

MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER
RECREATION and ACTIVE LIVING
Strategic Outlook
2024-2027



Both the Chester Municipal Recreation Committee's (CMRC) strategic goals and the Municipality of Chester's Active Living Strategy require updating to better align with today's health, social, and community imperatives; especially in a post-pandemic world.

The CMRC, with facilitation by staff, have crafted a new set of strategic priorities to help guide how we support our communities for the next several years. This strategic outlook provides a framework for these priorities.

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.
-Canadian National Recreation Framework.

These newly established priorities have been built on recreation as a broad concept, not limited solely to physical activities (see above); and they are an extension of the solid foundation of similar municipal, provincial, and national strategies that have come before.

While the work outlined here is the responsibility of staff to execute it, it is intended that the CMRC will be partners and stewards of its implementation. Department staff, including seasonal and occasional contributors, usually have specific roles; however, each of us has the responsibility to work together and transcend each of the five strategic priority areas.

Some of the actions identified here are a continuance of the good work we think we've been doing; while some of them are expected to give us new ways to expand our reach and impact in our communities. In truth, they likely don't represent all the work we will commit to in the next few years. We will continue to be open to new opportunities, and flexible in our approaches.

The word we often revisited while crafting this is 'intent.' It is a good reminder that while we carry out our daily tasks, we should always be acting with intent to attend to the priority areas.

We invite the CMRC, Council, and indeed members of our communities to often ask us "how are you filling the buckets?"

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VISION

Our vision represents our goals and how we'll get there. It describes the core of what we do, and signals our expected longer term results.

Our Municipal Recreation and Parks service is a passionate, innovative, and agile leader in creating equitable recreation opportunities for our diverse communities so that they may thrive physically, mentally, and spiritually.

MISSION

Our mission describes what we should attempt to do on a daily basis, and signals our expected shorter term results.

To empower, and enable, everyone to find joy, fulfillment, health, and community through recreation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Guiding Principles represent our values and steer our actions. Every decision/program/policy/plan should be checked against, and satisfy the guiding principles. We are responsible to them every day.

Commitment

We understand the restorative, transformative, and sustaining power of recreation. Each of us are both agents of, and joyful participants in, recreation lifestyles and will act to instill this passion in others.

Welcoming and inclusive

We respect the needs of each individual that we serve and will work to remove their unique barriers to participation in our programs and enjoyment of our facilities and outdoor spaces. We will always act with a service-first, human-centered approach and treat our community members in a friendly and helpful manner.

Excellence

We will strive to be trusted and knowledgeable partners in supporting people in their recreation pursuits. We will use our own passion and skills to enthusiastically lead and support our communities.

Collaboration

We will prioritize teamwork and partnerships, and align with community groups and individuals who share our mission to advance our common recreation goals.

Communication

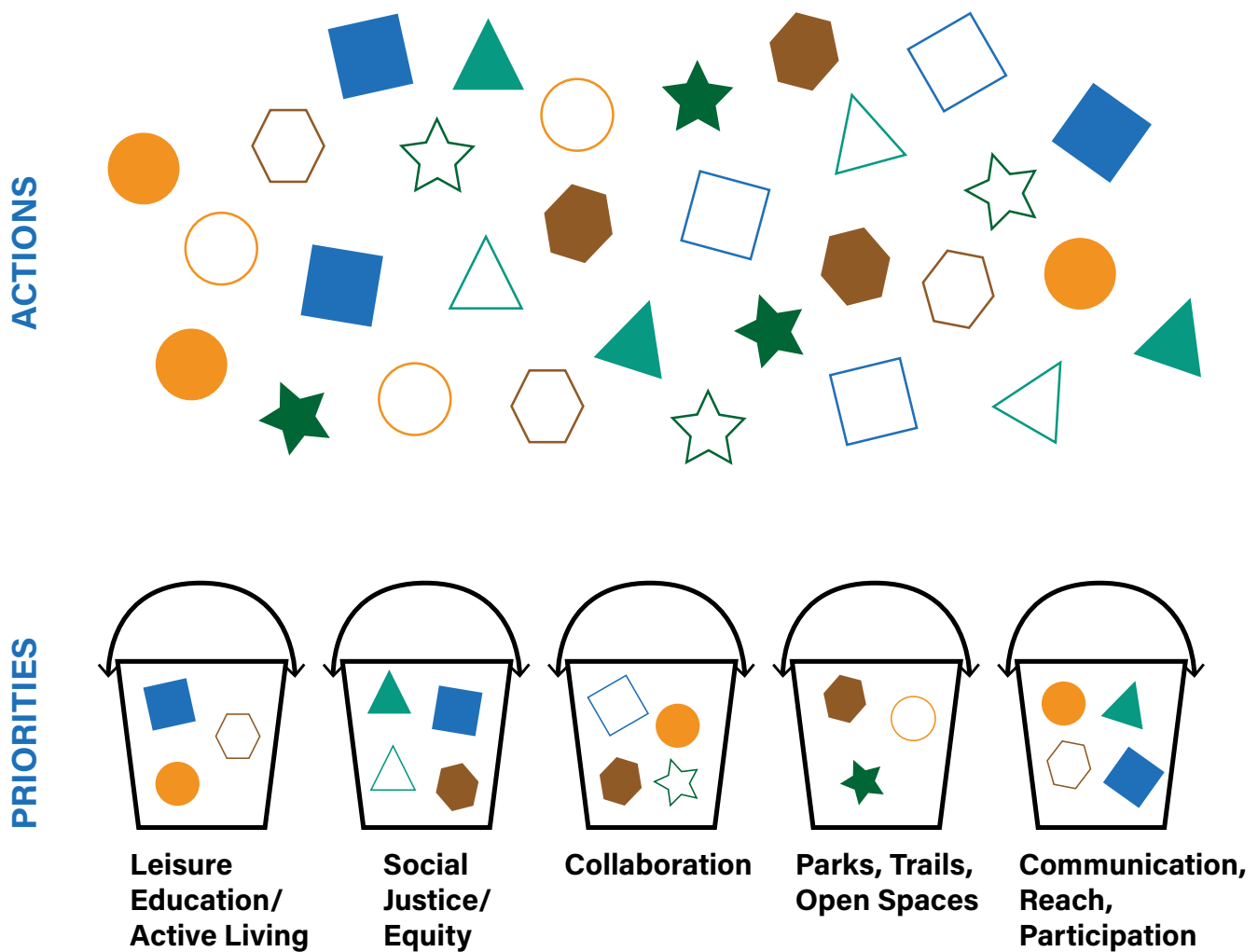
We will optimize the tools available to us to both inform and inspire citizens to participate in recreation.



"How are you filling the buckets?"

BUCKETS

The following five **strategic priorities** emerged from the thoughtful contributions of the CMRC members, and they have been reviewed and endorsed by staff. A useful analogy is to think of these as the **'buckets'** into which our **actions** will fall.



ACTION AREAS

These are groups of activities that will lead us toward our desired outcomes. To continue the analogy from above, these are the day-to-day activities by which we will fill the buckets (strategic priorities). It is staff's responsibility to attend to these action areas to make sure they are contributing to our goals. It is also staff's responsibility to determine the detailed nature of the activities. So while CMRC has shaped the priorities, staff will determine operationally how best to achieve the priorities.

Do not be confused by the apparent duplication with the names of the strategic priorities. For example, while better communication is an overarching strategic priority, excellent communication is a necessary part of advancing each one of the priorities.



Parks, Trails, Open Spaces

Acquisition and development of natural areas.



Professional Development/continual learning

Continuing commitment to be on the vanguard of the recreation sector, be recognized as leaders, and learn how best to serve the needs of citizens.



Communication

Optimizing the use of current and emerging media types to reach citizens.



Programs

Structured, time-bound opportunities that encompass all aspects of recreation (social, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and creative).



Policies

Identify opportunities to institute new, codified ways of removing barriers and providing support.



Physical Supports

Built environment planning and development.



Social Supports

Connecting people and communities to each other to foster supportive recreation environments.



Facilities

Optimizing the use of Municipal and partner recreation facilities.



Provision

The things we can place in communities to support unprogrammed opportunities (e.g. play boxes).



Enabling

The things we can do to inspire, encourage, educate citizens to participate in recreation on their own time and terms (e.g. guiding hikes, bird watching courses).

PRIORITY 1

Leisure Education/ Active Living



We will encourage and empower citizens to include recreation and physical activity into their daily lives. This includes sharing the skills and wisdom needed for people to be active independent of our programmed offerings.

Strategic actions between 2024 and 2027:

- ▶ Analyze the 2024 Citizens Survey (Spring) and develop relevant, new actions.
- ▶ Complete the Outdoor Play and Older Youth project at CAMS. Consider applicability and expansion to NRCS and FHCS
- ▶ Commit to the excellence of our programming by developing the leadership, skills, and talents of summer staff; and put them on a path to a career in recreation.
- ▶ Engage school administration to explore community supports needed to impact physical activity in the school setting.
- ▶ Add a Fall, big community walking event (sibling event to the Cut n Run).
- ▶ Promote new, enhanced AT options in our communities.
- ▶ Survey facility users and program participants (experiences, needs, barriers, preferences, improvements).
- ▶ Foster the 'The participant/leader arc' – join, learn, develop, share. Consider youth leadership in this too.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to expand indoor walking at CDS or CAMS, ACES, and NRCS.
- ▶ Continue to offer a diversity of programs and experiences that appeal to all members of the public.
- ▶ Continue to offer leisure education 'toe-dipping', skill building, and educational experiences that foster lifelong, independent participation.
- ▶ Review and improve the inventory and reach of our equipment loan program (including adaptive equipment).
- ▶ Entice more people that have not used our programs or services in the past, through our fee structure and social tools.

Key indicators of progress:

- ✓ Engage administrators in 5 schools and develop 3 actionable items at each.
- ✓ New walking event hosts 50 people in year 1; 100, year 2; 150, year three.
- ✓ Gauge impact of Cut n Run participation on physical activity behaviors/choices.
- ✓ 20% Response rate to user/participants surveys. 3 actionable insights gained.
- ✓ 3 new, stable leaders developed each year.
- ✓ 5% of registrants are first-timers in year 1.

PRIORITY 2

Communication, Reach, and Participation

We are committed to improving our communication techniques and tools. The premise of this is that if we communicate more effectively, we will broaden our reach to more citizens and communities, and we will increase participation in programs and use of our facilities and spaces.

Strategic actions between 2024 and 2027:

- ▶ Establish program and events participation trends and baseline data.
- ▶ Adopt, and consistently employ, Rec Text.
- ▶ Consistently employ the practice of doing a promotional 'blitz' of our individual programs in the weeks prior to their registration deadlines (texts, social media, boosts).
- ▶ Amplify the Province's Make Your Move campaign and use local examples to highlight the benefits of physical activity.
- ▶ Inventory, formalize, and share recreation facility accessibility information.
- ▶ Use Explore Life to continue to share the benefits of recreation, celebrate positive impacts, and inspiring community members. Employ an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) lens to our content selection.
- ▶ Consider adopting the Sport and Rec Hub. If applicable, make its functionality available to community sport and rec organizations, and support their usage.
- ▶ All staff will complete training in 'communications for better accessibility'.
- ▶ Map out our local communications landscape, and optimize promotional opportunities through partner organizations. Reciprocate accordingly.

Key indicators of progress:

- ✓ Rec Text enrollment increases each year.
- ✓ Consistently 'blitz' 80% of our programs and events.
- ✓ Participation rates increase.
- ✓ Program and event cancellations, due to lack of enrollment, decrease.
- ✓ An inventory of recreation accessibility information is developed by year 2. It should be flexible enough to adapt to, and complement, the province's guidance and our own broader accessibility initiatives.



PRIORITY 3

Social Justice/ Equity

We are committed to removing barriers to participation and expanding our audience beyond the traditional participants. This includes our own journey to better understand and respond to the unique needs of Mi'kmaq, African-Nova Scotians, members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, low-income families, those with accessibility needs, and other underrepresented people. We will strive to welcome everyone into supportive and inclusive environments and experiences.

Strategic actions between 2024 and 2027:

- ▶ Conduct an analysis of the NS Quality of Life (QoL) data that is specific to recreation outcomes. Consider how to turn data into actions.
- ▶ Establish a 'Companion' policy to enable and encourage caregivers to participate in programs to remove barriers for those in their care.
- ▶ All staff will complete RNS's Anti-racism (AR) training and use the learnings to further develop our own AR actions, AR declaration and Code of Conduct.
- ▶ Support the EDI Committee's workplan.
- ▶ Improve public awareness of our mobility options and program accommodations strategies.
- ▶ Enhance awareness and impact of PRO Kids by revising our intake process, donor outreach, and messaging to applicants.
- ▶ Develop a policy that enables the inclusion and integration of underrepresented people in all our programs and facilities.
- ▶ Staff will seek out and participate in professional development/training opportunities that support our learnings and ability to address equity issues.
- ▶ Support the Lunenburg County accessibility staff and committee.

Key indicators of progress:

- ✓ 5 program or policy actions are derived from the QoL data.
- ✓ A companion policy is developed and publicly shared by year 1.
- ✓ An Anti-racism Code of Conduct is developed and publicly shared by year 1.
- ✓ Trail Rider usage increases.
- ✓ Our PRO Kids promotional material is updated by year 1.



PRIORITY 4

Collaboration

We are committed to working with, and supporting, individuals and organizations who are similarly committed to providing recreation and healthy lifestyle opportunities. We will lend our skills and expertise to relationships that help increase our collective impact.

Strategic actions between 2024 and 2027:

- ▶ Promote and support neighbourhoods employing ideas from the Activate Your Neighbourhood Toolkit (AYN).
- ▶ Continue to support New Ross Trail Society's planning and delivery of trail opportunities and events in New Ross.
- ▶ Continue to support Hubbards Streetscape Project's community development planning.
- ▶ Continue to support Infrastructure and Operation's (I&O) trail reconstruction, bridge reconstruction and maintenance, and completion of our current infrastructure projects.
- ▶ Encourage our own accountability to this Strategic Outlook through the CMRC.
- ▶ Continue to champion the community school model and act as a resource for colleagues across NS.
- ▶ Support MOC's development and implementation of an Arts and Culture strategy.
- ▶ Host a recreation and sport organization summit to explore challenges, opportunities, and future needs and desired supports. This should be hosted jointly with the CMRC.
- ▶ Strengthen our relationship with Wasoqopa'q First Nation by exploring recreation opportunities and connections through nature.

Key indicators of progress:

- ✓ Two community led AYN projects are initiated each year.
- ✓ CMRC reporting is structured around our five strategic priorities.
- ✓ A rec summit is well attended, and supportive actionable items for MOC can be identified.
- ✓ Conversations with Wasoqopa'q result in collaborative activities.

PRIORITY 5

Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces

People need spaces and places to recreate, be physically active, and connect to nature. This priority reflects our recent focus on developing open spaces and the desire of community members for more of these opportunities. It also reflects a community, asset-based approach to recreation facility development.

Strategic actions between 2024 and 2027:

- ▶ Conduct a recreation facilities inventory. Establish Level of Service (LOS) criteria in all districts.
- ▶ Support Chester Tourism's efforts to market our Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces opportunities and MOC as an outdoor recreation destination.
- ▶ Develop new trails on the Hiltz property (adjacent to Haughn).
- ▶ Shift our emphasis to promotion and animation of our open spaces. Include messaging on the benefits of nature. Target families (e.g. play hikes).
- ▶ Increase our capacity to host/guide hikes.
- ▶ Complete any remaining develop tasks on our Gem properties. Fine tune amenities.
- ▶ Commit to trail and open space maintenance standards, plan/budget for summer staff, and develop focussed work plans.
- ▶ Bridge cultures and learning opportunities through nature education and outdoor recreation.
- ▶ Program outdoor spaces for mental health benefits. Encourage self-exploration.
- ▶ Actively explore options to add to our open space landbase.
- ▶ Offer summer days camps at our open spaces to instill a love of the natural world in youth. Develop supportive amenities as needed.

Key indicators of progress:

- ✓ Our LOS analysis provides better strategic direction, shows EDI improvements to be made, and helps direct investments.
- ✓ Hiltz plan is developed in year 1, built in year 2.
- ✓ Three new animation events are launched each year. They focus on mental health, families, and bridging cultures.
- ✓ 2 new hikes leader developed each year.
- ✓ Collaborate with I&O and codify trail maintenance standards.



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