

Municipality of East Hants

MOUNT UNIACKE RECREATION STRATEGY DISTRICTS 8 & 9



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing Mount Uniacke's Recreation Strategy was identified as a strategic initiative to reflect the needs of the community for the next 10 years. This Recreation Strategy was prepared by WSP Canada Inc. (WSP), Nustadia Recreation Inc. (Nustadia), and Architecture49 (A49) in collaboration with the Municipality of East Hants staff, stakeholders, and residents.

Phase 1 of the project delivered a **Background Report** (Attachment A) and Phase 2 a **Community Consultation Report** (Attachment B) which have been prepared based on a thorough investigation of background research; on-site visitation; available municipal and regional information; findings from community and stakeholder group engagement; as well as drawing on updated provincial and national documents and research/trends about recreation, sport, active living and sustainable design practices. Findings and key takeaways from these two Phases have provided a framework, context, and information needed for the developed **Needs Assessment** and **Recreation Strategy** that are presented in this report.

This Needs Assessment and Recreation Strategy (Phase 3) presents a total of **28 Recommendations** within the following three categories: (1) Recreation and Sport Infrastructure; (2) Programming and Passive Leisure Opportunities; and (3) Overarching Recommendations. These recommendations and actions have all been presented to the Municipality as recommendations to take to improve on the current state of recreation services within the Mount Uniacke community. As part of this Strategy, a **Human Resource Plan** has also been provided which gives context for the current state of staffing and resources and the anticipated need of future staffing to achieve many of the recommendations provided within this Strategy. As many of the recommendations provided within this Strategy require an increase in effort for the current Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, an increase in staffing complement is warranted. It is critical to understand that, without further supporting the current staffing resources, the Municipality will have difficulty moving this Strategy forward and improving the recreation services for the Mount Uniacke community.

Building off the recommendations presented in Needs Assessment and the Human Resources Plan, an **Implementation Strategy** was prepared. Presented in this report are a series of final recommendations for the Municipality to consider within the life of this Strategy. The following table provides a summary of the recommendations provided and include anticipated timeline. A more detailed version of the Implementation table can be found in Section 5 of this Strategy which identifies the primary group or organization involved in each of the recommendations as well as next steps to pursue.

Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)
1. Building Capacity within the Community		
5.2	Invest in personnel to have on-the-ground presence within the community. Having an in-community presence will be important to re-invigorate momentum in program coordination, participation and offering. A staffing complement that is located within the community will also play a critical role in implementing many of the recommendations that have been provided as part of this Strategy.	0 – 2 years
5.4	Mount Uniacke currently has facilities that can support a variety programming through present and current flexible spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, meeting rooms, banquet halls). The Municipality should explore ways to support these facilities and work with the community and building operators to explore facility access and programming potential. On-the-ground presence and/or personnel to support programming initiatives and start-ups will be highly valuable.	0 – 2 years
2. Identify and Explore Improvements to Community Recreation Infrastructure and Services		
1.3 + 3.5	Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights (and continue current agreement) and weekdays.	Ongoing
2.1	In keeping with the Parks, Open Space and Active Transportation Master Plan, the Municipality should look for opportunities to improve the connectivity between parks and open spaces and residential areas to support recreation and to invest in the maintenance and improvements to existing trails/playgrounds where needed.	Ongoing
2.2	Identify and plan for the investments in improvements to existing outdoor facilities. In particular, promote discussions with CCRCE on feasibility of remediating drainage issues on Uniacke District School soccer field.	0-2 years (soccer field) Ongoing for all other
4.1	Analyze whether different neighbourhoods in Mount Uniacke have adequate access to passive leisure opportunities. A spatial analysis should be done to understand how different communities could be served by passive recreational opportunities. This could be used to direct where new passive recreation facilities and/or interventions could be introduced. Current and future development should be considered during the life of this Strategy.	5-10 years
4.2	Mount Uniacke lacks playground structures within the outskirts of the community. Playground areas support unstructured play for young children and parents. To serve communities who are underservice by playground facilities, properties for siting additional playgrounds should be identified and investment should be made to provide a play structure for these communities. As communities continue to grow, additional playgrounds should be accounted for.	0 – 2 years

Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)
3.4	Work with the community to gauge the level of interest of the current programs/activities offered and facilitate a more focused consultation to gather input on what the community would like to participate in, when they would like to do so, and identify where these new programs could take place.	0 – 2 years
5.3	Explore enhancing the level of transparency on recreational efforts and investments within the community and work to build the level of trust between community and Municipality by hosting events or piggybacking on to annual activities within the community to bring staff and community together to discuss current and ongoing efforts to improve recreation for Mount Uniacke.	0 – 2 years
2.3	Engage with existing Trails Groups to understand needs in order to improve Mount Uniacke's trail system. Trails groups provide valuable advocacy and volunteer work to the upkeep and maintenance of Mount Uniacke's trail system.	5 – 10 years
3. Identify and Collaborate with Partners		
3.2	Investigate the opportunity for strategic partnership who are currently located within the community (i.e., the Library) to activate programming currently not offered within Mount Uniacke. The Municipality could offer assistance with promotion, communication, and could invite the organizations to collaborate on existing Municipality events.	0 – 2 years
3.3	Investigate the opportunity for strategic external partnerships (e.g., West Hants, HRM, etc.) to activate programming that can't be offered in Mount Uniacke, such as learn-to-skate, open swims, etc.	0 – 2 years
1.3 + 3.5	Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights (and continue current agreement) and weekdays.	Ongoing
4.8	Explore the opportunity to collaborate with respective Provincial departments to implement safety measures along the main roads to promote active transportation.	Ongoing

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of East Hants retained WSP Canada Inc. with Architecture49 and Nustadia Recreation Inc. to complete a Recreation Strategy for Districts 8 & 9 (Mount Uniacke) in efforts to help meet the current and future needs of the Mount Uniacke community. Council initiated the Strategy to help shape the recreational services delivery model by examining areas for improvements, enhancements, and efficiencies and recommending innovative solutions in 2-, 5- and 10-year timeframes.

Recreation opportunities are essential to achieving high quality of life for all residents and contribute to the community's physical and social infrastructure. Going forward, it is critical for Council and Staff to reflect on how the Municipality plans to grow and how the needs of current and future residents should be provided for critical services such as recreation. While this Recreation Strategy was developed for Districts 8 & 9, many of the findings and recommendations developed as part of this Strategy should be considered alongside other trends that are happening within the greater region of East Hants.

The Municipality of East Hants as a whole is experiencing rapid growth, and therefore demand for recreation services will continue to grow in tandem with the population. This growth will place a stronger emphasis on the Municipality and staff to provide appropriate services to meet the current and very near-future need for recreation services across all communities. Throughout the development of this Strategy, it has been evident that the current status quo for supplying recreation services for the entire Municipality needs to be re-visited. If anticipated population growth continues within the entire region, the current delivery model and staffing do not have capacity to provide sustainable recreation opportunities. The public echoed these observations and comments through the consultation, expressing dissatisfaction with recreation services available to them within or in close proximity to Mount Uniacke.

Building off the East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan vision for the Municipality: *“East Hants is an engaged Municipality where residents are active for life. East Hants is a place where all residents are able to access and participate in a wide variety of recreation opportunities.”* This Strategy places an emphasis on taking a holistic approach to recreation. This includes planning for various opportunities, from connecting with Mount Uniacke's beautiful natural environment to participating in recreation and sports programs.

The following Strategy has been conducted into three phases, each phase building off of the next one.

1. GETTING STARTED, BUILD UNDERSTANDING, AND SERVICE INVENTORY

Phase 1 was to establish the 'baseline' through a background review for recreation in East Hants, specifically, Mount Uniacke, including socio-demographics; a summary of background documents and relevant plans; a summary and review of facility inventory and organizational inventory; summary of Provincial and National recreation delivery trends; and a comparative communities analysis.

2. CONSULTATION

Phase 2 was an essential part of this study to understand the perspective from 'on the ground', which included one-on-one interviews with staff, Council, and key stakeholders, as well as a public online survey.

3. BUILDING THE STRATEGY: NEEDS ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RESOURCES PLAN, AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (ASSET PLAN)

Phase 3 was completed based on a site visit, interviews and the previous information found in Phase 1 and 2 to identify key findings associated with demonstrated needs. The following Strategy is presented in the following sections:

- **Section 2: Inventory Overview** – what facilities are currently available in the community.
- **Section 3: Needs Assessment** – assessing the anticipated needs and producing recommendations in the following areas: 1) Indoor Recreation and Sport Infrastructure, 2) Outdoor Recreation (Parks and Open Spaces) and Sport Infrastructure, 3) Programming, 4) Passive Leisure, and 5) Overarching Recommendations
- **Section 4: Human Resource Plan** – identifying options to fulfill human resource need and anticipated impacts to community and financial costing.
- **Section 5: Recommendations and Implementation Strategy** – presenting and categorizing produced recommendations and applying a timeline, organization responsible, and actions for each.

2 INVENTORY OVERVIEW

The following inventory overview provides a summary of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that are located within the Mount Uniacke community.

2.1 INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY

This inventory outlines the indoor facilities in Mount Uniacke and provides a description of the components (e.g., number of ice surfaces).

Type of Facility	Ownership	Components	Condition	Capacity (Booking Availability)
Mount Uniacke Public Library 555 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke, NS B0N 1Z0	Municipality of East Hants (Operated by Colchester East Hants Public Library)	Meeting room and collaboration space. Programming held for ages 8+ afterschool and throughout the day for seniors/adults.	Good	Under Capacity – Daily programming with low participation rates. Closed Sunday and Monday, open 1pm - 8pm Tuesday, 10am-1pm Wednesday, 2pm-7pm Thursday, 2pm-5pm Friday, 10am-1pm Saturday.
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 165 18 Veterans Ln, Mount Uniacke NS B0N 1Z0	Royal Canadian Legion	Basement Hall and Small Hall/Bar. Enclosed Bar Room. Tables and chairs. Male and Female Washrooms 3 stalls each. Kitchen with industrial range hood, fryer ovens and range. Barrier free access from bottom level doorway.	Good	Under Capacity – Basement Hall utilized 3x per week and rented and average of 3x per month. Small Hall/Bar utilized 2 times per week.

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		Must come around building for entry.		
Uniacke & District Volunteer Fire Department 654 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke NS B0N 1Z0	Uniacke & District Volunteer Fire Department	Shower rooms, new barrier free W/C facilities Male and Female 3 stalls each. Kitchen with industrial range. Barrier Free Access from ground level. Small stage with sound system.	Excellent	Under Capacity – Fire Hall rented 1 time per week and rented for summer camps in the summertime. Occasional weddings, anniversaries and funerals etc.
Uniacke District School 551 Hwy 1, Mount Uniacke, NS B0N 1Z0	Province of Nova Scotia - Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education	<p>Medium size Gymnasium. Provides full court Basketball and 2 half courts. 2 Volleyball courts. 3 Badminton courts. Small stage is provided, used only for school assemblies. Gymnasium has 2 reasonable size storage rooms providing adequate storage. No issues with leaks and the ventilation was recently upgraded. Floor was recently replaced and is causing some frustration as there is moderate bubbling. Rental would be \$25.00 per hour for the custodian to come on weekends. Free after hours.</p> <p>Large unprogrammed hall space. School Kitchen attached. Rental</p>	Good	<p>Gymnasium - No Capacity: Badminton- Monday nights. Pickleball - Tuesday and Thursday. Soccer - Wednesday. Home/School Programming – Friday</p> <p>Cafeteria – Under Capacity: Rented 1-3 times per year.</p>

		would be \$25.00 per hour for the custodian to come on weekends. Free after hours. Lighting was poor, no leaks, ventilation was good.		
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2.2 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY

This inventory outlines the outdoor facilities in Mount Uniacke and provides a description of the components (e.g., number of fields).

Type of Facility	Ownership	Components	Condition	Capacity (Booking Availability)
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 165 18 Veterans Ln, Mount Uniacke NS B0N 1Z0	Royal Canadian Legion	2 well kept fenced diamonds. Good agreement between baseball association and Legion. Association provides maintenance. 2 storage units. Dog park located on 3 rd former ballfield.	Excellent	Near Capacity – Utilized 5 times a week, but not available to the public.
Uniacke & District Volunteer Fire Department 654 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke NS B0N 1Z0	Uniacke & District Volunteer Fire Department	Large un-boarded skating pad. Unrefrigerated. Has the ability to be used as flooded skating rink. It is used by the community,	Good	Under Capacity – Utilized by the Fire Department 1 time a week and 1-2 times a week by the public

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		but there is no schedule. Lighting provided.		
Uniacke District School 551 Hwy 1, Mount Uniacke, NS B0N 1Z0	Province of Nova Scotia - Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education	Soccer field is in a low-lying area not far from lake. Often must deal with flooding and field is often muddy. Discussion of a grant being provided to set-up disk golf area on field. Ballfield is not currently used or maintained. Basketball court, playground and outdoor classroom.	Soccer Field – Marginal Baseball Field – Poor Basketball – Poor	Under Capacity – Currently only used by the school or pick-up. Some shared use by the West Hants Soccer Association for soccer programming
Mount Uniacke Memorial Park 670 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke	Municipality of East Hants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playground - Playbox 	Good	N/A – available for public use.
Mount Uniacke Estates Trail	Province of Nova Scotia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13km of Hiking Trails - Trail head located in Mount Uniacke Memorial Park. 	Good	N/A – available for public use.
South Uniacke Road Park	Municipality of East Hants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playground - Picnic Table 	Good	N/A – available for public use.

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254 South Uniacke Rd, South Uniacke		- Basketball Court		
Bell Park Highway 1, Mount Uniacke B0N 1Z0	Province of Nova Scotia	- 55-Acre Nature Park - 2km of signed trails	Good	N/A – available for public use.
Cockscomb Lake Provincial Park Waterview Drive, Mount Uniacke, B0N 1Z0	Province of Nova Scotia	- Beach - Water Access	Good	N/A – no public access. Located on private property.
Lewis Lake (Water Access) Jorphie Drive, Mount Uniacke. (Parcel P2 Located across the road from 24 Jorphie Drive, East Uniacke)	Municipality of East Hants	- Public Water Access	Good	N/A – available for public use.
Edmond Chater Memorial Skate Park 628 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke	Municipality of East Hants	- Skate Park	Excellent	N/A – available for public use.

3 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Needs Assessment is to collectively consider demand indicators to assess community needs in a pragmatic manner. This needs assessment summarizes data collected thus far by type of facility for both indoor and outdoor recreation, as well as programming and passive leisure opportunities. Each section begins by examining the existing quantity and quality of facilities. The community's existing supply of facilities is presented by facility type and then compared to the present facility-type demand. Data that establishes demand indicators has been collected through consultation data from interviews with Staff, Council, and facility operators, as well as a community household survey. Local and national trends by recreation type have also been added to the assessment to help inform the discussions and overall recommendations provided.

It should be noted as part of this Needs Assessment that it is not uncommon to confuse “desire” for “need”. True need is a function of (1) demand and (2) support. Demand indicators come in two forms (a) expressed and (b) demonstrated. Expressed demand is as it suggests – what people or groups say they want. While important, these are not measurable, and there is no easy way to hold people or groups to this projected use. Consequently, expressed demand can only be relied on where there are more quantifiable indicators to support it. Quantifiable indicators might include growth in population, facility provision levels relative to other similar communities, condition of the existing facilities, state of current use, quantity of additional time users indicate they would like through documented waiting lists, and trends in usage across other communities. These quantifiable indicators are referred to as demonstrated demand, versus expressed demand.

3.1 RECREATION AND SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

INDOOR RECREATION AND SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Indoor recreation infrastructure includes a variety of facilities that can be utilized for the desired organized and/or passive recreational opportunities for communities and could include meeting rooms, performance spaces, gymnasias, banquet halls, libraries, etc. While these facilities typically tend to be largely ‘programmed’ facilities, wherein organizations rent the facility to offer programming, there are spaces that are also accounted for to be utilized by more passive recreation by individual users or small groups.

Demand Indicator	Summary
Existing Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meeting Room Rental and Commercial Grade Kitchen (Fire Hall) – One (1) gymnasium (2 pads) (Uniacke District School) – One auxiliary gymnasium space (Uniacke District School – currently utilized as lunchroom) – One (1) banquet hall and Commercial Grade Kitchen (Legion) – Library with available meeting room rental (Library)
Demonstrated Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 47% of survey respondents indicated they do not currently use any indoor community facilities within Mount Uniacke. – Of the survey respondents who indicated they use indoor community facilities within Mount Uniacke, 41% access indoor facilities less than 5 times a year and 25% access indoor facilities within Mount Uniacke weekly. – 22% of survey respondents utilize the school gymnasium (after school hours). – Interviewees indicated the school gymnasium is booked 4-nights a week (pickleball, men’s basketball, etc.)
Expressed Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviewees and survey respondents indicated a lack of indoor facilities to support recreation and sport (e.g., no ice sheets, pool, fitness facilities) in the community. – Survey participants indicated the lack of indoor facilities in Mount Uniacke is a barrier to their participation in recreation. – Survey participants indicated they travel outside of Mount Uniacke to participate in indoor recreation/programming. – Interviewees expressed a want for a larger library facility.

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Interviewees expressed a need for a joint-use agreement between other indoor facilities in neighbouring communities. — Survey respondents indicated a desire for a gym/fitness facility within the community. — Survey respondents expressed a desire for a multi-purpose Community Centre
Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Movement towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Non-structure recreation and leisure opportunities. — Reducing sedentary lifestyles and addressing the importance of public health. — Facilities that are welcoming to all residents, especially those who might not feel included or welcomed, including the use of existing structures and spaces. — Integrating indoor and outdoor public spaces and introduce nature into non-traditional spaces. — 2016-2018 Physical Activity Monitor indicates the most frequently reported sports among adults are (1) hockey; (2) golf, softball, baseball & soccer; (3) racquet sports; (4) basketball; (5) volleyball; (6) curling; (7) skiing; and (8) bowling. — Challenges are presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — With aging facilities, for example, maintenance and energy consumption. — To low-income families and their access to a range of recreational opportunities. — In children needing opportunities to experience risk in order to gain critical risk management skills. Need to seek a balance between risk and safety in play.

DISCUSSION

Uniacke District School is owned and operated by Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE). Currently, there is no Joint Use Agreement in place between the Municipality and CCRCE however, the school has made the gymnasium available for booking beyond school hours on Monday-Friday from 5pm-9pm and is regularly booked for adult sport programming 7-9pm on Monday-Thursday. It is noted that 60% of weekly available gymnasium booking hours are still available to the community. Interviewees have noted that that these time slots are currently at or nearing capacity for community booking and use as it is activity rented at least 4-days a week. It is also noted that a Before and After School Program operates out of the Uniacke District School and may impact some gymnasium booking hour availability.

Uniacke District School has a 2-pad gymnasium, and a flexible multi-purpose space (currently used as a school lunchroom). The presence of the school and the amenities it offers is a highly valuable asset for community recreation use within Mount Uniacke. Gymnasias offers a wide range of

programming opportunities that can facilitate organized sports/events as well as unorganized/informal indoor play. It's important to note that the school was also identified within the East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan as a key resource for service delivery to improve access to current recreation facilities within communities. It has been noted that the Municipality is currently in discussions with the CCRCE in an effort to establish a Joint Use Agreement to allow for the Municipality and other third parties to operate recreation programs using the school facility during non-school hours. This Strategy continues to support the Municipality in pursuing those efforts as it will be a critical resource to improving community recreation services going forward.

Beyond the Uniacke District School, the community also has the community library and meeting and banquet rooms available at the Fire Hall and Legion, both of which come with full kitchens. These spaces provide opportunity for further recreation programming as they are relatively large, open and give flexibility in how they could be used for recreational purposes. These facilities should be recognized as valuable assets to the community and in the short term, be prioritized to facilitate recreational uses. In order to improve accessibility, consideration should be given to built features in existing facilities such as ramps and curb cuts, entrances, and public restrooms. While the Municipality does not own these facilities, they can be advocates and partners to building owners to explore funding opportunities.

While Mount Uniacke is located 35–40-minute drive from the main growth centres of East Hants, it is positioned closer to other major recreation hubs including Windsor and West Hants (20 minutes) and HRM communities of Upper, Middle, and Lower Sackville (15-20 minutes). These communities offer recreation facilities that Mount Uniacke does not currently have such as arenas and swimming pools. In the short term, the Municipality of East Hants may wish to consider working with the Mount Uniacke community to find days and times during the week to set up weekly or bi-weekly facility rentals within these adjacent communities for the use of Mount Uniacke residents and consider providing organized programs such as a weekly learn to skate classes. It should be noted that the Municipality has done this in the past for the Mount Uniacke community and should something that staff look to implement on a more regular or routine basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1.1: Engage with existing facilities (Public Library, Legion and Fire Hall) representatives to understand and determine the possibility for expanding programming and facility booking.

Recommendation 1.2: Work with facility owners and operators to identify necessary improvements to existing indoor facilities to improve accessibility standards. Specific attention should be given to entrance, doors and wayfinding through facilities. Work with owners to identify cost sharing opportunities and/or available grant or funding streams for improvements.

Action 1.2.1: Review Mount Uniacke’s existing indoor facilities and identify upgrades to meet accessibility standards such as the Rick Hansen Accessibility Standards.

Recommendation 1.3: Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights (and continue current agreement) and weekdays.

Recommendation 1.4: Look for opportunities to utilize larger indoor facilities in neighbouring municipalities such as HRM and West Hants.

Recommendation 1.5: As programming grows, continue to monitor community facility need. Special attention should be given to ancillary space requirements such as equipment storage.

OUTDOOR RECREATION (PARKS AND OPEN SPACES) AND SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Demand Indicator	Summary
Existing Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 5 parks and open spaces — 3 playgrounds — Soccer Field (School) – poor drainage. — 2 Baseball Fields (Legion) – good condition but only available to book and utilized by organized leagues through Legion. — Dog Park — Lake access (Lewis Lake, Murphy Lake, Long Lake) — Boat launch on Pigott Lake — Outdoor Classroom — Carpet Bowling (Fire Hall) — 3 Basketball Courts (Uniacke District School, South Uniacke Park) — +15km of Trails
Demonstrated Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Based on the comparative community analysis, Mount Uniacke currently has a below average ratio for playgrounds and soccer fields given the overall population of the Community (see the <i>Background Report</i> under a separate cover for a list of comparative communities). This has been recognized as part of the East Hants Playgrounds Strategy with future facilities within the community being identified for future investment.

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Of the survey respondents who indicated they use outdoor facilities within Mount Uniacke, the most common responses were Uniacke Estates Trail (72%) and Bell Park (64%). Other responses included Mount Uniacke Memorial Community Park (Playground) (54%) Uniacke District School (Playground/Sport Court/Soccer Field) (33%), the Uniacke Legion – Ball Fields (20%), and Edmond Chater Memorial Skate Park (18%) — 30% of survey respondents utilize outdoor facilities within Mount Uniacke weekly. — 20% of survey respondents utilize outdoor facilities within Mount Uniacke more than once a week. — The most common response identified by respondents as it relates to frequency of facility use outside of Mount Uniacke was that they travelled more than once a week (38%) to get to their facility of choice, while one quarter (33%) of respondents indicated the travelled weekly.
Expressed Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 55% of survey respondents indicated a desire for splash pads. — 52% of survey respondents indicated a desire for an outdoor skating rink. — Participants expressed a need for more accessible trails for all ages and abilities. — Participants expressed a desire for additional active transportation routes. — Participants expressed a concern for the lack of outdoor infrastructure within the community. — Survey respondents indicated a lack of awareness for outdoor recreation programs currently offered.
Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Movement towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Non-structure recreation and leisure opportunities with the advances in technology such as geocaching. — Introduction of new recreational opportunities. — Integrating indoor and outdoor public spaces and introduce nature into non-traditional spaces. — Public awareness about the importance of linking with and simply being in nature, especially for children and its contribution to physical, social and spiritual health of individuals. — The understanding of the importance of the natural environment and its contribution to physical, social and spiritual health of individuals. — Ensuring that active transportation is a component of both recreation and urban planning.

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Movement towards facilities that are welcoming to all residents, especially those who might not feel included or welcomed. Including the use of existing structures and spaces. — Movement towards integrating indoor and outdoor public spaces and introduce nature into non-traditional spaces. — 2016-2018 Physical Activity Monitor indicates the most frequently reported sports among adults are (1) hockey; (2) golf, softball, baseball & soccer; (3) racquet sports; (4) basketball; (5) volleyball; (6) curling; (7) skiing; and (8) bowling. — Challenges are presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — To developing recreational programs, mainly connected to nature, due to rapid urbanization. — With aging facilities, for example, maintenance and energy consumption. — To low-income families and their access to a range of recreational opportunities. — In children needing opportunities to experience risk in order to gain critical risk management skills. Need to seek a balance between risk and safety in play.

DISCUSSION

Outdoor facilities can often offer more opportunities for the type of passive recreation that many survey participants indicated they were interested in. Outdoor recreation infrastructure such as playgrounds are designed for drop-in activities. Others such as sports fields, can be utilized for organized groups, as well as for informal “pick-up” groups during times when they are not booked by organizations and/or leagues. When assessing the need for outdoor recreation facilities, the availability of outdoor facilities for both organized user groups as well as informal “pick up” groups should be considered. While there are sports fields located in the community (soccer and softball), each type of field does present constraints in terms of who they are able to serve and how. While the soccer field could support unorganized/informal sporting events, it is not appropriate (due to field condition) for organized soccer teams or leagues. The Legion’s ball diamonds are in excellent condition and are well utilized by teams and leagues, however they are not made available to those not involved in an organized team or league.

Outdoor facilities provide opportunity for community members to connect with each other and connect themselves to nature. Mount Uniacke has a number of valuable outdoor recreational assets (e.g., Uniacke Estates Trail and Bell Park) that support recreational uses for residents and for visitors. East Hants should recognize and build on to their outdoor recreation assets to create more

opportunities for connection and informal play. In the short term, the Municipality should consider how and where to provide equipment rentals or amenities that can enhance existing outdoor spaces and support sports, recreation and leisure.

As momentum in the community grows, maintenance and upkeep of outdoor facilities will be an important part of continuing to support recreation in Mount Uniacke. Trails groups can be a valuable resource for local governments to assist in the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of public spaces and trails systems. East Hants should consider how to spearhead and recruit members of the community to build on past and current efforts of volunteer upkeep of Mount Uniacke's valuable outdoor recreation spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2.1: In keeping with the Parks, Open Space and Active Transportation Master Plan, the Municipality should look for opportunities to improve the connectivity between parks and open spaces and residential areas to support recreation and to invest in the maintenance and improvements to existing trails/playgrounds where needed.

Recommendation 2.2: Identify and plan for the investments in improvements to existing outdoor facilities.

Action 2.2.1: Promote discussions with CCRCE on feasibility of remediating drainage issues on Uniacke District school soccer field.

Recommendation 2.3: Engage with existing Trails Groups to understand needs in order to improve Mount Uniacke's trail system. Trails groups provide valuable advocacy and volunteer work to the upkeep and maintenance of Mount Uniacke's trail system.

Recommendation 2.4: Look for "quick" interventions to enhance and/or promote more passive recreation opportunities. Provide accessible equipment rentals that support sports, outdoor leisure, and arts/culture/play.

Action 2.4.1: Look for creative means to promote passive recreation opportunities such as:

- Social media contests
- Community newsletter features like "photo of the month"

Recommendation 2.5: Continue to monitor programming offering and facility capacity and identify opportunities (once existing facility use is deemed at capacity) for future facility expansion and/or infrastructure upgrades.

3.2 PROGRAMMING AND PASSIVE LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

PROGRAMMING

Recreation Programming can involve a variety of activities such as sports, games, art, music, reading, and more. Through these activities, it can contribute to child development, socialization, improve mental health and satisfaction.

Demand Indicator	Summary
Existing Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public library offers after school programming for ages 8+ (program room for daily “homework” hangout, totally tweens, teen time, crafting, STEM program) – Public library offers programming for adults and seniors (Learn to knit, board games Saturday, yarn club) – Active Camps (Municipality-operated) during the summer (Uniacke District School & Legion) – Government funded after school program offered at the Uniacke District School that is geared towards pre-primary (Mount Uniacke Early Learning) – Private childcare services offered throughout the community. – Staff indicated special events held on holidays (Christmas, Halloween) are well attended. – Fire Department Firefighter’s Fair – Girl Guides – Legion acts as a community centre and holds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bingo (weekly) – Darts (weekly) – Karaoke (weekly) – Senior’s group card night
Demonstrated Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff indicated that the Municipality operates a summer camp that is 80-100% full. – Interviewee indicated the pandemic caused challenges with participation rates for programming offered at the public library. Pre-pandemic, program participation was at or near capacity. Post-pandemic, attendance is lower than previous. – Interviewee indicated the school gymnasium is booked 4-nights a week (pickleball, men’s basketball, etc.)

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviewee indicated senior pickleball held at the school gym (after-hours) is well attended. – An interviewee located within the community felt that soccer programming and participation is on the decline, while softball participation rates within the community are growing.
Expressed Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviewee indicated extended hours at the library may better accommodate potential program attendees and lead to more programming. – Online survey participants indicated a lack of awareness and promotion around current programs offered within the community. – Nearly three quarters of survey respondents indicated they were either extremely unsatisfied (49%) or unsatisfied (24%) with current recreation opportunities in the Mount Uniacke community. – 77% of survey respondents indicated that new program offerings from the Municipality would improve their recreation experience. – 46% of online survey participants indicated there were recreational activities they would like to participate in but can't, such as fitness (gym, programmed classes, etc.), swimming, soccer, indoor walking, etc. – 79% of survey respondents indicated that a barrier to not permit them to take part in recreational activities was that the desired activity was 'not offered' within the community. – Survey participants indicated a desire for more age friendly programming including seniors, youth, and adults. – Survey participants responded that they would like more programming including the following: swimming lessons, dance classes, fitness classes, pickleball, activities for youth, adults and seniors, art activities or classes. – 50% of survey respondents indicated new events hosted in the community would improve their recreation experience. – Survey participants and interviewees indicated there is a perceived lack of volunteers to support programming. – 45% of survey respondents are willing to travel to their recreation programs 1-2 times per week, while 41% are willing to travel 3-4 times per week. – 50% of survey respondents are willing to drive 15 minutes or less for recreational activities, while 37% are willing to drive 15-30 minutes.

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Survey participants indicated they want to learn about recreational activities and events through mediums such as Facebook, email, community newsletter and websites.
Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — National movement towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Non-structure recreation and leisure opportunities. — People coming together around shared personal and community goals. — Use of online program registration and other technological advancements. — Inclusivity in programs due to the increase of ethnicity and diversity in the population and a growing First Nation population nationally. — Offering social recreational programming that are easily accessible by public transit and active transportation (walking and cycling). — Incorporating physical literacy into all recreation programming. — Programs that link with education, health and other public services on community building initiatives (e.g., age-friendly communities, food security). — Providing nature-based interpretive programming; increasing child-directed play in parks; offer wilderness skills and training opportunities; and use new technology to connect people with nature. — Understanding of the importance of the natural environment and its contribution to physical, social and spiritual health of individuals.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the engagement portions of this project, it has become evident that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the quantity of programs available within the Mount Uniacke area. Survey responses indicated 73% of participants were unsatisfied with the current recreation opportunities in Mount Uniacke and a call for additional programming such as fitness classes, youth recreation and child play opportunities, as well as gymnasium-based sports came to the forefront.

An area that has also become clear through the engagement phases of this project is that there appears to be a lack of community momentum and volunteerism to self-organize and utilize the current spaces that are available with the Mount Uniacke area. As presented in the Inventory Overview of this Strategy, the community does have facilities that could potentially host many of the desired programs being asked for by the community, but would require organization and leadership to initiate. Both the Legion and the Fire Hall have the capacity to accommodate future indoor programming and provide flexible enough spaces to do so. Both buildings are equipped with commercial grade kitchen appliances and offer rooms for rental (with and without a kitchen rental

fee). Likewise, the public school would have capacity to accommodate future programming should community rental hours be extended; however, a Joint Use Agreement is required to be in place between East Hants and CCRCE. Conversations should be addressed further with community members to start identifying specific programs that are of interest to Mount Uniacke residents and to start identifying existing spaces where and when these programs could be facilitated.

For programs that are highly sought after by community members which may be unable to be facilitated within the Mount Uniacke community, East Hants should explore additional opportunities in neighbouring municipalities that could provide them. Examples of programming that can't be facilitated within the immediate community may be arena- or pool-based activities such as a learn-to-skate or open/free swims. There is opportunity available to the Municipality to explore which facilities outside of the community could facilitate such activities and look to schedule a regular time for facility rental so community members can utilize the space. Consultation with the community should be conducted to determine the types of facilities residents are in fact interested in and when (days/times) they would prefer to utilize them.

Another constraint that has become evident through this study is the general lack of awareness of the current indoor recreational programs that are being provided within the community. While programs are offered through the Library, attendance and participation have not yet recovered from pre-pandemic levels. This may be a result of a lack of awareness, a lack of interest, and/or a lack of accessible dates/times that they are being offered to community members through the facilities. Conversations that should be held with the community should work to identify why these programs have had low participation and look to alter them to better accommodate resident interests and schedules. Interviewees have also indicated that there is a role for the Municipality to play to assist in a greater level of promotion and communications for existing programs. These comments were also corroborated by the feedback in the online survey, where several participants expressed they are not aware of current programs and events within the community. This item has also been identified in the East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan where communication of existing programs within East Hants' various communities needs to be improved on by both the Municipality and current program facilitators.

It is evident that additional programming is desired within the community and that Mount Uniacke residents have a high level of dissatisfaction with what is currently available. A benefit that the community does have to them are the flexible facilities that are currently available (either within the community or just beyond) which could accommodate many of the desired programming identified.

Where there does appear to be a gap, however, is the on-the-ground leadership to generate momentum and create opportunities for new programs to be organized and offered to community members. In the short term, the Municipality should explore options of how they can support or create an in-community presence. A key recommendation of this Strategy would be for the

Municipality to increase staffing capacity to support on-the-ground presence and leadership for the Mount Uniacke area. This role will be critical in generating community momentum for recreation service provision and implementing many of the other recommendations that make up this Strategy. Details of this particular recommendation are provided in Section 3.3 *Overarching Recommendations*, as well in Section 4 – *Human Resource Plan*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3.1: Improve communication and promotion of programming in Mount Uniacke both offered by community groups and by the Municipality.

Action 3.1.1: Expand the Municipal webpage (Recreation Programs) and the East Hants Community Calendar to include programs identified in Mount Uniacke.

Action 3.1.2: Partner with the Mount Uniacke newsletter coordinator to promote ongoing programs available to the public.

Action 3.1.3: Foster and initiate programming, such as a recreation symposium or hosting incubator sessions for like-minded groups to help spark ideas and plans for new programming to help meet the gaps that exist in the community.

Recommendation 3.2: Build capacity within the Municipality to create on-the-ground presence and through the creation of a Community Recreation Coordinator or appropriate to instill community momentum in organizing recreational services and programs. This increased capacity will play a critical role in providing support for staff to help implement many of the recommendations identified in this Strategy.

Recommendation 3.3: Investigate the opportunity for strategic external partnerships (e.g., West Hants, HRM, etc.) to activate programming that can't be offered in Mount Uniacke, such as pick-up hockey games, open swims, etc.

Recommendation 3.4: Work with the community to gauge the level of interest of the current programs/activities offered and facilitate a more focused consultation to gather input on what the community would like to participate in, when they would like to do so, and identify where these new programs could take place.

Recommendation 3.5: Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights and weekdays.

PASSIVE LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

Demand Indicator	Summary
Existing Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The municipality has existing opportunities for passive recreation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 5 parks and open spaces – Lake access (Lewis Lake, Murphy Lake, Long Lake) – 3 playgrounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1 playground offers a play box that provides frisbees, catch games, skipping ropes, etc. – 1 outdoor gym space – 15+ km of trail systems
Demonstrated Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Based on the comparative community analysis, Mount Uniacke currently has a below average ratio for playgrounds given the overall population of the Community (see the <i>Background Report</i> under a separate cover for a list of comparative communities). This has been recognized as part of the East Hants Playgrounds Strategy with future facilities within the community being identified for future investment. – In the online survey, the most frequently listed outdoor facilities used in Mount Uniacke were trails, Bell Park and playgrounds. – Interviewees indicated the skate park is well utilized. – Interviewees indicated the Accessibility Park (Mount Uniacke Community Memorial Park) is attracting visitors to Mount Uniacke.
Expressed Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participants indicated that more opportunities for passive recreation are needed such as, playgrounds in closer proximity to neighbourhoods, walking trails, improved public water access, etc. – Interviewees indicated a desire to implement a program offering equipment rentals to provide more opportunities for recreational activities (i.e., snowshoes, cross-country skis, kayaks, lifejackets, etc.) – In the online survey, many respondents indicated the desire for indoor walking opportunities and safer walking/running/cycling routes in Mount Uniacke – One third (32%) of survey respondents indicated they would be most likely to use cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails. – One third (32%) of survey respondents indicated they would be most likely to use a community garden. – 55% of survey respondents indicated they would be most likely to use a splash pad within the community.

Demand Indicator	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 52% of survey respondents indicated they would be most likely to use an outdoor skating rink. — Participants indicated a desire to offer additional play boxes at other playgrounds
Trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — National movement towards non-structured recreation and leisure opportunities. — Active transportation being a component of both recreation and urban planning. — Providing nature-based interpretive programing; increasing child-directed play in parks; offer wilderness skills and training opportunities; and use new technology to connect people with nature. — Passive recreation and non-organized recreation were identified as a trend in recreation in Canada. It is expected that demand for these opportunities will continue to grow. — The COVID-19 pandemic limited the number of individuals permitted at indoor gatherings and, at times, limited the ability for gatherings at all. This encouraged individuals to spend more time on the sidewalks, trails network, and in parks, doing self-directed leisure activities such as having picnics, jogging, or playing at playgrounds.

DISCUSSION

Passive leisure opportunities, also known as non-organized recreation, are opportunities for individuals to enjoy leisure activities such as walking, cycling, picnicking, making art, sledding, playing on a playground, etc. and are outside of a “structured” or “programmed” environment. Demand for passive leisure opportunities at the national level had been increasing before the pandemic and have accelerated due to the limitations on gatherings. Passive leisure opportunities are increasingly being looked at as a strong investment for communities for the following reasons:

Passive leisure opportunities are often free or low-cost: with the cost of living increasing, free activities are in demand.

Passive leisure opportunities often require less maintenance: in developing new facilities of any kind, maintenance is a key consideration. Due to the nature of passive recreational facilities (e.g., fields for picnics or pickup soccer games, etc.) they often require less maintenance than a new facility for organized recreation (e.g., a new facility with washrooms, storage, booking requirements, etc.).

Passive leisure opportunities give more individuals a chance to recreate: there are barriers to participation beyond financial challenges, such as not knowing what programming exists, struggling to find appropriate programming for age/ability/interests, feelings of anxiety or discomfort around

group programming, etc. By providing individuals with opportunities to do leisure activities on their own, the Municipality can provide the opportunity for more people to improve their quality of life.

Throughout the course of this study, an evident gap in outdoor facility inventory were the lack of playgrounds/structures across the community. Interviewee and community household survey respondents expressed the need for additional playgrounds within the community, particularly within areas beyond the central hub of Mount Uniacke area. This Strategy recognizes and supports the efforts that the Municipality has identified in the East Hants Playground Development Strategy (and has since pursued) to acquire water lots that have the potential to incorporate a future destination or district beach park and playground structure as part of the development. Additionally, individuals and households (from the online survey) as well as interviewees have all expressed the need for additional passive recreational opportunities in or close to neighbourhoods to get more individuals participating across more demographics. Similar to the East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan, this Strategy encourages nature-based recreation initiatives and activities throughout Mount Uniacke. Moreover, the East Hants Playground Development Strategy encourages diverse playgrounds that differ from traditional playgrounds (e.g., playground structure), that work with nature and surrounding landscape and create a sense of place in the community.

Currently, the Municipality offers an ‘Equipment Loan’ program, that allows individuals to rent recreation equipment kits or specific equipment in order to promote physical activity throughout the community. Equipment such as snowshoes, life jackets, and sporting equipment are available, however, equipment is stored within the growth centres of East Hants which is not conveniently located for residents of Mount Uniacke to rent on a day-to-day basis.

Many individuals who responded to the survey also noted areas for improvement for passive leisure opportunities currently provided for by the Municipality. While there are currently three public lake access locations, individuals expressed concern with the overall awareness of how to access them and a lack of wayfinding signage to provide indication to users and surrounding property owners of public access points. Additionally, individuals expressed the need for enhanced safety measures to be implemented along the main roads to calm and slow down traffic to enable a safer environment for on-street active transportation. It should be noted that improvements to the right of way fall under the jurisdiction of the Province, however the Municipality should look for opportunities to collaborate with Provincial authorities to identify right of way safety improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4.1: Analyze whether different neighbourhoods in Mount Uniacke have adequate access to passive leisure opportunities.

Action 4.1.1: A spatial analysis should be done to understand how different communities could be served by passive recreational opportunities. This could be used to direct where new

passive recreation facilities and/or interventions could be introduced. Current and future development should be considered during the life of this Strategy.

Recommendation 4.2: Mount Uniacke lacks playground structures within the outskirts of the community. Playground areas support unstructured play for young children and parents. To serve communities who are underservice by playground facilities, properties for siting additional playgrounds should be identified and investment should be made to provide a play structure for these communities. As communities continue to grow, additional playgrounds should be accounted for.

Recommendation 4.3: Implement passive leisure opportunities for youth and seniors that is publicly accessible and allows for active or passive recreation. Look for areas to improve accessibility in current facilities (e.g., school playground). While the Municipality may not necessarily own many of these facilities, they can be advocates and partners to building owners to explore funding opportunities.

Action 4.3.1: Investigate the opportunity to create additional passive and active leisure spots within existing parks in addition to those already provided in Mount Uniacke to help facilitate self-directed passive and active leisure, such as:

- Jumbo lawn games (permanent infrastructure, semi-permanent or removable)
- Play Boxes
- Disc Golf (utilizing existing trail system)

Recommendation 4.4: Expand the 'Equipment Loan' program (Recreation Equipment kits) within Mount Uniacke and explore alternative ways to encourage passive leisure opportunities.

Action 4.4.1: Establish a location within the community suitable and accessible for storing Recreation Equipment kits, such as using the Mount Uniacke Public Library or the Legion.

Action 4.4.2: Investigate how to promote the existing trails to encourage passive leisure opportunities (i.e., promote existing walking groups, etc.)

Recommendation 4.5: Passive recreation opportunities should not only focus on sport and physical activity, but also the arts and more passive recreation (e.g., musical instruments for rent, games and/or books available for use in parks, art bags available for pick up at the library).

Recommendation 4.6: Opportunities for passive recreation should be actively promoted by the Municipality through ongoing promotional campaigns (e.g., social media and tagging contests).

Recommendation 4.7: Identify and plan for the investments in improvements to existing water access. In the short term, improve public access to lakes and strive to improve on lake accessibility standards over the long term.

Action 4.7.1: Identify public water access points through enhanced wayfinding.

Recommendation 4.8: Explore the opportunity to collaborate with respective Provincial departments to implement safety measures along the main roads to promote active transportation.

Action 4.8.1: Work with Provincial partners to explore active transportation corridor.

3.3 OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

This section refers to the ‘overarching’ recommendations that have been developed in conjunction with the other sections of the Needs Assessment. While these recommendations have been written as they relate to Recreation Service provision for Districts 8 & 9, the Municipality may wish to consider these recommendations for how recreation services are provided across the whole region.

The East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan identifies a number of items that the Municipality needs to consider when planning for and providing recreation services to East Hants’ various communities. Many of these items that have been identified have continued to be supported for this Recreation Strategy for Districts 8 & 9. Enhanced programming, communications and promotion, supporting staff with adequate resources, and working with and coming to agreements with key community partners for facility use are all recommendations that come forward as part of this Strategy. Additionally, this Strategy has identified a need for the Municipality to initiate conversations with Mount Uniacke on the efforts that staff are taking to improve upon recreation services as well as to bring community members into the conversation as to how enhanced servicing could be implemented. These conversations will help to establish a level of transparency and overall trust between local government and members of the community.

Recreation and passive leisure should be made available to all residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. The Mount Uniacke Community Memorial Park playground includes accessible features and is a popular attraction for residents and visitors to the community. Facilities that are accessibility-friendly can often generate the highest level of excitement, energy, and attraction. Upon site visitation, the project team noted that one of the playgrounds located at the school is positioned at the bottom of a steep embankment and would detract those who may be physically disabled from utilizing it. Similarly, the accessible entrance to the Legion was located in the rear of the building with no clear directional signage for those who may require it. Working with partners to improve accessibility for existing facilities as well as planning for accessibility in all future projects should be a priority for the Municipality. Whether it be indoor facilities or outdoor amenity spaces, accessibility should be on the forefront and implemented where possible. Working with partners to identify grant/funding opportunities, or cost sharing capital expenditures could be a key role that the Municipality may play to enhance access to recreation for all members of the Mount Uniacke community.

Recommendation 5.1: The Municipality should explore opportunities to improve on communication and promotion for existing and future programming efforts and recreation opportunities.

Recommendation 5.2: Building off of Recommendation 3.2, explore opportunities to invest in personnel to have on-the-ground in the community that further support recreation initiatives and services. Having an in-community presence will be important to re-invigorate momentum in program coordination, participation and offering.

Recommendation 5.3: Explore annual community events to enhance the level of transparency on recreational efforts and investments within the community and work to build the level of trust between community and Municipality.

Action 5.3.1: Look at hosting a Townhall and/or Recreation Expo (Community Meeting) to bring those interested in recreation together and begin addressing current resident concerns. (e.g., budgetary actions and constraints). These events not only will help in re-connecting the Municipality with community, but it will also offer opportunities for those interested in recreation programming, and those offering it (or interested in starting to offer it) an event to connect and generate some momentum.

Recommendation 5.4: Mount Uniacke currently has facilities that can support a variety programming through present and current flexible spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, meeting rooms, banquet halls). The Municipality should explore ways to support these facilities and work with the community and building operators to explore facility access and programming potential. On-the-ground presence and/or personnel to support programming initiatives and start-ups will be highly valuable.

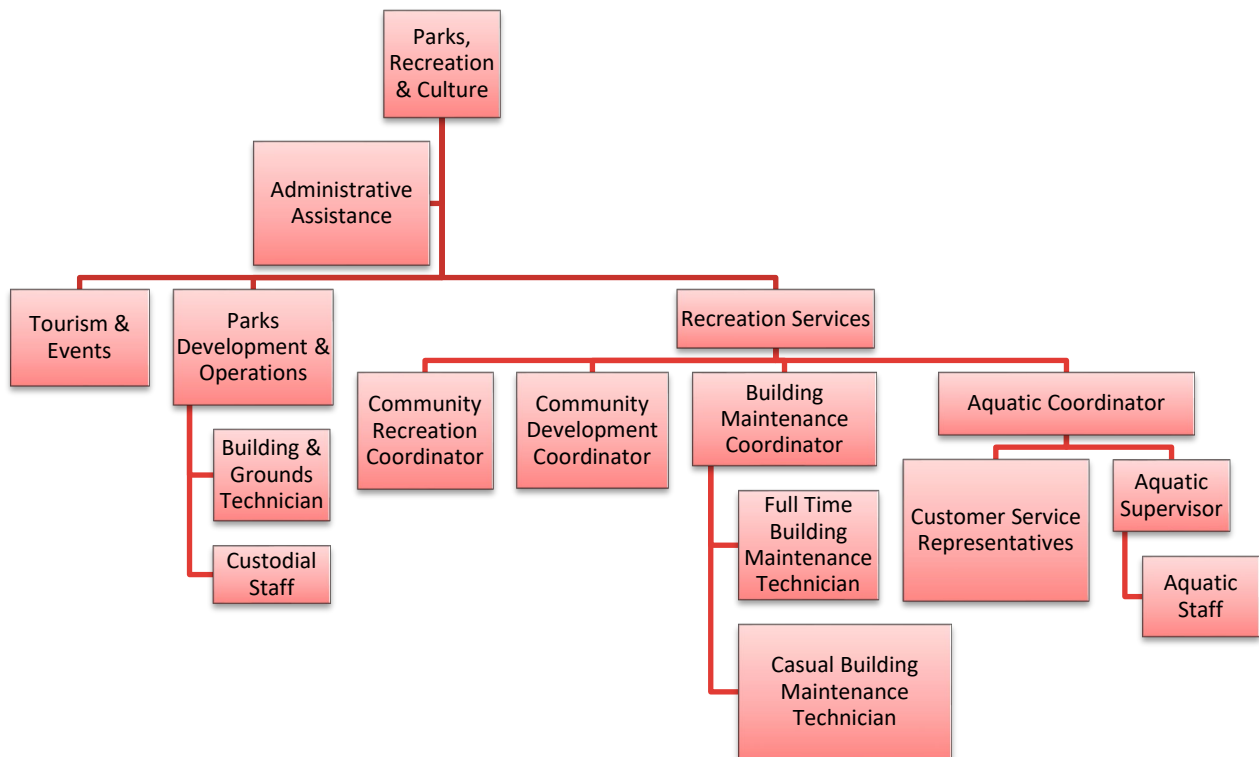
Recommendation 5.5: Work with existing indoor and outdoor facility partners to enhance accessibility in all facilities to encourage users of all ages and abilities.

4 HUMAN RESOURCE PLAN

A Human Resource Plan is a basic economic assessment of the supply and demand of the human context of an organization, particularly for this exercise the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department (PRC). As the recommendations provided within the plan are an increase in demand functions of critical roles, an assessment on the ability to increase the human supply is warranted. It is critical to understand that, without further supporting the current staffing resources, the Municipality will have difficulty moving the plan forward once adopted. Therefore, a review of the current state of staffing, the capacity of human resources and the recommendations of the overall plan are important to note.

4.1 OVERVIEW OF STATE OF STAFFING

Staffing of the East Hants Parks, Recreation & Culture (PRC) Department is consistent with a Municipality of its size and population base. With one Director overseeing the department and reporting directly to the Chief Administration Officer (CAO), the PRC Department is streamlined to offer essential services valuing a healthy, active, and community focused way of life for residents, visitors, and businesses. The Organizational Chart of the Department for the 2022/23 fiscal year is provided.



Through the interviews with the department, Staff indicated that the current resources are at capacity. Discussion during the Staff Stakeholder interviews focused on two key roles, the Community Development Coordinator and Community Recreation Coordinator were discussed as they relate most directly to programming. There is some crossover however, these two positions serve the whole municipality. The Community Development Coordinator role is essentially supporting community groups, not just recreation to maximize their function, including grant management, volunteer resources and provision of support. The Community Recreation role is more recreation focused. Given that there are only two staff members to cover the entire municipality, the service delivery for the Mount Uniacke area is limited, and supply is low.

4.2 CHALLENGES

It has become evident through the community engagement that a disconnect exists for this area of East Hants as it relates to recreational programming and marketing of these programs. As noted in section 3.2 Programming and Passive Leisure Opportunities discussion section:

- Another constraint that has become evident through this study is the general lack of awareness of the current indoor recreational programs that are being provided within the community currently. While programs are offered through the library, attendance and participation have not yet recovered from pre-pandemic levels.
- An area that has also become clear through the engagement phases of this project is that there appears to be a lack of community momentum and volunteerism to self-organize and utilize the current spaces that are available with the Mount Uniacke area.

Due to this low supply of human resources, ever increasing challenges persist and become more predominant. Geographical location of East Hants is challenging to the roles. During Staff Stakeholder interviews, the topic of geography was discussed and the concentration of municipal facilities along the Elmsdale “corridor.” Obviously, the location of Mount Uniacke within the region can’t be changed, but a greater presence in either staffing or program opportunities could minimize the optics of having to travel to do anything within the municipality.

A greater presence in the context of a low supply of human resources, or current human resources that are at capacity with their current roles, does not lend well to successful implementation. In the past, recreation staff have had success with a volunteer base in Mount Uniacke. Volunteer engagement has been declining prior to Covid but has been increasingly challenged post-Covid. There was a community rate-payers association at one time, but that group has been disbanded. Others have tried to establish a local committee, but with limited success. It has been observed that other areas of the municipality have had a greater engagement than that in Mount Uniacke.

Like with geographical and human resource capacity considerations, the regional service delivery model for recreation has its limitations. Regional Service Delivery methodology as promoted by the Government of New Brunswick

(https://www.bienvuenb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/Promos-LG/about-consultation/regional_service_delivery_approach.pdf) highlights a number of objectives within a regional approach, including:

- Empower communities to work together on common issues, needs, and opportunities that cross local boundaries.
- Strengthen regions and increase opportunities for collaboration leading to more efficient and effective use of resources.
- Enable the communities of each region to pool their resources to better meet the local service needs, while maintaining community identity.
- Foster regional economic development Challenges (geographic separations, capacity, regional service delivery).

However, these objectives are only possible with sufficient human resources. Furthermore, the Municipality of East Hants as a whole is experiencing rapid growth, and therefore demand for recreation services will continue to grow in tandem with the population. Once again, due to the regional service delivery model, growth in another district of the Municipality will only draw further human resources to it, leading to further isolation of the smaller districts. The organization model is not currently sustainable given the pace the community is growing at.

4.3 CONSIDERATIONS

Upon reviewing the current staffing model, the low supply of human resources that are currently at capacity, the geographical location of Districts 8 & 9 compared to the corridor region of East Hants and the regional service delivery model viewed through the context of rapid population growth potential, we can conclude that additional human resources are warranted.

While this study has identified recommendations for on-the-ground staff in Mount Uniacke, the Municipality will need to consider how they could be utilized to also support other communities outside of the primary growth areas. One of the strategic directions of the 2018 East Hants Recreation Services Master Plan was to “ensure appropriate, equitable and impactful recreation programs and opportunities are provided in East Hants”. To be equitable across services, the human resources plan must consider the entire scope of recreation in East Hants and is not able to silo Districts 8 & 9 in the context of staffing. However, a strategic human resource plan which adds a

staffing complement to assist or evenly spread out the regional workload should be considered to increase capacity, and thus increase supply to assist with the high demand for services.

At this time the Status quo is not sustainable, and these considerations are warranted:

- Overall growth of Municipality of East Hants is going to absorb current resources and the current staffing complement.
- To be equitable, one can't look at Districts 8 & 9 in isolation, East Hants has a regional service delivery model. The Municipality is growing, and resources are going to get absorbed in that growth leaving less available to the more rural communities.
- Consider opportunities for this new position to support other rural communities. They could be based in Mount Uniacke, but their services may be able to reach other outlier areas of the Municipality.
- The Municipality of East Hants is growing, staffing complement (in all services) will need to follow.

4.4 EXPLORING OPTIONS

For the following options, this section will provide options for staffing. For each item there is an explanation on levels of impact, budgetary impact (for one budget year only), and ancillary needs (e.g., office spaces) for the following:

1. FULL TIME EMPLOYEE (FTE)

- Level of Impact: An FTE would provide a major level of impact to the organization. An additional Community Recreation Coordinator role would assist not only Districts 8 & 9, but the entire Municipality. With the creation of a new role, current roles would be reassessed to streamline workloads, and better offer services across all districts while maintaining a presence in Districts 8 & 9.
- Budget Impact: **\$60,401 – 75,501** (Annual cost, fully burdened cost including 18% overhead).
- Ancillary Needs: Would require office space, ideally located in Districts 8 & 9, potential partnership with library or school district for space.

2. PART TIME EMPLOYEE (PTE)

- Level of Impact: A PTE would provide a moderate level of impact to the organization. A part time Community Recreation Coordinator role would assist strictly Districts 8 & 9, however be

counterintuitive to the Recreation Services Master plan by not being equitable to Districts outside the corridor region.

- Budget Impact: **\$30,200 - \$37,751** (6-month engagement, fully burdened cost including 18% overhead).
- Ancillary Needs: May require office space, ideally located in Districts 8 & 9, potential partnership with library or school district for space, or could be a work from home role with emphasis on meeting community groups and developing relationships with volunteers in the community.

3. CONTRACT

- Level of Impact: A contract would provide a minor level of impact to the organization. A contract role would have an end term to it, dependant on budget. The possibility of long-term growth is not possible.
- Budget Impact: **\$37,500 - \$50,000** (No overhead cost, however, would vary depending on scope of contract and timeframe of engagement).
- Ancillary Needs: Limited Ancillary space requirements, however limited engagement with the public.

4. STUDENT

- Level of Impact: Similar to a contract position, a student would provide a minor level of impact to the organization. A student once again has a term to the engagement, which does not lend well to long term planning or growth.
- Budget Impact: **\$10,210 – 14,144** (Based on a 16-week engagement with a student at 40 hours per week, fully burdened cost including 4% overhead).
- Ancillary Needs: Limited Ancillary space requirements, however limited engagement with the public.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Based on the findings of the Needs Assessment as presented above, the following recommendations are outlined for the Municipality's consideration. The following table provides a summary of the recommendations, included timeline, the primary group or organization involved in the recommendation implementation as well as next steps to pursue.

Many of the recommendations presented in the following section are similar or the same as what has been presented in the Need Assessment, however they have been categorized and consolidated (where appropriate) and presented under the following four (4) categories:

- 1 Building Capacity within the Community:** To successfully implement many of the recommendations generated from this Strategy, an increase of capacity is required from a staffing perspective.
- 2 Identify and Explore Improvements to Community Recreation Infrastructure and Services:** Identify and look to facilitate improvement to recreation facilities and infrastructure which in turn will improve upon recreation services and opportunities. Such improvements may include enhanced connection to recreation opportunities, improved accessibility requirements, improved communication and related resources, and/or expanding upon existing assets and infrastructure.
- 3 Generate Momentum within the Community:** Generating momentum within the community will rely on leadership and presence within the community. On-the-ground leadership is a key component to generating community momentum and building on promotional initiatives that can be implemented and/or supported by the Municipality to build greater use, excitement, and participation in recreational services within the community.
- 4 Identify and Collaborate with Partners:** Working with key partners is a critical piece to the successful implementation of this Strategy. The Municipality should continue to work with current partners and explore new ones to successfully deliver an enhanced recreation service program for the community of Mount Uniacke.

The following table provides detailed recommendations and implementation steps that will help the Municipality of East Hants move forward to an improved recreation service deliver in Mount Uniacke.

**Municipality of East Hants – Districts 8 & 9
Recreation Strategy**

Recommendation	Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
1. Building Capacity within the Community			
5.2 Invest in personnel to have on-the-ground presence within the community. Having an in-community presence will be important to re-invigorate momentum in program coordination, participation and offering. A staffing complement that is located within the community will also play a critical role in implementing many of the recommendations that have been provided as part of this Strategy.	0 – 2 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department	- Explore Municipal and Departmental budgets to identify what position may be possible the immediate term. See Section 4 for more discussion.
5.4 Mount Uniacke currently has facilities that can support a variety programming through present and current flexible spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, meeting rooms, banquet halls). The Municipality should explore ways to support these facilities and work with the community and building operators to explore facility access and programming potential. On-the-ground presence and/or personnel to support programming initiatives and start-ups will be highly valuable.	0 – 2 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department	- Establish contact with facility operators to understand current facility usage, capacity, and opportunities for increased community use.
2. Identify and Explore Improvements to Community Recreation Infrastructure and Services			
1.3 + 3.5 Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights (and continue current agreement) and weekdays.	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education	- Continue efforts to establish a Joint- Use Agreement to expand school rental space beyond what is currently provided for.
2.1 In keeping with the Parks, Open Space and Active Transportation Master Plan, the Municipality should look for opportunities to improve the connectivity between parks and open spaces and residential areas to support recreation and to invest in the maintenance and improvements to existing trails/playgrounds where needed.	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department	- Municipal staff to meet with CCRCE staff to draft a Joint Use Agreement (JUA) regarding intentions to investigate options of a shared facility

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Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action	
2.2	Identify and plan for the investments in improvements to existing outdoor facilities. In particular, promote discussions with CCRCE on feasibility of remediating drainage issues on Uniacke District school soccer field.	0-2 years (soccer field) Ongoing for all other	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate with CCRCE on working to find a solution to drainage issues at sports field. Identify how to address issues and explore cost sharing opportunities so it can be a usable resource for both students and the community. 	
4.1	Analyze whether different neighbourhoods in Mount Uniacke have adequate access to passive leisure opportunities. A spatial analysis should be done to understand how different communities could be served by passive recreational opportunities. This could be used to direct where new passive recreation facilities and/or interventions could be introduced. Current and future development should be considered during the life of this Strategy.	5-10 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Once recreation services increase and community momentum is established, identify where gaps in passive and active leisure exist within the community. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to work with community to identify how more recreational services can be expanded to those in more rural settings. 	
4.2	Mount Uniacke lacks playground structures within the outskirts of the community. Playground areas support unstructured play for young children and parents. To serve communities who are underservice by playground facilities, properties for siting additional playgrounds should be identified and investment should be made to provide a play structure for these communities. As communities continue to grow, additional playgrounds should be accounted for.	0 – 2 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue for new playground structure placement as planned within un-served communities. - Continue to evaluate gaps within the community for playground access and siting. 	
4.4 + 4.5 + 5.5	Expand the 'Equipment Loan' program (Recreation Equipment kits) within Mount Uniacke and explore alternative ways to encourage passive leisure opportunities for both indoor and outdoor facilities.	Establish a location within the community suitable and accessible for storing Recreation Equipment kits, such as using the Mount Uniacke Public Library or the Legion.	0 – 2 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, community partners (library, Legion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Converse with community and community partners (e.g., teachers, library) to understand desired equipment being requested for by the community/visitors. - Identify what could be purchased by the Municipality, and where it can be housed for community rent/use. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to promote and use of passive leisure opportunities.

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Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
	<p>Passive recreation opportunities should not only focus on sport and physical activity, but also the arts and more passive recreation (e.g., musical instruments for rent, games and/or books available for use in parks, art bags available for pick up at the library). Provide equipment and resources to support such activities at current recreation hubs in the community.</p>	0 – 2 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, community partners (library, Legion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Converse with community and community partners (e.g., teachers, library) to understand desired equipment being requested for by the community/visitors. - Identify what could be purchased by the Municipality, and where it can be housed for community rent/use. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to promote and use of passive leisure opportunities.
5.5 + 4.3 + 1.2	<p>Look for areas to improve accessibility in current facilities including improved access (and signage to accessible entrances) to the Legion as well as to the school playground. While the Municipality may not necessarily own many of these facilities, they can be advocates and partners to building owners to explore funding opportunities.</p> <p>Investigate the opportunity to create additional passive and active leisure spots within existing parks in addition to those already provided in Mount Uniacke to help facilitate self-directed passive and active leisure for all ages and abilities with accessibility in mind.</p>	2 – 5 years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach community partners on areas how to improve facility/amenity accessibility. - Begin to identify grants/funding/cost sharing programs for improvements in accessibility standards.
2.5	<p>Continue to monitor programming offering and facility capacity and identify opportunities (once existing facility use is deemed at capacity) for future facility expansion and/or infrastructure upgrades.</p>	10+ years	Parks, Recreation and Culture Department,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin long term planning and identify opportunities for future facility expansion should it be required. - Work with Planning and Development to understand long term plans and policies for the Mount Uniacke area and understand how (if) recreation services may require adaptation and change.

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Recommendation	Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
3. Generate Momentum within the Community			
4.6 + 2.4 Opportunities for passive recreation should be actively promoted by the Municipality through ongoing promotional campaigns (e.g., social media and tagging contests).	0 – 2 years	Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Municipal communications office to identify how best to promote opportunities for passive leisure in the community. Consider social media posts, hashtag competitions. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to promote and use of passive leisure opportunities.
3.1 + 5.1 Improve communication and promotion of programming in Mount Uniacke both offered by community groups and by the Municipality. Specific efforts could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Expand the Municipal webpage and community calendar to include programs identified in Mount Uniacke. — Partner with the Uniacke newsletter coordinator to promote ongoing programs available to the public. — Foster and initiate programming, such as a recreation symposium or hosting incubator sessions for like-minded groups to help spark ideas and plans for new programming to help meet the gaps that exist in the community. 	0 – 2 years	Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Municipal communications office and IT to provide a central online hub for recreation services and programs available in Mount Uniacke. Create a recreation programming calendar or electronic seasonal brochure to advertise what is available within the community. - Reach out to current community partners to identify collaboration opportunities to enhance the communication and promotion of recreation services within the community. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to continue promotion and work with current and new community partners to effectively communicate with members of community.

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Recommendation	Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
<p>3.4 Work with the community to gauge the level of interest of the current programs/activities offered and facilitate a more focused consultation to gather input on what the community would like to participate in, when they would like to do so, and identify where these new programs could take place.</p>	<p>0 – 2 years</p>	<p>Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, community partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with community via in-person open house, online survey/questionnaire, town hall, to understand specific interests of the community, where/when programs would be the most preferable, and identify located of where they could be offered. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to coordinate community engagement and facilitate discussions with residents.
<p>5.3 Explore enhancing the level of transparency on recreational efforts and investments within the community and work to build the level of trust between community and Municipality by hosting events or piggybacking on to annual activities within the community to bring staff and community together to discuss current and ongoing efforts to improve recreation for Mount Uniacke.</p>	<p>0 – 2 years</p>	<p>Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, community partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify opportunities in the near future of how to bring community members, recreation providers, and facility operators together to generate ideas and momentum for improving recreation services in the community. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to generate momentum and buzz amongst residents prior to the event.
<p>2.3 Engage with existing Trails Groups to understand needs in order to improve Mount Uniacke’s trail system. Trails groups provide valuable advocacy and volunteer work to the upkeep and maintenance of Mount Uniacke’s trail system.</p>	<p>5 – 10 years</p>	<p>Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, community partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As recreation uptake increases in the community, identify which outdoor facilities could benefit from an organized trails group to assist in upkeep and maintenance. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to spearhead volunteerism and uptake to these groups.

4. Identify and Collaborate with Partners

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Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
3.1	Investigate the opportunity for strategic partnership who are currently located within the community (i.e., the Library) to activate programming currently not offered within Mount Uniacke. The Municipality could offer assistance with promotion, communication, and could invite the organizations to collaborate on existing Municipality events.	0 – 2 years	Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to identify potential community partners that could activate programming not currently offered. - Support community groups in items like facility booking, communications/promotions, and where appropriate, equipment provision.
3.3	Investigate the opportunity for strategic external partnerships (e.g., West Hants, HRM, etc.) to activate programming that can't be offered in Mount Uniacke, such as learn-to-skate, open swims, etc.	0 – 2 years	Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, adjacent municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reach out to adjacent municipalities in HRM and West Hants to discuss opportunities in facility rental for the use of Mount Uniacke residents. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to identify a set of preferred dates and times should the Municipality of East Hants pursue facility rental commitments for making facilities in adjacent communities available to residents in East Hants. - Utilize on-the-ground personnel to organize programming in these facilities during the decided dates/times. E.g., Learn to Skate, Open Swims, Pick-Up hockey.
1.3 + 3.5	Continue discussions and negotiations with the Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) to implement a Joint Use Agreement to permit the Uniacke District School to be used for community purposes on weeknights (and continue current agreement) and weekdays.	Ongoing	Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, CCRCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to work with the CCRCE to come to a Joint Use Agreement that will provide greater access to the School's amenities for community use.

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Recommendation		Priority (Timeframe)	Organization/ Group Involved	Next Steps/ Action
4.8	Explore the opportunity to collaborate with respective Provincial departments to implement safety measures along the main roads to promote active transportation.	Ongoing	Department of Infrastructure and Operations, NS Department of Transportation and Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to engage with NS Department of Transportation and Public Work on the improvement measures for safer arterial roadways. - Participate in NSTPW studies on future road network planning and advocate for the current safety issues in communities including Mount Uniacke.