

# A Framework for Community Recreation in the City of Burlington

City of Burlington Recreation Services Department



live&play

CITY OF  
**Burlington**

## Executive Summary

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and cultural activities that enhance individual well-being and create a sense of community belonging.

### **Benefits of Recreation** (Source: [CPRA: The Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015](#))

The evidence on the benefits of recreation and exposure to nature suggest that recreation and parks can address existing challenges with policies and practices that:

- Enhance mental and physical wellbeing
- Enhance social wellbeing
- Help build strong families and communities
- Help people connect with nature
- Provide economic benefits by investing in recreation

**The Recreation Services Department plays a vital role in fostering a Healthy and Engaged City as defined in the Corporate Strategic Plan.**

**More specifically, the role of the Recreation Services Department is to act as a steward of recreation within the community.**

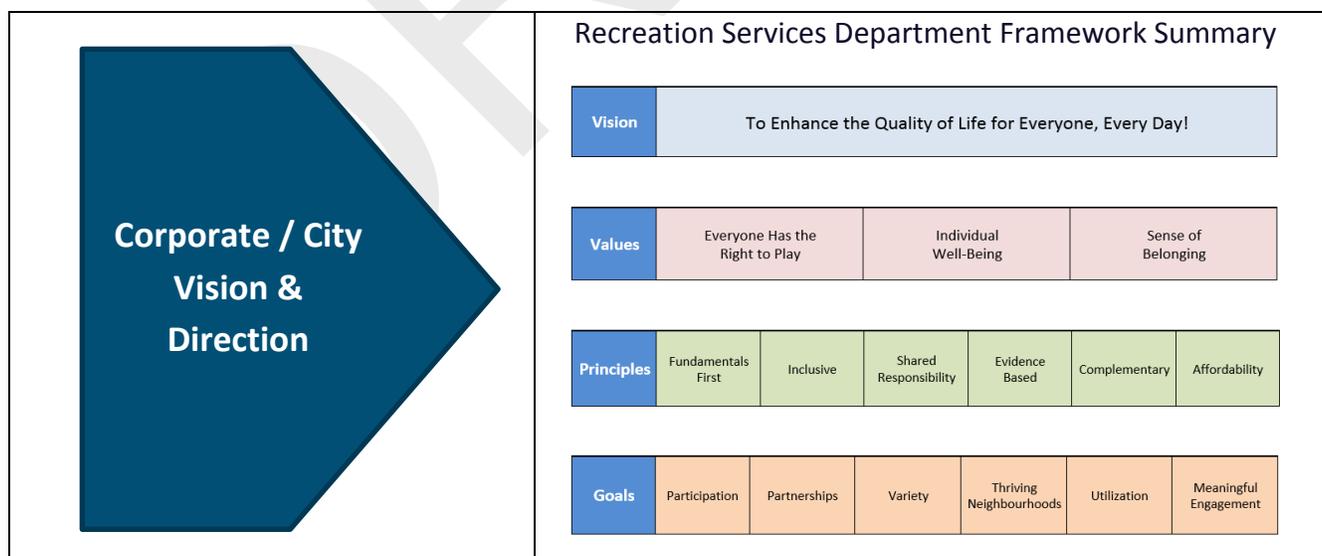
**We do this by:**

- **Partnering** with others,
- **Providing** opportunities, and
- **Promoting** the benefits, through providing
- **Play** for all

## Framework Context

This Framework highlights our Department’s **Vision, Values, Principles, and Goals** for the provision of recreation in our community. This Framework forms a set of rules, ideas, and beliefs to be used every day. City Council entrusts the Recreation Services Department to work with the community to fulfill this commitment.

As Recreation Services is one department within a larger corporation made up of a multitude of services, the Department’s Framework must align with the broader corporate/city vision and direction which is established by City Council. These broader corporate interests will remain at the forefront of the Department’s Framework and will fundamentally be understood, remain current and relevant by all staff, and align. Examples of broader corporate/city interests include; climate, green interests, transportation, and health & safety. As broader corporate/city interests can change from time to time, these interests will rest at the foreground of the Departments’ Framework, as illustrated below.



## VISION

The Vision of the Recreation Services Department is to:

**‘Enhance the Quality of Life for Everyone, Every Day!’**

## VALUES

We believe the Vision of the Recreation Services Department can be achieved through our three Core Values:

	<p><b>Everyone Has the Right to Play</b></p> <p>Regardless of race, gender, ability, socio-economic status or age; everyone has the right to play and participate.</p>
	<p><b>Individual Well-Being</b></p> <p>This core value has a strong focus on the individual’s well-being; mental, physical, and social.</p>
	<p><b>Sense of Belonging</b></p> <p>Belongingness is a human emotional need to be connected or accepted as a member of a group or community.</p>

# PRINCIPLES

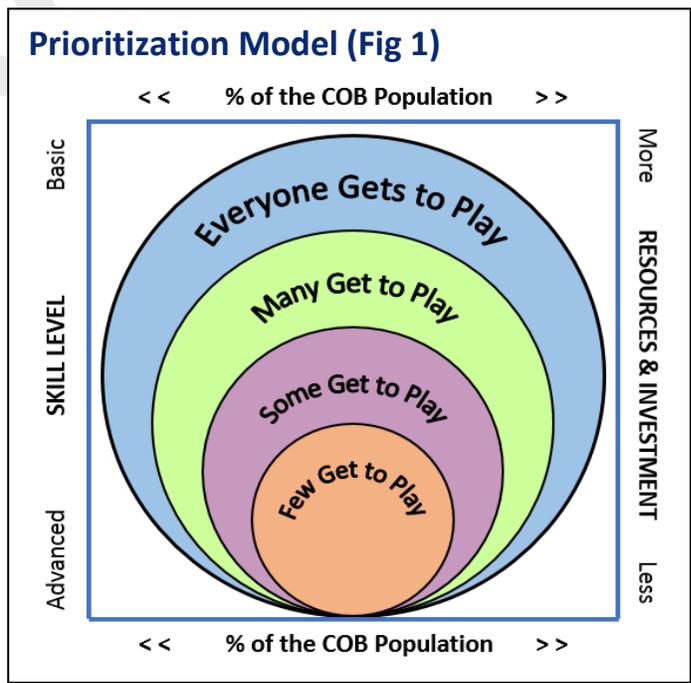
The SIX Principles shown below represents the Department’s core beliefs. These principles act as a checklist, compass and/or filter that can be used whenever something is in question or a decision needs to be made or when an opportunity emerges.

Fundamentals First	Inclusive	Shared Responsibility	Evidence Based	Complementary	Affordable
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## FUNDAMENTALS FIRST

We believe that the fundamentals of play must be our priority as it reaches the largest demographic of people without limitation to ones’ ability to participate. Fundamentals, as represented through general interest activities, are open and available to all and will be prioritized above special interests that are focused on a few.

The Prioritization Model (fig. 1) illustrates that more City resources will be place on recreation experiences that support broader interests that reach most of the population. As the skill level required increases, the percentage of the population participating lessens, resulting in fewer City resources that would be used to support those experiences. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Department will strive to support ALL levels of play through a prioritization model based on the activity provided.



The X axis (base) represents the total population of the City (i.e. all residents). As shown on either side of the illustration the Y axis (left) represents ones’ skill level, ranging from basic to advanced. The other Y axis (right) represents the level of City resources provided ranging from more to less. City resources include, but are not limited to, human, financial, assets, time, effort, etc. Each level of play is further described below.

<p><b>Everyone Gets to Play</b></p>	<p>This foundational level is considered ‘Introductory’ and/or ‘Open-for-all ages and all abilities’. These opportunities reach the largest population at a basic, general or introductory level.</p>
<p>Some examples include; swimming lessons, recreational skating and swimming, general land and water exercise programs, general neighborhood-based camps, open social gatherings, family or multi-generational based programming, general interest programs, learn-to programs such as hockey or soccer, co-ed house-league type programs, general arts and culture based programs, community events, and open play opportunities in parks and facilities such as hiking, water play, public tennis, pickleball and skateboarding.</p>	
<p><b>Many Get to Play</b></p>	<p>This level continues to build on the introductory level, but opportunities are targeted towards a specific or unique population.</p>
<p>Some examples include; age-specific or targeted house league programs, general arts and culture-based programs, recreational swimming opportunities for specific groups, and targeted age-specific general opportunities like youth-only or older adult-only programs.</p>	
<p><b>Some Get to Play</b></p>	<p>This level is focused on more competitive play. Participants in this category have acquired high skill levels and talent. The target market for this category is a smaller segment of the population.</p>
<p>Some examples include; rep sports, competitive-level programming, advanced programming, leadership, competitive events and closed groups not open to the entire public. Opportunities to support this could be at the regional level, sharing this level of play with other neighbouring municipalities.</p>	

### Few Get to Play

This level is focused on the elite level of play. Participants in this category are at the top of their game and compete at a provincial, national or world-wide level.

Some examples include; elite level play and national or provincial level programming and sports. While these experiences may represent a level of importance and pride within the community, the use of tax-supported resources would be minimal. Opportunities to support this level of play would be to leverage private sector-based partnerships, including sport tourism opportunities and could also be supported regionally.

## INCLUSIVE

The City will demonstrate leadership by creating an atmosphere and culture where all residents feel safe and welcome, allowing everyone to participate with dignity and respect. An inclusive culture and atmosphere will be represented in City facilities, parks, amenities, programs, staff, policies and services. We will seek relationships that support inclusion and look to remove physical, social and economic barriers to participation. Inclusive strategies can include financial assistance services, free or lost cost programs where applicable, inclusive training for staff, tailored programming and partnerships and pilot or try-it programs.

## SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

We believe that recreation experiences should foster a shared responsibility approach. Responsibilities can be shared between the City, an individual, a neighbourhood, volunteers, community groups, partners and stakeholders. At times, a regional-based approach may also be considered when sharing responsibility. A culture that has a shared responsibility approach has the potential to create meaning, purpose and value for all of those involved. This approach removes the notion of linear City-to-resident service, and rather creates a more robust approach where all stakeholders are involved. A shared responsibility approach also helps to support capacity identification and capacity building within the community. This approach helps to create a win-win-win outcome for the taxpayer, the partner(s), and the City.

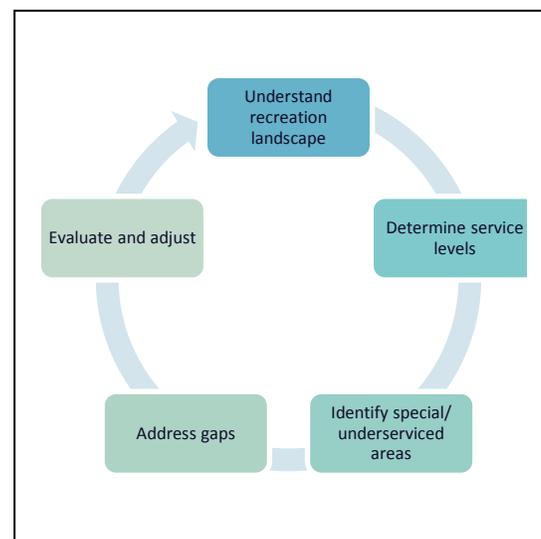
## EVIDENCE-BASED

Evidence-based decision making is a process that is grounded in the review and analysis of all relevant data. We will look to ensure that decision making is put through an evidence-based lens to help establish the likelihood of a desired outcome. Good decision making needs to be supported by evidence including research, data and sound information. This approach helps to ensure that the decisions we make are both sound and defensible. Evidence can be derived several ways, including; facts, demographics, research, pilot projects/experiments, surveys, feedback forums, benchmarking, statistics, feasibility studies, anecdotal and through direct feedback.

## COMPLEMENTARY

The recreation landscape in Burlington is rich with a variety of recreation experiences provided by not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. Where complementary to the landscape, the City will also provide recreation experiences to the community. We believe in providing recreation experiences that complement other providers rather than competing. The process highlighted below is cyclical requiring on-going review and readjustment when necessary. In many cases, when the recreation landscape changes, so do we. We look to complement the recreation landscape by:

- Understanding and being aware of the overall recreation landscape in Burlington
- Determining service levels needed within the community
- Identifying special or underserved markets
- Addressing gaps by seeking opportunities to complement existing services
- Evaluating and adjusting service delivery



## AFFORDABILITY

We believe that everyone should have access to affordable recreation. We will provide places where everyone can play at no cost. This includes access to public recreation

spaces and facilities, parks, trails, and community events. Where fees apply, the City will ensure affordability is considered broadly, with access to financial assistance programs for those who require support. We will also look to seek partnerships that upholds our interest in affordability.

## GOALS

The SIX Goals noted below will represent the desired **outcomes** of the vision, values, and principles. The City will strive to *Maximize*:

Participation	Partnerships	Variety	Thriving Neighbourhoods	Utilization	Meaningful Engagement
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## PARTICIPATION

The City will look to maximize participation in everything we do. We want more people active in play through supporting the recreational interests of our community. We want our recreation facilities, parks and trails filled with people participating. We want people to be involved and connected. Participation can be passive or active, and includes volunteerism, participation in programs, and casual use of facilities, parks and trails.

We will do this through active promotion of opportunities, removing barriers, developing programs and services that are desired and are aligned to interests, designing facilities that are conducive to maximize participation (e.g. multi-use spaces, supporting amenities), creating volunteer opportunities, and by living what we believe every day.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

The City will maximize a broad range of meaningful community partnerships to support the delivery of recreation. Partnerships include direct involvement with program providers, joint venture organizations, neighbourhood organizations, social-good agencies, regional services, local boards, government organizations, school boards and private organizations/businesses. We will continually work towards the enhancement of our current partnerships and seek new relationships. We will also seek strategic partnerships to help support specific interests of need and growth. The partnerships must align to our collective values with clear depiction of roles and responsibilities, ensuring a clear focus on the end user/resident.

## **VARIETY**

With a lens on the end user (i.e. every citizen of the City), the City will look to maximize the variety of recreation provided across the community. We believe that residents should have the ability to choose from an abundance of recreation experiences that represent the many interests of each individual and our community, both current and forecasted. We will do this by staying current in our program and service options, intentionally seeking new and emerging trends, forecasting needs, understanding the changing demographics of the community and connecting with program-matter experts.

## **THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS**

The City will look to invest in programs or practices that improve our subjective quality of life and improved social inclusion. This results in people feeling part of their neighbourhood, people having more empowerment over their lives and more likely to be active in civic life. By focusing programs directed at, “change makers”, there is a greater return because these people can influence their neighbourhood based on their robust social network of relationships. A connected neighbourhood is resilient and inclusive and results in taxpayer saving in health, justice and social service as well as improving a person’s employability and health.

## UTILIZATION

The City will look to maximize use of all physical assets (e.g. recreation centres, pools, arenas, parks and trails). We want people freely playing in their parks, registering for a program, joining a league, dropping in to an activity, contributing as part of a recreation-based organization, or participating in an event. We want our assets to be well used, all day, every day, year-round.

We will do this by promoting our assets, repurposing assets if under-utilized, enhancing amenities to support use, developing incentive pricing strategies, and to seek year-round utilization opportunities. We will look to design assets that are multi-purpose, allowing for a broad range of use. We will place priority on assets that promote mixed/multi-purpose uses as opposed to single-purpose assets.

## MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

We believe that meaningful engagement and collaboration with residents, staff, partners and stakeholders is essential in the planning and delivery of recreation experiences. Collaborative strategies include, but are not limited to; public engagement opportunities, round tables, program provider forums, pilot programming, surveys and daily dialogue. Feedback received will be heard and leveraged to help meet community interests. Staff will use a variety of public participation approaches including Informing, Consulting, Involving, Collaborating, and Empowering. The approach used will be based on several factors including the projects goals, council direction and the outcome desired.

## CONCLUSION

It is essential for a public service that is tax supported by the citizens of the City of Burlington, to be transparent by all. This Framework represents the Department's Vision, Values, Principles, and Goals. This Framework is the Department's foundation to which all other policies, procedures and planning will then be built upon. Once approved, we will review and update this Framework at every term of Council, when required to do so based on circumstance or through City Council direction.

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## DEFINITIONS

For this Framework, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions apply:

<b>Term</b>	<b>As Defined in Framework</b>
<b>Activities</b>	Something that somebody takes part in or does as related to one's recreation interests. Activities include both passive (e.g. table-top activities) and active (e.g. exercise classes) recreational pursuits, life skill programs (e.g. swimming lessons), drop-in programs (public skating), registered programs (camps), culture-rich programs (e.g. theatre and music), and community events, all that are either hosted by or through the City.
<b>Agreement</b>	Formal document signed and dated by the participating parties that outline the objectives, terms and conditions of the working relationship. Agreements might be in the form of a memorandum of understanding, program and activity provider agreement, sponsorship agreement, rental agreement, license agreement, lease agreement, service level agreement or joint venture agreement.
<b>Asset</b>	An economic resource that is either tangible or intangible. Assets are either physical (facilities, parks, amenities) or human (e.g. staff, volunteers).
<b>Collaboration</b>	To work jointly with others to pursue common goals. Collaboration includes both cooperation and coordination in delivering programs and activities.
<b>Community</b>	A group of people living in the same place <u>or</u> having a characteristics or interests in common. This includes a feeling of fellowship with others, because of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals. Examples could be a neighborhood, a seniors group, a sports group or league, or ethnic/cultural connection. A community can embody a variety of forms that share a collective interest.
<b>Partnership</b>	A collaborative working arrangement between two or more parties based on mutual interest and a clear understanding. For the purposes of this Framework, partnership is not intended as a legal term.
<b>Pilot Programming</b>	Pilot programming are short-term programming to measure interest and collect data and feedback. The collection of information is then used to help make decisions on future direction.
<b>Program Provider</b>	An individual or organization providing recreation programs and activities that is open for the entire community to participate. A Program and Activity Provider would be considered as a 'partner' with the City as related to this Framework.

<b>Term</b>	<b>As Defined in Framework</b>
<b>Framework</b>	The necessary structure needed to support decision making, planning, service delivery and the daily operation.
<b>Fundamental</b>	Basic, beginner, entry level, general interest and foundational as related to recreational based experiences. These are the building blocks for more complex and specialized skills.
<b>Joint Venture</b>	Any combination of resources by two or more persons, corporations, collaborative relationships, or some combination thereof, whereby each agrees to contribute money, knowledge, skills, land/property to conduct an initiative together. The City of Burlington's Joint Venture Framework addresses major projects such as the development of new facilities, major renovations to existing facilities and a variety of financing options for program providers. The City might have complete, partial or no ongoing responsibility for facility maintenance, capital repair and asset preservation, hence, the City's risk rests with the ownership of the physical asset. Joint Venture Agreements can allow significant freedom to operate or be very detailed about limits.
<b>Market</b>	The market represents the broader community and their interests.
<b>Recreation</b>	Recreation is an activity of leisure. Leisure is free time. The "need to do something for recreation" is an essential element of human biology and psychology. Recreational activities are often done for enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure and are "fun".
<b>Recreation Landscape</b>	All recreation experiences provided across the City by all providers.
<b>Round Table</b>	A round table is a collective group of individuals coming together for a common interest. Typically, round tables are facilitated by City staff and would include representation from a group focused on a specific initiative.
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.
<b>Sponsorships</b>	A sponsorship is a type of relationship whereas there is an exchange of money, products and/or services in return for a commercial benefit. A formal sponsorship agreement is typically associated with this type of arrangement.
<b>Participation Fees</b>	Participation Fees are Council approved rates a consumer would pay for. Examples include membership fees, program registration fees, rental fees, licensing fees, rent and drop-in fees.