



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Heather Kaufmann, Community Development Supervisor

DATE: October 6, 2024

MEMO NO.: CSE-2024-009

SUBJECT: Development of the Outdoor Sports Strategy in Halton Hills

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Council with an update on the development of the Outdoor Sports Strategy which will establish priorities and an implementation plan for outdoor sport development, facilities and amenities in Halton Hills.

BACKGROUND:

Initiated in 2023, the Outdoor Sports Strategy is focused on reviewing outdoor sports fields and ball diamond sports to address growing demands and the evolving priorities of community sports organizations, as identified in the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan that was approved by Council in 2021. An update was needed to include population growth, which has led to increased participation and interest in sports like soccer, football and cricket. Local sports organizations are seeking improved field access, quality and scheduling. Additionally, the strategy responds to the need for equitable access, environmental sustainability, and the economic benefits that outdoor sports can bring to the community.

Once completed, the strategy will serve as a roadmap for the future of outdoor sports opportunities in Halton Hills, ensuring sustainable growth, enhanced access, and the development of high-quality outdoor recreational spaces that meet both current and future needs.

The development of the Outdoor Sports Strategy advances the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan and Council's Strategic Plan by supporting the priorities and goals

related to Safe and Welcoming Communities, meeting evolving community needs, sport programming, increasing access to recreational opportunities, and fostering community engagement through sports and active living.

The strategy emphasizes collaboration with local sports organizations and stakeholders, facilitating partnerships that enhance resource allocation and promote sports tourism.

The following areas are not included in this review, as they have already undergone specific studies related to these sports:

- **Tennis & Pickleball:** These sports were reviewed as part of the Outdoor Court Sports Strategy adopted in 2021.
- **Skateboarding and BMX Biking:** These activities were assessed in the Georgetown Action Sports Needs Assessment completed in 2017, which advises the Town on action sports opportunities (including cycling and skateboarding) in Georgetown.

The development of the Outdoor Sports Strategy is being conducted internally by Town staff, leveraging their expertise and knowledge of local sports needs and infrastructure. Staff plan to report back to Council in Q1 2025 with the recommended draft strategy for Council's review and approval. It is important to note that the completion timeline for this project is highly dependent on the availability of current staff resources. Any delays or resource reallocations to higher-priority projects, such as the Eighth Line Park Expansion project, could shift the projected timeline.

COMMENTS:

1. Outdoor Sports Strategy Objectives

Development of the strategy is focused on several key objectives:

- **Confirming Outdoor Facility Permitting Needs:** An assessment of permitting requirements and the organizational health of sports clubs and user groups is required to understand current challenges.
- **Understanding Facility Usage:** Stakeholder consultation and data analysis on outdoor sports facilities and amenities usage will provide a detailed report on current utilization and community needs.
- **Exploring Standards and Operational Models:** The strategy will investigate provisional standards and operational models implemented in other municipalities, ensuring that Halton Hills is responsive to evolving sports trends.
- **Confirming Facility Development Needs:** A critical aspect of the strategy is to identify facilities that require development or decommissioning, which will impact future Town capital budget needs and effective resource allocation.

- **Creating a Phased Implementation Plan:** The strategy will outline a phased approach for implementation, allowing for incremental improvements that can be implemented over time.
- **Updating Agreements and Exploring Partnerships:** Ongoing collaboration with local sports organizations is vital. The strategy will identify any required updates to existing agreements and exploration of future joint capital initiatives.

2. Core Tasks

The project has been organized into several key tasks with defined deliverables and timelines. As noted below, four of the six tasks have already been completed and the project is now entering a community engagement/stakeholder consultation phase:

- **Project Start-Up (Completed):** The Project Charter has been reaffirmed and approved by the Department Management Team.
- **Research and Context (Completed):** An analysis of facility usage data from 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023 was performed. This included a comprehensive review of community group data to assess organizational health and identify needs. The project also investigated trends in outdoor sports, factoring in new and emerging activities.
- **Facility Inventory (Completed):** A complete assessment of the existing facilities was conducted, including their condition and lifespan. The current operating seasons were reviewed, and user group needs were evaluated.
- **Standards and Principles (Completed):** A review of provisional standards and service delivery models from other municipalities has been completed.
- **Partnerships and Opportunities (Ongoing):** Staff are currently in the process of reviewing user agreements with local sports organizations and exploring future joint capital opportunities to enhance the community sports facilities.
- **Draft Strategy and Final Approval (Ongoing):** The drafting of the Outdoor Sports Strategy is underway, with preparations for stakeholder review and a future Council presentation.

The project will produce several key deliverables, including a summary of research findings and notes from stakeholder focus groups, detailed maps for proposed sites based on the implementation plan, and a comprehensive Outdoor Sports Strategy. These will be the subject of a future Council Report.

3. Community Engagement

Engagement with key stakeholders is a key element for this project. Town staff are collaborating closely with almost 40 local sports clubs and organizations, including the Acton Soccer Club, Georgetown Soccer Club, Georgetown Impact Volleyball, Georgetown Goats, Halton Hills Minor Lacrosse, North Halton Rugby Association,

Halton Hills Minor Baseball Association, Georgetown SloPitch League and other major outdoor sports field and ball diamond users. Other groups who use other related facilities, which are covered under other studies, are also being consulted to ensure coordination. The focus of the consultations is primarily on sports organizations who use outdoor sports fields and ball diamonds, as well as their participation rates.

Given that the primary focus of the Outdoor Sports Strategy is to address the specific operational needs, facilities and challenges faced by local sports organizations and stakeholders, consultations will be prioritized with these groups, rather than individual members of the public, to ensure that the strategy effectively reflects the insights and requirements of those directly involved in outdoor sports activities.

Stakeholder consultations are currently underway through the Town's Let's Talk platform and surveys. Additionally, an in-person consultation session with stakeholders will be held to facilitate open dialogue and feedback. Specific meetings are also being arranged with emerging local sports groups, such as cricket organizations, to foster collaboration and discuss their needs.

CONCLUSION:

The Outdoor Sports Strategy will serve as a roadmap for the future of outdoor sports opportunities in Halton Hills. By addressing the needs of the local sports organizations, the strategy aims to enhance the community's engagement and participation in physical activities while ensuring that the facilities and programs remain relevant, accessible, and well-utilized.

With a focus on strategic priorities and a phased implementation plan, the Outdoor Sports Strategy will improve the community's sports facilities and infrastructure.

Reviewed and approved by,

Kevin Okimi, Director of Parks, Community Development & Environment

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer