



## Community Services *Staff Report*

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REPORT NO: CS-2024-18

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Chris Catania, Director of Community Services

PREPARED BY: Chris Catania, Director of Community Services

REVIEWED BY: Greg Clark, Acting CAO

DATE: August 26, 2024

SUBJECT: Community Services Master Plan Update and Situational Analysis Report

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CS-2024-18, Community Services Master Plan Update and Situational Analysis Report be received for information.

### SUMMARY:

To provide Council with information and update on the Community Services Master Plan and to inform Council on key findings and next steps for the approval of the Township of Wilmot's Community Services Master Plan.

### BACKGROUND:

Parks, recreation, and culture are integral to promoting the physical and mental health of Wilmot's residents. Accessible green spaces and recreational facilities encourage people of all ages to engage in physical activities such as walking, cycling, swimming, playing sports, and participating in fitness classes. These activities are essential for maintaining physical and mental health, reducing the risk of chronic disease, and improving overall fitness levels.

Parks, recreation, and cultural programs play a vital role in fostering a strong sense of community and social cohesion in Wilmot. Public parks and community centers serve as gathering places where residents can connect, interact, and build lasting relationships.

Community Services launched the development of the new Community Services Master Plan to the public in January 2024. Among the goals of the Master Plan is to help to build a roadmap to enhance and grow the Township's parks and recreation facilities and services for residents, user groups and visitors, now and into the future. The Township hired the team at consulting firm McQueen Galloway Associates (MGA) to bring their expertise in municipal recreation, parks and culture to this research and engagement project. Working with the Township, MGA has prepared some key findings (Situational Analysis Report) for review by Council, stakeholder groups and the community.

### REPORT:

### **Community Services Master Plan & Services Delivery Review will Prioritize Services for the Town**

The 2024 Community Services Master Plan and Service Delivery Review presents an excellent opportunity to establish a strong foundation for the future that staff and Council can take ownership of and accountability with the following:

- The recognition of human resources and financial pressures facing the Township and offers strategic insight to address requirements into the future.
- A companion Service Delivery Review reflecting the current issues confronting the Township's service delivery efforts and offers recommendations for future staffing alignments to better serve the community.
- A Master Plan allowing staff and Council to define a clear and strategic vision for community services. This vision will guide the development and enhancement of parks, recreation, and community services, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of residents.
- The Master Plan provides an evidence-based framework for making informed decisions about resource allocation. It ensures that taxpayer dollars are invested wisely, prioritizing projects that offer the most significant benefits to the community.
- By identifying short-term, medium-term, and long-term priorities, the plan aids in efficient budgeting and financial planning. This structured approach ensures that necessary funds are allocated appropriately over time, avoiding financial strain and ensuring sustainability.
- Developing a Master Plan involves extensive community engagement, giving residents a voice in shaping their community services. This inclusive process fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the plan reflects the actual needs and desires of the community.
- Engaging with various stakeholders, including user groups, partner organizations, and residents, strengthens community bonds. It encourages volunteerism and collaboration, enhancing the overall sense of community.

- A well-developed Master Plan identifies and addresses gaps in services, and if acted upon, can improve the quality of life for all residents. Enhanced recreational and cultural opportunities and well-maintained facilities promote health, well-being, and overall community satisfaction.
- The plan provides a long-term vision, preparing the township for future growth and changes in demographics. It ensures that Community Services can adapt to new challenges and opportunities, maintaining their relevance and effectiveness.
- High-quality parks, recreation facilities, and community services enhance the Township's image and attractiveness. This positive reputation can attract new residents and businesses, contributing to economic growth and community vitality.

## **Community Services Master Plan Process**

The Township's Community Services Master Plan and Service Delivery Review is grounded in a proven methodology. The process is evidenced-based and designed to build on overarching policies, quantitative data, emerging trends, and continuous validation through qualitative information driven by the community.

The development of the Community Services Master Plan has evolved in the following four phases:

### **Phase 1 – Literature Review, Research and Analysis October 2023 – December 2023**

- Policies and Plans
- Financials
- Participation Numbers
- Rental Numbers and Utilization Data
- Facility Observational Assessments
- Staff Structure
- Programs Analysis
- Trend Analysis
- National and Provincial Policy review

### **Phase 2 – Community Engagement January 2024 – May 2024**

- Mayor
- Members of Council
- Staff
- User Groups
- Special Event Organizers
- Participants
- Community Groups

- Service Organizations
- High School Administration
- Partner Organizations
- Residents

#### Phase 3 – Situational Analysis Report June 2024 – August 2024

- Compilation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 into a detailed Situational Analysis Report (SAR) with findings.
- Presentation to Council

#### Phase 4 – Master Plan Development August 2024 – November 2024

- Development and Circulation of Recommendations and Draft Master Plan
- Community Consultation on Draft Plan
- Development and Presentation of Final Community Services Master Plan with Recommendations

### **Extensive Community Outreach, Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement**

A multi-faceted community engagement process was employed to provide options for Council, staff, user groups, community leaders, participants, and residents to share their insights and interest in the future of parks and recreation services.

The community engagement process used in the development of the Community Services Master Plan included a variety of different forums for stakeholders to share their input, ideas, and suggestions. Options included interviews (1:1 or in small groups), facilitated focus group with representatives of ‘like’ organizations, opportunity to provide a written submission based upon questions provided by the consultants. Interviews (1:1 and small group) were also conducted with staff and Members of Council. These sessions were held between January 2024 and March 2024.

Several themes arose from the engagement process. A Public Workshop was held on March 26th, 2024, to discuss the themes, hear new and different perspectives, and validate some of the initial findings and feedback, using a “SOAR” exercise led by facilitators (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results).

An online community survey was also available for a four-week period in April and May. 349 responses were received. The survey was promoted through many communication channels:

- Direct email to all community groups, service clubs, special event organizers, sporting user groups.
- Information on website, social media and all Township electronic signs.

- Master Plan postcards printed that contained information regarding the process and invitation to complete survey as well as link and QR code. Available:
  - To program participants across the municipality, Firebirds games, concession booth patrons.
  - Hard copies of postcards displayed on counters at WRC, Active Living Centre, Administration Complex, Castle Kilbride and Satellite Facilities.
  - Postcards given out at Heritage Day
  - Postcards provided to all that participated in the “Wilmot Roots” tree giveaway.
- User group meetings asked to share the information with their memberships.
- High school workshop - Surveys at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School.

In addition to interviews and participation in the community workshop, the field and ice sport user groups were sent a survey. The survey asked for information about current and future needs and their participation numbers. Questionnaires were received from New Hamburg Skating Club, New Hamburg Hockey Association, the Wilmot Girls Hockey Association and Wilmot Soccer.

### **Situational Analysis Report & Key Findings**

As previously documented, the third phase of this project was the creation of a Situation Analysis Report which is comprised of the culmination of Phase 1, Research and Data Analysis and Phase 2, Community Engagement. The purpose of the Situational Analysis Report is to create a benchmark with respect to how the Township is currently meeting the community services needs of its residents. This benchmarking exercise is evidence-based. It includes quantitative results of the current inventory of assets, utilization rates, financial performance, demographics, and growth projections. It is further informed by qualitative information through stakeholder engagement, policy alignment, trends and best practices, and sound planning principles.

The Situational Analysis Report does not contain any specific recommendations. Rather, the Situational Analysis Report helps determine, through a series of findings, what (if any) gaps currently exist and how, when, where, and why those gaps could be addressed. The report also clearly identifies which community needs the Township is already positioned to meet over the ensuing years. Some key findings from the Situational Analysis Report include; Asset Management planning, Under-utilized halls, Ice Pad needs, Capital and Operational resourcing, Volunteer sustainability and Programing expansion. These observations will inform the themes and recommendations in the final Community Services Master Plan.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will begin final preparations for the Draft Master Plan. This includes further promoting to the community through various communication channels key findings of the Situational Analysis Report, Surveys and Council presentation. Community Services and MGA will make another presentation to Council in September 2024, responding to any action items arising to date and draft recommendations. This will include further stakeholder engagement on the draft

recommendations and any necessary refinements before a final report to Council recommending adoption of the Community Services Master Plan this Fall.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

- Quality of Life through Recreation and Leisure Opportunities
- Community Engagement through support for Belonging
- Responsible Governance through Service Reviews and Master Planning

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Situational Analysis Report Presentation
2. Situational Analysis Report
3. Community Survey