 residents by mid 2024 and 36,433 residents by the year 2034. Employment growth is expected to remain steady in the Township of Woolwich through to 2034. It is anticipated that the largest growth will be seen in industrial employment, followed by commercial/population related employment.

2.2 Indigenous Population

The Township of Woolwich has a lower percentage of residents who identify as Indigenous (1.0%), compared to the percentage of the population that identify as Indigenous in Ontario as a whole (2.9%). Table 2 has a more detailed breakdown of the Indigenous population in the Township of Woolwich and Ontario.

Table 2: Indigenous Population (2021)

	Population with Indigenous Identity	Percentage of Population
Woolwich	265	1.0%
Ontario	406,585	2.9%

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

2.3 Mennonite Population

The Township of Woolwich is distinguished from many other communities in Ontario through having a large Mennonite community. According to 2021 Census data, 6.4% of the population of Woolwich reported a Mennonite ethnic or cultural origin and 1.0% Pennsylvania Dutch, compared to only 0.3% and 0.1% in Ontario. The large Mennonite population has impacts on Woolwich's housing needs and is reflected in several demographics included in this assessment. Table 3 below gives a more detailed breakdown of the Mennonite population in Woolwich.

Table 3: Mennonite Population (2021)

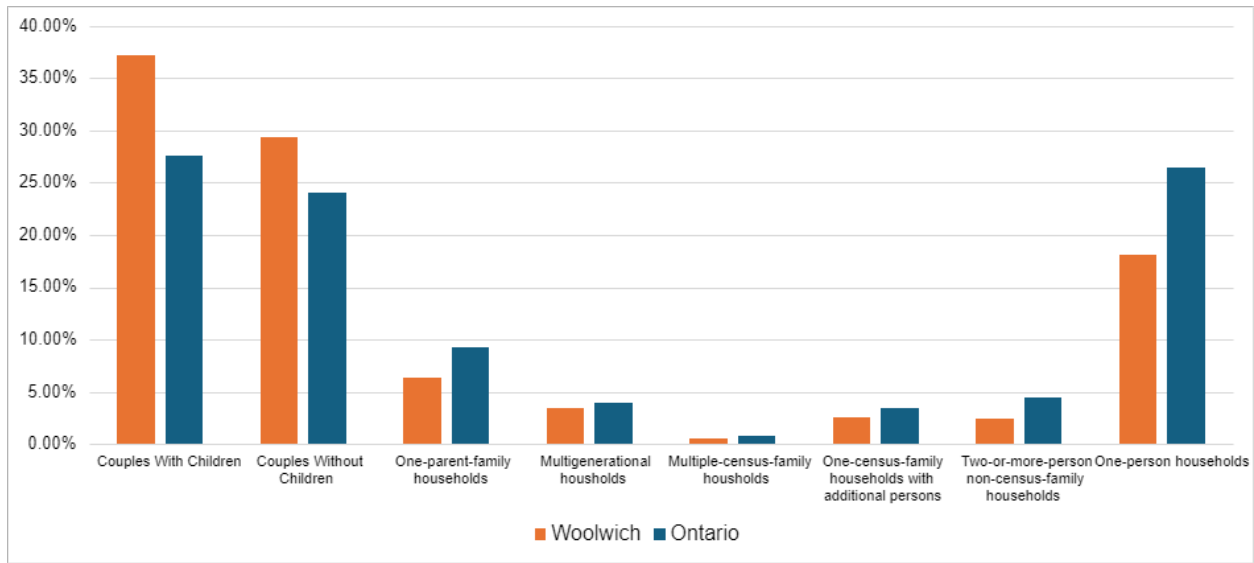
	Population with Mennonite Cultural or Ethnic Background	Percentage of Population	Population with Pennsylvania Dutch Cultural or Ethnic Background	Percentage of Population
Woolwich	1,690	6.4%	265	1.0%
Ontario	38,095	0.3%	12,085	0.1%

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

2.4 Households

Woolwich was home to 9,355 households as of the 2021 Census. Households in Woolwich are primarily made up of couples with children (37.2%), couples without children (29.4%), one-person households (18.1%), and single parents with children (6.3%). Other non-family households and multiple-family households make up the remaining 9%. Compared to Ontario, there are significantly more couple-family households, both with and without children, and significantly fewer one-person households. This household mix suggests a need for both larger single and semis, townhomes, condominiums, and rental apartments units to accommodate the high number of couples with children, as well as more moderate sized homes and apartments, to accommodate two and one-person households. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Distribution of Household Types in Woolwich and Ontario (2021)

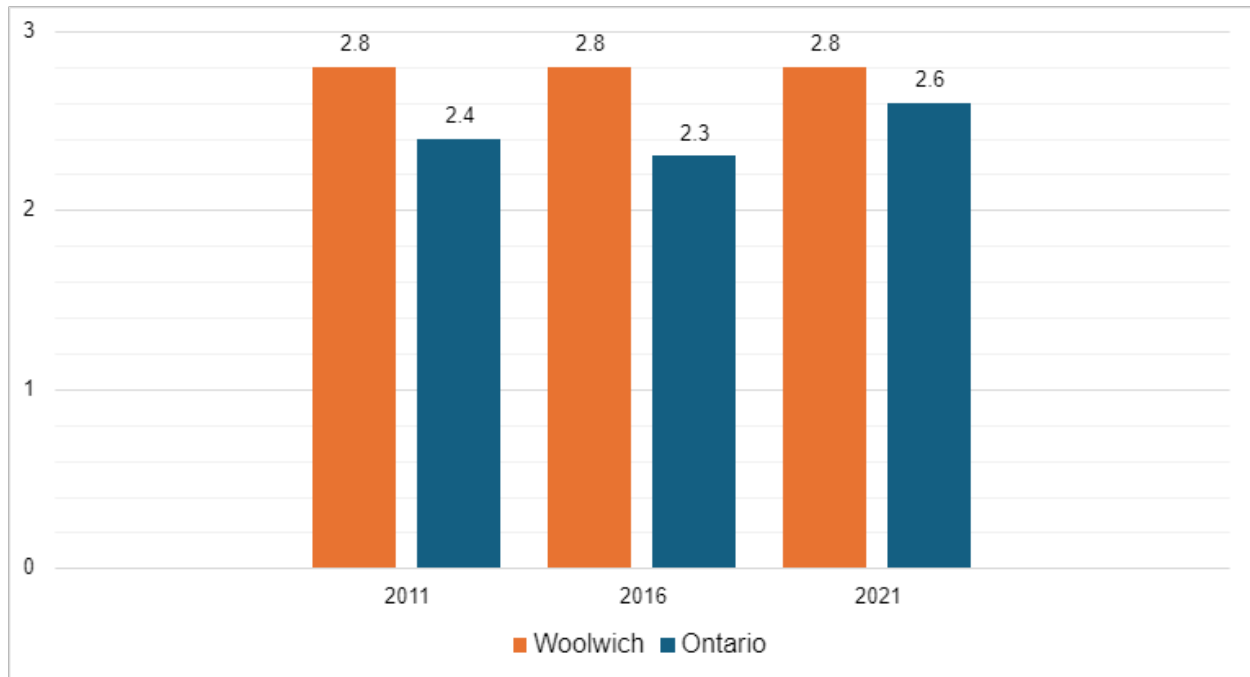


Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Figure 5 below illustrates the average household occupancy in the Township of Woolwich in comparison to the provincial average over the 2011 to 2021 period. This is expressed as the average number of persons per dwelling unit (P.P.U.)^[2]. As shown, the P.P.U. has remained steady in Woolwich at 2.8. Woolwich’s current (2021) P.P.U. of 2.8 is higher than the provincial average of 2.6, but not by as significant a gap as the two previous census years.

^{2]} Average number of persons per unit (P.P.U.) defined as the total population divided by the number of occupied dwelling units.

Figure 5: Township of Woolwich and Ontario – Average Household Occupancy (2011 to 2021)



Source: 2011-2021 Statistics Canada Census data.

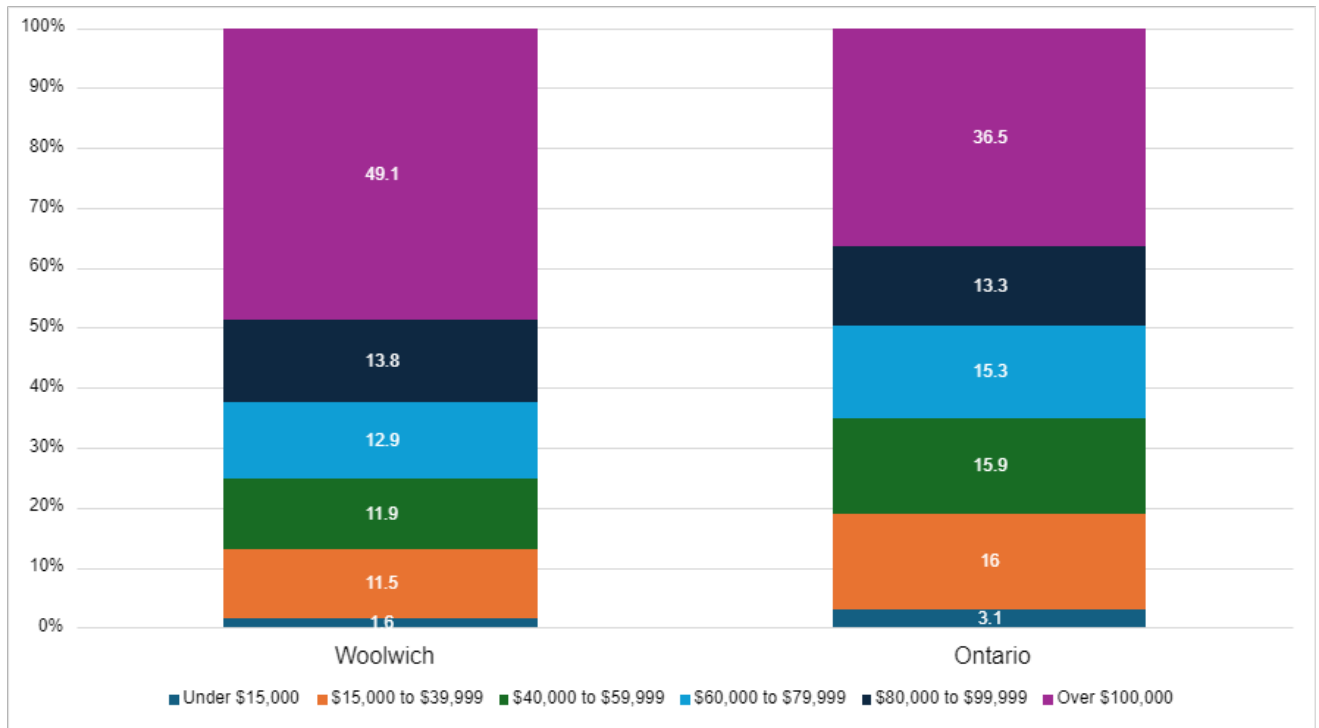
2.5 Income

Woolwich has a noticeably higher share of high-income households as compared to the province of Ontario as a whole, with 49.1% of households earning \$100,000 or more per year after tax (36.5% in Ontario), and only 13.1% of households earning less than \$40,000 per year after tax (19.1% in Ontario). Average and median household incomes are also noticeably higher in Woolwich (median 2020 after-tax household income of \$99,000) compared to the province (median 2020 after-tax household income of \$79,500). Income as reported in census data is inclusive of government supports.

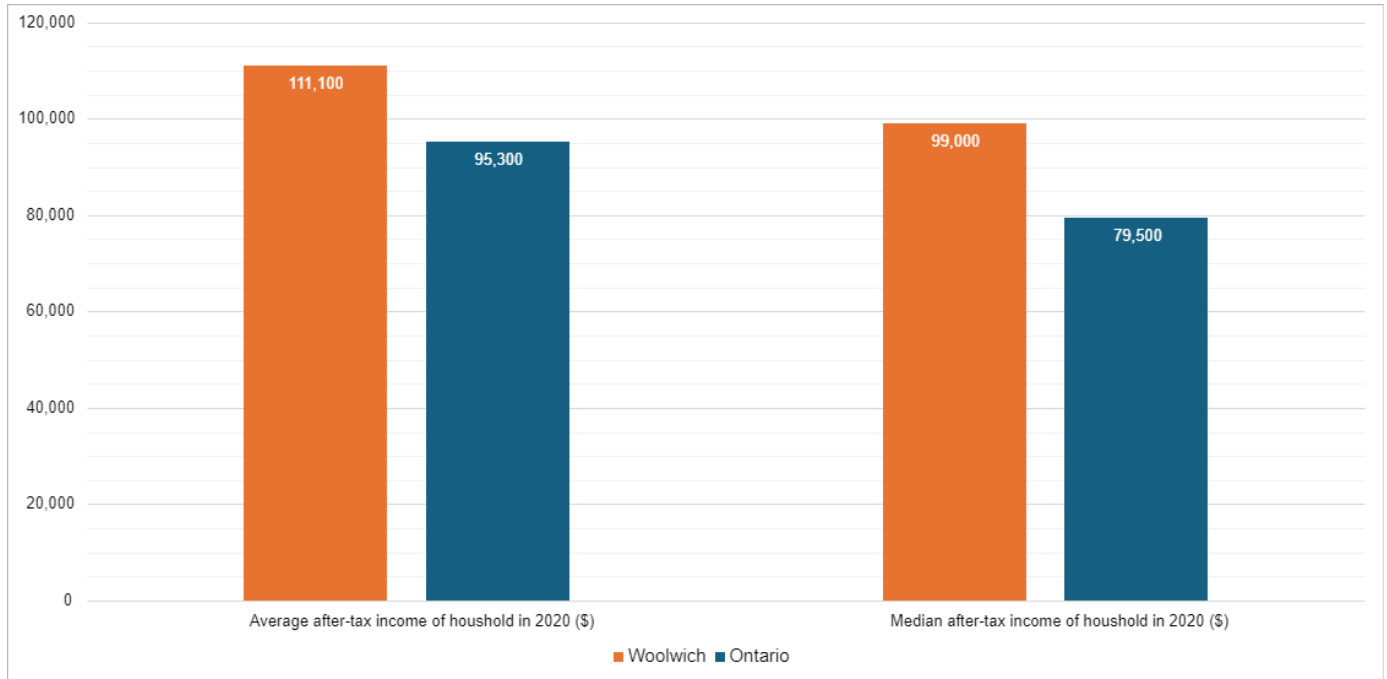
Household income in the area has implications for the cost of housing that will be considered affordable when using an income-based definition of affordability.

It is important to note that despite the higher incomes in the Township of Woolwich nearly 38% of households earn less than \$80,000 a year after tax. The high average incomes in the Township are reflected in housing prices and the forms of housing that have been constructed in abundance over the past several decades, outlined in Section 3.1 below. This has the potential of pricing out those with lower incomes out of the market entirely and rendering them unable to find suitable housing in the Township.

Figure 6: Household Income Distribution (After Tax) (2020)



Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Figure 7: Average and Median Household Incomes (After Tax) (2020)

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

3. Housing Metrics

3.1 Current and Projected Housing Stock

As of the 2021 Census, the Township of Woolwich had a total of 9,360 private dwellings. Most of the private dwellings (75.8%) are single-detached houses.

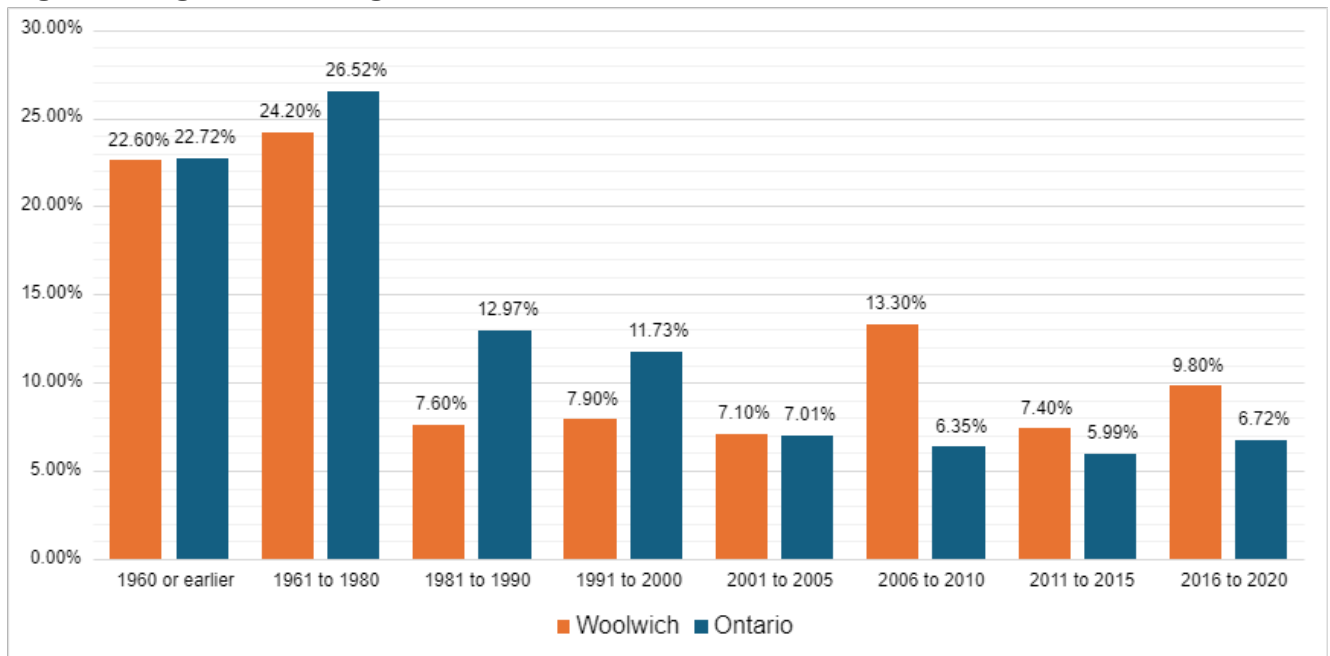
Table 4. Township of Woolwich Private Dwellings

Dwelling Type	Number of Dwellings	Percentage of Total Dwellings
Single-detached house	7,095	75.8%
Semi-detached house	765	8.2%
Row house	535	5.7%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	130	1.4%
Apartment building	730	7.8%
Other single-attached houses	15	0.2%
Movable dwelling	90	1%
Total	9,360	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Of the 9,360 private dwellings in Woolwich, as of 2021, 23% were estimated to be 60 years or older, with 47% estimated to be 40 years or older. These percentages are comparable to figures for the province as a whole. Between 1981 and 2000 Woolwich was constructing less dwellings proportionately to the province, however starting from 2001, Woolwich has built new dwellings at a higher rate than the province up to the year 2020. Woolwich has built 3,520 new residential dwellings in the past 20 years, over 37% of its total dwellings. This is consistent with the steady population growth that the Township has been experiencing in recent decades.

Figure 8: Age of Housing Stock in Woolwich and Ontario



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Per the 2024 Development Charges Background Study of the Township of Woolwich, conducted by Watson & Associates Economics Ltd., the housing stock within the Township of Woolwich is expected to grow to 9,940 units by mid 2024, and 12,990 units by 2034.

Single and semi-detached homes are expected to remain the most common dwelling type in Woolwich through to 2034, with an increase of 1,907 homes or 24% from 2021. However, both multiple dwellings (including townhouses, stacked towns, row housing and fourplexes) and apartments are expected to see significant increases by the year 2034. Multiple dwellings are projected to increase by 798 units or 120% between 2021 and 2034, and apartments are projected to increase by 925 units or 127% (see Table 5 below).

This indicates a demand for increased diversity of built form, including but not limited to more relatively affordable row housing, and medium to higher density apartments targeting older adults ready to downsize, working professionals, low-income groups and those requiring a range of housing supports. This forecast aligns with the expressed needs heard amongst community members for more diverse housing options that are accessible and affordable.

Local builders did note that row housing and stacked towns are currently selling better than semi-detached houses. Semi-detached houses and smaller detached houses with modest finishes are sitting on the market longer by comparison as they are priced too high for many first-time home buyers looking to enter the market, as well as those looking to downsize. Buyers purchasing detached houses are typically upgrading and looking for something larger and with more features.

Table 5: Forecast of Residential Dwelling Units by Housing Type

Township of Woolwich	Single and Semis	Multiple Dwellings	Apartments	Other	Total
2011	6,723	417	664	109	7,913
2016	7,355	520	700	35	8,610
2021	7,860	665	730	105	9,360
2024	8,242	731	862	105	9,940
2034	9,767	1,463	1,655	105	12,990

Source: 2024 Development Charges Background Study of the Township of Woolwich, Watson & Associates Economics Ltd.

Local developers have largely focused on single detached homes with some medium density townhomes, for which there has been ample consumer demand. However, it is apparent in discussions with them that due to the pressures of the market and increased interest rates, there has been a shift in market demand towards more compact housing models, such as townhomes, rowhouses, and stacked townhomes. Developers are beginning to plan accordingly for future developments. It was also noted by private sector builders in one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions that despite an acute need for more modestly priced units, they often struggle to meet this need due to current land costs and construction costs.

3.2 Housing Market Indicators

As of the 2021 Census, the Township of Woolwich had a total of 9,360 private dwellings. Of the 9,360 dwellings, 46% of them are 3-bedroom units, making them the most common dwelling type. Table 6 below looks at the different dwelling types in Woolwich based on bedroom count as of 2021.

Table 6: Township of Woolwich Dwellings by Number of Bedrooms 2021

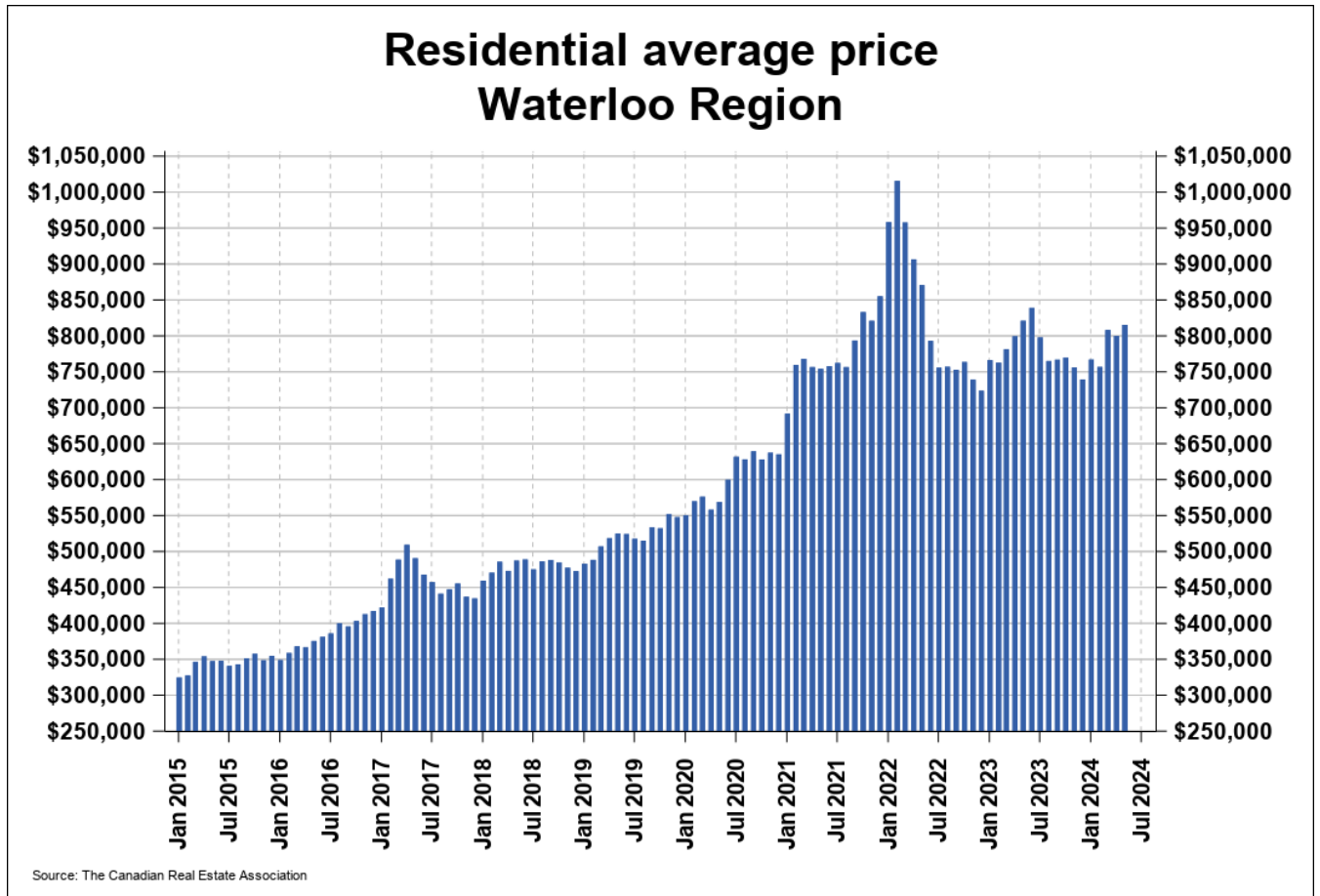
	1-Bdrm	2-Bdrm	3-Bdrm	4-Bdrm+	Total
Number of Units	600	1,220	4,305	3,220	9,360
Percentage Share	6.4%	13.0%	46.0%	34.4%	100%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Despite one person households making up 18% of all households in the Township of Woolwich and couples without children making up 29% of all households, the table above shows that there is a lack of one-bedroom dwellings (6.4% of the share of private dwellings) as well as a lack of two-bedroom dwellings (13.0% of the share of private dwellings). This suggests that many one-person households and couples without children are over housed, that is, are living in larger or perhaps more expensive dwellings than they require, as a matter of personal preference or a lack of available alternatives.

Through key informant interviews and survey responses, it was clear that some empty nesters and seniors are staying in their existing homes due to the costs associated with downsizing; many are “over-housed”, living in larger houses than they require or desire due to a lack of available alternatives within their chosen community. There is an acute need for more affordable and attainable ground level homes, rowhouses, small condominiums and purpose-built rentals with accessibility features and elevators for older adults looking to downsize. This would, in turn, bring more resale homes to the market and keep the housing continuum moving.

Figure 9: Waterloo Region Average House Prices



The Township of Woolwich does not have their own real estate board but is included in the Waterloo Region Real Estate Board. As shown in Figure 9, average house prices rose dramatically starting in July 2020, peaking near January of 2022, dropping by July of 2022, and then have remained fairly constant, although significantly above pre-pandemic levels, since that time. An average price in January 2020 of around \$450,000 would be listed for \$800,000 in July 2024.

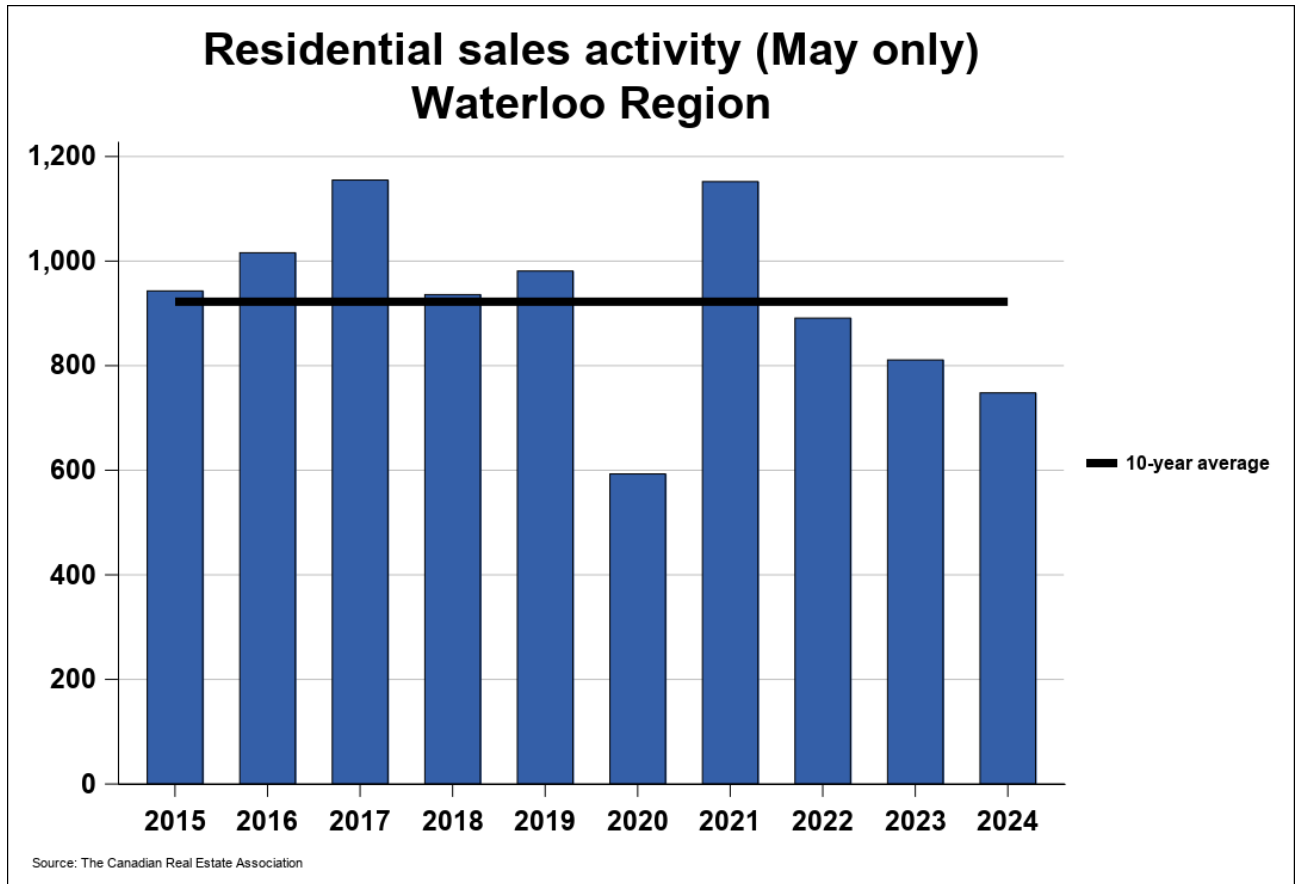
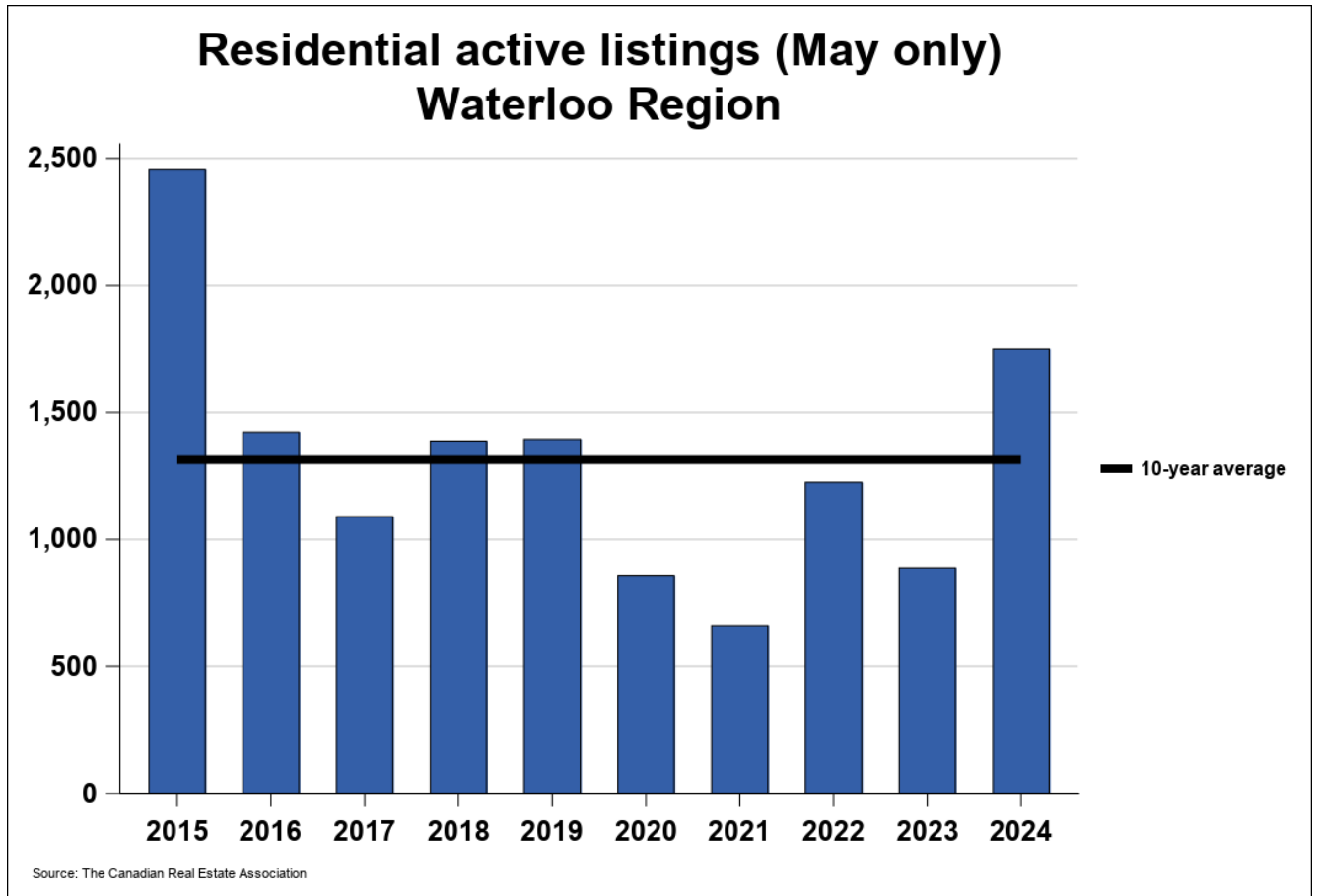
Figure 10: Waterloo Region Residential Sales Activity

Figure 10 shows the number of residential property sales over the past 10 years in Waterloo Region. The number of houses purchased each year has declined each year since 2021, with sales being noticeably below the 10-year average in May of 2024. In contrast to this, Figure 11 shows the number of active listings in Waterloo Region. There were more active listings in May of 2024 than any of the previous 5 years, with a figure well over the 10-year average. This suggests that the decline in house sales is not due to lack of availability. Instead, housing cost and affordability, or housing type and suitability is more likely the reason for the decrease in people purchasing housing. It is important to note that these are trends for the entire Region of Waterloo, and the trends in Woolwich may or may not be as pronounced.

Figure 11: Waterloo Region Residential Active Listings



Single detached homes are the most popular unit type being bought and sold in the Region of Waterloo. They are also the most expensive property type. Table 7 gives a further breakdown of both number of sales, and average sale prices for different property types using data from the Waterloo Region Association of Realtors.

Table 7: Region of Waterloo Sales and Average Sale Price by Property Type, June 2024

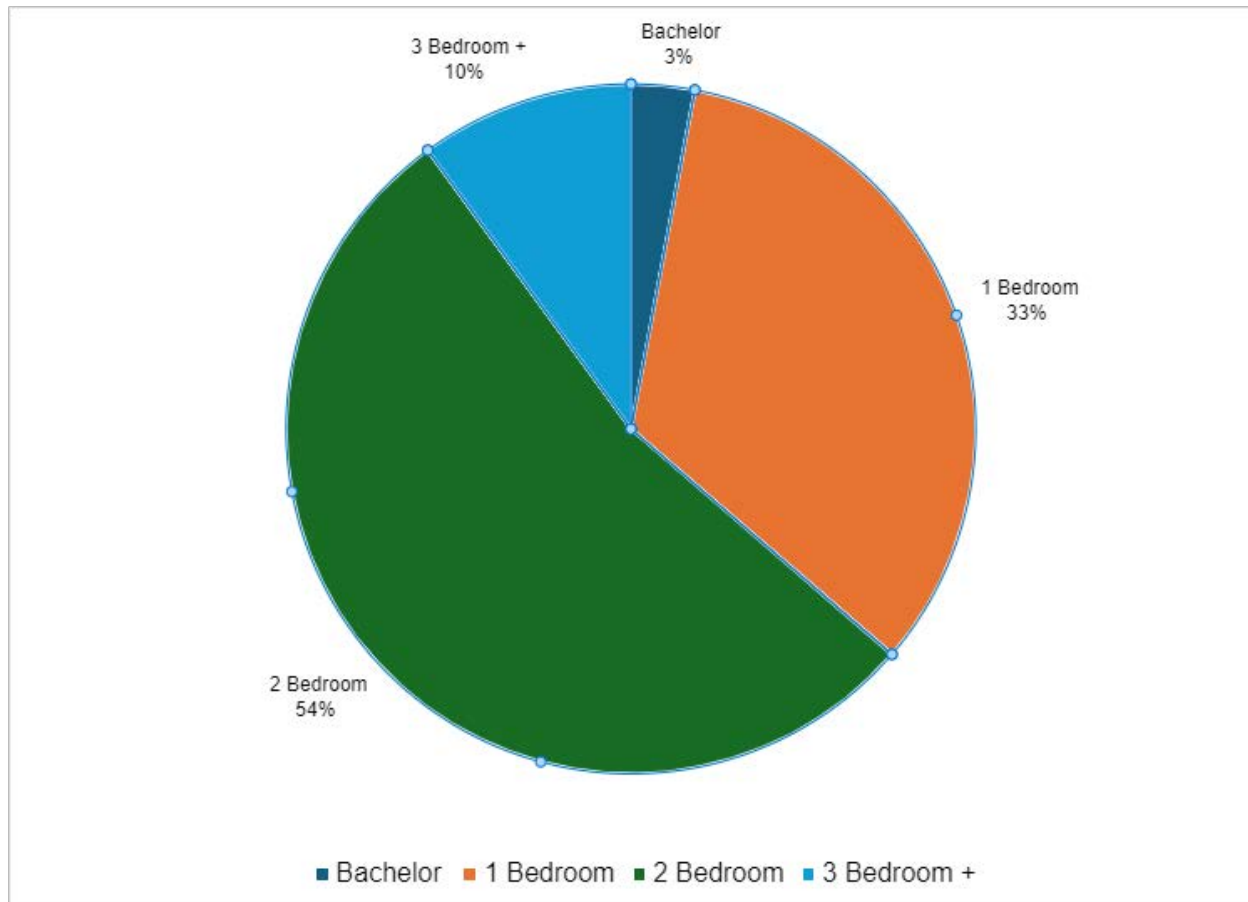
	Single Detached Family Home	Townhouse	Condo	Semi-detached House
Sales	421	137	66	47
Average Sale Price	\$900,373	\$664,273	\$462,145	\$649,353

Source: Waterloo Region Association of Realtors

3.3 Rental: Units

The Township of Woolwich and Township of North Dumfries had a total of 977 purpose-built, private apartment units, the majority of which are 2-bedroom, according to CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics Report as of October 2023, see Figure 12.

Figure 12: Woolwich and North Dumfries Purpose-Built Rental Apartments by Unit Size, 2023



Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

3.4 Housing Tenure

Housing tenure falls under two categories – owner-occupied and tenant occupied. In the Township of Woolwich in 2021, 84% of housing units were owner occupied and 16% were tenant occupied. Woolwich has a significantly lower share of renter households than the provincial average of 31%. This share of housing tenure isn't uncommon for smaller communities such as Woolwich.

This lower percentage of renter households could be a result of several factors, some of which are covered in this report, such as higher household incomes, and a lack of available rental units. As of the date of data collection for the 2021 Census, there were a collective 998 purpose-built rental units in the Township of Woolwich and Township of North Dumfries (reported together by CMHC). The 1,505 renter households in Woolwich by itself, identified through Census data, suggests that many renter households live in secondary rental units (e.g., rented ownership households, duplex apartments, accessory apartments, or non-registered rental spaces). Since 2021, the number of purpose-built rental units has increased to 1,015 in 2022, but then fell to 977 in 2023, according to CMHC's primary rental market statistics report.

Table 8: Housing Tenure (2021)

	Woolwich		Ontario	
	Number of Households	Percentage of Total Households	Number of Households	Percentage of Total Households
Ownership	7,855	83.9%	3,755,720	68.4%
Rental	1,505	16.1%	1,724,970	31.4%
Total	9,360		5,491,200	

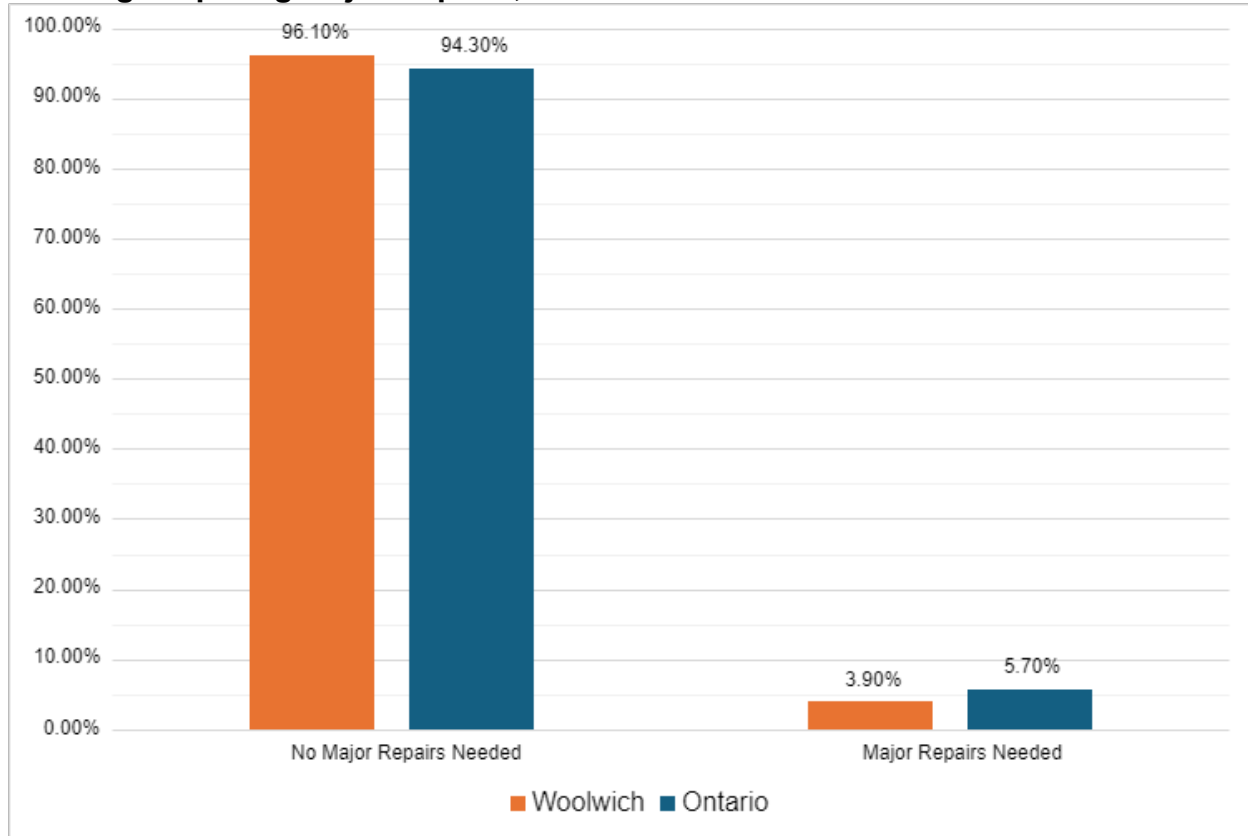
Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

The addition of Accessory Residential Units throughout the Township could comprise a significant percentage of the purpose-built rentals permitted in the coming years due to province-wide legislative changes allowing for additional units on residential lots connected to municipal services.

The disparity between renter households and purpose-built rental units indicates the importance of the Township of Woolwich encouraging the development of rental units. Feedback garnered through community consultation throughout summer 2024 highlighted widespread concern around the lack of affordable rental units and rental protection policies to protect existing rental stock. Limited affordable and accessible options for seniors looking to downsize and remain in their community as they age was a significant concern, as was the lack of larger rental units (3-bedroom+) for families, including newcomers to Canada and larger Mennonite families.

Figure 13 below illustrates the condition of dwelling units in Woolwich. Of the total housing units in Woolwich, 3.9% need major repairs. Figure 13 shows that the share of housing units requiring major repairs in the Township of Woolwich is smaller than the share of dwellings needing major repairs in Ontario (5.7%), this may be related to the age of housing stock in Woolwich as discussed above.

Figure 13: Township of Woolwich and Province of Ontario Percentage Share of Housing Requiring Major Repairs, 2021

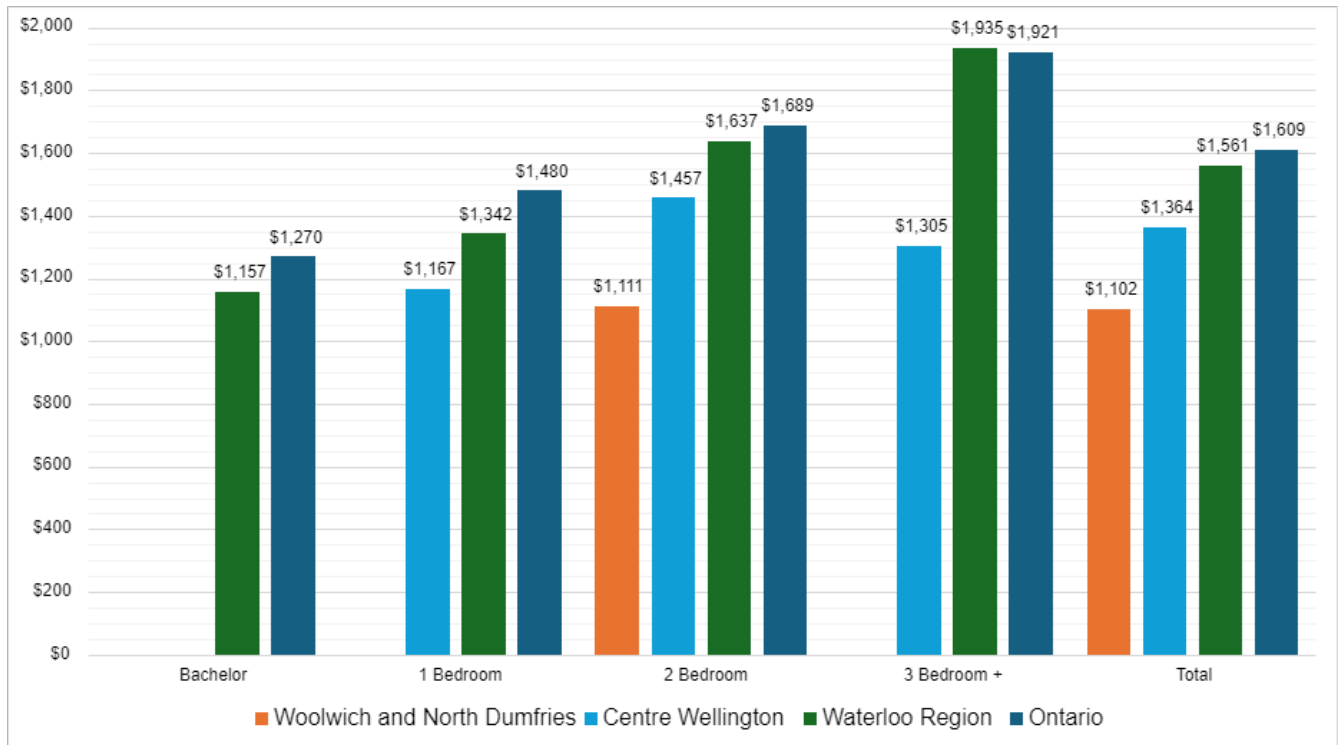


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

3.5 Average Rental Prices

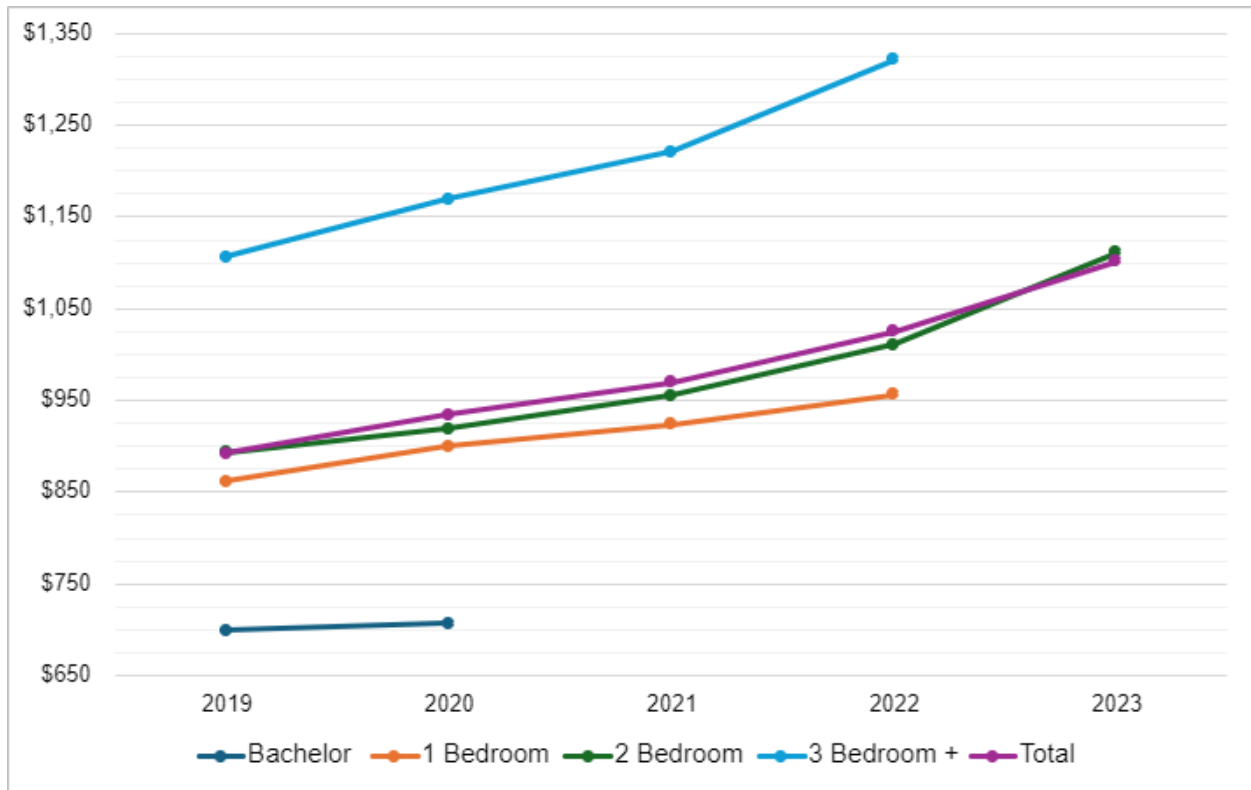
As of October 2023, CMHC reported the average price of a two-bedroom unit in Woolwich to be \$1,111 per month. There is a lack of data for other unit types in 2023, aside from the total across all unit types of \$1,102, however CMHC warns to use this figure with caution. We can use 2022, average rental prices to get a better sense of the other unit types, 1-bedrooms were, on average, \$956, and 3-bedroom+ units were \$1,321, on average. Figure 14 compares 2023 average rental prices in Woolwich with Centre Wellington Township (a slightly larger nearby municipality), the Region of Waterloo CMA, as well as Ontario's average rents, giving us a fuller picture of the rental market in Woolwich. Figures 15 and 16 show change in average rental prices, for both Woolwich and Ontario, over time across different unit types.

Figure 14: Woolwich and North Dumfries, Centre Wellington Township, Region of Waterloo CMA, and Ontario Average Rental Prices by Unit Type, October 2023

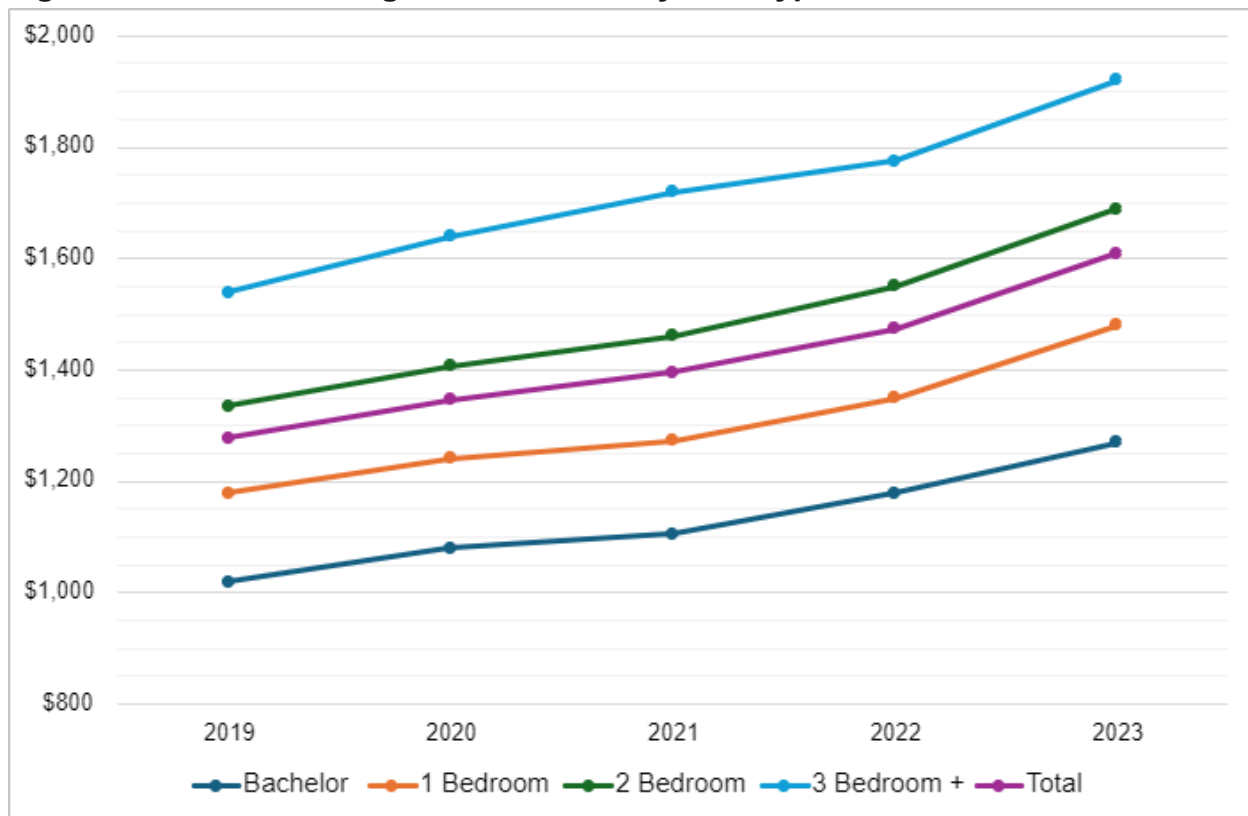


Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

Figure 15: Woolwich and North Dumfries Average Rental Prices by Unit Type, 2019-2023



Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

Figure 16: Ontario Average Rental Prices by Unit Type, 2019-2023

Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

There are several things to take away from this data. First, based on CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics Report figures, Woolwich's average rents are noticeably lower than the provincial averages, the average rents of Waterloo Region, and the average rents of a similar sized nearby municipality. Another trend, both in the Township of Woolwich and the province, is the rate of increase in rents accelerating after 2021.

It should also be noted that CMHC reports average rents, which include all occupied rental units. These prices are not in line with market rental rates for those currently looking for vacant rental units. Based on the analysis completed by the project team, and outlined in Table 9 below, the average price for rental units currently advertised for rent is much higher – with the average 1-bedroom unit renting at around \$1,600, the average 2-bedroom renting for approximately \$2,011, and the average 3-bedroom+ unit around \$3,280. Table 9 shows a more detailed breakdown of current rents in Woolwich from searching various market rental websites.

Table 9: Current Market Rents in the Township of Woolwich, June 2024

Unit Type	Cost	Sq. Footage	Building Type	Year Built
1-Bedroom	\$1,600	1,400	Basement apartment in house	2023
2-Bedroom	\$2,400	unknown	Loft apartment above retail	2023
2-Bedroom	\$1,650	600	Basement apartment in house	2020
2-Bedroom	\$1,800	750	Basement apartment in house	2020
2-Bedroom	\$2,195	950	Unit in apartment building	2020
2.5-Bedroom	\$2,500	1,200	Unit in triplex	Unknown/1920s
3-Bedroom	\$3,475	1,900	Single detached house	2021
3-Bedroom	\$2,850	1,523	Townhouse	2020
3-Bedroom	\$2,995	1,650	Single detached house	2015
4-Bedroom	\$3,800	unknown	Single detached house	2015

Source: Compiled from listings on Facebook Marketplace, Kijiji, Rentals.ca, and Realtor.ca

One factor that has had a significant impact on current rental rates is the changes made to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, introduced through Bill 57, wherein residential rental units built after 2018 are exempt from rent control. This means landlords of newer units can raise rents without adhering to the annual rent increase guideline set by the provincial government, provided they supply the tenant with at least 90 days' written notice before increasing the rent and only do so once every twelve months. As can be seen from the table above, a lot of the current units available for rent in June of 2024 were built after 2018.

It is also worth noting that when there is turnover in rental units, there is no provincial regulation of rents that can be charged to the new tenant. This policy of "vacancy de-control" has been in effect in Ontario since 1998 and during times of tight rental markets. The policy tends to push up rents higher than provincial rent guidelines when a new tenant moves into an existing rental unit.

A lack of affordable rental stock and competition for units is placing increased pressure on the community. Comments received through community consultation noted the importance of protecting older properties with rental units. It was suggested that Township staff look at what Toronto and other jurisdictions are already doing and speak with the Region of Waterloo around best practices that could be replicable in the

Township to protect existing rental stock while simultaneously encouraging new rental construction.

3.6 Rental Vacancy Rates

A vacancy rate of 3% is generally considered to be an acceptable balance between supply and demand for rental housing. Vacancy rates below this can drive up rents as tenants compete for fewer units.

There is limited data on current and past vacancy rates in the Township of Woolwich, and some of the data that is available is to be used with caution (as recommended by CMHC). CMHC's primary rental market statistics recorded a vacancy rate of 0.7% across all unit types in 2023. Although this was the only vacancy rate recorded in 2023, Table 10 looks at the vacancy rates in the Townships of Woolwich and North Dumfries over the past five years. Table 11 shows Ontario's vacancy rates over the past five years. This gives us an overall picture of vacancy rates and trends in Woolwich, and how they compare to the province.

Table 10: Woolwich and North Dumfries Private Apartment Vacancy Rates

	Oct-19	Oct-20	Oct-21	Oct-22	Oct-23
Bachelor	0.0	0.0	**	**	**
1 Bedroom	1.4	1.2	0.3	0.5	**
2 Bedroom	**	1.2	3.3	0.7	**
3 Bedroom +	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	**
Total	1.3	1.0	1.9	0.5	0.7

Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

Table 11: Ontario Private Apartment Vacancy Rates

	Oct-19	Oct-20	Oct-21	Oct-22	Oct-23
Bachelor	2.7	5.0	6.2	2.6	1.8
1 Bedroom	2.1	3.6	4.2	1.9	1.9
2 Bedroom	1.9	2.7	2.6	1.6	1.7
3 Bedroom +	1.5	2.9	2.4	1.5	1.4
Total	2.0	3.2	3.5	1.8	1.7

Source: CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

From this data we can see that Woolwich has consistently had vacancy rates lower than the province, and well below the balanced rate of 3%, even when the province's vacancy rates went above 3% during the pandemic. The province initially saw large increases to vacancy rates during the pandemic, but they have dropped down considerably in the past two years. Although vacancy rates did not increase very much during the pandemic, Woolwich saw a similar drop in vacancy rates in 2022 and has

been at a rate below 1% for the past 2 years. Very low vacancy rates like this can have an impact on rent increases, reflecting an increased demand and lack of supply.

The Township of Woolwich will need to increase the number of rental units available substantially if they want their vacancy rate to increase to a balanced level.

4. Affordability Indicators

4.1 Core Housing Need

Core Housing Need is defined as households living in an unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwelling that cannot afford alternative housing in their community. It refers to whether a private household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability, or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable.

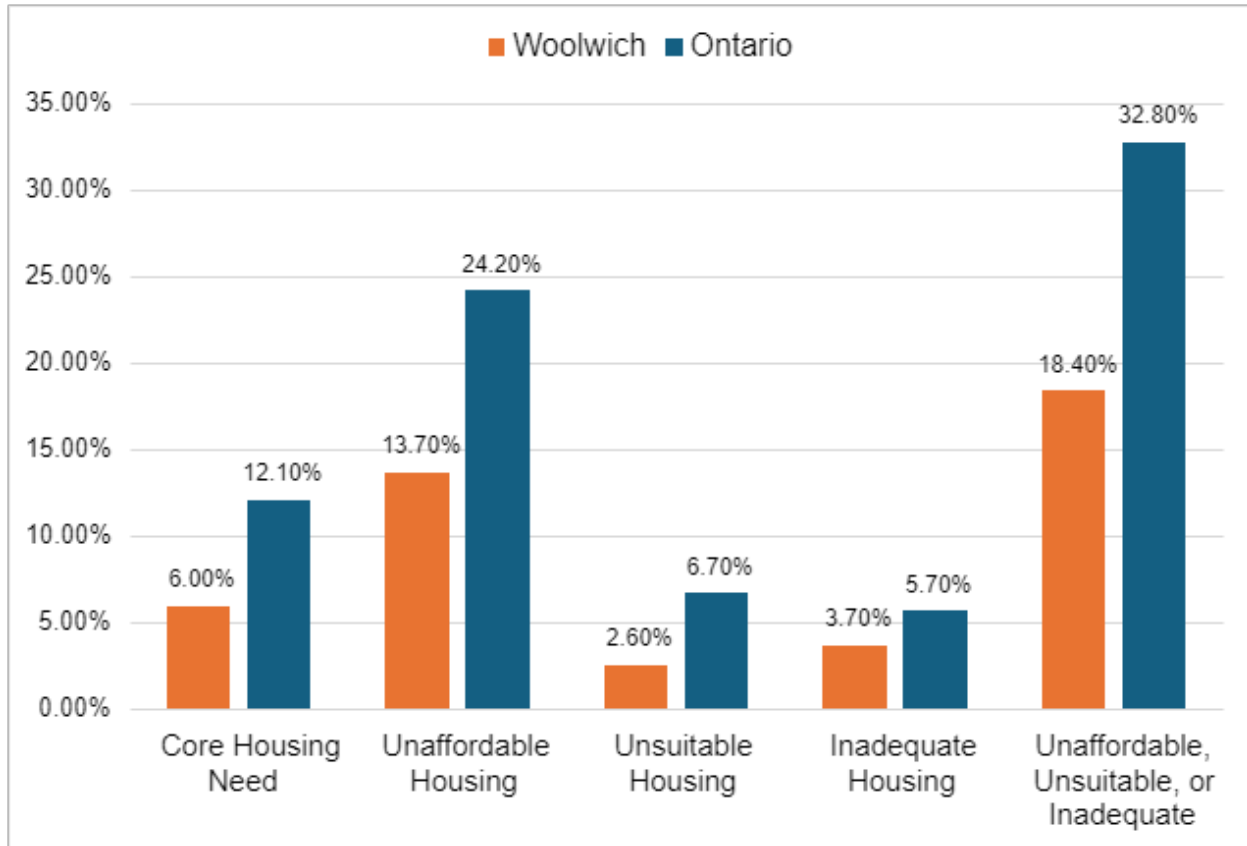
Unaffordable housing is defined as a household that spends more than 30% of its income on shelter costs. **Inadequate housing** is defined as a household that lives in a dwelling in need of major repairs. And **unsuitable housing** is described as when a household does not have enough bedrooms according to the National Occupancy Standard.

It is important to note that CMHC calculates core housing need by identifying households living in dwellings considered unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable and then considering if income levels are such that they could not afford alternative suitable and adequate housing in their community. Of 9,005 owner and tenant households with household total income greater than zero and shelter-cost-to-income ratio less than 100%, in non-farm, non-reserve private dwellings in Woolwich, 540 of them were found to be in core housing need (6%) as of 2021. This is less than half the 12.1% of households in core housing need in Ontario in 2021. However, 13.7% of households in Woolwich were found to be living in unaffordable dwellings, with 18.4% living in unaffordable, unsuitable, or inadequate housing.

In addition to reporting core housing need, it is important to understand the number of households currently living in unaffordable, inadequate, or unsuitable housing. Based on this criteria, out of the 9,360 total occupied private dwellings in the Township of Woolwich, as of 2021, 1,725 were in unaffordable, inadequate, or unsuitable housing with either 30% or more total income spent on shelter costs, unsuitable housing, or housing in need of major repairs. This 18.4% figure (as referenced above) can be found in the 2021 Stats Canada Census data (Figure 17), and although still much lower than Ontario's 32.8% rate, points to a significant housing need for more affordable housing in

Woolwich. The largest factor affecting the Township of Woolwich's core housing need is housing affordability, as 1,245 (13.7%) households are currently spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs.

Figure 17: Households in Core Housing Need, Township of Woolwich and Ontario, 2021

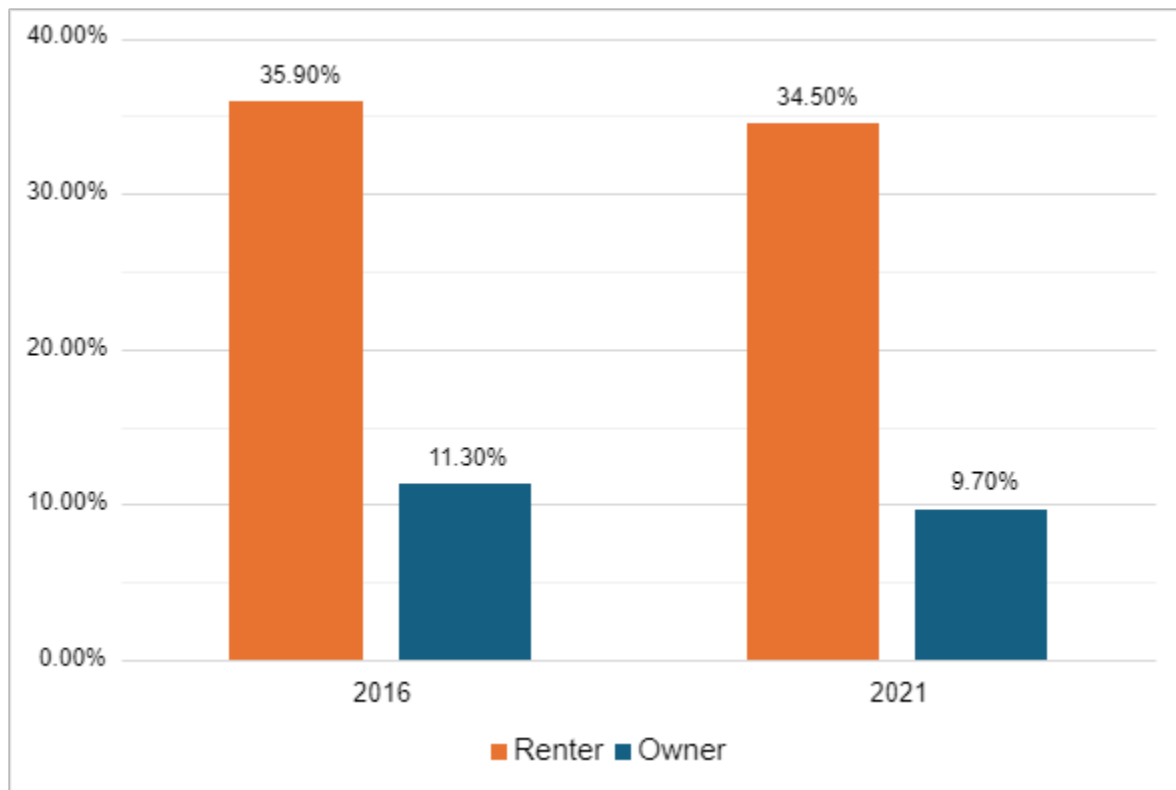


Source: Statistics Canada

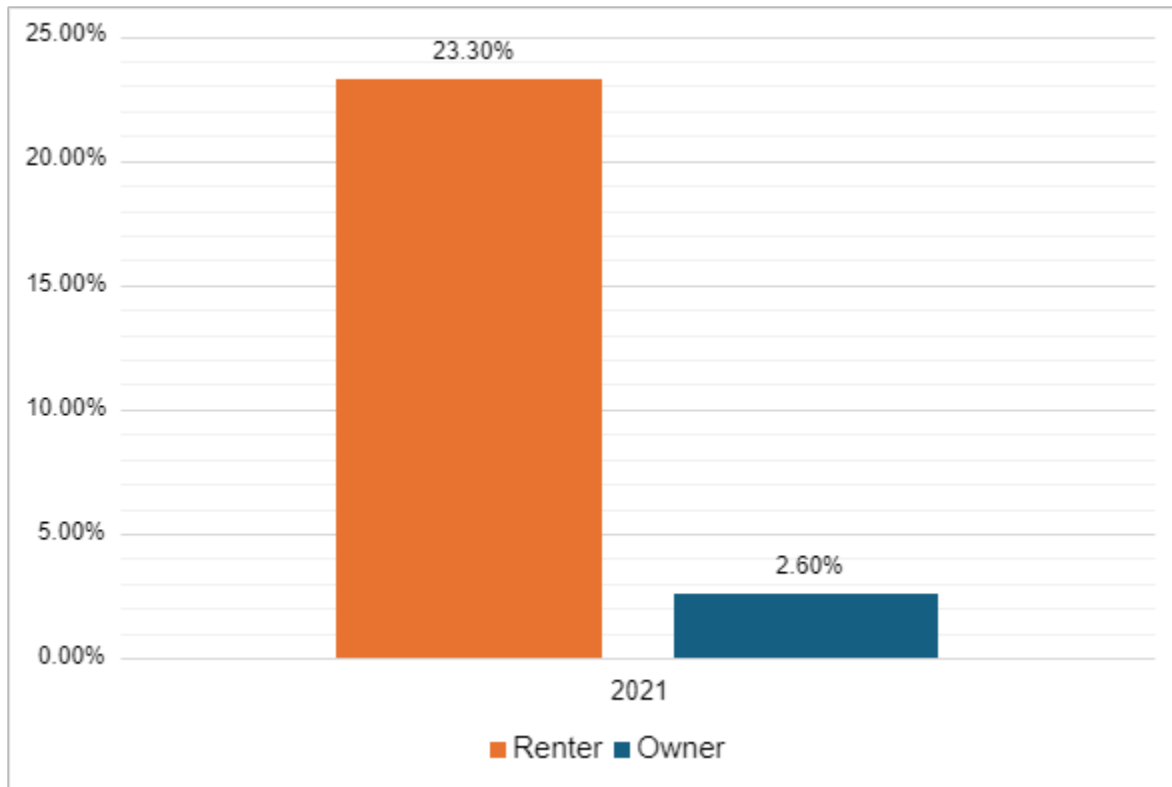
Across the country there was a decrease in households experiencing core housing need between 2016 and 2021, which was likely due to factors surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and the federal government's initial response with the CERB financial relief program. In Woolwich however, the decrease was not as noticeable. Those experiencing unaffordable housing dropped from 15.0% to 13.7%, and those in core housing need dropped only 0.1 % from 6.1% to 6.0%. The 2021 census reports income from the year 2020. With CERB payments having stopped in late 2020, and housing costs increasing in Woolwich from 2020 to 2023, it is likely that the percentage of households living in unaffordable housing and in core housing need has seen larger increases in the past few years. This will be a key housing measure to watch when new Census data emerges.

According to 2021 Census data, a greater proportion of renter households in Woolwich (34.5%) live in unaffordable housing compared to owner households (9.7%). This is true throughout the province, but the disparity is higher in the Township of Woolwich compared to Ontario as a whole. Looking at past census data we can see that in Woolwich the number of owner households living in unaffordable housing dropped by 1.6% between 2016 and 2021. During the same period, the number of renter households living in unaffordable housing dropped by 1.4%. This is illustrated in Figure 18, which illustrates that the disparity between renters and owners living in unaffordable housing has stayed consistent over time. This disparity between renter households and owner households is also true for core housing need. There were 23.3% of renter households in Woolwich in core housing need, compared to only 2.6% of owner households (Figure 19), meaning renters were roughly nine times more likely to live in core housing need in 2021.

Figure 18: Township of Woolwich Housing Affordability by Tenure Type, 2016 to 2021



Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 19: Township of Woolwich Core Housing Need by Tenure Type, 2021

Source: Statistics Canada

Core housing need also affects different demographic groups in varying ways. Single-parent households and seniors often make up the highest percentages of households living in core housing need.

4.2 Affordable Prices and Rents

Table 12 shows affordable rents for average and median incomes based on 2021 Census data using the 30% affordability threshold. An individual earning the median income could afford a monthly rent of approximately \$1,090. Individuals earning the average income in Woolwich could afford a slightly higher monthly rent of \$1,283.

The median and average incomes and thus affordability thresholds for one-person households remain close to the median and average incomes for individuals in the Township of Woolwich, although moderately lower.

For couple-only economic families making the median after tax income of \$93,000, the affordability thresholds would be \$2,325 per month in rent. For couples with children taking home the median after tax income of \$132,000 annually, the affordability thresholds would be \$3,300 a month for rent. Lastly, the median income for single

parent families residing in the Township of Woolwich was \$74,500. Their affordability thresholds would be \$1,863 a month in rent.

Table 12: Affordable Prices and Rents Based on Average and Median Income

	2020 After Tax Income based on 2021 Census data	Affordable Rent at 30% of Income
Average Income for Individuals	\$51,300	\$1,283
Median Income for Individuals	\$43,600	\$1,090
Average Income for One-Person Households	\$48,360	\$1,209
Median Income for One- Person Households	\$42,400	\$1,220
Average Income for Couple-Only Economic Family	\$100,900	\$2,523
Median Income for Couple-Only Economic Family	\$93,000	\$2,325
Average Income for Couple-with-children Economic Family	\$147,800	\$3,695
Median Income for Couple-with-children Economic Family	\$132,000	\$3,300
Average Income for One-Parent Economic Family	\$92,800	\$2,320
Median Income for One- Parent Economic Family	\$74,500	\$1,863

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

Income data from the 2021 Statistics Canada Census was utilized to calculate average and median incomes and was not adjusted for inflation, as we know that salaries have, in many instances, not kept pace with the inflationary pressures in the market and with respect to housing costs and landlord expenses since 2020.

When compared to the cost of rents as illustrated in Section 3.5, the problem becomes apparent, specifically for the 25% of households in Woolwich earning less than \$60,000 annually. Current average market rents are too high to be considered affordable. As noted in Section 3.5, current market listing for vacant rental units in Woolwich range from \$1,600 for a 1-bedroom unit to \$3,475 for a three-bedroom unit.

4.3 Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program

The table below indicates the affordability of allocated shelter costs for Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) compared to CMHC data. OW and ODSP income recipients are among the lowest income earners in the province.

One-bedroom units at a very conservative monthly rental rate of \$956 are above the maximum allowance for ODSP recipients for all family sizes, except for couples with children, but particularly out of reach for individuals. It is also important to note that one-bedroom units are not appropriate for single parents or couples with children, and the cost of a two-bedroom unit is even more unaffordable. This picture means that Woolwich residents who are recipients of these government supports are priced out of their community due to clear lack of available housing options.

Table 13: Affordability for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Recipients

Family Size	OW Max Housing Allowance	ODSP Max Housing Allowance	Woolwich Average Market Rent CMHC
Single	\$390	\$582	\$956*
Couple	\$642	\$915	\$956*
Single Parent - 1 Child	\$642	\$909	\$1,111
Single Parent - 2 Children	\$697	\$915	\$1,111
Couple - 1 Child	\$697	\$990	\$1,111
Couple - 2 Children	\$756	\$1,074	\$1,111

Source: Income Security Accuracy Centre and CMHC Primary Rental Market Statistics

*Denotes rental price derived from 2022, as CMHC does not have a 1-bedroom rental figure for the Woolwich and North Dumfries in 2023.

Once again, it should be emphasized that the average market rental rates utilized in Table 13 above are conservative numbers based on CHMC data from the 2023 and 2022 Primary Rental Market Statistics and are not reflective of listing rates for available

accommodations advertised at the time of this report. Based on the analysis completed by the project team, and included in the project reporting, the average price of units currently available for rent is much higher – ranging from \$1,600 for a 1-bedroom unit to \$2,400 for a two-bedroom unit. This renders all the available units deeply unaffordable for OW and ODSP recipients.

4.4 Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and Guaranteed Income Supplement Programs

As mentioned in a previous section of this report, there is a large percentage of seniors in the Township of Woolwich, and that number is expected to grow in the coming years. Many of these seniors will be receiving publicly administered pension plans operated by the government such as Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), or the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

Table 14: Canada Pension Plan Benefits July-September (2024)

Program	Maximum Monthly Payment (age 65-74)	Maximum Monthly payment (age 75+)
CPP	\$1,364.60	\$1,364.60
OAS	\$718.33	\$790.16
GIS	\$1,072.93	\$1,072.93
CPP + OAS	\$2,082.93	\$2,154.76
OAS + GIS	\$1,791.26	\$1,863.09
All 3 programs	\$3,155.86	\$3,227.69

Source: The Government of Canada

It is important to note that these are the maximum amounts, and many seniors will be receiving less than what is listed above, specifically for their CPP amounts as they are based on income contributions made throughout a person's life. In April 2024, the maximum monthly CPP payment was \$1,364.60, but the average monthly amount paid for a new retirement pension (at age 65) was only \$816.52.

4.5 Minimum Wage

For minimum wage workers, making \$16.55/hour at the time of this report, the available rental stock in the Township of Woolwich is also deeply unaffordable. Using even conservative monthly rental rates per CMHC data, a one-bedroom rental unit would be unaffordable for individuals making minimum wage, and a two-bedroom unit would be even more so.

Table 15: Affordability for Persons Making Minimum Wage 2022

Type of Unit	Woolwich Average Market Rent CMHC	Minimum Wage Affordability Monthly Rent for a Single Income Household	Difference
One Bedroom	\$956	\$753	-\$203
Two Bedroom	\$1,111	\$753	-\$358

Source: CMHC Primary Rental Statistics and The Government of Ontario

Through the community housing needs survey, many residents shared their experiences struggling to find suitable rental or ownership options in the Township, from seniors on fixed incomes, to young families, to single income households and newcomers.

This points to a phenomenon observed in many places throughout the province; when it becomes impossible to work minimum wage or traditionally lower-income positions and pay rent or mortgage payments and purchase the essentials, the services provided to the community through those positions slowly cease to become available. This can result in insufficient childcare spaces and a lack of workers in other caring professions, such as PSWs in seniors' residences and communal living communities for those with disabilities. It can also lead to decreased offerings or hours in the food service industry and retail shops.

The extent to which this is already happening within the Township of Woolwich is difficult to measure, but concerns were echoed in several interviews about challenges finding staff and volunteers, particularly when it comes to future expansion of seniors' care and dedicated housing, as well as social services.

4.6 Non-Market Housing

There are 149 Community Housing units in Woolwich – all of which are located in Elmira. Community Housing refers to housing that is in some way subsidized or administered by the Region of Waterloo – either through capital building grants, rent top-ups to private property owners, agreements to provide rent geared to income, or direct ownership under Waterloo Region Housing. Table 16 provides a breakdown of the 149 units by provider and unit type.

Table 16: Community Housing Units in Woolwich, 2024

Type of Provider	Number of Units	Bedroom types
Non-profit provider	93 units	69-1br, 15-2br, 7-3br, 2-4br
Private provider	10 units	4-1br, 3-2br, 3-3br
Waterloo Region Housing	46 units	46-1br

There are additional non-profit housing providers across the Township that are not administered and/or supported by the Region of Waterloo and are not part of the Community Housing Waiting List. Some of these non-profit housing providers are communities of faith. These include, but are not limited to:

- Sprucelawn Non-Profit, 33 Front St., St. Jacobs - 58 units (including the recently completed 28-unit addition., 1 & 2 bedroom
- St. James Manor Non-Profit, 8 Dunke St. N., Elmira - 28 units for seniors

Table 17 below shows the centralized waitlist data for the Township of Woolwich as of December 31, 2023. The numbers shown are for people who selected a Community Housing property in Woolwich from the list of available Community Housing properties. They are not necessarily currently living in Woolwich. Waitlist applicants can pick any or all Community Housing properties across the Region as places they would be willing to move to. For the numbers below this means that 1,024 households on the Region's Community Housing waitlist have selected at least one Community Housing property in Woolwich that they would be willing to move to if they were offered a unit.

Table 17: Woolwich Centralized Waiting List, 2023

Unit Type	Number of Households	Household Type	Number of Households
Bachelor or 1 Bedroom	313	Seniors	210
1 Bedroom	316	Households with Dependents	367
1 or 2 Bedroom	3		
2 Bedrooms	67	Households without Dependents	447
2 or 3 Bedrooms	41		
3 Bedrooms	114		
3 or 4 Bedrooms	93	Total	1024
3, 4, or 5 Bedrooms	24		
4 Bedrooms	14		
4 or 5 Bedrooms	38		
5 Bedrooms	1		
Total	1024		

Source: Region of Waterloo Planning, Development & Legislative Services

The demand for the existing non-market housing units across the Township is great. In speaking with non-profit housing and community service leaders, it was noted that demand for bachelor and 1-bedroom units has remained consistently high and continued to grow, including among an older adult demographic. Demand for 3 bedroom+ units for families has risen dramatically in recent years as larger families struggle to find suitable and affordable housing in the Township.

In speaking with volunteers from St. James Manor, it was noted that the demand for additional non-market seniors' units is immense; their waiting list is double the number of available units. The Manor's model is a positive one and that organization is open to constructing more units but there is a deficit of volunteer resources to do so. A lack of human resources was echoed by many in the community, both those working and volunteering in the non-market housing sector, as well as complementary support services such as homecare and the food bank.

4.7 Expansion of Housing with Supports

In interviews with the same community service organizations, it was reiterated frequently that individuals living in non-market housing often face significant challenges due to the complexities of low-income living. These challenges necessitate comprehensive support services. Residents may require assistance with transportation, mental health support, and access to and navigation of social services. For example, many individuals need help with filling out essential forms, such as those required annually by Waterloo Region Housing, which can be a barrier to maintaining their housing.

Precarious housing and homelessness in rural communities, including the Township of Woolwich, has not always been as visible as it is in urban settings. Rural townships have a history of inner care; family, friends, and neighbours take care of one another and may even informally fill some of the roles of emergency shelters and transitional housing. It was noted throughout the community consultation that this informal system is becoming increasingly tenuous due to immense population growth, more dispersed family networks, increased financial burdens, and growing care needs. There are no emergency and limited social housing options available locally, so individuals and families in need of these options increasingly need to leave the Township in pursuit of suitable housing and supports in neighbouring communities in the absence of supports from next of kin.

Additionally, as the community becomes more diverse, there is an increasing need for multicultural support services, including language translation. Currently, the availability of such services is minimal, highlighting a gap that needs to be addressed. Expanding and enhancing these services in addition to housing will be important for ensuring that all community members receive the support they need. Therefore, integrating supportive services into affordable housing models is important in addressing the

broader needs of low-income residents. This holistic approach ensures that affordable housing solutions are not only accessible but also sustainable and effective in supporting residents' long-term well-being.

Future expansion of housing with support services, and indeed any non-market housing projects, will likely require significant engagement and support from all levels of government to make the projects work. There are many ways that the Township of Woolwich can support and champion these projects to ensure that in the years to come, the Township's housing stock can meet the needs of all current and future residents and decrease existing gaps along the housing continuum.

4.8 Service Manager Supports

The Region of Waterloo is the Service Manager for the Township of Woolwich. As the municipal service manager, the Region is responsible for the administration and coordination of various social and community services for all area municipalities within the Region. They oversee the delivery of essential services such as housing and homelessness programming, social assistance, homelessness service responses, childcare and employment supports.

In addition to managing the centralized wait list and supporting 149 Community Housing units in Elmira through rent top-ups to private property owners, agreements to provide rent geared to income, or direct ownership under Waterloo Region Housing, the Region as Service Manager is committed to funding new projects through requests for proposals and administering Housing Services Act sites. The Region has funded projects in Woolwich such as St. James Manor and Sprucelawn.

The Region lacks the necessary infrastructure to support unhoused individuals in rural areas, particularly with mental health and addiction services and significant infrastructure challenges, particularly in relation to transportation. These services are often urban based, making it difficult for rural residents to access the support they need. The need for a rural-specific homelessness strategy is evident, as traditional community-based care models are breaking down under increasing demand. Expanding transit options, especially in areas like Breslau, where a GO Station is planned, could help support increased housing density and provide better access to services for low-income residents.

Regarding future opportunities, partnering on surplus land, joint requests for proposals, and expanding programs like the affordable homeownership and Ontario Renovates Secondary Suite programs. The Region has introduced a property tax exemption for affordable housing and is exploring an acquisition program to buy and preserve affordable rental buildings. A need for more rental support and rent supplements in Woolwich was also identified through community consultation, which would help

residents immediately and in the next 5-10 years while new affordable housing is built in the community.

The Township of Woolwich should also consider participating in the co-creation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness by joining the Co-Creator Table. In doing so, they will be able to get a strong sense of the challenges across the Region and the pressures anticipated in the coming years as the Region's population continues to grow and put pressure on the townships. They will also be well positioned to advocate at the regional level for more support, services and transit connections to their village centres.

The Region of Waterloo is also interested in undertaking a Rural Homelessness Strategy. They are interested in partnering with the rural townships, including Woolwich, on this project. It is anticipated that as the population continues to grow across the region, and the cost of living becomes more expensive, the challenges facing the Township will change and become more complex.

The transient and often hidden nature of homelessness is such that it is difficult to capture the total number of people experiencing homelessness at any given time, particularly in rural communities. The Region as Service Manager oversee a By-Name List to track the number of individuals experiencing homelessness across the Counties and support them with resources as they are able. Housing Services does prioritize those on the By-Name List on the waiting list for community housing. The Region would benefit from ongoing support from staff in in the Township to identify individuals who are not housed so that the Housing Department can identify the most vulnerable populations and provide much-needed services.

Continued integration between the efforts of the Township of Woolwich and the Region as Service Manager is recommended as Township staff and Council look at ways to increase the supply of different forms of housing along the entirety of the housing continuum and support the needs of individuals requiring a range of housing options and complementary support services.

5. Housing Action

As a recipient of 2023 Housing Accelerator Fund monies, the Township of Woolwich had already committed to ten initiatives to remove barriers to housing development and support the rapid construction of more residential units across the Township. The completion of this Housing Needs Assessment, to identifying gaps in existing housing stock and highlighting emergent and future needs, was one of these ten initiatives.

The other nine were as follows:

Initiative 1: Development Ready Strategy for Provincially Added Urban Expansion Areas

Under this initiative, the Township committed to undertaking a Secondary Plan for Breslau, which is poised to receive much of the residential growth, engage a consultant to identify infrastructure needs across the Township, including servicing and transportation, complete identified infrastructure upgrades to ensure there is sufficient land that is development ready, and pre-zoning strategic lands to encourage greater density, a variety of built form and expedite development within the Provincially added urban expansion area. The Secondary Plan is currently underway.

Initiative 2: Establish a Framework for the Development of Underutilized Township Lands

Building upon its initiative in 2022-3 which provided surplus Township land at 28 South Street in Elmira to the non-profit Beyond Housing for a forthcoming below market 24-unit townhouse development, the Township committed to developing a framework for the disposition of underutilized Township lands. This framework would provide metrics upon which to review the properties to determine if they are underutilized and thus the lands would be suitable candidates for residential development, much needed community amenities, or a combination of both through a mixed-use project. The Township will undertake pre-development studies for the land, such as record of site condition, environmental impact studies, transportation plans and survey, as pre-zone the land if required to ensure it is development ready. A request for proposal (RFP) will be issued for each development-ready site to any interested developers with viable proposals for redevelopment.

Initiative 3: Comprehensive Transportation Plan

The Township has engaged a consultant to complete a Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Once completed, this plan will identify key sites requires for transit ready strategies which the Township will pre-designate to be ready for the demands of continued growth and pressure on existing and planning transit services. The Official Plan and Zoning By-law will also be amended as required with supportive policies to complement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Initiative 4: Expedited Review with Dedicated Service for Affordable Housing

Under this initiative, the Township will develop a framework for fast-tracked review of planning and building permit applications for affordable and attainable housing development. Key actions will include hiring staff as well as creating an educational program regarding the integration of affordable and attainable housing in developments. Further recommendations on moving this initiative forward can be found in Section 6.

Initiative 5: Creation of Mixed-Use Development Design Guidelines

The Township will issue an RFP for the creation of Mixed-Use Development Guidelines and retain a consultant to develop said Design Guideline for the Township. The establishment of additional mixed-use development within the Township of Woolwich is critical to their strategy of diversifying the housing stock and creating units within the villages that are walkable to services and retail, especially when considering the increased cost of both land and construction. The incorporation of mixed-use development will allow for the inclusion of much needed gentle density, as well as the addition of additional amenities that are very desired by residents, as confirmed through community survey data. The establishment of a Design Guidelines will provide clear direction to both developers and Township staff, thereby shortening the pre-development timeline through clear and upfront parameters and expectations.

In developing the Mixed-Use Development Guidelines, the retained consultant should look at successful projects across the country where attainable residential units and even deeply affordable units were incorporated above retail space, medical plazas and even public buildings such as libraries. Whenever possible, AODA compliant or barrier free units should be considered as part of these mixed-use developments to help meet the immense need for compact, affordable and accessible residential units for seniors and adults with mobility concerns to live close to necessary amenities and retail, and age in place.

The Township could consider entertaining partnerships with affordable housing developers that would incorporate affordable housing design ideas with new/necessary community services facilities. An example of this could be a 4-5 story apartment complex for seniors and low-income wage earners with RGI units with a main floor public library, medical clinic and/or day-care facility. Existing integrated developments (see the “Campus” project in Orillia) serve as a good example of how this can be championed by municipality, in partnership with community partners and the private sector.

Initiative 6: Encourage the Development of Accessory Residential Units

This initiative involves various targeted actions to promote and encourage development of accessory residential units (ARUs) as a means of increasing the available rental stock in a timely manner through the use of existing infrastructure and the renovation of existing units. Key actions include: updating the Zoning By-law to permit increased flexibility for ARUs (ex. size, height, setbacks, etc.); marketing, communication and education to encourage the construction of accessory residential units in existing and new homes; development of an informational brochure and clearly laid out application process, with sample drawings; and recognizing existing accessory residential units foregoing the regular disincentive of additional fees for works prior to permit approvals. This will ensure existing units are safe for residents and in conformance with the Building Code.

The Province of Ontario has introduced legislative changes through Bill 185 that significantly impact the development of Accessory Residential Units. This intent of this change is to address the housing crisis by making it easier for homeowners to build additional units on their properties. Under these new rules, homeowners can now build up to three residential units on fully serviced lots (i.e., lots with municipal water and wastewater services) without needing to apply for rezoning. This aligns with revisions to provincial policies that permit greater density on serviced lots.

Uptake on ARU construction may also be increased with additional homeowner education and information sharing around development opportunities, landlord-tenant regulations and the benefits and value of Accessory Residential Units, coach houses and garden suites to both the property owner and the wider community.

The Township may wish to consider including the brochure or FAQ document in a municipal newsletter or property tax mail-out and should display it at the Township office and all local building supply centres. They should also consider hosting an information session or workshop on “How to Create an ARU”.

Initiative 7: Development of a Rental Housing Promotion Program

There exists 44.4 hectares of vacant properties across the Township that are serviced and have been draft approved for a minimum of five years, with no submissions for building permits due to recent market conditions. This land alone could accommodate nearly 1,000 units of residential units that fit the need for modest, affordable starter homes or much needed residential rental units.

The Township has committed to a Rental Housing Promotion program aimed jumpstart construction on these medium density blocks in the form of much-needed rental housing. Since much of the pre-development work has already been completed for these sites, this offers a way to meet demand quickly and efficiently. Through the waiving of Planning fees and a per unit financial incentive, the construction of purpose-built rentals will be incentivized on these sites. Key actions will include waiving planning fees for the construction of purpose-built rentals; financial incentives, initially through HAF monies for each unit constructed with alternative funding sources sought beyond the three years to support the continuation of the program; and education regarding the benefits of purpose-built rentals both for prospective developers and the community at large.

Through the key informant interviews completed as part of this Housing Needs Assessment and the intersectoral focus group, it was noted that many existing developers with landholdings locally are not keen to operate rental housing long-term, preferring to build ownership units. That said, there are also several non-profits in the community that are successfully operating rental housing and dedicated seniors' housing that have extensive waiting lists and the capacity to operate more units but do not have the human resources necessary to take on a new build or expansion. There may opportunities here for the Township to facilitate meaningful partnerships wherein developers can construct multi-unit residential buildings, making use of the Rental Housing Promotion program, and sell or lease the units to community organizations that can manage the buildings long-term. The Township may also need to attract new rental companies to the villages as needed to support the demand for additional attainable rental units.

In the development of this program, Township staff should seek feedback from developers through the Housing Developer's Roundtable (see Section 6.1 below) and local non-profit housing leaders to ensure that the structure of the program considers the economic realities of the current construction market and life cycle of a build, as well as the rental housing need and complementary supports that may be helpful for prospective tenants. Affordability thresholds for rental housing may need to be considered, the securing of rent supplements from the Region of Waterloo, and complementary in-home support services and public transport connections. The Township should also consider making the financial incentive a per-bedroom incentive rather than a per unit incentive to encourage the construction of larger rental units (3 bedroom+), the increasing demand for which is explained in Section 3.4.

If done well, this incentive program could be extended beyond the immediately identified parcels, encouraging a building typology and density that has not historically found strong footing within the Township and help to generate viable stock for non-profit

housing providers and ongoing partnerships between for-profit builders and local non-profit housing providers.

Initiative 8: Fast Tracking Municipal Land Program for Affordable and Attainable Housing

The initiative, a partnership with the Region of Waterloo and other area municipalities, will increase the supply of affordable, attainable and market rate multi-unit housing for both ownership and rental. A Region-wide governance framework will be utilized to select several sites that will be brought through the Rapid Building Sites program for housing. An Advisory Body made up of representatives from all area municipalities and the Region of Waterloo will be formed to establish criteria for land to be included in the program, a shared streamlined approvals framework, financial incentives package, region-wide procurement framework, and agreed upon implementation model with the required development partners.

Initiative 9: Comprehensive Zoning By-Law Update to Permit Four Units ‘As of Right’ in R3 Zones or Higher

The Township will undertake updates to the Township’s zoning by-law to permit 4 units as of right within R3 or higher zones. Per feedback from community consultation, the Township may also wish to consider updates to provide additional development options as of right, ability to allow people to age in place.

This Housing Needs Assessment, the last of the Township’s ten initiatives under the Housing Accelerator Fund, endeavours to provide the data needed for well-informed land use planning, building, and other administrative initiatives that remove barriers to development and ensure the right forms of housing are constructed to meet local need.

Section 6 below outlines several additional actions that the Township may consider undertaking to streamline new residential development and provide complementary community services to ensure that the housing continuum serves the needs of Woolwich residents and that everyone is able to find a home to call their own.

6. Recommendations

The nine additional recommendations below support the goal to ***provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing types and densities that will meet the projected housing needs of the community.***

6.1 Advocacy, Awareness & Outreach

Recommendation 1: Utilize the Development Liaison Committee to Gather Feedback and Share Housing Resources

Several local developers and builders indicated a willingness to meet with the municipal staff and “talk through” some proformas to determine what types and combinations of units could be incorporated into new subdivisions (including more flexibility in zoning by-laws) to meet the needs of current and future residents while maintain financial viability for builders.

This space could also serve as a forum for discussing local needs, introducing new policies and programs such as the Rental Housing Promotion Program noted above, and providing developers and builders with municipal or community-driven resources and information.

Action Item 1.1: Add the above items to the workplan and agendas for the Development Liaison Committee.

Action Item 1.2: Develop sample subdivision layouts with a diversity of building typologies that are workable for local developers.

Recommendation 2: Host a “Meeting of the Minds” System Integration Summit

Community engagement highlighted the need for increased cross-sectoral engagement and partnerships. Leveraging local assets and knowledge pertaining to supportive housing and support services could better serve populations with special needs and promote housing stability and create additional residential units within the Township.

A ‘system integration summit’ would include private, non-profit and government organizations with the aim of developing inter-sectoral partnerships that would enable local service agencies, non-profits and developers to leverage existing assets to build more housing. It could also serve as a forum for marketing the Rental Housing Promotion Program, underutilized and development-ready municipal lands, and other housing-related partnership opportunities.

Action Item 2.1: Host a housing summit, perhaps in partnership with the Region, to present the housing landscape, share knowledge and experience, and to raise awareness of how Township residents and housing partners can contribute to the development of a more diverse housing supply, including affordable housing.

Action Item 2.2: Continue to facilitate partnerships following the event among non-profit and for-profit residential developers, community agencies, private owners, and faith groups to renovate, redevelop, or convert vacant or underutilized land or buildings to increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing. This may include vacant homes, commercial property, motels, inns and hotels, underutilized parking lots, and vacant or underutilized property owned by faith-based groups.

Recommendation 3: Greater Collaboration with the Region of Waterloo as Service Manager

No single level of government can solve the housing supply challenges in the Township of Woolwich alone. Meaningful increases to local supply of purpose-built rental units, dedicated seniors housing, affordable and workforce housing, and other gaps in the local housing stock will only be possible with continuous and meaningful intersectoral collaboration between the Region as the Service Manager and the Township.

Action Item 3.1: Enhance continuous and ongoing collaboration with the Region to ensure alignment and efficiency in addressing housing and homelessness issues. The Region has indicated that they are interested in undertaking a Rural Homelessness Strategy. The Township of Woolwich should partner with the Region on this project. It is anticipated that as the population continues to grow across the region, and the cost of living becomes more expensive, the challenges facing the Township will change and become more complex.

Action Item 3.2: Jointly advocate for increased provincial and federal support and funding to address the unique housing challenges faced by the Region, as well as expansion of and adjustments to the rent supplement program to better align with market rents and support low-income households within the Township of Woolwich.

Additionally, joint advocacy for stronger rent control measures at the provincial level could support the development of legislative changes that would have a positive impact on renters within the Township. The Township should also provide support for any rental protection policies and programs that the Region of Waterloo may undertake to preserve existing rental stock in the Township.

Action Item 3.3: The Township of Woolwich should consider participating in the co-creation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness by joining the Co-Creator Table. In doing so, they will be able to get a strong sense of the challenges across the Region and the pressures anticipated in the coming years as the Region's population continues to grow and put pressure on the townships. They will also be well positioned to advocate at the regional level for more support, services and transit connections to their village centres.

6.2 Policy & Zoning

Recommendation 4: Development of a Surplus Lands Disposal Policy or Procedure

The Township can develop a Surplus Lands Disposal policy or procedure for adoption by Council and consider the use of municipally owned sites for high-impact community projects.

Township staff should maintain a short-list of high-impact community projects that would address gaps identified in the Housing Needs Assessment and community groups that can support their development and ongoing operation. These could include, but are not limited to, below market rate seniors' housing, deeply affordable housing and RGI units, modest accessible units, and larger family-sized rental units and attainable ownership units.

As residential properties are obtained by the Township, they can be considered for these high-impact projects and sold at below market value for affordable and/or support housing.

Action Item 4.1: Develop a Surplus Lands Disposal policy or procedure for adoption by Council and consider the disposal of municipally owned sites for high-impact community projects first and foremost.

Recommendation 5: Development of a Municipal Capital Facilities By-Law

The Township of Woolwich is a member of an intermunicipal group with the Cities and the Region of Waterloo that is working to develop affordable housing incentives. It is recommended that the Township continue to participate in this group and consider the development of a Municipal Capital Facilities By-law if required to implement the initiatives put forward by this group.

A Municipal Capital Facilities By-law is a legal tool that allows municipalities to enter into agreements with external parties for the provision of municipal capital facilities, including but not limited to housing. Assistance for municipal capital facilities from a municipality can include:

- Granting or lending money
- Transferring or leasing property
- Guaranteed borrowing
- Property tax exemptions or reductions

Action 5.1: Develop a Municipal Capital Facilities By-law as required in order to implement affordable housing initiatives.

Action 5.2: Consider municipal property tax exemptions for new affordable housing to complement the Region of Waterloo's Property Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing Program.

Recommendation 6: Community Improvement Plan (CIP) with Enhancements for Affordable Housing and Brownfield Redevelopment

Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) can be used as a tool to offer incentives that encourage development of affordable housing, renovations and conversions of properties from non-residential to residential as well as brownfield redevelopment. Incentives could include the waiving of application and permit fees, cash-in-lieu of parkland, and tax increment-based incentive grants, taking the full life cycle of a build and building management into consideration.

Tax increment-based incentive grants (TIBIGs) are a common tool used within the context of CIPs in Ontario to encourage new development and redevelopment in specific areas. These can be incorporated into Affordable Housing CIPs to incentivize the development of designated affordable units within new residential development projects that meet certain affordability criteria and address gaps in the local housing stock identified in the Township's Housing Needs Assessment.

TIBIGs are based on the concept of tax increment financing, where the increase in property taxes (the "tax increment") that results from the increased assessment value of a property is used to finance the incentives provided to the developer, often in the form of a grant. For example, a developer may receive a grant equivalent to the increase in property taxes for a set period, effectively reducing their tax burden and making the project more financially viable. While the Township would forgo some tax revenue as a result of new residential development or intensification in the short term, the long-term benefits of increased property value, more affordable housing units and other associated social benefits would be a net positive.

Action Item 6.1: Consider developing an Affordable Housing CIP for which the project area aligns with settlement area boundaries in their entirety, ensuring that all developers have access to the program and that affordable housing is not concentrated in certain areas within the villages.

Action Item 6.2: Incorporate brownfield revitalization incentives into the CIP to provide incentives for the revitalization of brownfields in serviced settlement areas for residential

and mixed-use development where appropriate. The program should leverage the province's Brownfields Tax Incentive Program.

Action Item 6.3: Develop a promotional plan for the new affordable housing CIP to increase uptake rates among builders and ensure the program is fully subscribed. Extensive consultation with local developers, for-profit builders, and non-profits throughout the development of the CIP will also be helpful in this regard to ensure broad community support and appetite for the unveiling of the program.

6.3 Innovation

Recommendation 7: Promote and Accept a Range of Housing Models

Promoting and allowing more housing types that serve both moderate-income households such as first-time home buyers and empty nesters wanting to downsize as well as vulnerable populations is an inclusive approach to ensuring affordable options are available to all in the community.

Action Item 7.1: There is a need for smaller, affordable homes for seniors and single persons. Evaluating options for alternative forms of housing construction such as manufactured housing, prefabricated housing, and tiny homes can expand housing options available in the community. These models, once aligned with municipal services, are viable and could be an option for community groups to develop and manage. Ensure enabling policies are in place in through the Township's Official Plan Review.

Action Item 7.2: Promoting infill developments and plans of subdivision with increased housing density and a variety of unit types (e.g., duplexes, or ARUs). Develop a streamlined application process for site plan. The Township should consider more flexible as of right zoning in subdivisions in order to allow developers to move forward with alternatives to single detached homes.

Action Item 7.3: Promote sustainable building practices and energy-efficient housing to ensure long-term viability and affordability.

Action Item 7.4: Utilize information from the Development Liaison Committee (see Recommendation 1 above) to encourage developers to consider housing forms that increase density within settlement areas and offer modest footprints and diversity of built form. Any plans of subdivision going forward should provide a variety of housing types which may include, but are not limited to townhomes, stacked towns, low-rise apartment buildings, tiny home cul-de-sacs, or detached homes with roughed in ARUs that can be completed as part of the new home sale, or finished later by the homeowner should they so desire.

Municipal staff should review proposed plans of subdivision for opportunities to incorporate low or medium-rise apartment development (where none is proposed) including the requirement for their development earlier on in the phasing of construction.

6.4 Monitoring and Process Improvements

Recommendation 8: E-permitting System (online portal) and integrated development application software for Housing Development (Building Permits and Planning Applications)

The implementation of an E-permitting system through an online portal for applications and fee payments would increase capacity for Township staff to manage the increased volume of planning applications in an expedited manner. A need for this was a strong refrain throughout the community and developer consultation for this Housing Needs Assessment.

A common refrain among developers was that if the Township is serious about addressing housing needs, they need to streamline development approval and permitting processes and revisit the cap on the maximum number of residential building permits allowed per annum.

It was also emphasized that there are several pre-zoned sites ready for development. Requests were made by community organizations, for-profit and non-profit developers and residents alike that the Township find ways to expedite these approvals and get shovels in the ground.

Action Item 8.1: Adopt a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) or use of an online portal where developers can upload materials, benefit from quick digital circulation and online e-permitting and payments.

Action Item 8.2: Aim for faster circulation and turn-around times, particularly for infill and high-social impact projects that address key gaps in the Township's housing stock: affordable rental and ownership units; dedicated seniors housing (all types); housing with supports; and larger rental units for families.

Recommendation 9: Development of Tracking Tools

Develop tools for evaluation of the housing goals and objectives both for Housing Accelerator Fund reporting purposed and to inform strategic priorities for the Township of Woolwich. Staff will be able to use these tools to assess progress and inform further action, ensuring a return on investment. The tools would track progress and be reported to Council and the community annually. In addition, this would become an advocacy document to support communication about local needs to the Region and other senior levels of government.

Action Item 9.1: Update the Housing Needs Assessment periodically as new Census data and information from the County becomes available. Monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed.

Action Item 9.2: The Township Planning and Building Department should prepare an annual report to Council on the implementation of HAF actions and other recommendation as outlined in this Housing Needs Assessment.

7. Summary

The Township of Woolwich has experienced consistent population growth, with an 8% increase between 2016 and 2021, bringing the total population to 26,999. This growth has placed substantial pressure on the local housing market, which is characterized by a limited variety of housing types. Approximately 75.8% of the housing stock consists of single-detached homes, which does not align with the increasing demand for more diverse housing options, particularly attainable, affordable and accessible units for seniors, young families, and smaller households.

Per the 2024 Development Charges Background Study completed by Watson & Associates Economics Ltd., Woolwich is expected to continue its rapid growth through the next ten years. It is expected that the market preference from single detached homes will shift more toward medium and higher density housing options due to rising home prices, and provincial planning policies that encourage more compact built form, including but not limited to more affordable townhomes, row housing, and medium to higher density apartments targeting older adults ready to downsize, working professionals, and families requiring greater affordability and a range of housing supports.

The Township of Woolwich should work collaboratively and proactively with upper-tier partners, local housing providers and builders to ensure that the Township can support the development of a suitable range and mix of housing to meet the needs of current and future residents. Demand still exists for single detached homes, though through interviews with local builders, we learned that several are already planning to build more compact housing options going forward. Increased zoning flexibility would go a long way in supporting the creation of missing middle ownership housing.

Key housing challenges include:

Affordability: Around 18.4% of Woolwich households live in housing that is either unaffordable, inadequate, or unsuitable. Of these, 13.7% spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs. This issue is more severe among renters, with 34.5% of renter households facing affordability challenges.

A Lack of Rental Housing: Rental units make up only 16% of the housing stock, compared to the provincial average of 31%. Additionally, the vacancy rate in the township is extremely low, at just 0.7%, further exacerbating the rental affordability crisis.

A Diverse Population: Woolwich has a unique demographic profile, with a relatively young median age of 40 years and 27.2% of the population under the age of 20. However, 17.6% of the population is over the age of 65, signaling a growing need for seniors' housing. Additionally, larger family sizes, especially among Mennonite communities and newcomers to Canada, highlights the need for more three-bedroom or larger units.

Future Housing Demand: The Township is projected to grow to 36,433 residents by 2034, necessitating a significant increase in housing stock. Housing stock is expected to grow by 24% for single and semi-detached homes, but there is also a strong need for an increase in multiple dwellings (120% growth) and apartment units (127% growth) to meet future demand. The Township is encouraged to embrace flexible zoning regulations and encourage a diversity of housing typologies for both infill and new development to meet the diverse needs of current and future residents.

The Township identified 10 excellent initiatives to diversify their housing stock and encourage the rapid construction of additional residential units as part of the Housing Accelerator Fund application. Additional recommendations for housing action coming out of the findings of this Housing Needs Assessment to build on the initiatives already slated for implementation include:

Recommendation 1: Utilize the Development Liaison Committee to Gather Feedback and Share Housing Resources

Recommendation 2: Host a “Meeting of the Minds” System Integration Summit

Recommendation 3: Collaboration with the Region of Waterloo as Service Manager

Recommendation 4: Development of a Surplus Lands Disposal Policy or Procedure

Recommendation 5: Development of a Municipal Capital Facilities By-Law

Recommendation 6: Community Improvement Plan for Affordable Housing and Brownfield Redevelopment

Recommendation 7: Promote and Accept a Range of Housing Models

Recommendation 8: E-permitting System or Planning Applications and Building Permits

Recommendation 9: Development of Tracking Tools

With continued growth anticipated for the Township of Woolwich in the coming years, and a strong housing market showing signs of a need for more modest and compact forms of housing, it is an opportune time for Township staff and Council to take stock of their steady growth, the gaps in the market, and future need.

There is an urgent need for deeply affordable rental housing as average monthly rental rates, home prices and interest rates have increased. The data reveals a continued strain on the ability of the Township's housing market to provide affordable, suitable, and adequate housing for its residents, specifically for the 25% of households in Woolwich earning less than \$60,000 annually, local seniors on fixed incomes, and those required additional housing supports. Residents most in need continue to face precarious housing conditions, where those earning minimum wage are virtually shut out of affordable housing according to CMHC statistics of average market rent. As such, an income-based definition of affordable housing will be necessary when creating plans and policies to meaningfully address the housing affordability crisis in Woolwich.

The Township should focus on permitting a range of housing types along the housing continuum, with an emphasis on addressing the acute need for:

- Attainable ownership housing, including smaller, modest units within reach of first-time home buyers and those looking to downsize.
- Rental housing at various price points, including deeply affordable RGI units.
- Fully accessible 1 and 2-bedroom rental units, as well as larger 3-bedroom+ rental units to accommodate large families and multigenerational households.
- Attainable row housing, ground level units in stacked towns and medium to higher density apartments with accessibility features and elevators targeting older adults.
- Infill developments and subdivisions with increased housing density and a variety of unit types (e.g., stacked towns, duplexes, and ARUs).

Collaborative partnerships between local service providers and non-profits, the Township of Woolwich, and the Region of Waterloo as Service Manager are recommended as Township staff and Council look at ways to increase the supply of housing and associated supports within the Township and support the needs of individuals requiring a range of housing options and supports along the housing continuum. By acting in the areas that the Township is best suited to lead, staff and Council can work towards a more inclusive, diverse, and sustainable housing environment that meets the needs of all its residents. A proactive approach will help mitigate the existing challenges of housing affordability, supply, and support services, ultimately enhancing the quality of life within the Township.

Appendix A: “What We Heard” Community Engagement Summary

Introduction

The Township of Woolwich has contracted Tim Welch Consulting Inc. (TWC) to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment in order to assess and analyze the current and future housing requirements of the Township. The detailed demographic data, housing metrics, and insight from concerned parties across the municipality captured in the Housing Needs Assessment is intended to guide public sector decision-making in land use planning, building, and administrative initiatives. A series of stakeholder engagement activities were conducted throughout July and August 2024 to inform the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment. This report summarizes the experiences and insights shared by community organizations, local service providers, residents, and partners in housing development. Engagement activities were aimed at identifying gaps in the existing housing stock across the Township, opportunities and challenges around future residential development, and concrete actions the Township can undertake to help streamline development and meet the housing-related needs of current and future residents of the Township of Woolwich.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were held with 14 individuals across 9 virtual interview calls and included Township of Woolwich staff, as well as Waterloo Region Housing Services staff, leaders from local non-profit organizations, area developers, planners and community leaders. Each interview was conducted virtually over the course of six weeks from early July to mid-August 2024.

Organizations	Interviews
Township of Woolwich Staff	2
Waterloo Region Housing Services Staff	5
Non-Profit Sector Representatives	3
Local Developers and Planners	3
Ontario Federation of Agriculture	1
Total	14

Community Housing Needs Survey

A Community Housing Needs Survey was hosted on the Township’s Engage Woolwich platform throughout the summer months. Paper copies of the survey were also made available at several municipal buildings throughout the Township for members of the community who preferred to complete a hard copy of the survey. A total of 130 responses were received.

Of the 130 respondents, the majority were between the ages of 30 and 64, with twenty-four respondents aged 65 and older and seven respondents below the age of 30. Of the survey respondents 71% lived in Elmira, a combine 17.4% lived in Breslau and St. Jacobs, 9.1% lived in other communities across Woolwich, and 3 individual respondents completed the survey who were not yet Woolwich residents, but we interested in relocating to the Township. There was one respondent who had to leave the Township in pursuit of more affordable housing elsewhere.

Interestingly, the household composition of respondents closely mirrored the household composition of the Township as a whole, per 2021 Census data and there was a broad distribution of respondents across household income levels. Most of the respondents had resided in Woolwich for over ten years (66%) and were homeowners (82%).

The survey responses received provided helpful input into the types of residential units lacking in the Township and the pressures many respondents and their families are facing in finding stable, suitable and affordable housing.

There is a tension evident between rapid growth from urban transplants and the changing expectations and culture in Woolwich. Amongst community survey respondents, there were two very noticeable trends: one group of survey respondents were less concerned with affordability and more diversity of built form. They did express concerns with the perceived level of safety within their neighbourhoods and were interested in the provision of more amenities and services in their communities, particularly in Breslau. The overwhelming majority of respondents though, expressed concerns with rising costs of living in the area, the lack of attainable rental and ownership options for housing locally, and the need for more supports for newcomers to Canada, young people looking to establish themselves and secure affordable accommodation, and above all, local seniors.

Developer Survey

A dedicated survey for the development community was also created on SurveyMonkey and circulated to local developers by email as well as through the Waterloo Region Homebuilders' Association network. Responses were received from 10 prominent local builders, all of whom have been working in the Waterloo Region for ten years or more.

There was a great deal of alignment between the survey respondents' submissions and some clear recommendations emerged for actions the Township should consider as a means of supporting the construction of more homes, faster.

Focus Group

A Focus Group was held on August 29th with 12 invitees from in attendance, representing non-profit community support agencies, for profit builders, non-profit housing providers, a local credit union, Waterloo Region Homebuilders' Association, the

Region of Waterloo, and Township staff. Following a brief presentation by Tim Welch Consulting Inc. (TWC) on the scope and intention of the Housing Needs Assessment being undertaken, lively inter-sectoral discussions were had and comments recorded by TWC staff at each table. Questions to catalyze discussion included:

- What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the Township of Woolwich with respect to housing?
- What changes to the housing system would make it easier for you to access housing in Woolwich for those you serve and/or build housing that buyers and renters are looking for?
- What type of housing would be ideal and why? Is it a departure from what is currently being built?
- What recommendations do you have for the Township for future housing action to meet the needs of all residents current and future?

Discussions helped to clarify the challenges facing both for-profit and non-profit developers in getting projects underway, as well as the varying perspectives related to the housing continuum in the Township. The housing continuum or system speaks to the housing supply in a community that responds to a range of housing needs.

Key Themes

Several key themes, as outlined below, were noted during discussions with local municipal representatives, area service providers, developers, planners and individual residents and concerned parties who agreed to an interview, attended the focus group or completed one of the two surveys.

Role of the Township of Woolwich and A Commitment to Action

There was a desire for the Township of Woolwich to clearly define their role in addressing the housing situation as it stands today. It was cautioned that they should work as a team player with the Region of Waterloo and neighbouring area municipalities across the Region to achieve maximum impact as they work to provide a wider range of housing options. There is an opportunity for greater communication and coordination in terms of resource sharing, partnership, and more targeted and impactful advocacy efforts.

The Township can work to achieve greater density and a desirable mix of built form through zoning, establish policies and procedures that incentivize the construction of diverse forms of housing, engage in thoughtful advocacy in partnership with the Region and organizations like Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), and work at facilitating relationships between different interested parties to promote inter-sectoral collaboration. Further, planning proactively for future growth will be key to ensuring long-term positive impacts from their efforts, especially

with respect to infrastructure, transit, and complete, walkable communities in Elmira, St. Jacobs and Breslau.

Lack of Appropriate and Affordable Housing Supply

The Township of Woolwich is struggling with a lack of affordability, availability and accessibility in their housing system. The situation has worsened in recent years due to inflationary pressures, higher interest rates and significant population growth within the Township. Service providers are citing an increase in demand for services and are stretched thin.

A lack of affordable rental stock and competition for units is placing increased pressure on the community. Limited options for individuals looking to downsize or upsize has essentially bottlenecked the housing system and seems to be forcing people to look outside of their desired community for suitable housing options.

There is a demand for greater diversity among housing stock, though single and semi-detached homes continue to sell reasonably well and draw a significant number of newer residents out to the Township. Rental vacancy rates are very low, and there is clear demand for affordable rental units with stable and predictable rental rates year over year.

Among survey respondents—largely current resident of the Township—the need for more seniors’ units that are modest, affordable, and allow for aging in place in the villages was emphasized. The Township can and should facilitate the development of gentle density, and seniors-type accommodations in proximity to services. Other key needs included affordable family-sized units, affordable starter homes for those entering the market, and even ‘tiny homes’.

Builders shared that there is still demand for single detached homes, but due to rising construction costs and interest rates, they are seeing greater demand for more modest footprints, as well as models that allow for the inclusion of roughed-in accessory dwelling units that can be completed and rented out to help offset mortgage costs or accommodate multi-generational living arrangements. In the current market, detached homes are selling more slowly than in previous years due to the higher price points. Stacked towns with four levels, with the entry level units fully accessible are selling more quickly.

Through key informant interviews and survey responses, it was clear that seniors are staying longer in their existing homes than they might otherwise be due to the costs associated with downsizing; many are “over-housed”, living in larger houses than they require or desire due to a lack of available alternatives within their desired community. There is an acute need for affordable, accessible bungalows, rowhouses, small condominiums and purpose-built rentals with elevators for older adults looking to downsize. Many stories were shared of seniors are being forced to leave the Township due to the lack of affordable housing options. A strain on in-home support services that

support older adults aging in place was also apparent. The Township should be aware of this pressure and support the Region and local non-profit service providers in building capacity to support more residents aging in place in the coming years.

In terms of market housing, there was an expressed interest in small bungalows, townhomes, and stacked townhomes at more attainable price points, as well as more purpose-built rental units. There was a desire for the Township and local builders to explore creative housing options, such as units with rear lane accessory dwelling units (ADUs), mixed-use developments, and more flexible zoning to add more housing typologies in new subdivisions. There is also a shortage of accessible units in the Township, which could be incorporated into apartments with elevators or ground level units in stacked townhomes.

It was also noted that the Township should be aware that two distinct strategies are needed: one that includes actions to stimulate residential development and help address gaps in the housing stock, including but not limited to “affordable” market housing, and another to look at how the Township can collaborate with local service providers and the Region of Waterloo as Service Manager to address the growing need for deeply affordable social housing and complementary support services which are overextended at present.

With respect to prospective affordable housing development projects and the expansion of community outreach and rural support services, a lack of human resources—both professional and volunteers—was seen as a significant factor inhibiting expansion while demand is expected to grow.

“Most of our friends are all in the same position, expenses and cost of living has made things very hard for everyone.”

In the past the strongest need was for deeply affordable 1-bedroom apartments. This need still exists now but there is also an increasing need for larger unit sizes 3 bedroom + to accommodate larger families that are struggling, including newcomers to Canada who often have large families and larger low German families who struggle to get into the ownership market and need larger homes.

The need for deeply affordable housing is one that private builders cannot fill. Coordination between all partners in development, including the Region as Service Manager, and federal and provincial support for projects that offer deep affordability will be crucial. It was also a common refrain throughout the community consultation that deeply affordable units need to be integrated communities near services and amenities.

A few comments were received that noted the importance of protecting older properties with rental units. It was suggested that Township staff look at what Toronto and other jurisdictions are already doing and speak with the Region of Waterloo around best practices that could be replicable in the Township to protect existing rental stock.

There was community demand for the Township to enter partnerships and do what they can to redevelop brownfields throughout the villages for mixed use housing, medical centres, and other necessary amenities. Specific sites were mentioned several times throughout key informant interviews and among survey respondents including, but not limited to the old Elmira swimming pool, empty lots on Church Street, Kiwanis House, the old Riverside School, Trinity United Church, and the previous site of Freiburger's.

Collaboration and Advocacy

It was clear through the engagement with Region of Waterloo Housing staff that they, as the Service Manager for the housing system, are interested in being an active participant in addressing housing concerns and willing to work in partnership with the Township on focused actions. The Region of Waterloo is responsible for all homelessness and housing programming, including social assistance programming, homelessness service responses, childcare and employment supports.

The Township of Woolwich should consider participating in the co-creation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness by joining the Co-Creator Table. In doing so, they will be able to get a strong sense of the challenges across the Region and the pressures anticipated in the coming years as the Region's population continues to grow and put pressure on the townships. They will also be well positioned to advocate at the regional level for more support, services and transit connections to their village centres.

The Region of Waterloo is also interested in undertaking a Rural Homelessness Strategy. They are open and interested in partnering with the rural townships, including Woolwich, on this project. It is anticipated that as the population continues to grow across the region, and the cost of living becomes more expensive, the challenges facing the Township will change and become more complex. Indeed, it was noted in discussions with community leaders at the food bank that they are seeing an increasing in the number of ownership households and new residents in Breslau accessing the local food bank as interest rates have increased and homeowners have felt squeezed as a result.

In order to meet the acute need for deeply affordable housing in the Township, advocacy for funding from the Province and Federal government and policy changes is necessary. The Township can collaborate with the Region of Waterloo, Rural Ontario Institute (ROI), and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) on this front for greater impact.

Streamlining the Approvals Process

A common refrain among developers was that if the Township is serious about addressing housing needs, they need to streamline development approval and permitting processes and remove the cap on the maximum number of residential building permits allowed per annum. It was reported that the planning approval and permitting timelines in Woolwich tend to take longer than in neighbouring jurisdictions, and the permit caps prevent housing construction that is otherwise ready to go. Both of

these factors end up costing the developer more in interest costs and thereby impact housing affordability.

Positive feedback around municipal efforts to work with developers was also received. One builder cited a positive arrangement in which they received a higher allocation of units in exchange for providing designated affordable units in their stacked townhomes. The money saved through lower interest rates could offset the cost of incorporating additional units at a below market rate in the development. Further, the Township collects development charges (DCs) at the time of building permit as opposed to at the time of application, as in other jurisdictions. This measure does assist builders financially and should be maintained.

“The focus on process has sometimes overshadowed the emphasis on deliverables, specifically the timely creation of new homes. While we understand the importance of following proper procedures, streamlining these processes could help us better meet our shared goal of increasing housing supply more efficiently.”

“If Woolwich is serious about addressing housing needs, the annual development cap in Elmira and Breslau needs to be removed. Without lifting these caps, this entire study is merely window dressing and fails to address the core issue—a severe shortage of housing in the region. Removing these barriers will allow the necessary supply to meet growing demand.”

Requests were made to eliminate excess planning approvals and studies that add unnecessarily to pre-development timelines, provide options as of right, and adopt an FTP where developers can upload materials, benefit from quickly digital circulation and online e-permitting and payments. While there are application fees and incentives programs around waiving fees, and those are nice to have, ultimately time is money; the longer the process takes the more expensive things become.

It was also emphasized that there are several pre-zoned sites ready for development. Requests were made by community organizations, for-profit and non-profit developers and residents alike that the Township find ways to expedite these approvals and get shovels in the ground.

Situating New Development Appropriately to Preserve Prime Agricultural Land

The Township of Woolwich is home to some of the best farmland in the province and faces the challenge of managing rapid growth while maintaining viable agricultural land. Housing developments in Woolwich must be balanced with farmland preservation. This is a critical issue as the community expands and housing needs increase. Greenfield development should be carefully planned and situated, and infill opportunities within the downtown cores fully maximized.

Woolwich has historically been home to a large Mennonite community living in on-farm, multi-generational households. Newly married young people are looking not just for housing, but a farm. They will either expand the house on the existing family farm, or

they need to move in search of land to farm outside of the Township, especially as less farmland is available.

Many survey respondents encouraged the Township to promote and expedite infill development, gentle density and diversity of housing options in the villages over prioritizing the development of detached and semi-detached units on greenfield lands.

Concerns Around Insufficient Infrastructure and Amenities

Concerns were expressed around insufficient infrastructure, services and amenities to support greater density as the Township has worked to keep up with the significant growth in recent years. In particular, comments were made that there should be a significant investment in infrastructure and amenities in Breslau.

In addition, housing, particularly seniors housing and affordable housing, needs to be close to services, amenities and public transportation. While public transportation is available, limited existing bus routes can be challenging for residents to get to work in Waterloo/Kitchener or vice versa. It was suggested that free shuttle services need to be maintained and increased.

Disincentives for Building Affordable Housing

Despite the clear demand for more affordable housing options, local builders and developers mentioned many disincentives to build more affordable units. They noted that it is important to understand the full life cycle of housing development, from initial planning to construction and ongoing maintenance when drafting and implementing housing policies. Specifically, land and building costs across the Region render it unfeasible to construct more affordable housing. The economics of it no longer make sense and private builder cannot operate at a loss.

Builders are however, interested in incorporating a diversity of unit types wherever possible. They are seeing an uptick in interest in the models with rough ins for ADUs. Flexible zoning to accommodate rear lane products is helpful for builders and allows for more opportunities for ADUs and increases parking. Rear lane homes are also appealing to multigenerational households. There was also an openness to more stacked townhome, accessible units and small condominiums within new developments to meet the diversity of needs locally.

Among the non-profit developers, there was a unique set of challenges. There is a need for significant support from all levels of government to make below-market-value housing development—particularly those with rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units—viable. Funding agreements however, come with stringent design and reporting requirements, and unique constraints on their operating budgets post-construction. It was also noted that local government support is critical for such projects, as municipal

buy-in and financial support is often a condition for receipt of funding from higher levels of government. From the non-profit developer's perspective, the timing of municipal investment isn't as important as the overall commitment. They need certainty that they can plan around. When they apply for Provincial and Federal funding, they need to be able to demonstrate municipal commitment to the project.

Community Awareness

The face of communities across the Township is changing in many ways and there were a few concerns raised about NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) when discussions around designated affordable housing are raised. Concerns were shared about the lack of understanding about housing affordability with many residents not seeing the impact that the housing situation is having on local seniors, single parent families, those working in traditionally lower- and middle-income fields, and other households facing financial pressures in today's current market conditions. Both the Township and local community groups could assist with this through educational efforts to raise awareness about what constitutes "affordable housing" in today's market and its impact on ensuring a healthy, well-balanced community and workforce.

Summary

The "What We Heard" report for the Township of Woolwich presents community feedback gathered through surveys, key informant interviews and an inter-sectoral focus group focusing on local housing and development throughout the summer of 2024. The report underscores the need for collaboration between developers, multiple levels of government, and the community to address gaps in the local housing stock, infrastructure needs, and concerns around housing affordability as the Township's population grows.

Amid rising land and construction costs, builders are committed to adapting to changing needs by incorporating a wider range of housing types, such as stacked townhomes, ADUs and multigenerational homes, if facilitated by flexible zoning regulations. Non-profit developers face challenges in delivering affordable housing, requiring support from all levels of government. Municipal commitment is essential to secure broader funding. There is an acute need for seniors housing, accessible residential units, purpose-built rental units, and modest homes and condominiums.

Significant issues include tensions around farmland preservation and stigma around affordable housing, often due to a lack of understanding of its benefits for various vulnerable groups in the community, such as seniors, single income households, and large families, and young people looking to enter the housing market. Public education on the need for affordable housing could reduce opposition and help foster a more welcoming environment for diverse housing solutions.

The report highlights the importance of collaboration between local governments, developers, and the community as a whole to create a balanced and inclusive community with a robust and complete housing continuum that meets the needs of current and future residents of the Township of Woolwich.



Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario
90 Sheppard Avenue East, Suite 200
Toronto ON M2N 0A4
Tel.: 416-326-8700 • Fax: 416-326-8711
Toll free in Ontario: 1-800-522-2876
Inquiries: www.agco.ca/iagco
Website: www.agco.ca

Municipal Information for
Liquor Sales Licences
(including Tied House)

The information requested below is required in support of all applications for a new Liquor Sales Licence (including Tied House) or areas being added to an existing Liquor Sales Licence.

Section 1 – Application Details

Premises Name

Rural Roots Brewing Co Ltd

Premises Phone Number (include area code)

519-210-2102

Premises Address

21B Industrial Dr

City/Town

Elmira

Province

ON

Postal Code

N3B 2S2

Contact Name

Roger Lichti

Contact's Phone Number (include area code and extension)

Contact's Email Address

roger@ruralrootsbrewery.ca

Does the application for a Liquor Sales Licence (including Tied House) include indoor areas and/or outdoor areas?

- [x] Indoor Areas [x] Outdoor Areas

Section 2 – Municipal Clerk's Official Notice of Application for a Liquor Sales Licence (including Tied House) in your Municipality.

Municipal Clerk:

Please confirm the "wet/damp/dry" status below.

Name of village, town, township or city where taxes are paid.

(If the area where the establishment is located was annexed or amalgamated, provide the name that the village, town, township or city was known as.)

Elmira, Woolwich ON

Is the area where the establishment is located "wet", "damp" or "dry"? Please select one.

- [x] Wet (for spirits, beer, wine) [] Damp (for beer and wine only) [] Dry

Note: Specific concerns regarding zoning or non-compliance with by-laws must be clearly outlined in a separate submission or letter within 30 days of this notification.

Address of Municipal Office

24 Church St. W, Elmira, ON P.O. Box 158 N3B 2Z6

Name of Municipal Official

Jeff Smith

Title

Clerk

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

25/10/2024

Telephone number

(519)669-6010

Email Address

[REDACTED]

jsmith@woolwich.ca

Signature of Municipal Official





Recreation & Community Services Staff Report

Report Number:	R07-2024
Report Title:	Parks and Recreation Master Plan
Author:	Ann McArthur, Thomas van der Hoff, Marie Malcolm
Meeting Type:	Committee of the Whole Meeting
Meeting Date:	November 5, 2024
eDocs or File ID:	File
Consent Item:	No
Final Version:	Yes
Reviewed By:	Ann McArthur, Deanne Friess, John Scarfone
Final Review:	Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report R07-2024 respecting the 2024 Parks and Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

1. Approve the 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and endorse the strategic directions set out in the plan (Attachment 1);
2. Approve in principle, the need for a community park and multi-use recreation facility in Breslau and to report back to Council with a recommended site by 2028;
3. Approve in principle, the need for additional parkland and outdoor amenities in Elmira and direct staff to develop a parkland acquisition strategy by 2028;
4. Adopt the new Parks Classification system into the Township Official Plan and the Landscape and Design Guidelines; and
5. Direct staff to include the necessary policies in the Township's Official Plan and to subsequently prepare a Parkland Dedication By-law for Council's consideration in 2025 to permit the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu as a condition of development or re-development as well as using the alternative requirements, as provided for in section 42 of the Planning Act.

Background:

Council authorized staff to undertake a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assess the future needs for parkland and related amenities considering anticipated population growth within the Township. The plan will guide the Township on parkland acquisition in new developments or redevelopment within the built-up area, determining the appropriate

park sizes, specifying the form, function and types of amenities/programming that would be accommodated, and identifying requirements for larger community parks.

The project faced delays early in the process associated with the pandemic and staff resources. Development Services restarted the project with NPG Consultants, taking on some of the analysis including the Needs Assessment, Background Study and draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) while continuing with their work on the Official Plan. The project scope did expand to include additional aspects relating to recreation but did not include a fulsome review of indoor facilities, services or the provision of recreation programs. This original scope was needed to update the Official Plan accordingly and include the appropriate policies specific to parkland and parkland dedication. The plan was funded through provincial modernization funding.

The process involved evidence-based research that included a review of best practices, trends in parks and recreation, demographics, community feedback, stakeholder surveys, policy analysis, and an inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities. The Master Plan provides a guide for staff in both Recreation and Community Services and Development Services on various recreational needs while broadly laying out how to address those needs and maintain service levels in the urban communities to 2051.

The Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation amenities provide significant benefits to communities and are a vital public service. In recent years, there has been a shift in planning for complete communities that offer opportunities to play, live, shop and work, with a strong emphasis providing recreational amenities and programming, as well as community connectivity.

Parks and recreation systems contribute to health and well-being, facilitating social interaction, building community spirit, providing a sense of space and connectivity. Parks and recreation provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share ideas, and experience diversity. These opportunities help to build a strong sense of belonging to one's community.

The benefits of parks and recreation are widely recognized including through evidence-based national/provincial charters such as Parks for All, the Framework for Recreation in Canada, and the Ontario Culture Strategy.

Comments:

Development of the Master Plan involved research that included a review of best practices, trends in parks and recreation, demographics, community feedback, policy analysis, and an assessment/inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities. The needs assessment evaluated gaps in services, identifying emerging recreation needs which can differ in various communities.

Staff recommend that Council approve the 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and all service levels, recommendations, best practices and guidelines as presented, and direct staff to work to implement various action items of the Master Plan through the annual work plan and budget process.

While approving the recommendations contained within this report and the Master Plan are important strategic directions for Council to support, any major future projects, recommendations and/or feasibility studies would come back to Council for formal approval either through a staff report or during the annual budget process.

Planning Context and Implications

Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

The PPS notes that healthy, active communities are promoted through the provision of equitably accessible parks and recreation facilities. The Growth Plan supports the achievement of complete communities through the expansion of convenient access to *“an appropriate supply of safe, publicly accessible open spaces, parks, trails, and other recreational facilities.”*

Regional Official Plan (ROP)

ROPA 6 added 1,907 hectares of land to settlement areas in the Township for urban development. The ROW Official Plan establishes a long-term framework for where and how the Region and its area municipalities should grow and develop based on forecasted growth to 2051. The Master plan relies on the regional growth allocated to the Township by the ROP which will drive the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities.

The ROP does not have a dedicated section that addresses parks, trails and recreational facilities, it does state that an equitable community offers residents access to recreation, mobility, and other services to meet their needs, while a thriving community with a 15-minute neighbourhood is one that provides within walkable distances access to a variety of public parks and open spaces and opportunity for recreation and entertainment.

Township Official Plan

The key objective of the Townships Official Plan (OP) is to provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational pursuits through the provision of parkland, sports fields, community facilities, and natural areas to satisfy the recreational needs of existing and future residents. The OP recognizes the importance of parks, open spaces and recreational facilities, and seeks to protect and continue to expand the parkland and open space areas to improve the quality of life.

Most new parkland will be provided in new neighbourhoods developed on lands within Designated Greenfield Areas adjacent to the Built-Up Areas of Elmira and Breslau. In such cases, lands will be identified during the planning and development approvals process and provided via parkland dedication requirements. Population growth accommodated via intensification of Built-up Areas is typically serviced by existing parks.

Parkland Dedication By-Law

The subdivision rates are collected to pay for park amenities, under Section 51.1 of the Planning Act, and are applied to residential/industrial and commercial subdivision or consent approvals. A Parkland By-Law is not required under Section 51.1 as this requirement is administered through the draft plan conditions or consent approval conditions.

The Master Plan recommends that Council adopt a Parkland Dedication By-Law in 2025 under section 42 of the Planning Act. The Township can currently collect parkland under section 51.1 of the Planning Act through plan of subdivision or consent applications. A Parkland Dedication By-Law is required to be passed by Council to apply a parkland dedication requirement under Section 42 of the Planning Act which would permit that all parkland or cash in lieu to be collected for development and redevelopment through site plan approval and building permit process. Section 42 (4) also allows the Township to pass a parkland by-law to use alternative density rates to calculate the parkland dedication requirement (i.e. 1 ha per 600 units) subject to including policies in the OP.

This By-Law is apt to provide financial contribution towards the implementation of parkland amenities where plans of subdivisions typically provide neighbourhood parks of limited size.

Staff anticipate that sufficient parkland will be received for small, neighbourhood parks (less than 2 acres) through parkland dedication from plans of subdivisions on the horizon. It is important to note that funds generated from a future Parkland Dedication By-Law can not be used to purchase vacant land for future parkland.

Of note, the Township has implemented an alternative approach to generate parkland funding that was developed with the Southwood 4 and Midwest subdivisions which could be included in a future Parkland Dedication By-Law (Attachment 3).

Projected Population Growth

The Master Plan uses population estimates that reflect the regional growth forecasted by the province to 2051 and allocated through the ROW Official Plan. To estimate future needs, this plan considers the preceding in combination with existing Township service levels and target ranges established through a review of parks and recreation provisions in other municipalities.

Understanding how much parkland should be acquired to support growth and maintain existing service levels is a **primary focus** of the Master Plan.

Township of Woolwich Community Strategic Plan

The Master Plan embodies much of the new Community Strategic Plan's mission and vision to:

1. *Promote and facilitate a commitment to community connection through facilities and new public spaces and embodying the Play, Live, Work model facilitating social connections that reinforce and expand community ties so that each resident feels a sense of belonging; and*
2. *Provide services and amenities to create an environment where Woolwich communities can flourish.*

A key result of the Community Strategic Plan is the development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will systematically address the growing demand for parkland, recreational activities and promote inclusive, accessible, and sustainable recreational opportunities that contribute to the overall quality of life for residents.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan – Vision and Goals

Parks and Recreation opportunities are vital to the development of healthy communities, where residents can connect, play and learn. As growth occurs, it is crucial to invest in the maintenance and expansion of services to ensure all residents have equitable access to Parks and Recreation. The vision, goals, objectives and recommendations of this Master Plan have been integrated from community engagement, best practices, research along with forecasted population growth, industry standards and existing service levels.

Vision

Woolwich's parks and recreation system is inclusive, sustainable and adaptable to meet the needs of the growing and diverse community, while building community connections and contributed to an improved quality of life.

Goals

1. Facilitate an Equitable, Accessible and Inclusive Parks and Recreation system

- a. Incorporate universal design standards into Parks and Recreation facilities to support barrier-free environments for people of all ages and abilities.
- b. Ensure that publicly funded parks and recreation opportunities will be affordable, with some being free to access.
- c. Provide facilities for passive and organized play (e.g. multi-use spaces) to support a range of activities, interests, and abilities.
- d. Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design measures to promote safety in all parks and recreational facilities.

2. Promote Opportunities for Health Living, Aging-In-Place, and Community Building

- a. Provide a range of recreational programs that address the needs and interests of residents of all ages and abilities.
- b. Facilitate place-making opportunities for cultural pursuits, events and socialization.
- c. Educate residents on program offerings and the various amenities and recreational opportunities offered by the Township.
- d. Explore community partnerships to deliver mutually beneficial projects.

3. Provide Well-Designed and sustainable Parks and Recreation Facilities

- a) Invest, maintain, and upgrade parks and recreation facilities to ensure the longevity of infrastructure.
- b) Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable practices in parks and recreation facilities.
- c) Integrate green infrastructure and shade as a key design element in the planning, development, or retrofit of parks and recreation facilities.
- d) Seek opportunities to use facilities efficiently and for multiple purposes.

Master Plan – Community Engagement

The community engagement phase provided a better understanding of community needs and concerns regarding parks and recreation facilities. This phase included community surveys with 278 survey responses and several stakeholder questionnaires. The feedback was geared towards understanding community opinions on *access* to facilities, *quality* of recreational facilities and *barriers* to participation in recreation programs, namely:

- 24% of respondents had concerns that parks are not accessible (pathways) or conveniently situated.
- Respondents also identified needs for inclusive features and amenities.
- Cleanliness, safety, features and proximity were important factors which influenced use of parks.
- 44% indicated the need for trail and playground improvements.
- 34% expressed a preference for upgrades of facilities.
- Most respondents indicated satisfaction with existing quantity of facilities and noted the importance of facility maintenance and updates.
- Factors impacting participation included lack of times, lack of desired facilities.
- 20% acknowledged cost as a challenge to participation.
- Most respondents were satisfied with existing sports fields.
- 24% expressed a desire to expand the variety of organized programs/activities.
- 50% of respondents participate in Township recreation programs.
- 27% of respondents participate in programs outside the Township, in Guelph, Kitchener and Waterloo.

The surveys did not seek feedback on specific amenities for individual settlement areas. Additional community engagement will occur prior to implementation on specific initiatives or significant investment in new amenities.

Master Plan – Park, Facility and Programming Implications

Parks System

The Master Plan details the parks system through a new parks classification system, an inventory of parkland, a needs assessment and a high-level parks plan. The inventory is divided into *active use* parks and *passive use* parkland. Only active use parks and future parkland needed for active use parks are being considered as part of the needs assessment in the plan.

Currently, the Township's Park system includes 234 hectares of land with Active Use Parkland totalling 78 hectares and Passive Parkland totalling 156 hectares.

The OP permits the Township to undertake a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to establish a hierarchy of parkland and facilities as well as to identify deficiencies and making recommendations for potential future acquisition/development of parkland, open space and recreation facilities. The parks system establishes size, use, service area and scale of amenities. This is a critical component of the Master Plan and related outcomes.

New Parkland Classification System

- Neighbourhood Park
- Community Park
- Specialized/Cultural Park
- Connector Park
- Natural Area/Open Space

Parkland Supply and Future Need

The needs assessment focused on active parkland only because of the limited usability of passive lands for park development. The Township's current 78 hectares of active parkland equates to a service level of 2.47 hectares per 1000 residents. This falls in the lower range of 2-4 ha per 1000 residents that most Ontario municipalities provide. The parkland inventory illustrates how the current parkland supply for each urban settlement will be negatively impacted as growth occurs if additional community parks are not developed.

Active Parkland

To maintain the Township's current service level of 2.5 ha per 1000 residents, the needs assessment estimates that the Township would need just over 50 hectares of additional active parkland by 2051 primarily in the form of large, community parks.

Neighbourhood Parks (under 2 acres)

Neighbourhood parks are typically located within a 500-meter walk from most neighbourhoods and may include a playground, multi-use pad or open park space. The Master Plan notes that sufficient smaller, neighbourhood parks (2 acres) will be received through parkland dedication as development occurs to meet the growth-related need as greenfield areas are developed.

Community Parks (over 2 acres)

Community parks are large parks that may include sports fields, outdoor amenities, trail links and various recreation facilities and are typically at least 5 acres. With population growth and as development occurs, Breslau and Elmira are estimated to progressively fall into a parkland deficit for large community parks.

In locating future recreation facilities, the plan recommends that the Township consider preferred locations and timing to develop (2) additional community parks by 2031 in Breslau. Ideally, one located to serve the new residential areas north of the rail corridor.

Similarly, forecast growth and the geography of designated greenfield areas in Elmira indicated that an additional (2) community parks will be needed along the western and southern edges. The Township could explore expanding existing community parks such as Lion's Park in Elmira.

Parks – Rural Settlements

Outside of Breslau and Elmira, where population growth is not an overriding concern, recreational facilities in rural settlements generally serve smaller populations that are not expected to change appreciably. For these settlements, the main consideration will be ensuring use aligns with capital and operating costs. The Master Plan recommends monitoring review to ensure needs are being met and establish if outdoor facilities are receiving sufficient use to warrant their longer-term maintenance and renewal costs.

Breslau Community Park and Facility

The Master Plan recommends the Township begin planning for a new community park and recreation facility in Breslau to support the long-term growth and development anticipated for that community. This will progressively represent a service gap as the eventual build-out of lands will be large enough to support a multi-use recreation facility comparable to the Woolwich Memorial Centre. The Master Plan recommends identifying and securing lands as a key action item to implement in the next 5 years.

Planning for new amenities will ensure the provision and equitable distribution of parks, facilities, trails and programs throughout the Township based on maintaining established levels of service to accommodate forecasted growth.

Master planning is an important tool that allows informed decision making and appropriate planning to ensure equitable funding and resources are available to support growth in our larger urban areas. At present, there is deficiency in the southern half of the Township, with most major amenities currently situated in the northern half. The goal of the plan was to develop a long-term, proactive plan that defines priorities, refines standards, supports budgeting and resources, and service levels for the future facilities

Recreation Facilities

Chapter 5 of the Master Plan provides an inventory of the Township's outdoor and recreation facilities.

Outdoor Park Amenities – Service Standard

Ball Diamonds - Adequate level of diamonds to meet minimum provision targets over the next decade. Staff will continue to monitor utilization rates in all communities to determine whether redistribution/repurposing of diamonds is warranted.

Soccer Fields - The Township currently exceeds the minimum standard provision however as growth occurs additional soccer fields will need to be included in expanded community parks.

Playgrounds - The Township is currently meeting a service area standard that most residences in settlements are within 500 m of a neighbourhood park or playground.

Tennis Courts - Based on the current provision of 1 court per 5000 residents, the Township will need to consider increasing the supply of courts and multi-use pads by 2031.

Outdoor Ice Rinks - There are 5 outdoor rinks operated by volunteer groups or Recreation Associations.

Skateboard Parks - The current service provision is 1 skatepark per 30,000 residents.

Splash Pads – The current service provision is 1 splash pad per 15,000 residents.

Trails -The Township provides 4 km per 1000 residents with the average service level in the Region of 1 km per 1000 residents, although not all trails are on municipal property.

Gifted Facilities and Amenities

Based on past practise, the provision of additional gifted amenities (non-core assets) is based on interest and financial support from the community and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Staff note the importance of Council considering true operating costs associated with a gifted capital project. Often operational costs can not be accommodated within existing budgets with limited staff resources and funding to assume additional asset repair, maintenance, and eventual replacement.

Indoor Recreation Facilities

The Master Plan recognizes the valuable space community centres offer to deliver programs, help residents stay active, healthy and engaged.

Woolwich Memorial Centre

Community centres vary significantly in size and scope across the province. For indoor aquatic centres the recommended service level is 1 per 25,000-50,000 residents. For arenas, the recommended service level is 1 per 10,000-15,000. These service levels suggest additional facilities will be needed in the medium to longer term, most likely strategically located in the southern half to serve the growing population in Breslau. The WMC continues to welcome over 300,000 visitors annually.

The Master Plan recommends that a feasibility study be undertaken to determine unmet needs and utilized capacity in the northern half of the Township. The study would consider the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of additional facilities or expansion of existing facilities.

St. Jacobs Arena

Based on forecast population growth to 2051, the 3 rinks (St. Jacobs and WMC) will maintain the target range for the northern half of the Township. To maintain the existing service level of 1 rink per 10,000 residents the Township will need to add an additional ice rink by 2041.

Breslau Community Centre

The Master Plan does not establish target service levels recommendations for community centres. The BCC facility usage rate is quite high at 5,000 visitors per month engaging in a diverse range of activities and programs, facility rentals, senior's activities and a new library branch. While no minimum target service levels are set, as Breslau's population increases it will progressively require a community centre comparable to the WMC in size and range of facilities/amenities based on current service levels and the provincial threshold of aquatic facilities at 1 pool per 25,000-30,000 residents and the provision of ice rinks at 1 rink per 10,000 residents.

The Master Plan recommends the Township develop a strategy in the near term to address how it will meet the medium- and longer-term need for an aquatic centre and arenas. This strategy should consider the feasibility for a new facility comparable to the WMC versus the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of expanding existing facilities. This feasibility study should be conducted before the residents in Breslau / southern Woolwich exceeds 20,000 residents.

Partnerships

Both staff and the Master Plan recommend the importance of collaboration with adjacent municipalities for financial sustainability where possible. Staff note the importance of continued discussion with area municipalities to align on master plan outcomes and to review 10-year capital plan forecasts to identify opportunities to partner early on in the planning process. This could include a potential partnership with the City of Kitchener or others. Additionally, exploration and evaluation of partnerships with school boards and other third-party partners should be included as part of a future feasibility study to support the long-term viability of any major asset renewal, replacement or new build utilizing shared resources and funding

Facilities - Rural Community Centres

The needs assessment did not establish a service level for rural community centres. It is recommended that the Township maintain current service levels for rural community centres, it should monitor usage and review their role in the parks and recreation system and the communities they serve where they are found to be significantly underutilized. The Township is not aiming for the same service standards for community parks and larger recreation facilities in the small settlement areas.

Recreation Programming and Usage

While an analysis of program operations was not a focus of this Master Plan, staff felt an overview of program offerings was warranted.

Arena Usage

Prime-time ice is defined as weeknights between 5:00 pm and 11:30 pm and on weekends between 6:30 am and 11:00 pm. A typical week would see overall usage levels of prime-time ice at 89% representing 169.25 hours booked out of 190 hours.

Ice Programs

The Township provides various recreation skating programs with 7,293 participants in 2022/2023 versus 4,343 participants in 2021/2022. Participation over the last 3 years has increased drastically reflecting a demand in unstructured drop-in recreation programs.

Pool Usage

The WMC pool is a highly sought out public facility due to its ability to accommodate a wide range of programs for various ages, interests and abilities.

In 2023, the pool experienced strong attendance and participation rates with 18,361 visits for drop-in swim programs, 5,134 registered for swim programs which reflects an 87% utilization rate based on capacity, and 200 participants registered for leadership courses.

Master Plan – Major Action Items and Action Items

The Master Plan outlines several strategic directions, action items and recommendations to consider that allows for a staged implementation of the plan over the next decade while planning for growth.

Action Items

Action items are provided to address significant capital investments identified in the Master Plan, particularly with respect to parkland acquisition.

Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions provide guidance and best practices that should be adopted or employed. Best Practices include, for example:

- Minimizing barriers to participation
- Creating opportunities to meet emerging trends
- Establishing new and fostering existing partnerships

Recommendations and Implications

The Master Plan recommends maintaining current service delivery standards, including the range of amenities, facilities and programming provided. Staff recognizes that recreation systems will evolve based on demographics, trends, needs and resources.

Planning for Growth

Planning for growth was a **key focus** of the needs assessment prepared for this master plan. To provide high-level guidance on parkland requirements and facility needs to 2051. Appropriate service levels were established based on the existing parks and recreation systems and a review of other Ontario municipalities.

The plan provides guidance on future needs for a parkland acquisition strategy to ensure adequate physical space is available for new or expanded recreation facilities as population growth warrants them with the supply of large parcels of land available in short supply.

Breslau and Elmira will experience significant growth with each settlement reaching a population over 20,000. Both will require additional parkland for a community park with new or expanded recreational facilities.

The strategy recommended by this Master Plan is to address the need for a future major indoor facility by developing a new multi-use recreation facility in Breslau to better serve the southern half of the Township and support Breslau's growth and development.

Existing Parks and Recreation System

While not the central focus of this Master Plan, the importance of maintenance, improvement, and/or renewal of existing assets cannot be overstated.

Given the growth forecast for the Township, it will be imperative that a strong asset management approach is adopted. As the Township has limited resources, there will be a need to consider these capital needs, their timing, together with those assets required to support growth. Equally important is recognizing and committing to on-going annual operational costs and staff resources required for additional assets acquired by the Township because of growth, community needs or third-party partnerships.

Through the process, and from the public consultation, it became clear that the recreation needs of the community differed from one settlement to another, notably the needs of Elmira and surrounding settlements versus Breslau and surrounding settlements. NPG and the Township used this in the development of tailored recommendations for north and southern portions of the Township.

Development Charges Background Study (DC)

The recent DC Background Study detailed the existing service level and determined future gross capital costs for parks and recreation services. Gross capital costs were determined to be \$41.3 million (approximately). \$17.2 million was determined to be net growth-related capital costs. Included in the study, is a proposed Breslau Community Centre Complex. The DCA allows municipalities to impose charges to cover capital costs for increased need for services which includes parks and recreation services but *not* the acquisition of lands.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

The Master Plan and recommendations will impact the following departments in addition to Recreation:

- Infrastructure Services – with respect to asset management, integration of active transportation with parks and trails;
- Development Services – acquisition of parkland, planning for recreation through new development and implementation of the Landscape and Design Guidelines;
- Financial Services in relation to future financial feasibility studies and 5-year capital plan relating to new facilities and or amenities; and,
- All departments in relation to implementation of the Master Plan in relation to the new Community Strategic Plan.

Financial Impacts:

Increased population growth with the need to sustain standard levels of service will have financial implications associated with:

- Increased capital expenses required to provide additional parks, park amenities, and facilities over the next decade;
- Increased operating expenses and staffing resources to maintain these parks and facilities as growth occurs;
- Increased capital expenses required to acquire park lands for large community parks over and above those provided through parkland dedication;
- New infrastructure, facilities and amenities will be funded through a combination of Development Charges, Cash-in-lieu, Parkland Dedication through development applications and future budget allocations; and,
- Additionally, future financial feasibility studies will look to maximize corporate donations, sponsorship, leased property, third-party partnerships and user fees to assist an appropriate funding model and best use of taxpayer dollars.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

The Master Plan embodies much of the new Community Strategic Plan's mission and vision to:

1. Promote and facilitate a commitment to community connection through facilities and new public spaces and embodying the Play, Live, Work model facilitating social connections that reinforce and expand community ties so that each resident feels a sense of belonging; and
2. Provide services and amenities to create an environment where Woolwich communities can flourish.

The Master Plan aligns with the Township Strategic Plan priorities including:

- Cultivate long-term economic prosperity: As a guide it will allow staged growth of parks and recreation consistent with our staged residential growth and inform long-term capital plans.
- Empower communities to be adaptable and engaged. The plan promotes the expansion of inclusive public spaces to promote feelings of belonging amongst community members.
- Provide effective and open leadership including creation of partnerships.
- Maintain an innovative customer service focus. Ultimately, the entire plan is a guide to serve the community into the future and contribute to the Township's long-term soft service and infrastructure plans

Conclusion:

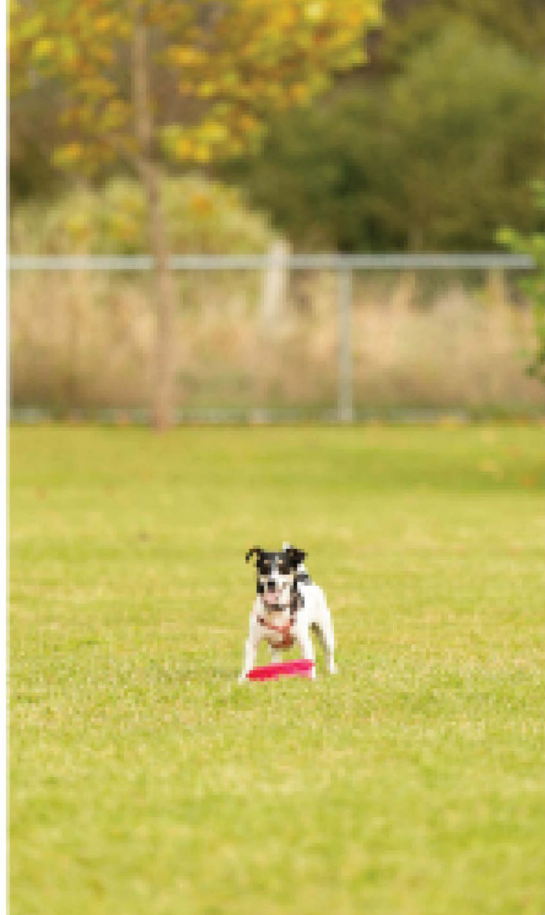
The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was developed as a guide for service levels for both current and future parks and recreation needs across the Township for the next decade. With anticipated growth, the parks and recreation system will need to change and adapt to changes in demographics, social and cultural makeup of the Township.

The Master Plan provides a strong foundation for the medium and longer-term planning. The plan highlights the best practices and trends, summarizes the results of an on-line survey, provides an inventory of facilities and identifies high-level needs based on population estimates to over the next decade.

The Master Plan notes the sustainability of the services and assets is a foremost consideration and that the ability and willingness to meet capital and operational costs, now and in the future, will play a major role in shaping decisions.

Attachments:

1. 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
2. Established Recreation and Community Services Department Levels of Service
3. Alternative Parkland Funding Approach



Township of Woolwich

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

May 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

Woolwich's parks and recreation system is a vital public service. It contributes to the health and well-being of the Township's residents, facilitates social interactions, builds community spirit, and provides sense of place. The Township is expected to grow significantly over the next 2-3 decades, doubling its population by 2051. Not only will the parks and recreation system need to expand to support this growth, it will also need to evolve and adapt to changes in the demographic, social, and cultural makeup of the Township. Wider trends in recreation will also influence needs and expectations.

This Master Plan has been prepared to provide a strong foundation for the medium and longer-term planning of the Township's parks and recreation system. It highlights best practices and trends, summarizes the results of an online survey, provides an inventory of parkland and recreation facilities, and identifies high-level needs based on population estimates to 2051. The Master Plan also outlines strategic directions and actions recommended for plan implementation.

To assess future needs for parkland and recreation facilities, this Master Plan uses population estimates for the Township that reflect the regional growth forecasted by the Province to 2051 and allocated to area municipalities through the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan. Further guidance and direction on how and where growth should occur within the Township is provided by both the Regional and Township Official Plans. To estimate future needs, this Master Plan considers the preceding in combination with existing service levels in the Township and target ranges established through a review of parks and recreation provision in other Ontario municipalities.

The Master Plan should be read as providing high-level guidance on parkland and recreation facility needs. Given the growth forecasted for the Township, understanding how much parkland should be acquired to support growth and maintain existing service levels or meet a minimum standard of provision is a primary focus. Facilities that provide the physical space for recreation services and programming are equally essential to the parks and recreation system. Neighbourhood parks provide walkable access to open spaces for amenities and informal leisure activities, including play space for children, while larger community parks form the backbone of the Township recreation system as they host sport fields and other indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

Ontario municipalities typically provided between 2-4 hectares of active use parkland per 1000 residents. Active use parks include neighbourhood and community parks that host playgrounds, sport fields, tennis courts, splash pads, community gardens, paths for walking, jogging, or rolling-blading, and indoor recreation facilities like arenas and community centres. Woolwich currently provides approximately 2.5 hectares of active parkland per 1000 residents. To maintain the existing level of provision the Township will need to secure approximately 50 hectares of additional active use parkland by 2051.



As noted in the Master Plan, the Township will receive parkland or payment-in-lieu as development occurs in accordance with the *Planning Act*—enough to meet the growth-related need for neighbourhood parks whose locations will generally be determined by more detailed planning as greenfield areas are developed, mostly in Breslau and Elmira. The remainder of the estimated need will be for the community parks needed to host indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. This Master Plan outlines the approximate amounts of land required for community parks in specific settlements. Detailed planning of new parks and recreation facilities was generally considered beyond the scope of this Master Plan, however.

The Master Plan does, however, recommend the Township begin planning for a major new community park and recreation facility in Breslau to support the long-term growth and development anticipated for that community. The needs assessment notes that while the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena provide indoor ice rinks and an aquatic centre at a service level appropriate for the Township as a whole, residents in the southern half of the Township are relatively distant from these facilities. As Breslau grows, this will progressively represent a service gap. The eventual full build-out of lands in the Breslau settlement area is expected to result in a community large enough to support a multi-use recreation facility comparable to the Woolwich Memorial Centre in size and range of facilities provided. Identifying and securing lands to host this facility is a key action item required to implement this Master Plan in the next 5 years.

1. INTRODUCTION





1. Introduction

The Township of Woolwich is comprised of 14 communities with various high-quality parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs. Woolwich is currently experiencing population growth and will continue to experience significant growth over the next decade. With the recent increase in outdoor recreation space usage and increased demand for amenities and services that has come with urban growth, the Township is undertaking a long term, proactive plan that defines priorities, refines standards, protects environmental features and woodlots, and supports budgeting and service levels for the future.

1.1. What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The purpose of the Woolwich Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) is to provide a flexible and comprehensive framework to protect and guide the development of parks, facilities, and open space in the Township over the horizon of the next 10 years. This Plan will be a guiding document for the Township and Community Partners to understand the communities' priorities, needs and demands regarding Parks and

Recreation in Woolwich. The Master Plan provides an inventory of the existing parkland and indoor and outdoor facilities, and an overview of recreation programs and services offered. In addition, it provides an assessment of future parkland and recreation facility needs to inform future decision making.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will:

- Establish effective service models and supporting service levels.
- Provide an analysis of the existing parks and recreation facilities, and, where appropriate programming, to address future needs and/or opportunities.
- Identify community priorities and develop decision making frameworks.
- Provide policy recommendations for parkland policy development and asset management.

1.2. How is the Plan Organized?

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Provides the background on why we should plan for parks and recreation, the Master Plan process, and an overview of applicable planning documents that were considered in the creation of the Plan.

Chapter 2: Community Context

Describes the geographic and socio-demographic profile of the Township, as well as current trends and best practices, and the community engagement that was undertaken as part of the creation of this Plan.

Chapter 3: Vision and Guiding Principles

Provides the overarching vision and guiding principles as a strategic framework for the development and maintenance of the parks and recreation system within the horizon of this Plan.

Chapter 4: Parks System

Describes the inventory of the current parks, and open space system in the Township, as well as an analysis of supply and need for the community.

Chapter 5: Recreation Facilities

Describes the inventory of the current indoor and outdoor recreation programs and facilities in the Township, as well as an analysis of each asset needs of the community.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and Implementation

Outlines the strategic directions and policy recommendations for the parks and recreation system that is aligned with the vision and guiding principles, provides guidance on plan implementation, and discusses basic financial considerations that may impact the implementation of this Master Plan.

1.3. Investing in Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation are an essential public service that enhances the quality of life and health of all Woolwich residents, with various social, environmental, economic and health benefits. They are a key element in building vibrant and healthy communities, as they provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share ideas, and experience diversity. These opportunities help to build a sense of belonging and a strong sense of community. Indirectly, the parks and recreation system also contribute to the conservation of natural areas, community vitality, and sense of place. Therefore, it is crucial to invest in the maintenance and growth of parks and recreation services, so they can continue to sustain the needs of generations to come.

Parks and recreation provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active and learn new skills, connect with one another, share ideas, and experience diversity. These opportunities help to build a sense of belonging and a strong sense of community.

The benefits of parks and recreation are widely recognized including through evidence-based national/provincial charters such as Parks for All, the Framework for Recreation in Canada, and the Ontario Culture Strategy. A scan of relevant research and literature identified the following key benefits of parks and recreation:

- **Strengthens Communities:**
 - a. Improving physical and mental health by promoting active living
 - b. Addressing sedentary behaviours and contributing to disease prevention and obesity reduction
 - c. Creating a sense of belonging
 - d. Removing barriers to access recreation, sport and leisure activities for hard-to-reach populations and delivering accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities
- **Builds Sustainable Communities:**
 - a. Maintaining a healthy, strong and vibrant community
 - b. Providing affordable and inclusive spaces for gathering and celebrating
 - c. Deepening our appreciation and connection to natural environments
 - d. Contributing to ecological health and climate change mitigation through the thoughtful management of open space and natural features

- **Supports Economic Growth:**
 - a. Increase property values through the availability of amenities
 - b. Supporting tourism and generating economic benefits
 - c. Creating a competitive advantage for the Township in terms of attraction and retention
- **Leads in Public Service Initiatives:**
 - a. Contributing to larger outcomes in the Township, such as economic vitality, public health, poverty reduction, and environmental resiliency
 - b. Creating new and/or enhanced opportunities for residents and neighbourhood groups to participate and engage in identifying program and service needs and to build capacity.

1.4. Study Area Overview

The study area explored in the Master Plan process and referred to in this document includes the full extent of the Township of Woolwich, but focuses on settlements with parkland. The following is a list of settlement areas in Woolwich with parkland:

Urban Areas

- Breslau

Township Urban Areas

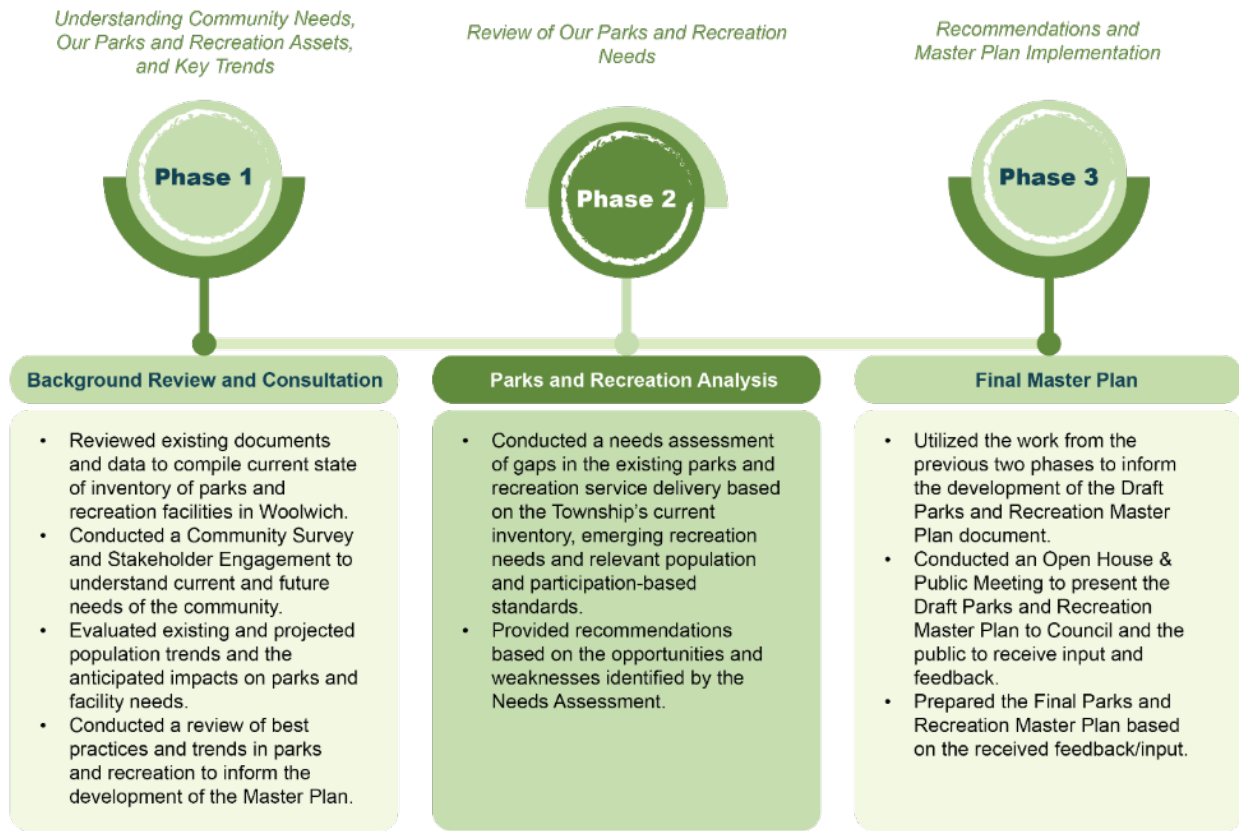
- Elmira
- St. Jacobs

Rural Settlements

- Bloomingdale
- Heidelberg
- West Montrose
- Floradale
- Maryhill
- Conestogo

1.5. How this Plan was Developed

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan process was led by the Township of Woolwich and NPG Planning Solutions Inc. The process was informed by evidence-based research including a review of best practices, trends in parks and recreation, demographics, community feedback, policy analysis, and an assessment of existing parks and recreation facilities. This work was carried out in three phases and was undertaken to understand future community needs and gaps in service delivery, to inform the recommendations in the Master Plan.



1.6. Planning Context

The following section includes a summary of the relevant policy documents that were considered in the creation of this Plan. The Master Plan aligns with the policy foundation and directions set by Provincial, Regional and local planning documents. In addition, an overview is provided on the planning tools/mechanisms available to municipalities related to parks and recreation services.

Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Both the PPS and Growth Plan include policy direction related to Public Spaces, Recreation and Open Space. The PPS notes that healthy, active communities are promoted through the provision of equitably accessible parks and recreation facilities, while emphasizing the need to minimize impacts on natural areas such as provincial parks and conservation areas. The Growth Plan supports the achievement of complete communities through the expansion of convenient access to *“an appropriate supply of safe, publicly accessible open spaces, parks, trails, and other recreational facilities.”*

Region of Waterloo Official Plan

Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 6, which updated growth-related components of the Regional Official Plan (ROP) was adopted in 2023 and has been approved by the Province. The ROP, as amended by ROPA 6 establishes the long-term framework for where and how the Region and its area municipalities should grow and develop based on forecasted growth to 2051. This Master Plan is based upon the forecasted regional growth allocated to the Township by the ROP as it will drive the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities.

The ROP does not have a dedicated section that addresses open space, parks, trails and recreational facilities; however, the ROP recognizes that an equitable community offers residents access to recreation, mobility, and other services to meet their needs, while a thriving community with 15-minute neighbourhoods is one that provides within walkable distances access to a variety of public parks and open spaces and opportunities for recreation and entertainment. Ensuring that most Woolwich residents are located within close proximity of open spaces, parks, trails, and recreational facilities is important to achieving the regional vision outlined in the ROP.

Township of Woolwich Official Plan

A key objective of the Township's Official Plan (OP) is to provide opportunities for both active and passive recreational pursuits through the provision of parkland, sports fields, community facilities, and natural areas to satisfy the recreational needs of existing and future residents. The OP includes various policies pertaining to the adequate provision of parks and recreation facilities for residents. The OP recognizes the importance of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities, and seeks to protect and continue to expand the parkland and open space areas to improve the quality of life. Specifically, the OP provides a comprehensive policy framework for Open Space with the direction to:

- Protect and expand the Township's parkland and open space areas;



- Provide a balanced system of recreation and leisure opportunities through a specified range of parkland and associated facilities; and,
- Encourage the development of a system of linked green space, open space, and trails throughout the Township, as well as bicycle routes, sidewalks, and pedestrian paths to both provide for recreational needs and link residential areas, employment areas, major public open spaces, schools, and activity centres.

The OP permits the Township to undertake a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to establish the hierarchy for existing parkland, open space, and recreational facilities, as well as in identifying deficiencies and making recommendations for potential future acquisition/development of parkland, open space and recreation facilities.

Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines

The Township's 2022 Landscape and Design Guidelines outline features and details to be provided for new parks and establishes the following existing classification system:

- Township Wide Park
- Community Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks
- Parkettes
- Natural Heritage Features

The Landscape and Design Guidelines also outline general requirements for pedestrian and cycling trails, including those provided within open spaces and parks in the Township.

Legislative Acts and Recent Changes

Development Charges Act

Under the Development Charges Act, after the completion of a development charges background study, municipalities can adopt a development charge by-law to impose development charges. This planning tool can be imposed to cover capital costs for increased need for services listed in Section 2(4) of the Act, which includes parks and recreation services, but not the acquisition of land for parks.

Planning Act

The *Planning Act* provides municipalities with two mechanisms for funding growth-related costs of land for parks and other recreational purposes: community benefits charges and parkland dedication.

Parkland Dedication

Parkland Dedication as permitted under the *Planning Act* is a tool for municipalities to acquire lands for parks needed to service increased needs associated with growth. It is the primary mechanism for parkland acquisition in Woolwich. There have been a number of changes made to parkland dedication in recent years, primarily to provide exemptions

for affordable and/or attainable housing, non-profit housing, additional residential units, as well as changes to the rate of parkland dedication and various implementation aspects.

Community Benefits Charges

Community benefit charges were introduced in 2019 under the *Planning Act* as a tool to be used by municipalities to fund any public service associated with new growth, provided those costs are not already covered through development charges and parkland dedication. This tool was established to replace Section 37 density and height bonusing. Further Amendments to the *Planning Act* have clarified what type of development/redevelopment are eligible for community charges, provided exceptions to affordable and attainable housing, and established maximum thresholds on the amount that can be collected. At the time of the writing of this report, it should be noted that the exemptions for affordable and attainable housing units have not been proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor and are not yet in-effect.

2. COMMUNITY CONTEXT





2. Community Context

Located in the heart of southwestern Ontario, the Township of Woolwich is part of the Region of Waterloo, surrounded by the Cities of Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge. It is also within close proximity to the City of Guelph and within an hour and a half drive from several large urban centres in southwestern Ontario, including Hamilton, London, and Toronto. Woolwich is known for its farms and farm markets, as well as its industry, trails, and quaint rural lifestyle. The Township is comprised of an extensive rural area along with residential communities and industrial/commercial areas which include Elmira, St. Jacobs, and Breslau.

Woolwich has approximately 28,700 residents and is made up of 31,912 hectares. With picturesque towns and pastoral countryside, the Township's small community setting and proximity to the Region's urban centres boasts a rich history and a strong agricultural and tourism sector. Woolwich's heritage is reflected throughout the community, with notable features that draw year-round visitors such as the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, the St. Jacobs Farmers Market, which is Canada's largest year-round market, the West Montrose Covered Bridge, St. Jacobs Village, and more. Woolwich is also home to the Region of Waterloo International Airport, which provides charter and scheduled flight services to destinations across Canada, the US, Mexico and Central America, serviced by three major airlines.

2.1. Growth Outlook and Socio-Demographic Profile

Understanding who lives in the Township and how the population is expected to change over time is key in planning for future parks and recreation facilities. The following section draws from census data and the Township's growth projections.





Projected Growth

According to the Region of Waterloo Official Plan (ROP), Woolwich's population will grow to 51,200 by 2051, an increase of 78.4% or 22,500 people over its 2021 population of 28,700. To reach the forecast 2051 population, the Township will need to grow on average by 800 people per year over the next three decades. This represents a doubling of the growth experienced by Woolwich over the past decade according to Statistics Canada.

A portion of population growth to 2051, at least 20%, is to be accommodated through intensification of Built-up Areas in Township Urban Centres (Elmira and St. Jacobs) and Urban Areas (Breslau). Most population growth in the Township, however, will be accommodated on lands referred to as Designated Greenfield Areas. These lands are located mostly in Elmira and Breslau, including those added by the Province as part of the process of approving Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 6. Development of these additional lands will result in a significantly higher population, particularly in Breslau, and will result in the need for additional parkland and recreation facilities in these areas.

Most new parkland will be provided in new neighbourhoods adjacent to the Built-Up Areas of Elmira and Breslau. In such cases, lands will be identified during the planning and development approvals process and provided via parkland dedication requirements. Population growth accommodated via intensification of Built-up Areas is typically serviced by existing parks. Overall population growth will generate the need for additional community parks which are larger and require longer range planning to locate and develop.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

- By 2051, Woolwich's population is set to **increase to 51,000, an increase of 78.4% from 2021**
- Most of the population growth will be accommodated in **Elmira, St. Jacobs, and Breslau**
- Most new parkland will be provided in **greenfield areas** in Elmira and Breslau



DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT



Woolwich's population grew by 8% from 2016 to 2021.



The median household income in 2020 was \$115,000 in Woolwich, which is 25% higher than Ontario's average of \$91,000.



The top two languages spoken at home in Woolwich are English 77.9% and German 9.4%.



The average age is 39.7 years.

Source: 2021 Census

Socio-Demographic Considerations

AGE AND POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The demographic projection provided by metroeconomics for the Woolwich Official Plan Review indicates that births and deaths will result in a net natural increase of 6,700 people between 2021 and 2051. Accordingly, net migration to Woolwich from elsewhere in Ontario, Canada, and abroad will account for slightly over two-thirds of the forecast population growth over the next three decades.

Overall, migrants (intra-provincial, inter-provincial, and international) tend to be younger than the Canadian average and disproportionately entering in their childbearing years. Significant population growth from net migration would moderate the aging of the Township's population.

Figure 1 below demonstrates that Woolwich is projected to experience an increase in people over 65 years old and slight decrease in people under 20.

It is noteworthy that people over 65 years old are projected to rise to approximately 20% of the population in Woolwich by 2051, with about half of them being older seniors (75+). The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will need to consider the specific needs of this group and whether current facilities and programming are meeting current needs and what might be needed to meet future needs.

Other Considerations

Socio-demographic factors such as diversity and income are key to consider as they influence the interest, participation, and delivery of parks and recreation programming.

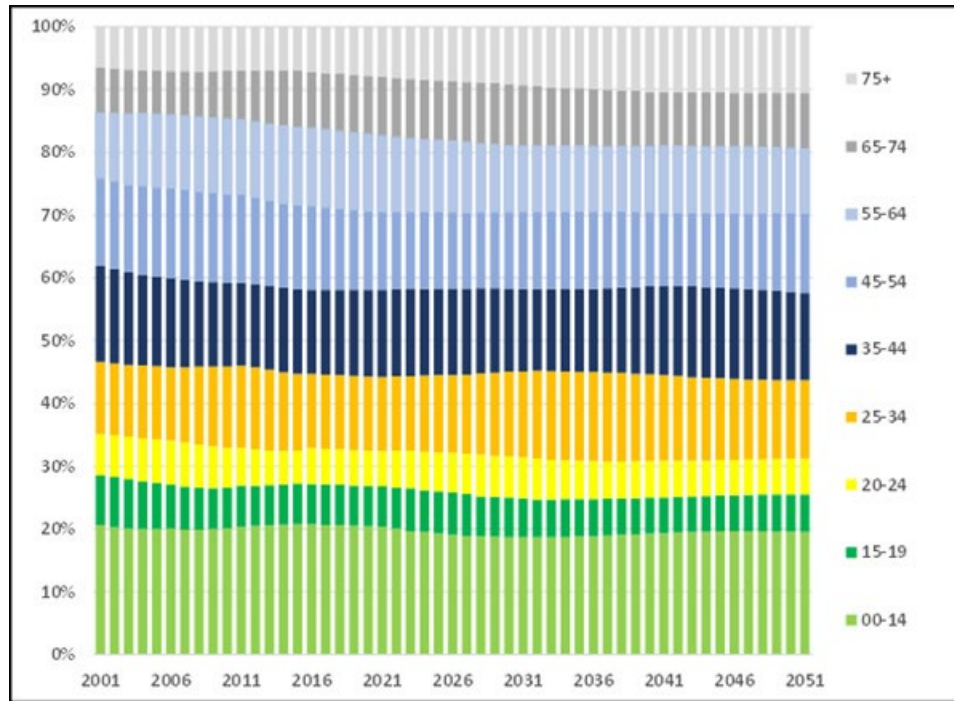


Figure 1 – Woolwich Population by Major Age Group Actual 2001 to 2021, Projected 2022 to 2051
 Source: Statistics Canada and metroeconomics inc.

Immigrant settlement patterns in the wider region are likely to influence the range and size of different ethnic groups in the Township over time. According to the 2021 Census, immigrants make up approximately 12.5% of Woolwich’s population, with about 1.5% having arrived in Canada between 2016 and 2021. This compares to 25.4% and 4.8% in the Region of Waterloo as a whole, and 30% and 4.2% for the Province of Ontario. That difference is echoed in the percentage of the Township’s population that is classified as visible minority (9.4%) when compared to the Region of Waterloo (27.5%) and the Province of Ontario (34.3%). In terms of ethnic or cultural origin, the 10 largest reported in the 2021 Census for Woolwich are associated with older waves of immigration to Canada from the United Kingdom and Northern or Central Europe, whereas more recent immigration is dominated by origins and ethnicities associated with the Global South. As the Township has experienced relatively low levels of immigrant settlement when compared to the Region of Waterloo and the Province, changes to its ethnic composition have been modest as well.

The 2021 Census reported a median household income of \$115,000 in Woolwich in 2020. That is approximately 25% higher than for the Region of Waterloo as a whole (\$92,000) or the Province of Ontario (\$91,000). By extension, fewer Woolwich residents were considered low-income in 2020 (2.3%) when compared with the Region of Waterloo as a whole (6.2%) or the Province of Ontario (5.3%).

Parks and Recreation Master Plans typically review service delivery. This can include assessing and making recommendations about service delivery models, including the role



and responsibility of a municipality to provide, maintain, and operate facilities, and whether, or to what extent, to directly provide and/or fund services and programming. The income and ethnocultural profile of residents, as well as other forms of difference and belonging in the community, are important to consider when mapping out future parks and recreation needs, particularly with respect to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

2.2. Overview of Parks and Recreation Trends

The following section provides an overview of current Parks and Recreation trends which are important to consider as they influence parks and recreation programming, infrastructure and participation levels. In certain cases, trends can gain enough popularity to become new best practices within the field. The following trends were identified through a thorough analysis of reports from Canada and the U.S.A.

Decline in Youth Sports Participation

Continuing evidence has demonstrated the steady decline in youth sports participation in North America. This has been an ongoing trend that has been further exacerbated during the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is an alarming discovery as sports offer children the opportunity to socialize with one another and partake in physical activity, which is a proven way to maintain and benefit one's mental health. Approaches that have been used to improve youth sport participation includes hosting "sport sampling programs", and expanding access to free, low-cost, or subsidised youth sports.

Multi-Use Spaces

A recently emerging trend has been the increasing development of multi-use spaces that can accommodate a range of activities and users. Multi-use spaces include various benefits such as improved physical health, increased social interaction and enhanced environmental sustainability. Additionally, multi-use spaces have been noted to have the potential to address equity and accessibility concerns by providing access to recreation opportunities for individuals and communities that may not have access to them otherwise. By accommodating a variety of activities in one space, multi-use spaces can attract a diverse group of users, create a sense of community, and accommodate the ever-changing needs of residents. Creating multi-use spaces further allows municipalities to maximize the use of limited parkland and resources and can make them more efficient and cost-effective but can also result in conflicting needs and demands.

Accessibility for All Users

Parks and recreation spaces are a vital part of any community that provides various social and health benefits. Unfortunately, access to these spaces is not always equal – a report by the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) noted that people with disabilities are much less likely to participate in recreation activities than those without disabilities.



To address this, parks and recreation spaces must be designed to be AODA compliant and able to accommodate the needs of diverse users, including those with different levels of mobility, such as individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and families with young children. Through the provision of accessible spaces, communities can promote social inclusion by providing opportunities for people to interact with one another and foster a sense of community amongst diverse groups of people.

Parks as Community Gathering Spaces

Parks have a longstanding recognition of being important gathering spaces. They offer open spaces where individuals can gather for picnic, games, events and provide opportunities for interaction with other members of the community. Additionally, recreation facilities provide a wide array of programming and activities that brings people with shared interests together. Large scale sporting events can benefit the local economy by attracting visitors from outside of the community to boost local businesses. Parks and recreation facilities are important community assets that can help foster social cohesion, support local businesses, and create a sense of pride and identity in the community. Amenities that can help foster this function include bandshells, seating areas, and picnic structures.

Health Benefits of Parks and Recreation

As previously noted, physical inactivity rates have continued to be on the rise in North America, further amplified by the COVID-19 Pandemic due to the increase of desk-bound behaviours. Fortunately, parks and recreation services have been recognized to be a critical resource in helping individuals maintain their physical and mental wellbeing, and in combatting issues such as inactivity levels, social isolation, stress, and anxiety. Parks and outdoor spaces are important in promoting physical activity – long-term health care costs associated with inactivity are significantly higher than upfront preventative costs associated with an active lifestyle.

Role of Parks in Reducing Urban Heat Islands

The Urban Heat Island effect is a critical issue that needs to be addressed as it can impact human health, energy consumption, and the environment. Parks have been identified to be an important tool for combatting the rising temperatures due to the Urban Heat Island effect. This is achieved through the provision of green infrastructure, promotion of passive cooling techniques such as natural ventilation, shade, and reflecting surfaces, and reduction of heat emissions.

Green Infrastructure and Strategies for Creating Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Parks and Recreation Facilities

There has been increasing recognition of the value of incorporating green and sustainable infrastructure techniques into the design and operation of parks and recreation facilities. Green infrastructure refers to a network of natural and semi-natural elements such as



parks, forest, wetlands and green roofs. Implementing green infrastructure in parks can positively benefit biodiversity conservation while providing for recreation and social benefits. Other practices may be adopted to make the parks and recreation system more sustainable such as energy efficiency audits, use of renewable energy where possible, or incorporating sustainable building materials the design of parks and recreation facilities. Through the above, the Township may decrease its carbon footprint, enhance the ecological function of parkland, improve community resilience, and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Technological Trends

Technology has become an integral part of contemporary life. As such, there has been a growing interest in integrating new technologies into parks and recreation facilities. Doing so could enhance visitor experiences, lead to increases in operational efficiency, and create a more inclusive park space. Some of the growing technological trends regarding parks include beacon counters, Wi-Fi-connected parks and QR codes/geospatial visualization. Beacon counters and Wi-Fi can be used to track park usage rates, while allowing users to access information outside of their home or work. Implementing QR codes can also provide users with quick information which may include available amenities or the history of the park, bringing forward an interactive and educational component.





2.3. Community Engagement

Community Engagement played a vital role in the development of the Woolwich Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As part of Phase 1 of this project, engagement methods were utilized to connect and gather input from the community. The goal was to better understand the communities needs and concerns across the Township regarding parks and recreation facilities. A community survey was conducted in 2021 during the COVID-19 Pandemic as well as in May 2023. In addition, further input was gathered from identified stakeholders through a questionnaire. An overview of the public consultation process is included below.

Community Surveys

A community survey was distributed by Township Staff in Fall 2021 to obtain information on the Township's existing parks and outdoor recreation amenities and to understand the communities' desires in terms of future municipal investment. The survey did not address indoor recreational facilities such as community centres or arenas.

Following feedback and direction from Township staff in the preparation of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a new online survey was conducted covering both outdoor and



indoor recreation areas and parks. In May 2023, the online survey was made available to members of the community via the project website over three weeks and generated 278 responses (participation in the survey was promoted through local media, social media, and in local businesses). Survey respondents were asked about the following:

Accessibility and Usability of Facilities

While a majority of respondents believe that parks in the Township are physically accessible and conveniently located, 24% of respondents expressed that parks are not adequately accessible or conveniently situated, with a lack of accessible pathways for individuals using walkers, strollers or wheelchairs to and from park amenities. Furthermore, 6% of respondents indicated that someone in their family has a disability that requires special accommodations when visiting parks or recreation facilities. Respondents also identified the need for inclusive features and amenities to address accessibility barriers such as adult change tables, wheelchair accessible washrooms, playground surfaces that accommodate children with special needs, signage, and improved information on facilities such as dog parks.

Factors Influencing Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Respondents were asked to rank cleanliness, safety, specific amenities/features, and proximity to park/facility as determining factors in deciding which park and recreation facility to visit. Survey results demonstrated that 66% of participants ranked cleanliness as a key factor to consider, followed closely by level of safety at 56%, specific amenities/features provided at 55% and proximity to park/facility at 52%.

Facility Improvements and Investments

When asked about priorities for upgrades or new construction, 44% of respondents indicated the need for improvements for nature trails, while 42% prioritized improvements for playgrounds, and 34% expressed a preference for upgrades or new construction of paved multi-use trails. Respondents noted the importance of facility maintenance and upgrades, with a need for washrooms, access to drinking water and water bottle fill stations, garbage collection and receptacles, and lighting. In addition, respondents also expressed the desire for other amenities such as picnic benches, shade, and multi-surface pads, as well as the need for accessible and inclusive park amenities.

Barriers to Participation in Recreation Programs

The largest factor identified in the survey as preventing participation in the Township's recreation programs is the lack of convenient times offered. In addition, 40% of respondents identified the lack of desired facilities as a barrier, while a number of respondents reported being unaware of program offerings. Less than 20% of respondents acknowledged cost or financial considerations as challenge to participation.

The survey indicated differing opinions with regards to the quantity of sports facilities, with the majority of respondents indicating satisfaction with the existing quantity of baseball



diamonds and soccer fields, and noting an apparent lack of hockey outdoor rinks, tennis courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, and pickleball courts. 24% of respondents expressed a desire to expand the variety of organized activities and programs available, including suggestions for tennis courts, pickleball courts (indoor and outdoor), ice rinks (indoor and outdoor), basketball courts, and volleyball courts. Approximately 50% of respondents indicated that they participate in recreation programs solely within the Township, whereas 27% of respondents indicated participating in programs outside the Township, in Guelph, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

Stakeholder Questionnaire

The Township has numerous community groups that provide services in the areas of sports, arts and culture. 19 organizations were invited to participate in the stakeholder questionnaire conducted in May 2023. Responses were received from 8 organizations, consisting of school boards, recreation associations, and sports organizations, with key findings identified below:

School Boards





Schools frequently use recreation amenities such as playgrounds and sport fields for class trips and extracurricular activities. However, it has been identified that current facilities are insufficient to accommodate current needs and that further demand is expected in the next 5 years. Participating organizations have identified the desire for new fields, a pool, access to ice and hockey facilities, and long-term plans for a bubble facility. School boards have expressed that there is a disparity in the quality and availability of recreation facilities between different neighbourhoods and are open to opportunities for joint development and partnerships.

Recreation Associations

While there is positive feedback associated with the (Heidelberg) Community Center, recreation associations have identified the need for facility upgrades and improvements, such as the need for soundproofing; the inclusion of an accessible path to the playground, a sandbox, and additional playground equipment; and improvements to the ball diamond, and maintenance of the tennis court. There is also a need for more advertisement to promote space availability in facilities. Recreation associations have noted that they are open to considering partnerships to fund outdoor recreation amenities and are in general agreement that while existing facilities are appropriately located, there are disparities in the quality and availability of recreation facilities and activities in different communities.

Sports Organizations

While there are mixed sentiments regarding the adequacy of existing Township facilities, sports organizations have noted that an expected increase in registrations in the next five years will require upgrades or replacements of bowling greens, weekly affordable ice, reliable internet access, dedicated dressing room opportunities for older teams, and boardroom facilities with office space. Additionally, it was identified that scheduling conflicts are common and especially frequent during March/April and September. Pertaining to the location of facilities, it has been noted that facilities are considered properly located to suit the needs of the organization and there have been no noticeable disparities identified between the quality and availability of recreation facilities within Woolwich.



3. VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



3. Vision and Guiding Principles

3.1. Overview

Parks and Recreation opportunities are vital to the development of healthy communities, where residents can connect, play and learn. As the Township of Woolwich continues to grow, it is crucial to invest in the maintenance and expansion of these services to ensure all residents have equitable access to Parks and Recreation. Furthermore, it is important to have a vision and goals to create a framework that will guide the development and future decision making of the Township over the next decade.

The vision, goals, and objectives of this Master Plan have been synthesized from the input gathered from the community, stakeholder focus groups and best practices research.

3.2 Vision

Woolwich's vision statement describes the desired future for the Parks and Recreation System in Woolwich. It is founded on the community values, priorities and aspirations identified through the community engagement process.

Woolwich's parks and recreation system is inclusive, sustainable, and adaptable to meet the needs of a growing and diverse community, while building community connections and contributing to an improved quality of life.

3.3 Goals and Objectives

The Goals of this Plan reflect the desired outcomes to be achieved by the Township of Woolwich. The objectives provide actionable recommendations as to how the goals of this Plan will be accomplished.

**Goal #1****Facilitate an Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Parks and Recreation System**

- 1.1 Incorporate universal design standards into Parks and Recreation facilities to support barrier-free environments for people of all ages and abilities.
- 1.2 Ensure that publicly funded parks and recreation opportunities will be affordable, with some being free to access.
- 1.3 Provide facilities for passive and organized play (e.g. multi-use spaces) to support a range of activities, interests, and abilities.
- 1.4 Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design measures to promote safety in all parks and recreational facilities.

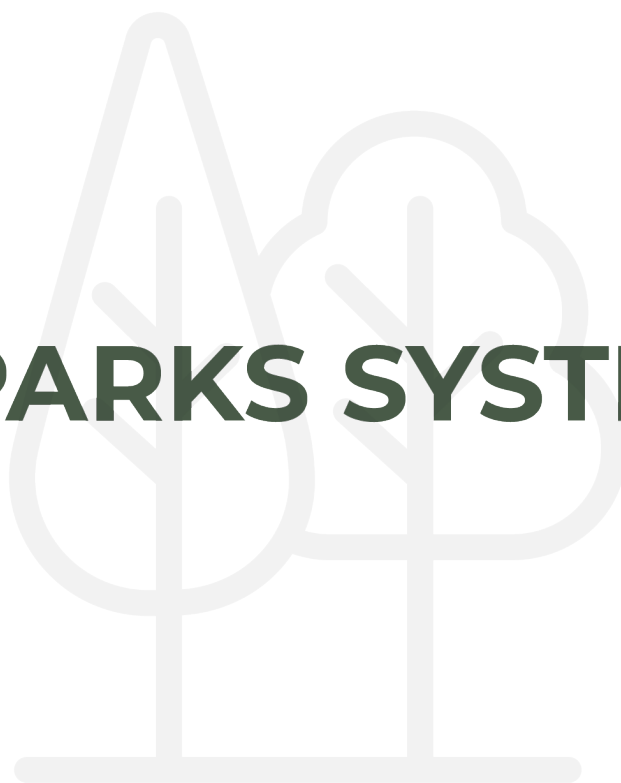
Goal #2**Promote Opportunities for Healthy Living, Aging-in-Place, and Community Building**

- 2.1 Provide a range of recreational programs that address the needs and interests of residents of all ages and abilities.
- 2.2 Facilitate place-making opportunities for cultural pursuits, events and socialization.
- 2.3 Educate residents on program offerings and the various amenities and recreational opportunities offered by the Township.
- 2.4 Explore community partnerships to deliver mutually beneficial projects.

Goal #3**Provide Well-Designed and Sustainable Parks and Recreation Facilities**

- 3.1 Invest, maintain, and upgrade parks and recreation facilities to ensure the longevity of infrastructure.
- 3.2 Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable practices in parks and recreation facilities.
- 3.3 Integrate green infrastructure and shade as a key design element in the planning, development, or retrofit of parks and recreation facilities.
- 3.4 Seek opportunities to use facilities efficiently and for multiple purposes.

4. PARKS SYSTEM





4. Parks System

This Chapter details the Township's parks system by providing a park classification system, an inventory of parkland, a needs assessment for parkland, and a high-level parks plan. Parkland refers to land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and leisure activities, and connection to nature. For the purposes of the Master Plan, "parks" and "parkland" are used interchangeably to refer to lands in the parks system but not all lands in the Township's overall parkland supply are considered when assessing service levels or future parkland needs. For reasons that are detailed below, the Township's inventory of parkland is divided into active use parks and passive use parkland. Only active use parks and future parkland needed for active use parks are considered as part of the needs assessment in this Chapter of the Master Plan.

Recommendations are presented in Chapter 6. Additional documentation is contained in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared as part of this Master Plan.





4.1. Parks Classification System

Woolwich provides parkland that ranges in size and differs in terms of landscape characteristics, amenities, and recreation facilities. To better manage and plan the Township's parks system, parkland within Woolwich should be classified as follows:

- Neighbourhood Park
- Community Park
- Specialized/Cultural Park
- Connector Park
- Natural Area/Open Space

The proposed parks classification system includes both active use parks and passive use parkland and should be used consistently by the Township to allow for effective monitoring and implementation of this Master Plan.

The distinction between active use parks and passive use parkland is important when considering the Township's parks system. Natural area/open space and connector parks are considered passive use parkland for the purposes of this Master Plan, while neighbourhood parks, community parks, and specialized/cultural parks are deemed to be active use parks.

Natural area/open space and connector parks identify parkland comprised of natural heritage features and/or natural hazards and may include limited passive recreation facilities such as trails. These lands are not appropriate, however, for active use park development. Passive use parkland in many cases are wooded or forested areas like the South Park Woods south of Whippoorwill Drive in Elmira or Priddle Park or Sawmill Woods Park in Conestogo.

Other Park types—neighbourhood parks, community parks, and specialized/cultural parks—are considered active use parks. These parks are intended to be used for informal play, social gatherings, leisure activities, and sports, with key differences between types of active use parks being intended size, service area, and range and scale of amenities/facilities provided.

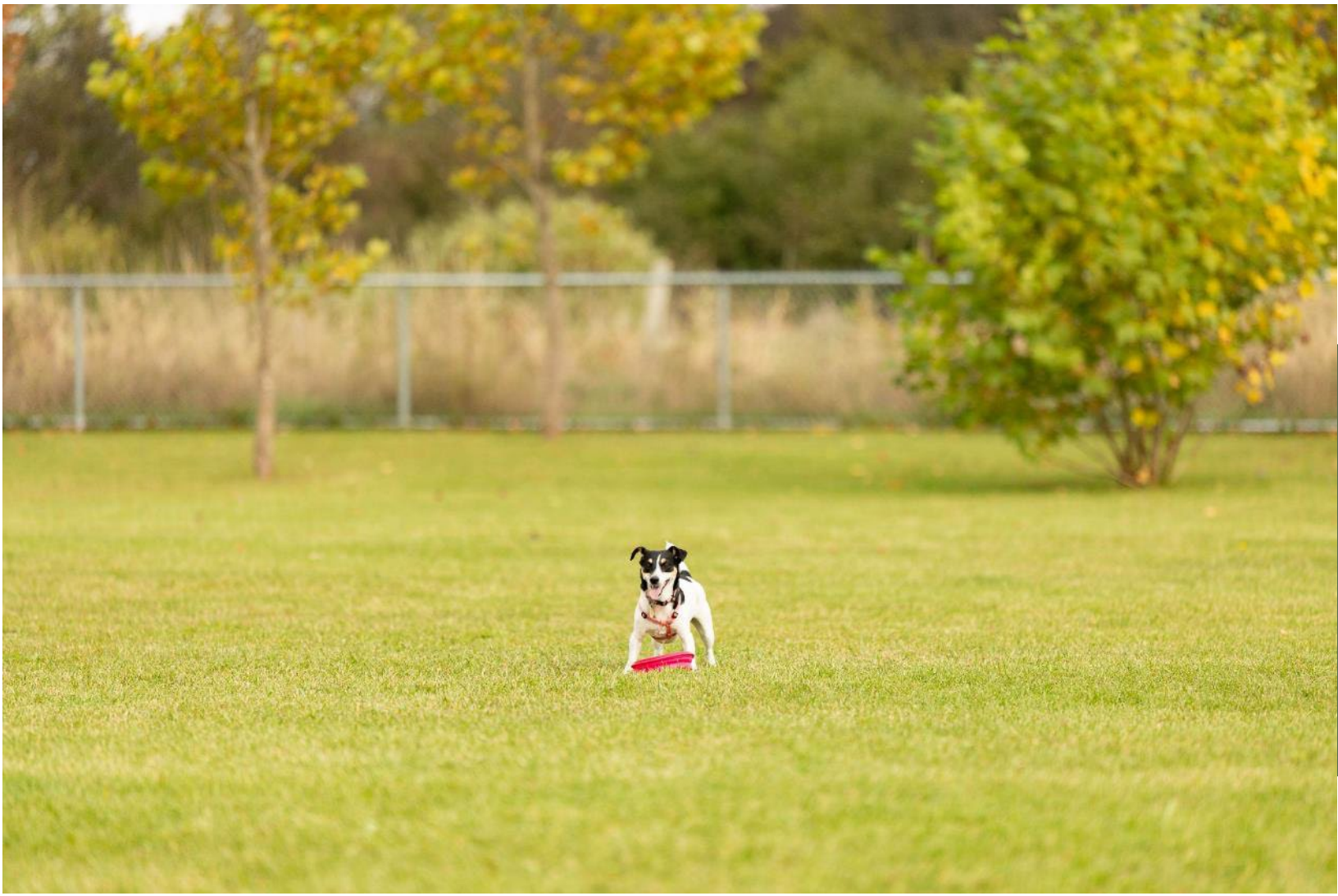
Neighbourhood parks are smaller and located such that most residences in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, especially in newer areas, are within convenient walking distance of at least one such park. Neighbourhood parks are generally limited to landscaped areas that may include facilities/amenities such as playgrounds, paths, multi-use pads, and benches.

Community parks are larger and fewer in number. They host facilities like sports fields, community centres, and/or arenas that require more centralized provision to be feasible. They may also provide facilities and amenities provided in neighbourhood parks.



Specialized/Cultural parks are provided based on historical provision and/or a mix of need, advocacy, civic interest, available space, and in some cases for public commemoration. Victoria Glen, Gore Park, and Memorial Park in Elmira, as well as the Elmira Dog Park, are examples of different specialized/cultural parks in the Township.

Woolwich's parks classification system is outlined in the following fact sheets.





Neighbourhood Parks

Neighbourhood Parks

Service Area

500 metres

Description

Neighbourhood parks are intended to support neighbourhood-scale outdoor recreational needs. Generally smaller than community parks and limited to amenities and facilities required to meet the daily recreation and leisure activity needs of residents within convenient walking distance (5-10 minutes). Access via active transportation (walking or cycling). Should generally be 0.15 to 0.6 hectares in size and have frontage along a public street.

Acquisition Strategy

Lands generally obtained as part of development approval process for subdivisions. Provided based on parkland dedication requirements but may require additional capital funding.

Minimum Service Level

0.4 ha per 1000 residents

Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Active uses. Appropriate landscaping for screening. Mowed grass or open areas. May include playgrounds, benches, pathways, and multi-use courts (where not provided in other nearby parks or public facilities such as schools).

Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities not provided. Parkettes may be utilized where determined appropriate.



Community Parks

Community Parks

Service Area

Settlement

Description

Community parks are intended to support the recreation and leisure activity needs for a group of neighbourhoods or an entire settlement (i.e. community) by providing space for a range of recreation facilities, including sports fields and community centres. Community parks are larger in size than neighbourhood parks to support centralized provision of recreation facilities and programming/services, as well as to address compatibility with adjacent uses. Community parks should generally be 1.5 hectares or larger in size.

Acquisition Strategy

Linked to service levels and forecasted population growth in settlements. Requires capital funding to acquire parkland based on medium to long term needs.

Minimum Service Level

1.4 ha per 1000 residents

Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Active uses. Mowed grass or open areas. May include similar elements to neighbourhood parks: playgrounds, benches, pavilions or covered areas, pathways. Focus is on sports fields, ball diamonds, courts, and other recreation facilities with extensive space needs and large service areas.

Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities provided. Supporting amenities/facilities may be provided such as washrooms, spectator seating, concessions, and maintenance buildings or equipment storage. To optimize usage lighting may be provided for outdoor facilities.



Specialized/Cultural Parks

Specialized/Cultural Parks

Service Area

Settlement or Township-wide

Specialized/cultural parks are intended to support social and cultural needs and often serve a unique function: venue for gatherings or events; hosts a community garden, war memorial, or heritage feature; or serves as a tourist destination. Can vary in size but are often smaller than neighbourhood parks. Tend to be located at highly visible and accessible locations.

Acquisition Strategy

Not applicable.

Target Service Level

Not applicable

Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Generally active uses with an emphasis on leisure or cultural activities and community events. Bandshell, memorials, seating, and other unique features (i.e. fountains, sculptures, or other forms of public art). May include specialized facilities or uses such as common gardens or off-leash dog parks.

Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities generally not provided. May have unique landscaping and maintenance requirements.



Connector Parks

Connector Park

Service Area

Settlement or Township-wide

Parks with trails intended to serve as links between neighbourhoods, parks and through settlements for pedestrians and cyclists. May be located on Township lands, or facilitated in partnership with private landowners, service groups, or other municipalities.

Acquisition Strategy

Not applicable.

Target Service Level

Not applicable

Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Passive uses such as trails. May include paths of various widths and surface treatments, including natural footpaths and multi-use paths with bridges.

Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities generally not provided. May have unique requirements for signage, landscaping, and maintenance.



Natural Areas/Open Space

Natural Areas/Open Space

Service Area

Settlement or Township-wide

Natural Areas/Open Space is parkland that contains naturalized open space such as forested areas and woodlots, ravines, marshes, and ponds, or natural heritage features such as woodlands, wetlands, and/or wildlife habitat that require protection and cannot be developed. These parks are typically low or no maintenance areas and only include facilities/amenities that support passive uses.

Acquisition Strategy

Lands are obtained as part of the development approval process. Typically, are lands with development constraints such as natural hazards and/or natural heritage features and buffers that are required by policy to be protected.

Target Service Level

Not applicable

Uses/Amenities/Facilities

Passive uses. May include access points and trails or natural footpaths.

Other Considerations

Off-street parking facilities not generally provided. Signage may be provided at trailheads and/or access points.



The goal of parkland design and development is to create vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive green spaces in communities through a comprehensive strategy. This effort aims to address the various requirements of the community while improving the ecological value and resilience of parklands.

Parkland design and development is guided by fundamental design concepts, including accessibility, environmental sustainability, interconnection, and multi-functionality. To ensure the parks represent the distinct qualities and goals of each community in the Township, the development process should include a careful assessment of needs, strategic site selection, intentional design, and active stakeholder engagement.

The Township's landscape and design guidelines emphasize the creation of accessible, environmentally sustainable, and visually appealing green spaces. The guidelines prioritize the integration of parks into the existing urban fabric, ensuring connectivity and ease of access for residents. They also emphasize the use of native plantings and sustainable construction practices to enhance ecological value and biodiversity.

By following sound design principles and involving the community, the Township can create parks that make its communities healthier and more enjoyable, while also enhancing the aesthetics and environmental performance of parkland.

**Design Principles**

Principle	Description
Accessibility and Inclusivity	Where required and reasonably possible all parks shall be AODA compliant as per Section 6.4.3 in the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines. Everyone in the community, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic background, should be able to access parkland. This entails offering amenities for varied user groups, programming that appeals to a range of interests, and barrier-free access.
Wayfinding	Incorporate effective wayfinding strategies into parkland design to ensure that users can easily navigate through the space, understand the layout, and locate key amenities and points of interest. This may include clear signage, maps, landmarks, and intuitive path layouts that enhance user experience and promote a sense of orientation and safety within the park.
Environmental Sustainability	In Section 6.3.1 in the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines, Designs shall include sustainable features including recycled products, water and energy conservation features and locally manufactured products wherever possible. To improve ecological value, climatic resilience, and biodiversity conservation, parkland design should place a high priority on environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by implementing green infrastructure, native plantings, and sustainable construction techniques.
Connectivity	By incorporating parks into the urban fabric, you may improve the accessibility and usability of the park system as a whole by creating a network of green areas that are simple to get to by bicycle, foot, or public transportation.
Multifunctionality	Parks should be places where people interact socially, give recreational possibilities, encourage active transportation, and maintain local biodiversity.



Development Process

Process	Description
Needs Assessment	Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to understand current and future recreational needs, including surveys, public consultations, and demographic data analysis.
Site Selection	Select suitable parkland development sites based on location, size, accessibility, and ecological value, considering redevelopment of brownfield sites or underutilized spaces to maximize land use efficiency.
Design Concept	Develop a design concept based on needs assessment and site analysis, including layout of park amenities, circulation paths, landscaping, and sustainable features reflecting cultural and historical context while incorporating innovative design elements. According to Section 6.3.2 of the Township of Woolwich Landscape and Design Guidelines, working with the staff, the design guidelines and the relevant planning documents, the developer shall engage the professional services of a qualified, O.A.L.A. registered Landscape Architect to prepare a Park Concept/ Facility Fit Plan during the preliminary stages of engineering design and master servicing for the subdivision and the preparation of the Draft Plan of Subdivision.
Stakeholder Engagement	Engage stakeholders, including residents, community groups, and local businesses, throughout the development process to gather input and feedback, ensuring the parkland design meets community needs and expectations.
Implementation	Implement parkland development through a phased approach, including site preparation, construction of amenities, planting of vegetation, and installation of infrastructure in a sustainable, cost-effective manner, considering long-term maintenance and operational needs.



4.3. Parks System

At present, Woolwich's parks system includes approximately 234 hectares of land. Passive use parkland (natural areas/open space and connector parks) comprise approximately two-thirds of the Township's parks system or 156 hectares. The remaining one-third or 78 hectares of parkland is classified as active use parks (neighbourhood parks, community parks, or specialized/cultural parks). Over 90% of parkland in the Township is found in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs.

A comprehensive inventory of parkland is provided in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared for this Master Plan. Fact sheets are provided below in this section to provide key data and an outline of the Township's parks system.



**Breslau**

Breslau				
Settlement Type	2024	2031	2041	2051
Urban Area	6,069	7,804	10,119	13,269
Parkland Supply (ha)	Active Use		Passive Use	
109.84	13.58		96.26	
Active Use Parks		Service Level (Active Use Parkland)		
Neighbourhood Parks (3) Community Parks (1)		2.24 ha per 1000 residents		

Description

One large community park, Breslau Memorial Park, is located centrally within the established residential community south of the rail corridor. Residential growth is occurring to the west and southwest of Breslau Memorial Park. One neighbourhood park is provided at the southern end of this area. Lands along the Grand River are included in the Township's park system as natural area/open space.

Significant growth can be anticipated in this area between Woolwich Street South and Fountain Street North. Newer residential areas are also located to the north between the rail corridor and Victoria Street North stretching eastward from Fountain Street to Greenhouse Road. Two neighbourhood parks are provided in this area. Natural heritage features in this area are protected as part of large natural area/open space parkland parcels.

Issues or Opportunities

Breslau has experienced considerable recent growth and development and is planned/forecasted for significant growth to 2051. It is geographically isolated from parks and recreation facilities provided in the northern half of the Township, requiring carefully planning for future parkland needs in the near term to ensure adequate parkland will be available to meet future recreation needs typically provided in facilities hosted at community parks.



Figure 2 – Breslau Parks System

**Elmira****Elmira**

Settlement Type	2024	2031	2041	2051
Township Urban Area	13,541	16,469	20,129	24,304

Parkland Supply (ha)	Active Use	Passive Use
72.67	37.53	35.14

Active Use Parks	Service Level (Active Use Parkland)
Neighbourhood Parks (10) Community Parks (7) Cultural/Specialized Park (4)	2.77 ha per 1000 residents

Description

Elmira has a well-developed park system that is balanced between smaller neighbourhood parks, especially in residential areas developed in recent decades, and larger community parks with recreation facilities, including sports fields and ball diamonds. The park system in Elmira also includes several specialized/cultural parks. Gore Park and Memorial Park, parkette-sized triangular public spaces, are located along Arthur Street on the approach to downtown. There is also an off-leash dog park east of Union Street and south of Oriole Parkway East, as well as Victoria Glen at the end of Dunke Street North, which is mostly forested but includes a community garden. Elmira has a large connector park which provides trails/footpaths through forested area/woodlot connecting residential areas south of South Parkwood Boulevard to those north of Whippoorwill Drive. There are also two large natural area/open space parkland parcels in the southwest part of Elmira adjacent to employment uses. The larger of the two, south of Field Drive and east of Union Street, is the Elmira Nature Reserve.

Issues or Opportunities

Elmira has experienced steady growth and development in the past around the older, established areas flanking Arthur Street north of First Street. Residential subdivisions are now being developed at the northwest and southwest edges of the existing built-up area. Significant growth is forecasted to 2051 and will mainly occur in designated greenfield areas westward toward Floradale Road.



Figure 3 – Elmira Parks System

**St. Jacobs**

St. Jacobs					
Settlement Type		2024	2031	2041	2051
Township Area	Urban	2,650	3,178	3,838	4,564
Parkland Supply (ha)		Active Use		Passive Use	
34.24		12.13		22.11	
Active Use Parks			Service Level (Active Use Parkland)		
Neighbourhood Parks (4)			4.58 ha per 1000 residents		
Community Parks (3)					
Cultural/Specialized Park (1)					

Description

St. Jacobs is a smaller urban settlement with a strong north-south orientation along King Street. Newer residential areas and recent subdivision development are found in the southeast part of St. Jacobs. Parkland south of the Conestogo River is provided mainly east of Water Street along the river as it turns and runs south to where it crosses Arthur Street/Highway 85. A considerable portion of these lands are connector park that integrates natural area/open space with a neighbourhood park (playground), community park (ball diamond and sports fields), and cultural/specialized park (off-leash dog park). North of the Conestogo River there are two adjacent community parks that host recreation facilities: a ball diamond and the St. Jacobs Arena.

Issues or Opportunities

The park system in St. Jacobs is strongly oriented to Riverside Meadows, with most amenities and facilities at its northern end. There may be opportunities for improvements, particularly to trails to connect new residential development at the southern end of the connector park to recreation facilities and amenities to the north, as well as provide active transportation options to reach the St. Jacobs core area along King Street south of the Conestogo River.

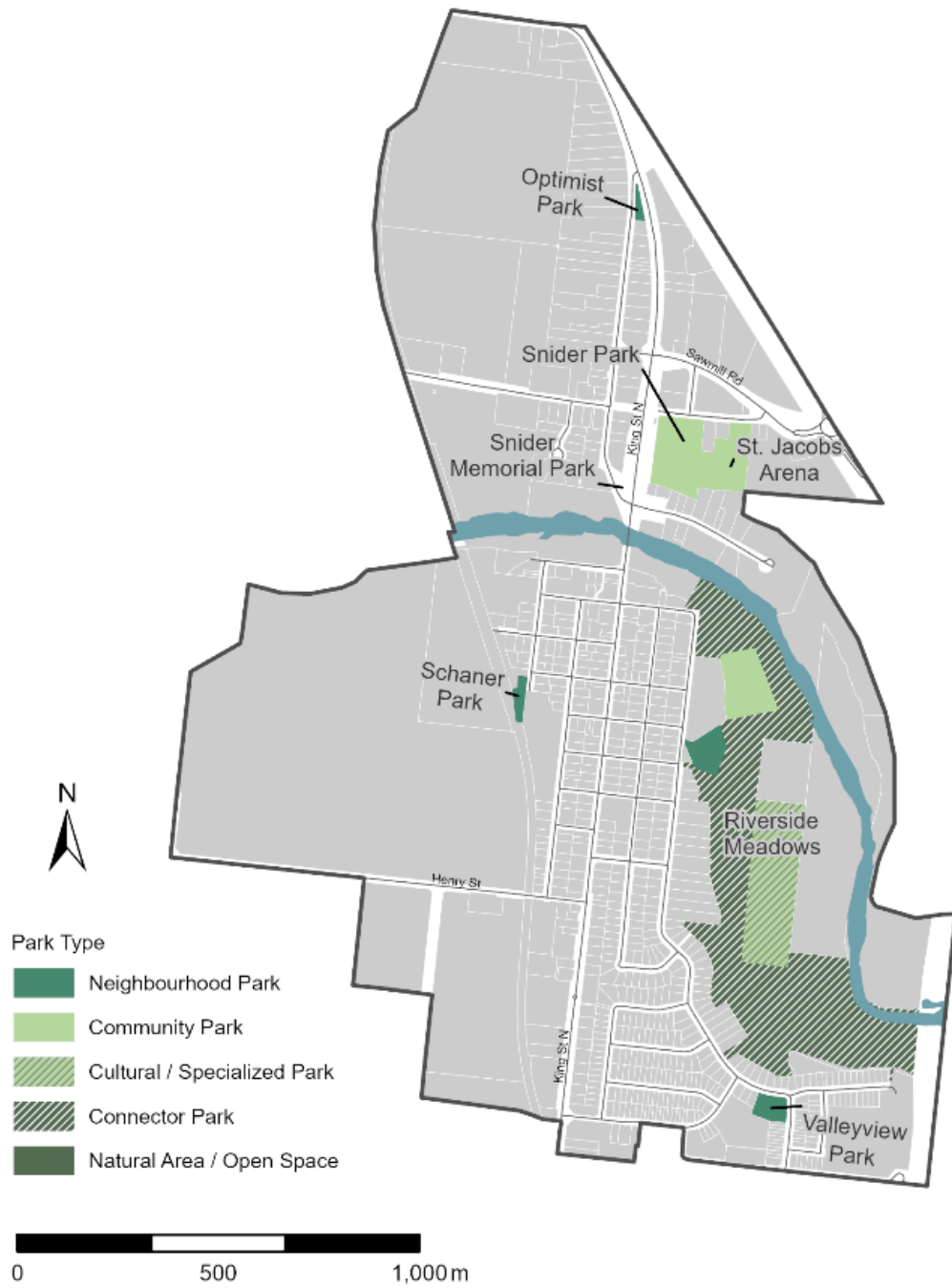


Figure 4 – St. Jacobs Park System





Rural Settlements

Rural Settlements and Countryside

Settlement	2024	Parks	Supply (ha)	Service Level (Active Use)
Bloomingtondale	269	1	4.58	17.03
Conestogo	1,316	1	1.35	1.03
Floradale	Not Avail.	1	2.29	Not Avail.
Heidelberg	698	1	1.59	2.28
Maryhill	645	2	4.95	7.67
West Montrose	262	2	0.27	1.03
Totals - Rural Settlements and Countryside	9,392	8	15.04	1.60

Parkland Supply (ha)	Active Use	Passive Use
17.43	15.04	2.40

Active Use Parks

Neighbourhood Parks (2)
Community Parks (5)
Cultural/Specialized Park (1)

Passive Use Parkland

Natural Area/Open Space (2)

Description

The development of community parks in Bloomingtondale, Conestogo and Heidelberg is closely connected to community associations that operated playgrounds and sports facilities in these settlements historically. More recently, the Township acquired lands in Maryhill and developed a park with a community centre, playground, and outdoor sport facilities. The Township now considers requiring small parks at strategic locations in larger rural settlements as part of the subdivision approval process to ensure playground facilities can be provided within a 5-10 minute walking distance of new residences.

Issues or Opportunities

The park system in the rural settlements should be considered distinct from urban provision as community parks and facilities serve a wider rural-agricultural countryside. Neither rural settlements, nor the countryside are expected to experience population growth. There should be a focus on quality (maintenance and renewal) and meeting community needs for gathering spaces. Periodic review of facility usage/utilization should be undertaken. The Township could explore options with the Foundation Christian School for shared use of their park space in Winterbourne.



4.4. Parkland Supply and Future Need

Assessment of current parkland supply focuses on active use parkland. As noted previously, passive use parkland in the Township includes parks classified as natural area/open space and connector park. While these lands are considered part of the parks system, they are excluded from the needs assessment because they are limited to passive uses and recreation facilities such as trails and involve lands not suitable for active use park development.

The Township currently provides approximately 78 hectares of active use parkland or 2.47 hectares per 1000 residents. This falls within the range of 2-4 hectares per 1000 residents that most Ontario municipalities provide. It is recommended the Township plan for its parks system as a whole to stay within this range and generally maintain its current service level of approximately 2.5 hectares of active use parkland per 1000 residents.

The needs assessment estimates that by 2051, the Township will need to add approximately 25 hectares of active use parkland to the current parks system to achieve the minimum standard of 2 hectares per 1000 residents. To maintain the current level of provision, 2.5 hectares per 1000 residents, the Township would need to double the amount of parkland acquired to just over 50 hectares.

Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs currently provide active use parkland above the recommend minimum standard of 2 hectares per 1000 residents. As population growth occurs beyond now and 2051, Breslau and Elmira are estimated to progressively fall into a parkland supply deficit. The table below summarizes parkland supply and estimated need for these settlements as well as the Township as a whole.



Parkland Need					
Population	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	6,069	13,541	2,650	9,392	31,652
2031	7,804	16,469	3,178	9,377	36,828
2041	10,119	20,129	3,838	9,579	43,665
2051	13,269	24,304	4,564	9,694	51,831
Supply (ha)	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
Community	7.93	26.17	5.53	14.15	53.78
Neighbourhood	5.65	5.18	1.71	0.71	13.25
Specialized/Cultural	-	6.18	4.89	0.17	11.24
Total Active Use	13.58	37.53	12.13	15.03	78.27
Service Level (ha per 1000)	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	2.24	2.77	4.58	-	2.47
2031	1.74	2.28	3.82	-	2.13
2041	1.34	1.86	3.16	-	1.79
2051	1.02	1.54	2.66	-	1.51
Need (ha) (at 2 ha per 1000)	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	-1.44	-10.45	-6.83	-	-14.97
2031	+2.03	-4.59	-5.77	-	-4.61
2041	+6.66	+2.73	-4.45	-	+9.06
2051	+12.96	+11.08	-3.00	-	+25.39
Need (ha) (at 2.5 ha per 1000)	Breslau	Elmira	St. Jacobs	Countryside	Township
2024	+1.59	-3.68	-5.51	-	-0.86
2031	+5.93	+3.64	-4.19	-	+13.80
2041	+11.72	+12.79	-2.54	-	+30.89
2051	+19.59	+23.23	-0.72	-	+51.31

Note: The parkland “need” means a deficit between existing supply and the service level that results from population projections for 2024, 2031, 2041, and 2051 when compared to the recommended minimum standard (2 ha per 1000 residents) or existing service level (2.5 ha per 1000 residents). “+” is used to indicate the need for additional parkland (in hectares).





4.5. Locating Future Parks

As the Township grows over the next three decades it will be especially important to acquire parkland strategically in Breslau and Elmira as these settlements will accommodate most of the population growth forecasted to 2051. Determining where and in what park type additional parkland should be added to the parks system is considered at a high-level by this Master Plan.

New neighbourhood parks will mainly be required where new residential subdivisions are developed—with the necessary parkland acquired as part of the development approval process. On this basis, new neighbourhood parks will mirror the geography of designated greenfield areas in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs. The planning and approval process for these new residential areas will need to consider the Township's Landscape and Design Guidelines and the location of existing neighbourhood parks. Care should be exercised to balance cost-efficiency and operational considerations with convenient access—i.e., ensure most residences will be within 500 metres of a neighbourhood park or park with a playground.

New or expanded community parks will be required in Breslau and Elmira to accommodate forecasted growth to 2051. Target rates and/or minimum standards for recreation facilities—i.e., ball diamonds, sports fields, tennis or pickleball courts, community centres, etc.—are discussed in the next Chapter of this Master Plan. These target rates or minimum standards allow the Township to translate population growth into estimated facility needs. Where the needs assessment has determined new or expanded recreation facilities will be required, the space to accommodate them will mostly be found in community parks. For this reason and the difficulty acquiring/assembling larger parcels of land in built-up areas, it is recommended that the Township plan to secure the necessary parkland for community parks ahead of the planned and/or anticipated medium and longer-term growth and development of new areas in Breslau and Elmira to ensure it is available when needed in preferred locations.

The recommended target service levels for neighbourhood and community parks implies between 55-70% of new active use parkland will be allocated to community parks. The precise breakdown will depend on the overall service level achieved. Neighbourhood parks tend to fall as a percentage of active use parkland as overall provision or service levels increase.



5. RECREATION FACILITIES

5. Recreation Facilities

This Chapter details the Township’s recreation facilities by providing an inventory of facilities, a needs assessment for each facility type, and outlining the connection between the parks system and recreation facilities. Recreation facilities are divided into indoor and outdoor facilities for convenience. Both indoor and outdoor facilities identified and discussed in this Master Plan are mostly located on municipally owned active use parkland (also including leased property from the GRCA or Region of Waterloo), with most found at community parks.

Other recreation facilities may be provided at private facilities, including places of worship, and at public schools. It is acknowledged that the provision of recreation facilities outside the Township’s parks and recreation system does impact demand. Access and usage of these facilities are outside of municipal control. For this reason, they are not directly considered as part of this Master Plan. Similarly, there are facilities, especially those linked to new sports or emergent or niche recreational trends that are not comprehensively addressed as part of the needs assessment provided in this Chapter—high-level discussion and recommendations are included, however.

A comprehensive inventory of recreation facilities is provided in the Background Report and Needs Assessment prepared for this Master Plan. Fact sheets are provided below in this Chapter to provide key data and an outline of the Township’s recreation facilities.

Recommendations are presented in Chapter 6.

5.1. Outdoor Recreation Facilities

A range of outdoor recreation facilities are provided as part of the Township’s parks and recreation system. Outdoor recreation facilities include playgrounds and splash pads to support the outdoor play and recreation needs of young children; they also include facilities for individual and team sports such as ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts. There are amenities such as trails, covered seating areas (pavilions), benches, washrooms, and landscaped areas that are not directly assessed—it is assumed these are parkland features that should be guided by individual park development or redevelopment processes and based on guidelines developed the Township such as the landscape and design guidelines referred to in the Parkland Design and Development section in Chapter 4 of this Master Plan.

As noted, there are new sports and emergent or niche recreational trends that are not comprehensively addressed. This Master Plan should be regarded as a living document. It is difficult to forecast medium to longer-term needs for sports or recreational activities that are relatively new. It is acknowledged that needs will evolve and that forecasting need to 2051 entails far more uncertainty for facilities than for parkland. The Township will need to develop a process or protocol for monitoring trends in usage and demand for recreation



facilities. This should include considering needs for sports or recreation/leisure activities that are relatively new and increasing in popularity and participation, as well as shifting preferences and declining usage of existing facilities or participation in sports associated with them. Multi-use facilities are an important way to build flexibility and adaptability into the parks and recreation system—with the additional benefit that it also tends to facilitate optimizing the use of parkland and facilities over time.

Fact sheets are provided in this Chapter for the following outdoor facilities to provide a snapshot of current provision and outline key findings or issues identified by the needs assessment:

- Ball Diamonds
- Soccer Fields
- Playgrounds
- Outdoor Ice Pads
- Splash Pads
- Tennis Courts





Ball Diamonds

Ball Diamonds

Supply 16.5 Unlit Equivalent
 - 9 Lit
 - 3 Unlit

Overview

The Township currently provides ball diamonds in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, as well as in community parks in the following rural settlements: Bloomingdale, Conestogo, Floradale, Heidelberg, and Maryhill. Most of the Township's ball diamonds have lighting, which allows them to be used more intensively/efficiently. Lit ball diamonds are considered 1.5 as an unlit equivalent (ULE) when determining overall supply. Most ball diamonds in the Township have fencing and are groomed. The sizes/dimensions of ball diamonds vary.

Provision Target 1 per 2000-3000 residents

(Ball Diamonds required)

	Year	Population	Provision ¹	Min	Max	Min. Standard
Service Level	2024:	31,652	1,918	11	16	Exceeds
	2031:	36,828	2,232	12	18	Exceeds
	2041:	43,665	2,646	15	22	Exceeds
	2051:	51,831	3,141	17	26	-

Needs Assessment

The Township is currently well-provided with ball diamonds both in terms of service level and geographic distribution. Elmira is undersupplied, however. For the Township as a whole, service levels will fall to the minimum standard by 2051 based on forecasted population growth.

Strategic Considerations

Although, the overall provision of ball diamonds in the Township will remain above the minimum standard until 2051, forecasted growth will occur mainly in Breslau and Elmira. The Township should monitor usage of individual ball diamonds in all communities and consider utilization rates in determining whether to maintain current service levels or allow provision to fall toward the minimum standard as forecast population growth occurs. Additionally, the

¹ Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per ball diamond.

Township should monitor usage to determine whether a redistribution of diamonds from communities with little/no use to urban settlements with greater needs is warranted.

Currently, the utilization of the baseball diamonds has been stable. The Township accommodates three primary groups that regularly use these diamonds, each maintaining steady registration numbers. A decline in registration among the South Woolwich Minor Baseball, Elmira Minor Softball Association, and adult user groups, would directly affect the overall usage of the baseball diamonds.

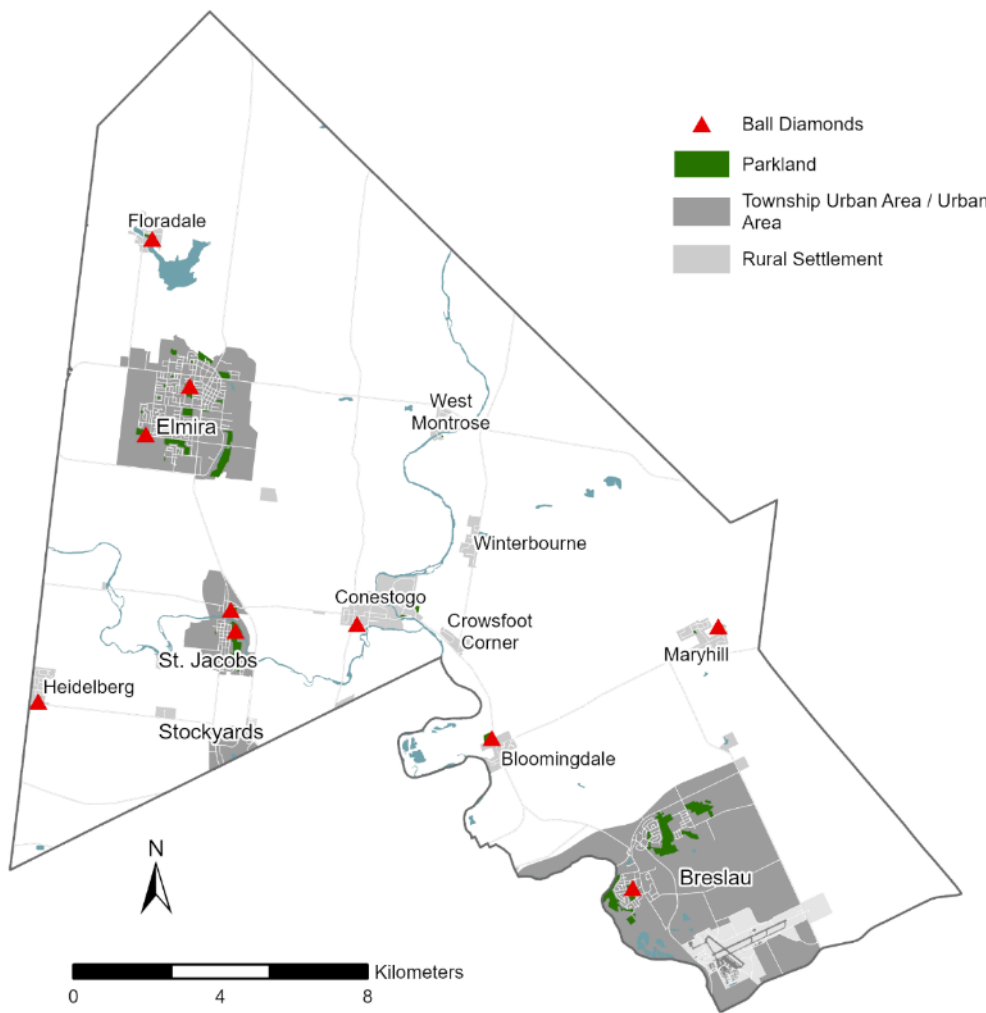


Figure 5 – Ball Diamonds in the Township of Woolwich



Soccer Fields

Soccer Fields

Supply 13.5

Overview

Most of the Township's supply of soccer fields are provided in community parks in Breslau, Elmira and St. Jacobs. Each park has multiple soccer pitches that range in size (full, 9v9, 7v7, 5v5). The soccer field at Lions Park in Elmira has lighting. Outside of urban settlements, Bloomingdale has a full-sized soccer pitch, while Maryhill has a 7v7 sized soccer pitch.

Provision Target 1 per 2000-4000 residents

		(Fields required)				
	Year	Population	Provision ²	Min	Max	Min. Standard
Service Level	2024:	31,652	2,345	8	16	Exceeds
	2031:	36,828	2,728	9	18	Exceeds
	2041:	43,665	3,234	11	22	Exceeds
	2051:	51,831	3,839	13	26	Exceeds

Needs Assessment

The Township is currently well-provided with soccer fields in terms of service level and geographic distribution. For the Township as a whole, service levels will fall toward the minimum end of the recommended service level range by 2051 based on forecasted population growth. To maintain the current rate of provision, the Township would need to add 9-10 soccer fields to its current supply, mostly in new or expanded community parks.

Strategic Considerations

The Township should monitor usage of individual soccer fields, particularly bookings, to determine how residential growth in Breslau and Elmira is impacting usage and supply requirements.

Currently, Woolwich Youth Soccer is the main user of the Township's soccer pitches. There are no adult groups currently using these facilities. Over the past few years, since the

² Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per field.



pandemic, there has been a noticeable decrease in Woolwich Youth Soccer registrations, which directly affects the overall utilization of the soccer pitches.

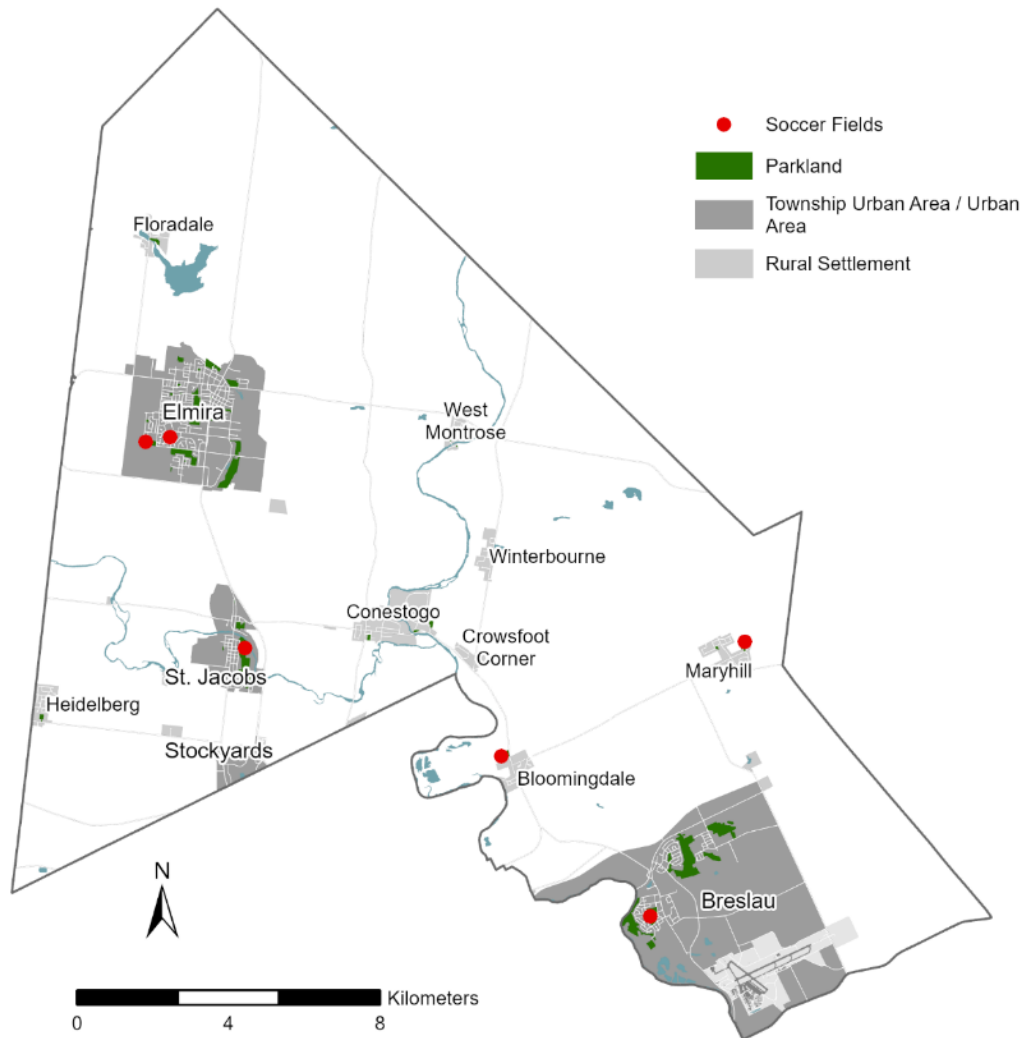


Figure 6 – Soccer Fields in the Township of Woolwich



Playgrounds

Playgrounds

Supply 20

Overview

Playgrounds are provided to meet the routine need for young children to engage in unstructured outdoor play. Facilities may include swings, climbing structures, slides, and other elements that combine physical and cognitive skills/activities. Because playgrounds are provided for regular use by young children, their provision targets are oriented toward proximity requirements such as most residences being within convenient walking distance of a park with a playground.

Provision Target Most residences within 500 metres of a playground

(Playgrounds required)

	Year	Provision	Min	Existing (service level)	Min. Standard
Service Level	2024:	222	15	20	Exceeds
	2031:	258	17	23	Exceeds
	2041:	306	20	28	-
	2051:	363	24	33	Under

Needs Assessment

The Township generally achieves the service area standard that most residences in settlements be located within 500 metres of playground facilities. A service level range of 1 per 100-300 children 0-9 years old may be considered when assessing service levels within settlement areas and to allow for variations in density. It is not recommended the Township seek to increase its overall service level and may determine based on usage the minimum standard is sufficient in most cases.

Strategic Considerations

Playgrounds should be provided in neighbourhood parks, and, where deemed appropriate, community parks. The priority when assessing need and selecting sites for neighbourhood parks should be achieving the service area standard to ensure most children are within a 5-10 minute walk (500 metres) of a playground, preferably without the need to cross busy streets.

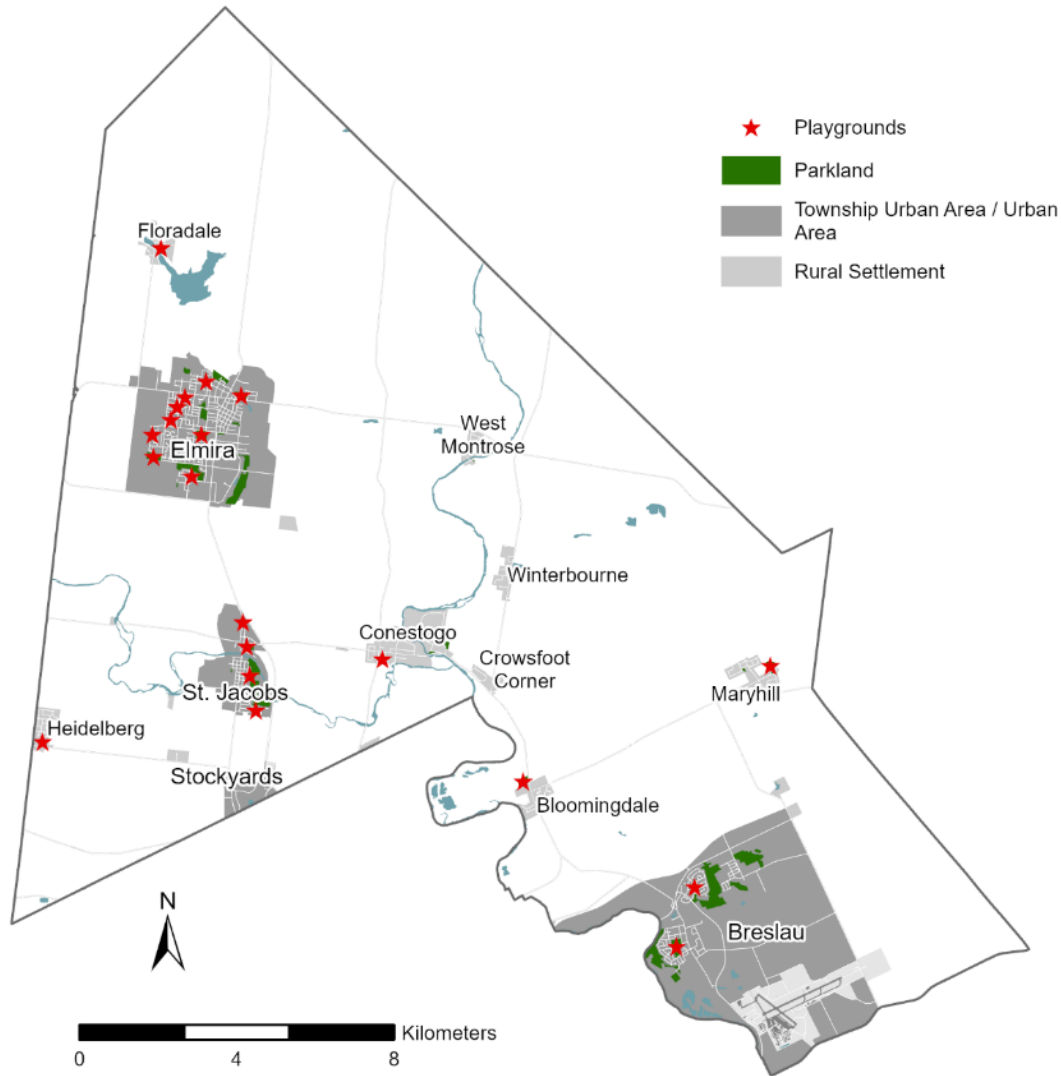


Figure 7 – Playgrounds in the Township of Woolwich



Outdoor Ice Pads

Outdoor Ice Pads

Supply 5

Overview

The Township current provides volunteer-run outdoor ice pads in three rural settlements – Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill – as well as in Breslau and St. Jacobs. Outdoor ice pads are typically provided at community parks, though an outdoor ice pad was recently constructed in a neighbourhood park, Valleyview Park, at the southern end of St. Jacobs. Outdoor ice pads have historically been run by volunteer groups and/or Recreation Associations in communities without an indoor ice pad.

Provision Target No target or minimum service level recommended.

Needs Assessment

While there is no recommended target for provision or minimum service level, Township-wide outdoor ice pads are provided at a rate of 1 per 6,330 residents. This is similar to the service level provided in the City of Kitchener and City of Woodstock, but somewhat lower than is provided in the City of Guelph and the Township of Centre Wellington. No outdoor ice pads are provided in Elmira or the portion of the Township north of Elmira where indoor ice pads and stick-and-puck ice times are offered.

Strategic Considerations

The provision of outdoor ice pads should be considered in conjunction with the supply and location of indoor ice arenas.



Skate Parks

Skate Parks

Supply 1

Overview

The Township current provides one skate park in Bristow Park in Elmira. Provision of skate parks and other similar facilities such as BMX tracks are typically provided based on expressed interest and support. Site selection focuses on compatibility and suitability criteria, which may include consideration of parks near where youth frequent such as schools and community centres.

Provision Target No target or minimum service level recommended.

Needs Assessment

The current skate park in The Township is centrally located in Elmira within walking distance of the public secondary school and proximate to public transit on Arthur Street. The Township may wish to establish criteria for evaluating requests for youth-oriented outdoor recreation facilities like skate parks and BMX tracks.

Strategic Considerations

Given the growth anticipated and relative geographic isolation from Elmira, the Township should consider providing a skate park in Breslau if there is expressed interest and the number children/youth increase with residential subdivision development.



Splash Pads

Splash Pads

Supply 2

Overview

The Township currently provides splash pads at Bolender Park (Elmira) and Breslau Memorial Park.

Provision Target 1 per 3000 children 0-9 years old

	Year	Population ³	Provision	Required	Need
Service Level	2024:	4,431	2,216	1	Surplus
	2031:	5,156	2,578	2	-
	2041:	6,113	3,057	2	-
	2051:	7,256	4,099	3	Deficit

Needs Assessment

After construction of the new splash pad at Breslau Memorial Park, the Township has a splash pad in the northern and southern parts of the Township—in the settlements, Breslau and Elmira, that are anticipated to accommodate most of the population growth forecasted for the Township to 2051. The recommended provision target rate suggests a third splash pad will be needed in the medium to longer term.

Strategic Considerations

Provision of splash pad or outdoor waterplay facilities varies across Ontario municipalities. The Township could consider providing splash pads at a somewhat higher rate if usage patterns and feedback from residents warrants it.

³ Population refers to children 0-9 years old estimated using the percent of the Township's population that was reported to be 0-9 years old in the 2021 Census of Canada.



Tennis Courts

Tennis Courts

Supply 7

Overview

The Township provides tennis courts in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs, as well as in two rural settlements (Conestogo and Heidelberg). Twin courts are provided in Breslau Memorial Park and Gibson Park (Elmira). Single courts are provided in Conestogo Community Park, Heidelberg Community Parks, and Snider Park (St. Jacobs).

Provision Target 1 per 5000 residents

	Year	Population	Provision ⁴	Required	Need
Service Level	2024:	31,652	4,522	6	Surplus
	2031:	36,828	5,261	7	-
	2041:	43,665	6,238	9	Deficit
	2051:	51,831	7,404	10	Deficit

Needs Assessment

The Township provides tennis courts at a service level comparable to provision targets found in Master Plans for other Ontario municipalities. Actual service levels do vary between municipalities, however. Woolwich provides tennis courts at a rate that is comparable to the Township of Wilmot but higher than nearby municipalities such as the City of Kitchener, City of Guelph, and Township of Centre Wellington. Forecast growth to 2051 suggests the Township will need to consider increasing supply sometime after 2031.

Strategic Considerations

The Township should monitor usage/utilization rates for existing tennis courts and consider growing demands for new hard-court sports such as pickleball that require similar facilities, particularly in the urban settlements.

⁴ Provision refers to the number of residents in the Township per tennis court.

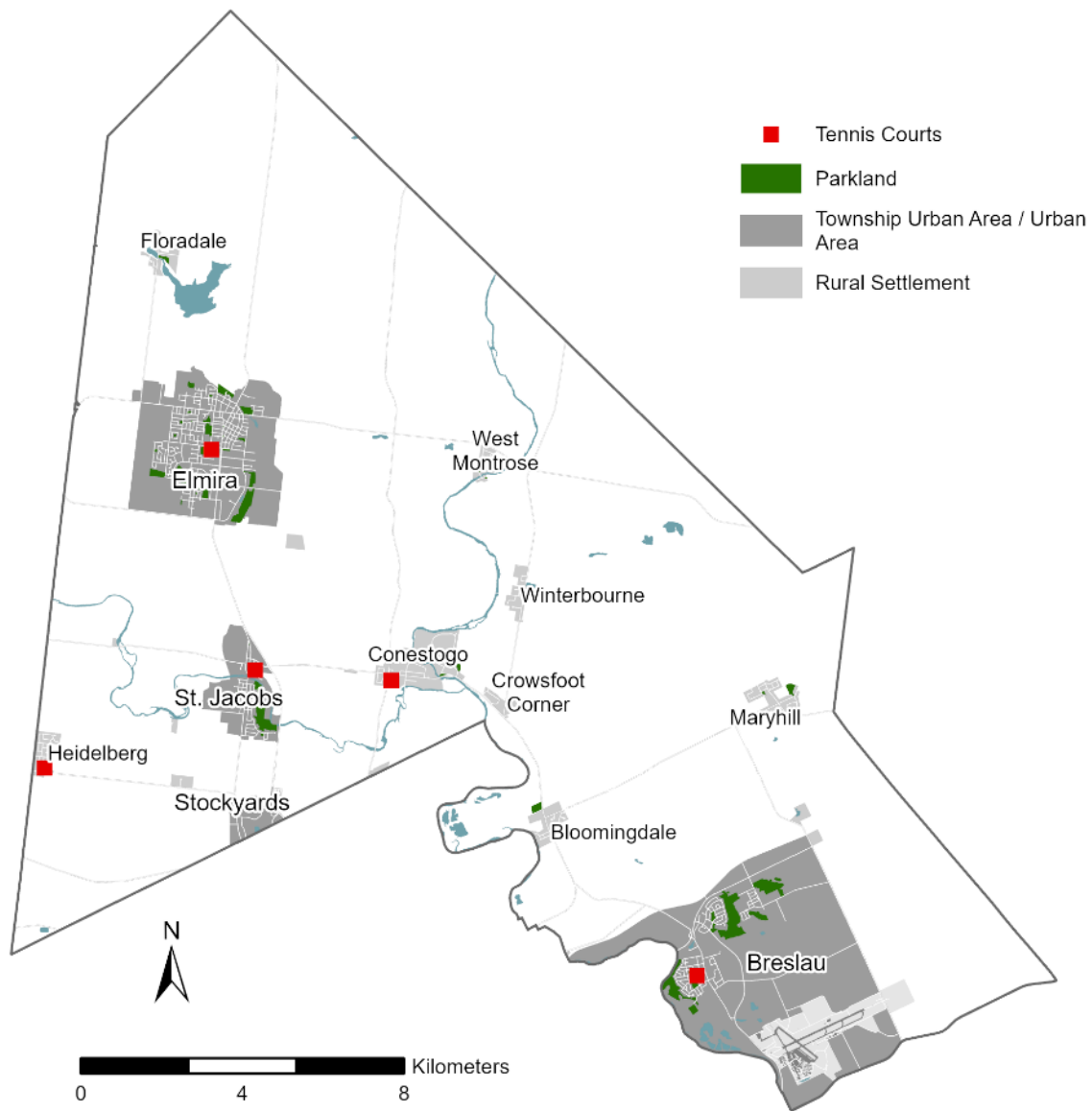


Figure 8 – Tennis Courts in the Township of Woolwich



Trails

Trails

Supply	104 km Total of Public Trails 65 km – Township Managed Trails (34 km Township owned and 31 km not Township owned)
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Overview

The Township has 104 km of public trail, located throughout urban settlement areas and including longer connector trails that provide east-west and north-south corridors through the Township.

Of the total 104 km of trails in the Township, 34 km are owned and managed by the Township, located primarily in Connector Parks and Natural Areas/Open Spaces. The remaining 70 km of trails are either managed by the Township (public trails on private property) or are apart of other trail networks, such as at Kissing Bridge Trail (Lions Club).

Trail surfaces throughout the Township range from natural footpaths to stone dust to asphalt, accommodating a variety of uses such as cycling, hiking, and mobility devices, and used for both recreation and as active transportation routes.

No target or minimum service level recommended.

Provision Target

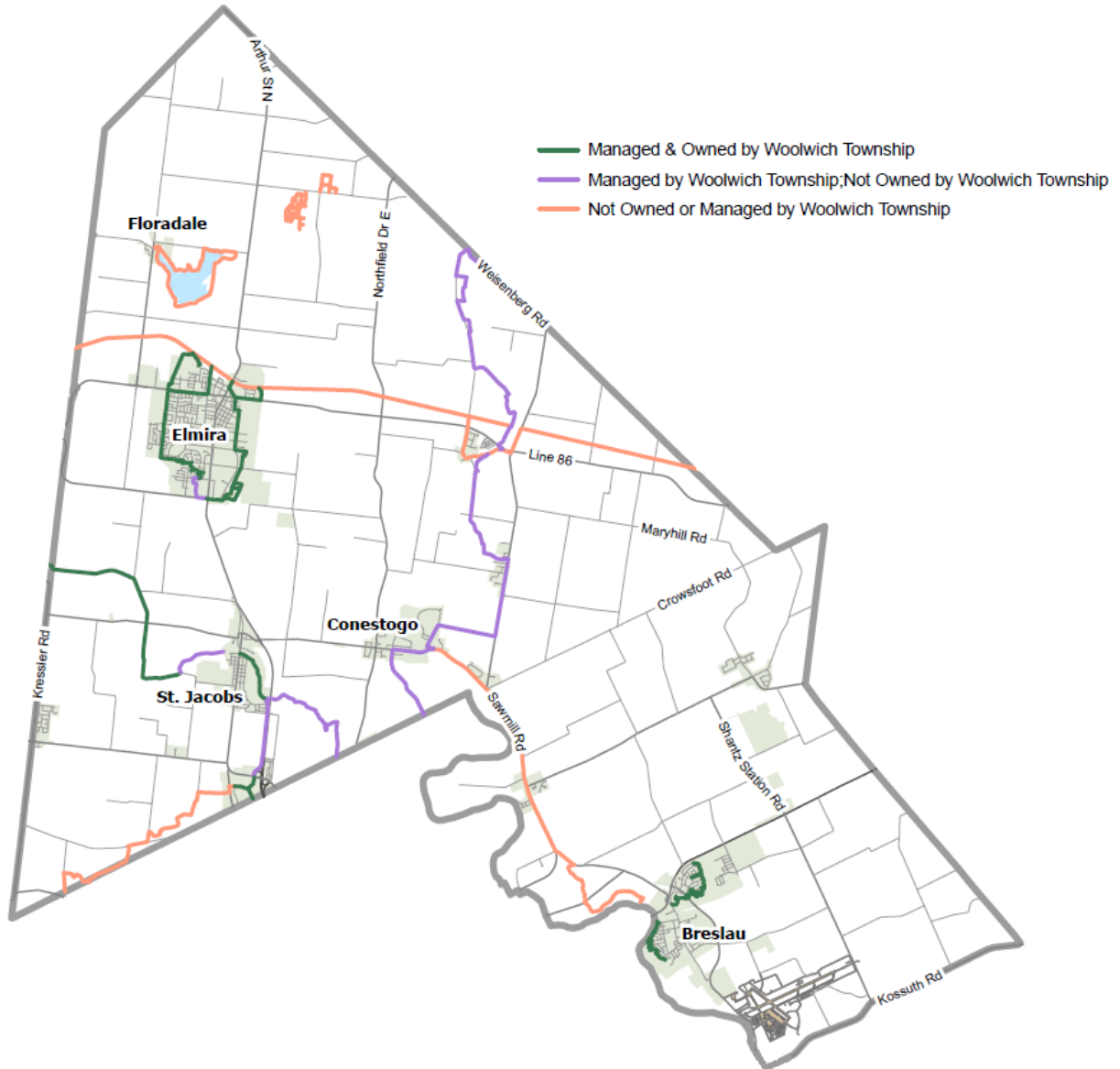
Average 2024 service level for municipalities within the Region of Waterloo is 1 km of trails per 1000 residents.

Needs Assessment

Based on a survey of municipal trail supply within the Region of Waterloo (2024), the service level for trails has been calculated at 4 km per 1000 residents, the highest in the Region. The Township is currently well-provided with trails in terms of service level and geographic distribution.

Strategic Considerations

Considering the forecasted population growth in both Breslau and Elmira, the Township should monitor usage of trails in these communities and consider overall utilization rates in determining whether to maintain current service levels or allow the provision to fall closer to the average service levels throughout the Region. Trails are often established through the design of and acquisition of lands for parks space, or open space. As acquisition occurs, the Township should continue to consider active transportation routes and opportunities for recreation trails to connect neighbourhoods within communities.



5.2. Indoor Recreation Facilities

Indoor recreation facilities provide valuable space for the Township and community organizations to deliver programs that help residents of all ages stay active, healthy and engaged. The Woolwich Memorial Centre, St. Jacobs Arena and the Breslau Community Centre are the three major indoor facilities. These facilities are complemented by smaller community centres in the Township's larger rural settlements.

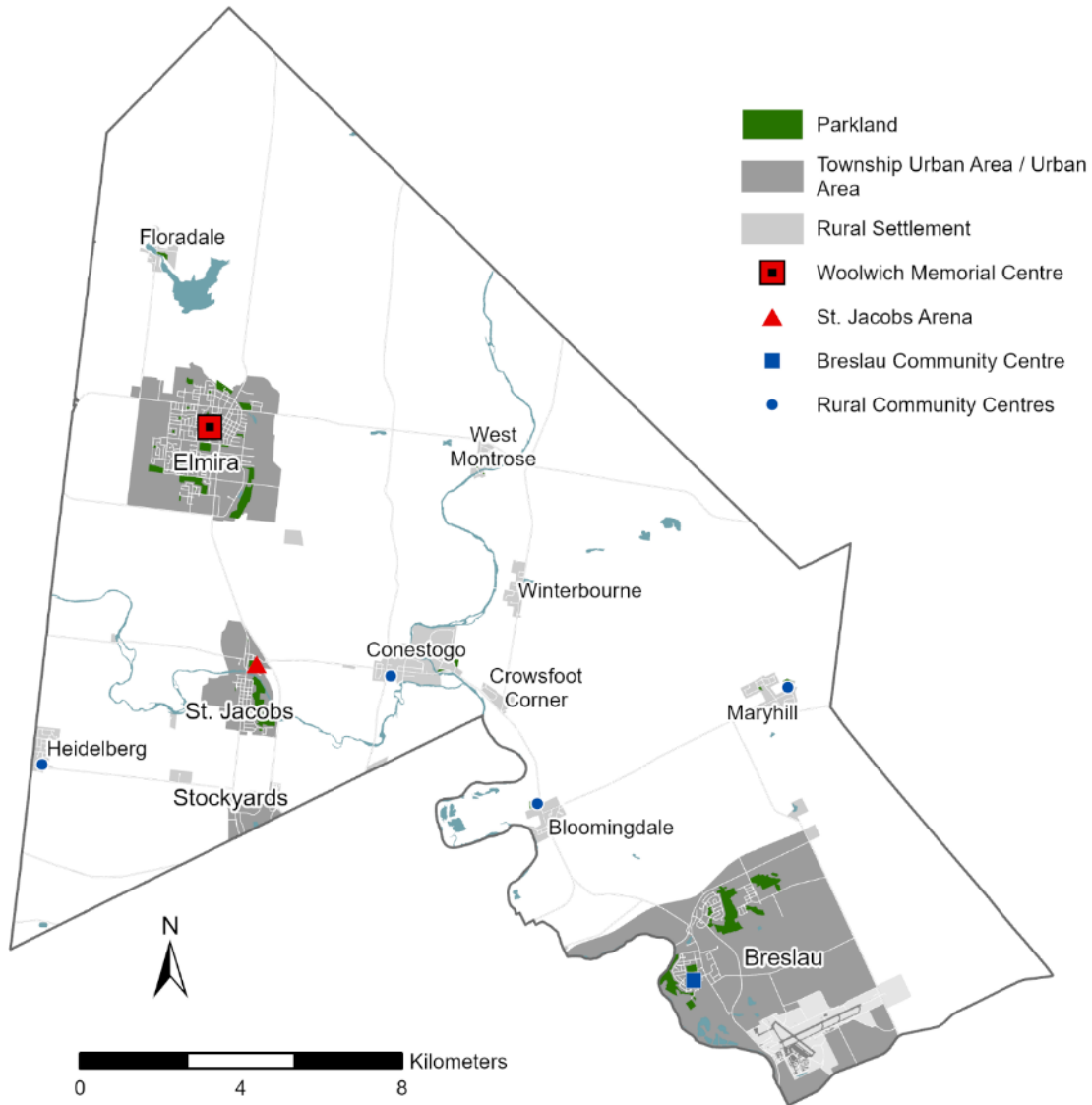


Figure 9 – Indoor Recreation Facilities in the Township of Woolwich

**Summary of Indoor Recreation Facilities**

Indoor Recreation Facility Type	Number	Location
Ice Rinks	3	Woolwich Memorial Centre (2), St. Jacobs Arena (1)
Indoor Pools	2	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Community Centres	6	Bloomingdale Community Centre, Breslau Community Centre, Conestogo Community Centre, Heidelberg Community Centre, Maryhill Community Centre, Woolwich Memorial Centre
Gymnasium	1	Breslau Community Centre
Senior's Centre	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Walking Track	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Fitness Centre	1	Woolwich Memorial Centre
Multi-Purpose Rooms & Meeting Rooms	11	Breslau Community Centre (2), Bloomingdale Community Centre (1), Conestogo Club House (1), Heidelberg Community Centre (1), Maryhill Community Centre (1), Woolwich Memorial Centre (5)



Woolwich Memorial Centre

Woolwich Memorial Centre

Overview

Centrally located in Elmira, the Woolwich Memorial Centre (WMC) is a unique, modern multi-use facility in the Township’s Parks and Recreation System. Just under 11,000 square metres (118,000 square feet) in size, the WMC has two NHL-sized ice rinks, one with seating for spectators; aquatics centre (pool); fitness centre; and, walking track. As community centre, the WMC also includes space for programming and events offered by the Woolwich Seniors Association, as well as a Community Hub run by Woolwich Community Services.

Forecasted Pop.	2024	2031	2041	2051
Elmira	13,541	16,469	20,129	24,304
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

Need Assessment

There is no minimum or target service level recommended for community centres because they can vary significantly in size and with respect to the amenities and facilities provided and services/programming offered. The WMC includes multiple facilities that do have recommended service levels minimums or target ranges, however. For indoor aquatic centres and arenas, the recommended service levels are 1 per 25,000-50,000 residents and 1 per 10,000-15,000 respectively. These service levels suggest additional facilities will be needed in the medium or longer term as the Township grows toward its forecast 2051 population.

Issues or Opportunities

The recommended target ranges for both pools and arenas recognizes a second facility may be warranted in the Township in the medium to longer-term, most likely strategically located in the southern half of the Township to serve the growing population in Breslau. The expansion of existing facilities may be considered based on unmet need and/or utilized capacity in the northern half of the Township. In either case, the Township should conduct a feasibility study and/or prepare a business case that considers the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of additional facilities or expansion of existing facilities.





St. Jacobs Arena

St. Jacobs Arena

Overview

Located in the northern end of St. Jacobs amongst Snider Park, St. Jacobs Arena is a single ice rink facility at 2,663 square metres (28,666 square feet). The facility was constructed in 1974 and has seen significant investment over the past decade in its mechanical and building systems. In recent years, the facility has been utilized year-round, accommodating summer camp through the summer months.

Forecasted Pop.	2024	2031	2041	2051
St. Jacobs	2,650	3,178	3,838	4,564
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

Need Assessment

The recommended target service level range for indoor ice rinks is 1 per 10,000-15,000 residents. This is based on the provision in comparable municipalities and the Township’s existing supply of 3 indoor ice rinks between WMC and the St. Jacobs Arena. Based on forecast population growth to 2051, the existing supply will remain within the target range for the north half of the Township. To maintain the existing service level of approximately 1 indoor ice rink per 10,000 residents the Township will need to add an additional ice rink by 2041.

Issues or Opportunities

This Plan has identified the need for a multi-use facility in Breslau to serve the southern half of the Township in the medium to longer-term as forecast growth occurs. The Township should monitor usage trends and utilized capacity at the St. Jacobs Arena. If bookings, registrations, or participation rates for ice rinks at the WMC and St. Jacobs indicate or suggest of unmet need in the northern half of the Township, further study should consider the feasibility or business case for increasing supply.





Breslau Community Centre

Breslau Community Centre

Overview

Breslau Community Centre (BCC) is located at the southern end of Breslau Memorial Park in the more established part of the settlement area, south of the rail corridor. The facility is just over 2,000 square metres (22,000 square feet) in size, approximately one-fifth that of WMC in Elmira. The BCC includes a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and a library.

Population	2024	2031	2041	2051
Breslau	6,069	7,804	10,119	13,269
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

Need Assessment

There is no minimum or target service level recommended for community centres because they can vary significantly in size and with respect to the amenities and facilities provided and services/programming offered. The BCC currently provides a gymnasium that hosts various programming, including drop-in or open gym times and summer camp. Breslau is expected to grow significantly over the next few decades. While there are no minimum or target service levels, as Breslau’s population increases it will progressively require a community centre comparable to WMC in size and range of facilities/amenities.

Issues or Opportunities

Indoor aquatic centres are generally considered based on minimum population of 25,000. While service level ranges can vary based on local context, the recommended target range for the Township (1 per 25,000-30,000 residents) recognizes a second facility may be added in the southern half the Township in the medium to longer-term. Similarly, the recommended target range for arenas is 1 per 10,000-15,000 residents. Breslau’s forecasted population will fall within the range for an arena in the medium to longer-term. The Township should develop a strategy in the near term to address how it will meet the medium and longer term need for aquatic centres and arenas (indoor pools and ice rinks). This strategy should consider the feasibility/business case for a new facility comparable to WMC in Breslau versus the cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability of expanding existing facilities. Partnership with the City of Kitchener should be explored as part of the strategy.





Rural Community Centres / Community Halls

Rural Community Centres

Overview

Community Centres are provided in Bloomingdale, Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill within the community parks in these rural settlements. These are relatively small facilities, ranging in size from 110-305 square metres. These Community Centres function more as community halls: they are open by appointment only and offer space that can be booked/rented for meetings, gatherings, or events.

Population	2024	2031	2041	2051
Rural Area	9,125	9,202	9,312	9,422
Township	31,652	36,828	43,665	51,831

Need Assessment

A recommended service level or target range is not provided for rural community centres.

Issues or Opportunities

This Plan did not include detailed study of individual facilities. While it is recommended the Township maintain current service levels for rural community centres, it should monitor their usage and review their role in the parks and recreation system and the communities they serve where they are found to be significantly under-utilized.

Note: Rural Area includes the population of rural settlement areas which account for approximately 40% of the population outside of the Township’s urban settlement areas: Breslau, Elmira, St. Jacobs, and the Stockyards.



5.3. Recreation Programming and Usage

Arena Usage

A combined three ice rinks are available between the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena. At these facilities, fees and charges distinguish between prime and non-prime-time ice. Prime-time ice is defined as weeknights between 5 pm and 11:30 pm and on weekends between 6:30 am and 11 pm, with non-prime-time ice during the remaining hours, primarily during weekdays. For the purposes of this Plan, a synopsis of prime-time ice has been provided.

Prime-time ice utilization over the past three ice seasons reveals that during a typical week at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena, overall usage levels remained consistent at 89%, representing a steady 168.25 hours booked weekly out of the 190 hours available. This trend suggests that the ice rinks at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena are operating at near full capacity with rentals and programming. It is generally uncommon for ice pads to operate at 100% utilization due to challenges renting later hours during the week and early hours during the weekend. According to the 2022/23 arena schedules, the following statistics revealed:

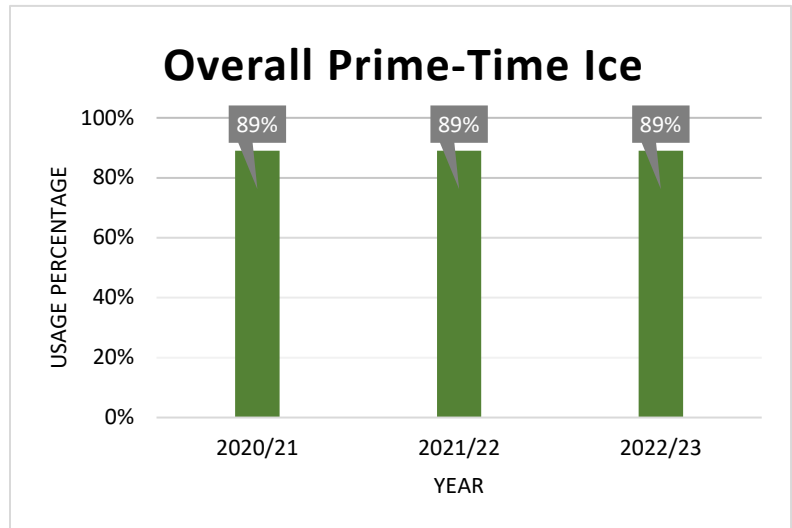


Figure 10 – Prime Time Ice Rentals

- McLeod Arena had 86% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 91% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.
- Snyder Arena had 80% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 87% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.
- St. Jacobs Arena had 87% of its hours scheduled during weeknight prime-time ice with 90% of its hours scheduled during weekend prime-time ice.

In addition to rentals and organized arena users, the Township provides drop-in recreational skating programs at the Woolwich Memorial Centre and St. Jacobs Arena, including public skating, stick and puck, and shinny. Participation over the past three



years has increased drastically reflecting a demand in unstructured drop-in recreational skating programs.

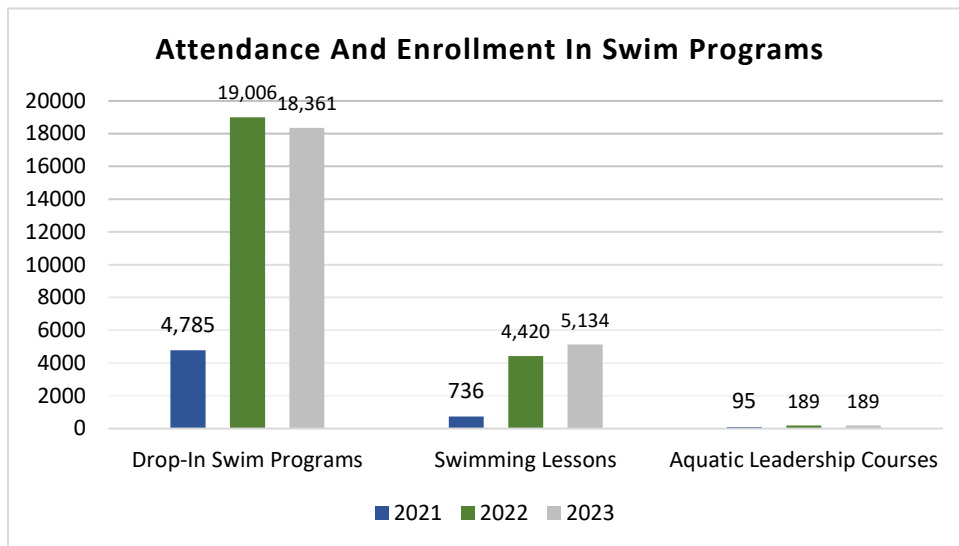
WMC Drop-In Programs	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Public Skating	2,320	3,206	5,232
Stick & Puck	2	287	892
Shinny	534	860	1,169
TOTAL	2,856	4,353	7,293

SJA Drop-In Programs	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Public Skating	2,320	3,206	5,232
Stick & Puck	2	287	892
Shinny	534	860	1,169
TOTAL	2,856	4,353	7,293



Pool Usage

The Woolwich Memorial Centre pool is a highly sought-after public facility due to its ability to accommodate a wide range of programs for many ages, interests, and abilities. Learning to swim is an essential life skill that all residents benefit from. The Township offers three categories of programming which include drop-in swim programs, swimming lessons, and advanced aquatic leadership courses. The pool is also utilized by affiliated and non-affiliated swim groups. Participation data shows that the indoor pool is well utilized with usage of drop-in swim programs the most popular form of use. Drop-in swim programs appear to be more attractive to residents compared to registered programs, likely due to convenience and increasing time-constrained lifestyles.



Registration in swimming lessons has increased over the past three years. The Township provides swimming lessons ranging from parent and tot to adult swim classes. The program use rate is between 87-93%. The increase is primarily driven by the popularity in swimming lessons for preschool and youth. Due to increasing demand for swimming lessons, additional programming opportunities have been added to support the demand.

Year	2021		2022		2023	
	Registered	Capacity	Registered	Capacity	Registered	Capacity
Parent & Tot	63	63	1,166	1,256	1,084	1,207
Preschool	163	169	1,017	1,066	1,605	1,820
Youth	390	430	1,890	2,132	1,933	2,198
Teen / Adult	0	0	8	8	55	124
Private Lessons	120	122	339	350	454	495
Total	736	784	4,420	4,812	5,131	5,844
Usage	93%		91%		87%	



5.4. Recreation Facility Supply and Future Need

The fact sheets above in this Chapter outline existing supply and needs for individual indoor and outdoor recreation facilities provided by the Township. This section considers both individual facilities in the context of the parks and recreation system, and touches upon facility needs for new sports and emergent trends in recreation that need consideration as part of this Master Plan.

Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Chapter 4 has already discussed future parkland needs. For simplicity, neighbourhood parks are provided using 500 metre service areas to ensure that most residences are within a convenient walkable distance of a neighbourhood park. This level of service and approach to provision has historically developed in the Township's urban settlements. In the larger rural settlements, playground facilities have been provided in community parks, though the Township has recently begun to require parkland dedication as part of subdivision approvals in rural settlements and these neighbourhood parks may also include playground facilities.



Neighbourhood parks may also provide amenities and improvements that were not specifically assessed: trails, benches, pavilions, etc. The need for playgrounds is closely associated with the need for additional neighbourhood parks in greenfield areas where new residential subdivisions will be developed and accommodate the lion's share of forecasted population growth over the next three decades.

Other outdoor recreation facilities will need to be provided in larger community parks. The fact sheets for the most numerous outdoor recreation facilities—ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts—indicate how the forecast population growth to 2051 will generate need for additional facilities or result in lower service levels. It is important that the Township continue to monitor soccer field and ball diamond usage to determine whether this need for additional facilities is required.

The target rates for service levels assume the recreation system will evolve and some flexibility will be required to ensure provision aligns with usage and participation—to ensure facilities are provided in a cost-effective and financially feasible manner. Chapter 6 will speak further to financial considerations when implementing the recommendations of this Master Plan.

As was noted in Chapter 4, it will be vitally important that the Township identify and secure additional parkland for community parks in Breslau and Elmira based on forecasted population growth. New and/or expanded community parks will accommodate the additional facilities needed to support population growth. Park development and redevelopment should consider the feasibility of multi-use fields and courts to optimize available space and increase the flexibility and adaptability of the facilities. This will be an important means to address the need for space and facilities for new sports or recreational activities experiencing increasing interest and/or participation such as pickleball and cricket.

With regard to pickleball, no target range or minimum service level has been recommended as part of this Master Plan, but it is acknowledged that interest and participation is growing in the Township. Master Plans for other Ontario municipalities are beginning to address the need for pickleball facilities, however, limited data is available to establish appropriate service level targets or minimum standards for provision. It is recommended the Township begin providing outdoor pickleball facilities based on usage and explore the merits of multi-use courts (shared with other compatible sports) and dedicated facilities. Some Master Plans anticipate pickleball may eventually require service levels on par with tennis.

Indoor Recreation Facilities

The Woolwich Memorial Centre is the Township's major indoor recreation facility and functions a community centre with meeting rooms, fitness centre, an arena with two ice rinks, and an aquatic centre with two pools (6 lane, 25 metre competition pool and a warm-water leisure pool). A facility of this size, quality, and range of amenities –

particularly the indoor aquatic centre and 2 NHL-sized ice rinks – represents a significant investment in recreation by the Township. Based on standards in other comparable municipalities the Township will need to consider providing a similar facility in Breslau based on forecast growth to 2051.

By 2051, the overall Township population and population in Breslau will reach the level where it could support a second community centre with an indoor aquatic centre and ice arena in the southern half of Woolwich. That is based on historical provision in the Township, however. Based on the recreation Master Plans reviewed for this needs assessment, a service level of 1 aquatic centre per 25,000 residents is on the high-end of provision. The distribution of forecast population growth and unique geography/shape of the municipality, however, may warrant a second indoor aquatic facility for equitable access. A feasibility study should be conducted as the Township's population exceeds 50,000 residents and/or Breslau and southern Woolwich exceed 20,000 residents.

To accelerate the construction of a major indoor recreation facility with an indoor aquatic centre and ice rink(s) in Breslau, the Township could explore partnering with the City of Kitchener. A facility along the planned Ottawa Street regional intensification corridor or existing Victoria Street North, could serve both communities and be viable sooner than if solely based on Breslau's forecasted population growth to 2051.



An ice rink in Breslau would allow the Township to maintain its current service level until 2041. Additionally, exploring the feasibility of adding a fourth rink could be pursued longer-term. If maintaining the existing service level is desired both options will be required. Deciding whether to maintain the existing level of provision (1 ice rink per 10,000 residents) or fall toward 1 ice rink per 15,000 residents should be based on usage and participation rates, including the availability of ice time during prime-time periods and registration trends in area minor hockey associations.

In addition to the Woolwich Memorial Centre, the Township has an ice arena in St. Jacobs and community centres in Bloomingdale, Breslau, Conestogo, Heidelberg, and Maryhill. Of these community centres, all but the one in Breslau are small facilities more akin to meeting halls for gatherings or community events. The Master Plan does not recommend a minimum service level or standard for community centres in rural settlements. They should be assessed on a case-by-case basis that considers usage and local circumstances, including historical role and importance to the community served.

5.5. Locating Future Recreation Facilities

The location of new indoor and outdoor recreation facilities will be driven by the location of available parkland. As the Township grows over the next three decades, the growth will be concentrated in Breslau and Elmira. This will strongly influence the location of new neighbourhood parks and playground facilities but will also be a factor when locations for new community parks are selected. Recreation facilities are limited to locating where available parkland can accommodate them. For most facilities that means community parks.

In Breslau, the Township will need to consider preferred locations and timing for developing two additional community parks to accommodate growth to 2051. Ideally, one community park should be located to serve the newer residential areas north of the rail corridor and the other to serve growth south of the rail corridor. The precise size and location will be determined by available parcels of land and the facilities to be included. The previous section noted that long-term a community centre with an indoor aquatic centre and ice rink will be needed. To maintain service levels, additional ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts will also be needed. New facilities for pickleball and cricket may also be needed.

Similarly, forecast growth and the geography of designated greenfield areas in Elmira indicate that the equivalent (in area) of approximately 2-3 new community parks will be needed along the western and southern edges of the existing settlement to meet needs to 2051. The Township could also consider expanding existing community parks such as Lions Park and incorporate adjacent natural heritage features and stormwater management facilities into a larger series of connected parkland and trails. It has already been noted that ball diamonds are supplied at a noticeably lower rate in Elmira than for the Township as a whole. Forecast population growth will require additional ball diamonds, soccer fields, and tennis courts. The location and timing of new facilities will



be strongly determined by when and where new community parks are developed. Consideration should be given to the location of existing facilities and whether it would be better for functional or operational reasons and/or cost-effectiveness to co-locate certain facilities or consolidate sports into specific parks.

Outside of Breslau and Elmira, where population growth is not an overriding concern, recreation facilities in rural settlements generally serve smaller populations that are not expected to change appreciably. For these settlements and facilities, the main consideration will be ensuring use aligns with their capital and operating costs. This Master Plan recommends monitoring and periodic review to ensure needs are being met and establish if facilities are receiving sufficient use to warrant their longer-term maintenance and renewal costs.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION



6. Recommendations and Implementation

This Chapter outlines actions and strategic directions. Action items are provided to address significant capital investments identified by the Master Plan, particularly with respect to parkland acquisition, while strategic directions provide guidance to be considered and/or identify best practices that should be adopted or employed.

Implementation Strategy

The Master Plan is generally oriented toward maintaining current service delivery standards, including the range of amenities, facilities, and programming provided. However, the Master Plan acknowledges the parks and recreation system will need to be responsive to changing needs. The parks and recreation system should be planned with the expectation it will evolve—that demographic and recreational trends may influence interest in existing sports and result in demand for new sports and activities. The Master Plan should be regarded as a living document to be implemented. Any increase in service to accommodate new sports or recreational uses or leisure activities could increase land needs, costs, and/or require repurposing existing spaces. Action items and strategic directions outlined in this Master Plan should be viewed as embodying the preceding when read holistically.

Planning for Growth

Planning for forecast growth was a key focus of the needs assessment prepared for this Master Plan. To provide high-level guidance on parkland requirements and facility needs to 2051, appropriate service levels for the Township were established based the existing parks and recreation system and a review of other Ontario municipalities. High-level



guidance on future needs to accommodate forecasted growth supports long-range planning and the development of a parkland acquisition strategy to ensure the Township has the requisite physical space available to host new or expanded recreation facilities when population growth warrants them.

It is understood that the development of new residential areas in Breslau, Elmira, and St. Jacobs will require new neighbourhood parks. The development of these neighbourhood parks will be determined by the timing and pace of development, with their locations determined as part of the planning and approval process for subdivisions.

Breslau and Elmira are anticipated to experience significant growth to 2051, with each settlement potentially reaching populations over 20,000. Both will require additional parkland in the form of community parks with new or expanded recreation facilities to support their forecasted population growth.

The strategy recommended by this Master Plan is to address the need for a future major indoor facility by developing a new multi-use recreation facility in Breslau to better serve the southern half of the Township and support Breslau's growth and development to 2051 and beyond.

The Woolwich Memorial Centre in Elmira is currently the primary indoor recreation facility in the Township with two NHL-sized ice rinks, an aquatics centre, fitness centre, and community/multi-purpose rooms. A single pad ice arena is located in St. Jacobs. These facilities are anticipated to meet the needs of the northern half of the Township, including forecasted population growth in Elmira and St. Jacobs to 2051.

Maintaining the Existing System

While not the central focus of this Master Plan, the importance of maintenance, improvement, and/or renewal of existing assets cannot be overstated. Given the growth forecast for the Township it will be imperative that a strong asset management approach is adopted. The capital funding needed to maintain the existing asset base of the parks and recreation system should be mapped out. As the Township has limited resources, it will need to consider these capital needs—their timing, magnitude, and location—together with those required to support growth. Growth in Elmira and Breslau may provide opportunities to address the renewal of existing facilities as part of meeting increasing and changing needs. The Township should identify such opportunities and leverage them to cost-effectively address, wherever appropriate, the dual challenge of maintaining the existing system while needing to allocate significant resources to meet growth-related needs.



6.1. Major Action Items

1. Applying the service level standards and target provision levels established within the Master Plan to the projected population growth in Breslau through 2051, the need for parkland and outdoor amenities, and indoor recreation programming space has been identified by the Master Plan. The need for a future community park and multi-use recreation facility in Breslau should be addressed as follows:

- a. By 2028 – Identify an appropriate site for a community park and multi-use recreation facility.

Develop a financial strategy to support the land acquisition, beyond what might be provided via conveyance or cash-in-lieu in accordance with parkland dedication provisions in the *Planning Act*.

- b. By 2030 – Complete a needs analysis, including comprehensive public consultation to determine facility amenity requirements for the multi-use recreation facility.

Develop a financial strategy to support the facility construction.

- c. By 2033 – Secure community park and multi-use recreation facility lands.

2. The Master Plan has also identified the need for additional parkland and outdoor amenities in Elmira to address forecasted population growth to 2051. It is recommended that a parkland acquisition strategy be developed no later than 2028 to address the medium to longer-term land needs for community parks. The following should be considered:

- a. Desirability and feasibility of expanding existing community parks.
- b. Identification of appropriate sites for new community parks.
- c. Detailed assessment of the long-term space needs of outdoor recreation facilities and amenities within community parks.
- d. A long-term financial strategy to support the acquisition of land to meet community park needs in Elmira beyond estimates of what might be provided via conveyance or cash-in-lieu in accordance with parkland dedication provisions in the *Planning Act*.



3. Prepare and adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law in 2026 to permit the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu using the alternative requirement provided for in the *Planning Act*.

6.2. Strategic Directions

Best Practices

1. Minimize barriers to participation in parks, recreation, and culture opportunities to ensure that access to facilities, programs and services are inclusive to residents. Strategies include broadening services to include non-traditional interests; designing facilities, programs, and services to be accessible; and, collaborating with organizations, associations and groups who serve diverse populations.
2. Achieve the following through park and facility design: enhance safety by incorporating crime prevention through environmental design best practices; facilitate social interaction in parks and recreation facilities, creating senses of place and inclusive community gathering spaces; and, incorporate green and environmentally conscious park design practices to reduce the Township's environmental footprint.
3. Enhance connectivity across the Township and throughout settlements by connecting parks and opens pace with existing and planned trails and active transportation facilities.
4. Create opportunities to meet emerging trends by developing multi-use spaces and amenities/facilities to maximize usage and functionality of parkland and recreation facilities in the Township based on growth projections and community needs. An example being multi-use courts that support pickleball, basketball, hockey, and more.
5. Utilize industry best practice standards, supporting usage data, and feedback for the provision of space and/or facilities for new sports or recreational/leisure activities.

Community Engagement, Capacity-Building and Partnerships

1. Use diverse engagement forums and EngageWR to provide the public and stakeholders or partners an opportunity to provide feedback on parks and recreation development or redevelopment/renewal.
2. Establish new and foster existing partnerships with private landowners, other government agencies, schoolboards, and neighbouring municipalities for the



provision of parkland, trails, boat launch/river access, and facilities to meet or enhance establish service level standards.

Parkland

1. Adopt the parks classification system to guide the planning and design of new parks and the revitalization of existing parks according to park class, size, and amenities. Incorporate parks classifications into the Township Official Plan, Landscape Design Guidelines, and all other relevant materials.
2. Maintain provision of active use parkland within the range of 2-4 hectares per 1000 residents for the term of the Master Plan.
3. Utilize the established service area standards and target provision levels for community and neighbourhood parks to guide the location and timing of parkland acquisition, new amenities and facilities to meet needs related to planned growth.
4. Assess the park space and facility requirements of new or emerging sports such as pickleball and cricket and consider opportunities for multi-use facilities or retrofitting, conversion, or co-location with existing facilities.
5. Evaluate where service area standards or target provision levels may be exceeded and assess how to improve or address geographic coverage and proximity/access by relocating or repurposing existing amenities.
6. Consider existing service level standards and funding models for the provision of niche uses and facilities such as skateparks, off-leash dog parks, and community gardens.

Other Actions and Strategic Directions

1. Secure and develop inclusive outdoor spaces and facilities that provide opportunities to connect our communities, especially in Breslau, through a broadening of our focus from direct program delivery to providing unique event spaces that foster inclusivity and build on our sense of belonging.
2. Monitor population growth, demographics, and diverse cultural needs to ensure that opportunities exist for current and future residents to engage in outdoor and indoor recreation programs and services.
3. Apply asset management planning practices and usage data to guide the implementation of the Master Plan recommendations, capital plans, support grant funding opportunities, and inform future reviews.



4. Explore opportunities to reimagine and repurpose underutilized facilities for the betterment of the Township.
5. Review and update the Township's Allocations Policy to enhance the equitable distribution of park and recreation facility spaces, with a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion.
6. Continue to support the fiscally responsible capital infrastructure investment in St. Jacobs Arena to meet the recreation needs of Woolwich residents.
7. Continue to provide and where/when necessary enhance the provision of dedicated space for Woolwich seniors.
8. Implement a Township Event's Policy or Action Plan by 2026 to assist third party groups build capacity and facilitate their event through a coordinated approach with the Township. The Plan will identify the allocation of resources required to support events.
9. Evaluate the role the Township plays in community events and explore opportunities to foster partnerships and collaborate to expand the Township's capacity and physical infrastructure to host large scale outdoor events.

6.3. Monitoring

The implementation of this Master Plan will require monitoring and evaluation directed at balancing growth-related needs with maintenance and renewal of existing assets. This Master Plan should be viewed as a living document intended to guide the timing and prioritization of investments in the parks and recreation system. Service level standards or provision targets are provided in this spirit and should not be viewed as binding requirements. They should be regarded as benchmarks to assist decision-makers, stakeholder groups, and the public in understanding the parks and recreation system relative to current service levels (as a baseline) and typical provision rates elsewhere in Ontario.

6.4. Financial Considerations

Investment will be required to support the parks and recreation system. This Master Plan has been prepared with an understanding that the sustainability of services and assets is a foremost consideration for the Township—that the Township's ability and willingness to meet capital and operational costs, now and in the future, will play a major role in shaping decisions.



This Master Plan is not intended to be definitive. Other initiatives may be identified and prioritized on a case-by-case basis as need, urgency, or funding and partnership opportunities dictate. It is acknowledged that local businesses, community groups, and individual community members have through donations and organized fundraising efforts contributed significantly to the capital costs of recreation facilities in the Township, including in the last decade splash pads in Elmira and Breslau, the skate park and Kate's Place (accessible, inclusive playground and washroom) in Elmira.

To maintain existing service levels or provision rates as the Township's population grows toward its forecasted 2051 population of 50,000+ residents will require significant capital investment to acquire parkland and construct new or expanded facilities. **This Master Plan estimates that approximately 50 hectares of active use parkland (community and neighbourhoods parks) will need to be added to the existing parks and recreation system by 2051 to maintain the current rate of provision per 1000 residents.**

Costs to expand the parks and recreation system to accommodate growth may partially be recovered through parkland dedication requirements and development charges. The remainder of the cost will need to be funded through the Township's capital budget, funding programs offered by senior levels of government, and local fundraising efforts.

Parkland Acquisition

Under the current legislative framework, the City of Guelph estimates they will receive approximately 0.6 hectares of land via parkland dedication requirements for every 1000 new residents. If Woolwich begins utilizing the alternative requirement for parkland dedication, it will likely receive a similar amount of land going forward.⁵ As a result, the Township may need to acquire nearly 2 hectares of additional land per 1000 new residents via other funding sources, including its capital budget, just to maintain its existing rate of provision: approximately 2.5 hectares per 1000 residents.

The timing of parkland acquisition should consider the strategic benefit of identifying and securing land in advance of growth and development. The timing and pace of park

⁵ Woolwich currently charges the 5% for residential development under Section 51.1 of the *Planning Act*. Recent changes to the *Planning Act* and *Development Charges Act* have reduced maximums for parkland dedication charged using the alternative requirement and expanded mandatory development charge exemptions. The City of Guelph currently receives approximately 1.2 hectares of land per 1000 new residents via parkland dedication requirements. Their estimate of what they may receive going forward (0.6 hectare per 1000 new residents) represents a 50% reduction—a result of reductions to the maximum rates that can be applied where the alternative requirement is employed in accordance with Section 42 of the *Planning Act*. This Master Plan recommends the Township adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law to enable it to apply the alternative requirement where development densities warrant it in future.



development and the construction of new or expanded recreation facilities should generally follow population growth to ensure it can be adequately supported.

To assist in meeting the need for parkland due to growth and development this Master Plan recommends the Township adopt a Parkland Dedication By-law. Doing so will allow the Township to require conveyance or payment-in-lieu for development and redevelopment using the alternative requirement provided for in the *Planning Act*. The ability to utilize the alternative requirement becomes increasingly important as residential densities increase above those typical of the low-density residential subdivisions comprised of detached houses.

Park Development and Recreation Facilities

The needs assessment prepared as part of this Master Plan estimated future recreation facility needs. The *Development Charges Act* specifies which growth-related costs are development charge eligible and provides direction for the calculation of the rates to be charged. Parkland development, recreation facilities, and vehicles/equipment required to maintain parks and recreation assets are typically eligible costs.

The recent Development Charge Background Study completed for the Township in 2024 detailed the existing level of service and determined the gross capital costs for parks and recreation services over a 10-year forecast period. It found gross capital costs would be approximately \$41.3 million. Of that number, \$17.2 million were determined to be net growth-related capital costs that could be included in the development charge calculation (i.e. the rate charged). Included within these totals is a future Breslau Community Complex, at \$37.5 million gross capital costs and \$14.35 million net growth-related capital costs.

The 2024 Development Charge Background Study was based on the growth forecast provided in the Region of Waterloo Official Plan, as amended by ROPA 6, which forecast population and employment growth to 2051.

Roughly doubling the Township's current population over that timeframe will require considerable investment in new and expanded recreation facilities. This Master Plan provides high-level guidance on the overall magnitude and general timing and location of future needs. From this it is possible to estimate growth-related capital needs in advance of any detailed planning or design work.

Specific capital investments in parks development and new or expanded recreation facilities to support population growth should, to a significant degree, be calibrated to the pace, magnitude, and location of the residential development necessitating it. The Township should, however, undertake more detailed planning—including business case and/or feasibility studies—for major capital investments like community centres or multi-use facilities in advance of reaching population levels that would warrant or could potentially support them.

COUNCIL'S OUTSTANDING ACTIVITY LIST
As of October 31st, 2024

Discussion Date	Title/Action Required	Assigned To	Projected Date of Completion	Updates/Notes
O – May 16, 2017 R – July 4, 2017 R – August 22, 2017 R – September 12, 2017 R – December 9, 2019 R – March 2, 2022	Taxation of Old Order Mennonite Churches	DS	Later in 2024	Updated policies to allow severance of churches have been incorporated in the Township Official Plan to be approved by the Region. To be included in part two of the ROPP review.

Commitments with Unplanned/Unknown Financial Implications

Meeting Date	Title/Project	Assigned To	Projected Date of Completion	Commitment/Updates/Notes
O - October 1, 2019 R – December 9, 2019	Resolution to Declare a Climate Emergency and Implementation of a Corporate Carbon Budget	CAO / FIN / RCS	Tied to the implementation of the TransformWR Strategy	<p>Council passed a resolution which was confirmed at the October 1, 2019, Council meeting to declare a climate emergency and implement a corporate carbon budget.</p> <p>A Region wide group is to be established to create a plan.</p> <p>Until this joint group is established, it was noted that the township has begun to address climate action strategies with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development applications • implementation of updated Building Code regulations • update to the Zoning by to reflect electric vehicles • investigation into green options for infrastructure projects
	Future Infrastructure Maintenance Agreement with the Region of Waterloo	Infrastructure Services	Later in 2024	