

# Staff Report

Presented By: Kristan Shrider, Director, Community Services  
Meeting Date: November 24, 2025  
Subject: Arena and Sports Fields Needs Assessment  
Attachment(s): Arena and Sports Fields Needs Assessment Report  
November 24, 2025, Presentation to Council

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## **Recommendation**

That Council amend the 2026 Business Plan to include a Community Services Division Highlight to develop an implementation plan.

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## **Report Summary**

A partial update to the Recreation Master Plan was highlighted in the 2025 Business Plan for Community Services. Monteith Brown Planning Consultants conducted a Needs Assessment on arenas and sports fields to set priorities for the next decade. This report summarizes the findings, outlines the work to advance in 2026, and includes future recommendations.

## **Background/Analysis**

Identified as a Division Highlight in the approved 2025 Business Plan was the partial update of the existing Recreation Master Plan. The areas of focus for the update were athletic fields and ice surface utilization, including user group trends, growth, and demand.

The [2004 Parks and Trails Master Plan](#) and the [2016 Recreation Master Plan](#) have been foundational in the creation of the 10-year Business Plan and supported the long-term decision-making for Saugeen Shores recreation needs and service delivery.

Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (MBPC) were retained to complete the Arena and Sports Fields Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) focusing on arenas and sports fields to establish priorities over the next 10 years. The full Needs Assessment report prepared by MBPC is attached. Anand Desai, Principal Planner and Partner, and Dennis Kwan, Senior Planner, from MBPC will be attending the meeting and providing a presentation.

Site tours of all related facilities and parks occurred with Town staff and MBPC on July 29. Representatives from MBPC were impressed by the movement and investment Saugeen Shores has made in recreation. The construction of the Pryde Aquatic and Wellness Centre

(PAWC) and the Lamont Sports Park (LSP) were both identified as recommendations in the 2016 Recreation Master Plan. Other notable projects highlighted during the site tours were capital upgrades to the Coliseum, Jubilee and Helliwell Phase 1 Master Plans construction, the temporary cricket pitch at Biener Park, and the three year 12-month ice pilot project at the Plex.

A critical piece contributing to the Needs Assessment was the consultation with user groups of the arenas and sports fields. Two separate focus group sessions occurred on August 19 to collect input from regular user groups, discuss strengths and challenges, growth and demand, and potential solutions for current and future needs. The sessions were well attended with 11 user groups represented overall.

### Summary and Recommendation

The recommendations included in the attached report provide a road map for items that require immediate attention and steps to ensure future decision making will be well informed and validated. It is acknowledged that future year recommendations are estimates and potential targets. Often timelines adjust based on updated needs, demands, financial impacts, funding opportunities, and priorities.

As outlined in the recommendations, it is imperative that the Town continues to engage with the user groups at key intervals over the planning period. Collecting data that is currently not available, and ensuring all data is up to date and relative to the timelines will ensure that Council has all necessary information to make decisions regarding future investments for major capital works.

- **2026 Recommendations** – the Divisional Highlights for Recreation and Parks and Facilities Divisions have been updated to include the expanded 2026 recommendations as outlined below:
  - Develop Ice Allocation Policy (included).
  - Develop Athletic Field Allocation Policy (included).
  - Monitor / track total ball diamond utilization, including games and practices (new).
  - Maximize utilization at LSP and Jubilee diamonds (new).
  - Monitor / track total soccer field utilization, including games and practices (new).
  - Maximize utilization at existing Town soccer fields (new).
  - Encourage partnerships at non-municipal soccer fields, if required (new).
  - Maintain Biener soccer field to a suitable standard for temporary use (new).
  - Negotiate a long-term Lease Agreement for J.H. Robertson (new).

The items identified for completion in 2026 have staff resourcing impacts but no financial impact to the 2026 Business Plan.

- **Future Year Recommendations** - future year recommendations to be included in the 2027 Business Plan for Council consideration as outlined below:
  - 2026-2028 Decommission two or three diamonds (new).
  - 2026-2028 Engage with SVCA about the options/considerations for future expansion at Helliwell (new).
  - 2027 Facility fit exercise at LSP, including cricket and ball diamonds (new).
  - 2027 Design and funding plan for cricket field at LSP (new).

- 2028 Refresh and update the Needs Assessment, including ball diamonds (new).
- 2028-2029 Construct cricket field and related amenities at LSP (new).
- 2029-2033 Complete accessibility improvements at the Coliseum (included\*).
- 2029-2031 Refresh and update the Needs Assessment and/or Recreation Master Plan, including arena and curling (new).
- 2029-2031 Design and funding plan for Phase 3 at LSP (new).
- 2029-2031 Complete improvements at Jubilee diamond (new).
- 2029-2031 Refresh and update the Needs Assessment and/or Recreation Master Plan, including ball diamonds, if required (new).
- 2029-2031 Refresh and update the Helliwell Master Plan, Needs Assessment and/or Recreation Master Plan, including soccer (new).
- 2029-2031 Design and funding plan for 1 or 2 soccer fields at Helliwell (new).
- 2033-2034 Update and modernize the Green Room at Coliseum (included\*).
- 2036+ Construct second ice pad at the Plex (new).
- 2036+ Construct two lit ball diamonds at LSP (included).
- 2036+ Decommission two or three diamonds (new).
- 2036+ Construct one or two soccer fields at Helliwell (new).

\* As directed at the November 12<sup>th</sup> Business Plan meeting, staff will be advancing Coliseum upgrades earlier than currently proposed. The revised timing will be presented through the 2027 Business Plan.

The items identified as “new” for future year consideration are currently not included in the 10-year Business Plan or the existing Capital Special Levy. Consideration for future year priorities and inclusion in the Business Plan will occur beginning in the 2027 Business Plan. Additional details on each recommendation and potential timelines are included in the full Needs Assessment attached.

### Arena and Sports Field Needs Assessment Overview

#### **Registration and Growth**

The Town of Saugeen Shores is one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario. The municipality grew by 16% since the last census, almost three times as quickly as the growth of the province (5.8%). Among the population segments that are expanding, the fastest are children under 15 (27.8%) and those between 25-44 (29.4%). These two segments represent most of the age demographics for the arena and sports field user groups in Saugeen Shores.

Collectively, registration for the main user groups of the arena and sports fields has increased by 32% since 2022. A summary of the increase to participant registration for arena and athletic field main user groups in Saugeen Shores is outlined in Appendix ‘A’.

#### **Allocation and Utilization**

It is important to distinguish the difference between allocation and utilization for arenas and sports fields. Allocation is the amount of time assigned to a user group to offer programming for their participants or teams. Utilization is the actual amount of time that an arena or sports field is used in the available time provided. Utilization rates for ice surfaces and ball diamonds are a KPI for the Department of Community Services that is reported out annually through the Business Plan.

It is noted that soccer and cricket fields do not have an allocation schedule as the fields are mostly allocated to a single user group.

**Ball Diamond Allocation and Utilization**

Ball diamond prime time is defined as Monday to Friday 5-11p (6hrs per day) and Saturday and Sunday 8a-11p (14hrs per day (1hr for maintenance)) for three months (June, July, and August).

The ball diamond allocation schedule for 2025 is provided in Appendix 'B'. The chart outlining the utilization of prime time for ball diamonds for the previous three years is provided in Appendix 'C'. A summary of average prime time allocation and utilization is outlined in the chart below:

	2023 Allocation/Utilization		2024 Allocation/Utilization		2025 Allocation/Utilization	
<b>All Diamonds</b>	80%	22%	83%	28%	85%	28%
<b>LSP D1-D4</b>	89%	36%	89%	45%	93%	45%

The two main contributors for the lower utilization rates are that practice times for user groups are not tracked and that not all time allocated to user groups are being effectively used. The diamonds that are not located at Lamont Sports Park (LSP) are mainly used for practice times.

**Arena Allocation and Utilization**

Arena prime time is defined as Monday to Friday 5-11p (6hrs per day) and Saturday and Sunday 7a-11p (16hrs per day) for 6 months (January, February, March, and October, November, December).

The arena allocation schedule for the 2024/25 season is provided in Appendix 'D'. The chart below outlines the previous two years of prime time for arena allocation and utilization:

	2023 Allocation	2023 Utilization	2024 Allocation	2024 Utilization
<b>Coliseum</b>	94%	79%	94%	80%
<b>Plex</b>	94%	78%	94%	84%

The main contributor for the lower utilization rates is the cancellation of ice times. Over the past two seasons, a total of 257.75hrs (4% of the allocation) were cancelled from main user groups.

**Soccer Utilization**

Industry standards for soccer field booking are that user groups book and pay for games but not practices. This is inline with the contract between the Town and the Saugeen Shores United Football Club (Club) in Saugeen Shores.

Most of the use for soccer fields occurs during the week, typically 1.5 to 3.5 hours per day. This translates to a usage rate of approximately 59%. Weekend use is substantially lower at approximately 8%. Even though the utilization rate is not at capacity, the Club struggles to meet the standard guidelines for team field time with the Town's existing supply because of game and practice scheduling conflicts and field availability. Because of this, the Club has been booking additional time at non-municipal fields.

### **Cricket Utilization**

The cricket field located at Biener Park in Port Elgin was established in 2023 and is home to approximately 200 players. In the last three years of play, Saugeen Shores has hosted teams from Cambridge, Toronto, Markham, Brampton, Hanover, Walkerton, Wingham, Owen Sound, and Kincardine. In 2025, the inaugural Saugeen Shores Challenger Cup Cricket Tournament took place, attracting 4 teams, hundreds of players and spectators.

Play generally occurs through the week in the evenings for approximately 20 hours per week. The average prime time utilization is estimated to be 45%, which is considered very strong for a new sport to the area.

### **Arena Analysis and Recommendations Summary**

The Coliseum and Plex are predominantly used by minor sports groups. Priority for minor sports ice time allocation should remain as a focus when the development of the Ice Allocation Policy is undertaken in 2026. With the projection of 1,400 minor participants over the next 10 years, it is anticipated that there may be a need for a third ice pad shortly after 2036.

### **Ball Diamond Analysis and Recommendations Summary**

The utilization rate for diamonds is low compared to the allocation schedule, mostly because data on practice time requirements is not collected and not all user groups effectively use the time allocated to them. The development of an Athletic Field Allocation Policy in 2026 will ensure that time is being allocated fairly, prioritizing minor sports, and encourage the use of existing vacant times at the LSP and Jubilee diamonds.

Maximizing utilization at LSP and Jubilee should deem two or three diamonds as surplus and the potential to be decommissioned. The Town should undertake an exercise to identify and recommend decommissioning of two or three diamonds at Lakeview, Biener and/or Cameron for Council consideration.

Prior to a decision on a future capital investment for additional diamonds, it is imperative that the Town and user groups collectively work together to track and monitor the usage, including practice times and focus on maximizing utilization at LSP and Jubilee diamonds.

With the projection of 2,000 ball players over the next 10 years, it is anticipated that there may be a need for two additional lit diamonds shortly after 2036.

### **Soccer Field Analysis and Recommendations Summary**

With upgrades to the two fields at Helliwell, which include lighting for each, it is anticipated that this enhancement will provide suitable field time for the Club, expand available programmable time and reduce the current limitations that exist. It is noted that if additional field time is required, partnerships with non-municipal partners is encouraged. With the projection of 1,100 participants over the next 10 years, it is anticipated that there may be a need for one or two additional unlit fields in 2036.

### **Cricket Field Analysis and Recommendations Summary**

Like other smaller municipalities, Saugeen Shores introduced a cricket field in response to growing demand and constructed it on an underutilized field. This is considered a temporary location and with the Town's growth, the sport will continue to increase in popularity. There is

currently no established service level target for cricket, but it is anticipated that one cricket field is sufficient for the current and projected registration levels over the next 10 years and beyond.

### **Linkages**

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 1: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community
- Business Plan Alignment: Community Services Division Highlight

### **Financial Impacts/Source of Funding**

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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Appendix 'A' – Participant Registration Summary

<b>Arena Main User Groups</b>					
	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2024/25</u>	<u>2025/26</u>	<u>Change</u>
<b>Skating Club</b>	385	390	398	400	+4%
<b>Minor Hockey</b>	608	677	750	630	+35%
<b>Bruce Grey Bulls</b>				192	combined
<b>Sports Field Main User Groups</b>					
	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>Change</u>
<b>Cricket</b>				200	
<b>Soccer</b>	787	830	806	909	+16%
<b>Minor Ball</b>	394	472	602	656	+66%
<b>Ladies Slo-Pitch</b>	400	400	400	460	+15%
<b>Men's Slo-Pitch</b>	408	442	476	476	+17%
<b>Fall Ball</b>	135	150	165	180	+33%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3117</b>	<b>3361</b>	<b>3597</b>	<b>4103</b>	<b>+32%</b>

\* It is noted that adult hockey leagues are not included in the chart above. Participant registration is not monitored for the adult hockey teams and leagues, but it is highlighted that approximately 22.5 hours per week is allocated to seasonal adult hockey groups at the Coliseum and Plex.



Appendix 'C' – 2023 to 2025 Ball Diamond Allocation and Utilization

	2023		2024		2025	
	Allocation/Utilization	Allocation/Utilization	Allocation/Utilization	Allocation/Utilization	Allocation/Utilization	Allocation/Utilization
<b>Biener 1</b>	68%	6%	93%	9%	93%	3%
<b>Biener 2</b>	60%	8%	74%	6%	71%	13%
<b>Jubilee</b>	78%	6%	67%	6%	67%	7%
<b>Lakeview</b>	76%	10%	78%	10%	78%	20%
<b>Cameron B</b>	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%
<b>Cameron D</b>	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%
<b>LSP D1</b>	86%	41%	86%	47%	86%	49%
<b>LSP D2</b>	93%	39%	93%	50%	93%	49%
<b>LSP D3</b>	87%	32%	93%	45%	97%	44%
<b>LSP D4</b>	91%	33%	86%	40%	97%	40%

\* It is noted that Cameron B and D were used mainly for practice and not included in the allocation calculation.

