



# Key Directions Report

City of Richmond Hill Parks Plan / Recreation & Culture Plan

January 24, 2022



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

The City of Richmond Hill's vision for parks, recreation and culture is being renewed to chart a new course for the next 10 years. During this time, Richmond Hill's population is expected to grow by nearly 40,000 residents (or 18%), reaching a population of 253,000 by 2031. Considerable population growth is expected to occur through intensification within the City's centres and corridors, along with in the remaining greenfield areas of North Leslie and West Gormley. Changes to the City's community composition, together with evolving interests and participation preferences, along with the need to ensure financial sustainability using an integrated lifecycle approach, provide the impetus for undertaking a review of the 2013 Parks Plan and Recreation Plan, along with the 2011 Cultural Plan. The Reviews are intended to align needs for facility, program and services with current and future needs, while ensuring the planning, design/construction, and maintenance/operational aspects of the facilities and programs outlined in the Plans account for all costs from project inception through to construction/program formulation, and operation/maintenance.

Foundational inputs have been completed, to date, including a review of relevant background documents, socio-demographic data, and trends, together with staff input, key informant interviews, and a community survey. These inputs provided vital information in preparing the preliminary needs assessments for parks, recreation and culture in Richmond Hill. This Key Directions Report highlights the key findings collected, to date, which will be further refined as the Parks Plan and Recreation & Culture Plan are developed. The following is a summary of key themes from the work completed to date. Preliminary findings for each theme can be found in Section 6.0. The rationale for the preliminary findings, including background research and preliminary needs assessment can be found in the Appendix.

### Key Themes for Parks

#### **Parkland to Address Future Population Growth**

As the focus of Richmond Hill's growth continues to shift from greenfield development towards intensification within the City's centres and corridors, Richmond Hill's park hierarchy and parkland service levels continue to be appropriate and should be maintained. To address future population growth, an emphasis should be placed on acquiring and developing new parkland, particularly within the growing centres and corridors. This practice should be augmented by the revitalization of aging parkland, particularly those within proximity to centres and corridors, to ensure that they are designed in a manner that responds to current and future needs, as well as a greater intensity of uses.

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#### **Responding to Parkland and Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs**

There have been changes in how people live, work and play, along with how our environment is adapting to climate change. Coupled with a growing emphasis on residential intensification, the rising cost of land, and other factors that have resulted in the development of smaller parks, outdoor recreation facility service targets must be revised or reconfirmed to keep pace with these changes and address community demands. In addition, the development of new parks, the revitalization of older parks, and the repair/replacement of existing park facilities provide an opportunity for the City to provide resiliency enhancements to help our infrastructure mitigate/adapt to the changing climate.

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#### **Strengthening Parkland Tools**

Richmond Hill has several tools available at its disposal to ensure that the funding, acquisition, planning, design, development, operations and maintenance of parkland is undertaken effectively and efficiently to meet community needs over the planning period.

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## Key Themes for Recreation

### Developing New Indoor Recreation Facilities

Over the next 10 years, Richmond Hill is expected to face pressure for intensification along designated centres and corridors. It will be important to ensure that the City's existing recreation facilities and community spaces are adequately positioned to respond to the needs of the evolving community within these areas.

Population growth is also expected to occur within Richmond Hill's two remaining greenfield lands. While the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area is expected to draw nearly 5,000 residents by 2031, the North Leslie Secondary Plan is anticipated to accommodate over 15,000 residents during the same period. Future residents within these areas will expect high quality recreation opportunities that residents currently enjoy in other areas of Richmond Hill. With the level of growth anticipated in this area, the analyses revealed a gap in indoor recreation facilities.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool was the most popular municipal facility with strong facility usage and program participation levels. As Richmond Hill emerges from the pandemic, historical usage and participation levels are not expected to return over the short term due to user and participant hesitancy, although the City will be required to closely monitor usage levels and promote opportunities, particularly given that this facility will also serve residents in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.

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### Optimizing the Use of Existing Recreation Facilities

While recreation and community facilities are a reflection of when they were constructed, it is vital that they are assessed from time to time to ensure that they continue to respond to the needs of the community, particularly as trends and interest change over time as residents continue to age and new people move to the area. Given the high value residents place on public recreation and community facilities, it is prudent that underutilized spaces are identified and adapted to address emerging opportunities, demands and gaps in services to optimize the use of existing spaces.

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### Enhancing the Delivery of Recreation Services and Programs

A key goal of every municipality engaged in the delivery/enabling of recreation services is to increase participation in recreation and active pursuits. All actions are focussed on improving delivery of service and engaging the people who participate to best understand their needs. Maximizing participation in safe and welcoming activities will result in stronger and healthier residents, families, and communities. The social, physical, and emotional benefits of participating in recreation and sport are very positive outcomes – every effort must be made to understand needs, assess trends, and continually improve the satisfaction levels of participants through various actions.

Richmond Hill's recreation service delivery system is in a mature state after decades of focussed work to improve service delivery. The City is proactive and is positioned as a strong leader in this field provincially and nationally. Continued efforts will need to be undertaken to improve physical activity levels of all residents and better include marginalized and underrepresented populations in the development and the delivery of recreation services. Specific emphasis will need to be made to increase the participation rates of females, youth and older adults in recreation as well as to refine policies to keep ahead of trends and community concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant financial and workforce impacts for the Canadian and global arts, culture, entertainment and recreation sectors.<sup>1</sup> Several factors have contributed to these declines, including the in-person nature of the sectors; venue closures, cancelled events, festivals and performances; operating restrictions; and changing consumer preferences for physically distanced, at-home and online activities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00033-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

### Key Themes for Recreation

While the ability of businesses to pivot and use digital technologies has alleviated some of the financial pressures and staffing issues, challenges remain, particularly as long-term impacts are not yet clear. The changing nature of work and consumer activities and habits are also unknowns that need to be tracked to understand their impacts. Economic recovery is not linear and similar across all industries. For example, industries that were already restructuring (e.g. newspaper publishers) may not rebound as other culture and arts industries. Similarly, performing arts industries will continue to feel the impact as it may take time before audiences, visitors, and tourists return, and companies can resume operating at the same scale as before the pandemic.

In its April 2021 budget, the federal government earmarked close to \$800 million in specific funding to help rebuild the sectors, complementing the relief programs already in place.<sup>3</sup>

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### Key Themes for Culture

#### Leadership and Networking Equates to Sustainability and Inclusivity in the Cultural Sector

The 2011 Cultural Plan introduced opportunities to better connect cultural organizations and industries to address the needs of the City's broader cultural sector. One of the objectives the previous Cultural Plan set out to accomplish was to assist in breaking down the silos that had formed between disciplines (e.g. arts groups, heritage groups, and creative enterprises). The resulting Cultural Leadership Council assisted in building a platform that bridged the various groups within the cultural sector leading to a better allocation of resources and enhanced innovative activity in the community, all while supporting cultural growth in Richmond Hill. This form of networking also incorporated diverse voices (ethno-cultural communities, youth) to oversee and comment on the implementation of the Cultural Plan.

Continuing to leverage the Cultural Leadership Council and identifying ways to involve the group in municipal decision-making will help to ensure that culture remains a key element of the City's growth and development. Cities today are increasingly turning to these types of advisory councils to understand how their actions would impact equality and to inform how design and programming would impact different people and communities.

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#### Fostering Growth in the Arts and Cultural Community

Arts and culture is widely accepted as a key economic driver for communities. In 2019, culture contributed \$27.5 billion to Ontario's GDP. Richmond Hill accounted for 1.49% of provincial culture GDP with contributions of \$428.5 million. Arts and cultural organizations play an essential role in Canadian society. These organizations are a vital part of the social fabric of communities promoting inclusion, tolerance and as a source of civic pride.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on both individual artists and organizations in the arts and culture community. Lockdowns have resulted in many organizations cancelling and postponing programs, special events, and festivals. Sales and admission fees of all kinds have all declined leaving many organizations unable to operate. Likewise, opportunities for donations, sponsorships, and fundraisers have slowed dramatically.

Fostering growth in Richmond Hill's arts and cultural community could include operating support through the review of the Community Cultural Grant Program, exploring funding models to support arts and cultural community organizations and directly engaging with the arts and cultural community to understand their needs.

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#### Optimizing Places and Spaces for Arts and Culture

Another emerging trend in cultural planning is the repurposing of community facilities to better integrate arts, culture, and heritage. This includes the sharing of resources and operation costs with parks and recreation, and better leveraging of strategic partnerships (e.g. with Libraries and For-Profit facilities). In Richmond Hill, it has been suggested that there is a need to review the inventory of existing cultural facilities and the nature of these

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

### Key Themes for Culture

facilities (from floor plans and programming limitations) to determine if the assets are being used to full potential.

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#### **The Changing Nature of Arts and Cultural Programming and Events**

Technological changes, together with changing demographics, lifestyles, and interests are impacting the delivery of local programs, festivals and events. The internet and social media have fundamentally changed the way programs, festivals and events are marketed, providing a more effective way to reach target audiences than traditional advertising. Online registration and ticketing are now common across all program and event sizes. In addition, online registrations and ticketing allows for the collection of information on audiences and a better understanding of the effectiveness of marketing tactics.

Program and event goers are also becoming more demanding. They expect more choices, experiences and authentic programming. There is increased demand for activities that have anything to do with food, wine and craft beer. Additionally, hybrid events – those that broaden the appeal of an event by adding complementary activities either in person or in tandem online – are increasing. This helps to grow audiences, give them more ways to spend money, and helps to expand the sponsor pool.

The impact of COVID-19 saw organizers pivot to delivering many experiences through online mediums. A growing number of events are now offering virtual experiences catered to specific audiences. Events such as virtual tours of museums, art exhibits, online music festivals, and workshops have provided opportunities for individuals to stay connected to the arts and culture community.

In Richmond Hill, organizers have followed these trends with several community groups offering online experiences. Additionally, the City has revamped its Programming, Festival and Event Booking process in accordance with emerging best practices from the Province's Reopening Ontario Act. This includes encouraging organizers to go digital, introduce digital registration and double up on experiences where possible.

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## 2.0 Introduction

### 2.1 Purpose of the Parks Plan and Recreation & Culture Plan

With a growing emphasis on personal health and wellness, community vibrancy, and environmental and economic sustainability, the provision of high-quality parks, recreation and culture opportunities has never been more important. The City of Richmond Hill has been guided by its 2013 Parks Plan and Recreation Plan, along with the 2011 Cultural Plan over the past 10 years. To keep pace with changes that have occurred within the community, a refreshed vision for parks, recreation and culture is needed so that the City can continue to offer a high quality of life, build complete communities, foster active and healthy lifestyles, and provide an adequate supply of parkland to serve the City. Updating these Plans positions the City to be environmentally sustainable, culturally vibrant, economically strong, financially responsible and engaged with the community.

The new Parks Plan and Recreation and Culture Plan (herein referred to as the “PRC Plans”) are being undertaken through a coordinated approach. The Consulting Team (led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants) is preparing the Recreation and Culture Master Plan, while the City is leading the preparation of the Parks Plan (with assistance from the Consulting Team). The City and Consulting Team will work collaboratively to develop a Costing Strategy to inform the capital budget process.

To ensure that the PRC Plans are responsive to community needs, consideration will be given to background research, demographic shifts, trends, service gaps, and park and facility requirements, as well as public and stakeholder input. Like the Plans before them, the PRC Plans will be designed as living documents that will be regularly reviewed and updated to respond to new opportunities and changing needs within the community. In doing so, the PRC Plans will assist the City with prioritizing corporate initiatives, budgetary requirements, support the search for external funding, partnerships, and align with other initiatives.

### 2.2 Intent of the Key Directions Report

The Key Directions Report summarizes all background inputs that comprised the preliminary phase of the planning process. Background inputs included reviewing relevant background documents, understanding the community profile, research on trends and best practices, and an analysis of urban open space opportunities, as well as a preliminary needs assessment on parks, recreation facilities, cultural opportunities, and service delivery. These inputs have been carefully considered and support the key directions that are highlighted in this Report. The detailed Background Report and Preliminary Needs Assessments can be found in the Appendix. It should be noted that key directions contained herein are subject to change as the planning process unfolds and is tested with the community through on-going consultations.

From this point forward, the Parks Plan and Recreation & Culture Plan will be developed as separate documents. City of Richmond Hill staff will be responsible for preparing the Parks Plan, which will include an Urban Open Space Master Plan and phased costing strategy component prepared by the Consulting Team. The Consulting Team will prepare the Recreation & Culture Plan.

## 2.3 Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities 2020 – 2022

Council’s Strategic Priorities for 2020 to 2022 provides a roadmap for Richmond Hill’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; the document emphasizes initiatives that minimize the financial impact on residents, while focusing on the environment, transportation and community building.<sup>4</sup> Table 1 summarizes four strategic priority areas to achieve the vision articulated in the 2009 Strategic Plan. Each priority area identifies initiatives that have relevance to the PRC Plans.

**Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community.**

*2009 Strategic Plan Vision*

**The City of Richmond Hill Council and staff are committed to providing exceptional public service to our community.**

*2009 Strategic Plan Mission Statement*

Table 1: Summary of Relevant Projects, Programs and Initiatives from Council Strategic Priorities, 2020 - 2022

Strategic Priority	Major Projects, Programs or Initiatives relevant to the PRC Plans
<b>Balancing Green and Growth</b>	<p><b>Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plans</b> – to plan for the future of parks, recreation and culture needs of Richmond Hill residents.</p> <p><b>Urban Forest Management Plan</b> – to plan, protect and preserve tree canopy cover while strengthening the urban forest to increase resilience.</p> <p><b>Climate Change Framework</b> – to create climate change action programs for community risk mitigation and green infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Environment Strategy</b> – to create a strategy to protect the natural environment through responsible community development, responsible municipal management and effective community programming.</p> <p><b>Official Plan Update</b> – to guide land use development to 2041, the update will continue to help transform suburban communities to a vibrant and complete community to serve the needs of all residents, visitors and businesses.</p>
<b>Fiscal Responsibility</b>	<p><b>Asset Management Plan</b> – to ensure continued and sustained asset and infrastructure health through long-term financial sustainability planning.</p>
<b>Strong Sense of Belonging</b>	<p><b>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative</b> – to increase awareness to support diversity, equity and inclusion through corporate training; and to develop recruitment strategies that aim to attract a more diverse candidate pool.</p> <p><b>Age Friendly Community Initiative</b> – to enhance the City’s capacity and approach to provide, design, plan, facilitate and deliver age-friendly features within the community.</p> <p><b>myRichmondHill community e-newsletter</b> – to keep residents and stakeholders informed and engaged about what’s going on the in City.</p>
<b>Getting Around the City</b>	<p><b>Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan and Yonge North Subway Extension</b> – To coordinate the expected growth in the Richmond Hill Centre area that will also support the creation of public spaces, walkable streets, and transit-oriented development.</p> <p><b>Transportation Master Plan Update</b> – to establish a vision for all travel models within the City, including active transportation.</p>

<sup>4</sup> City of Richmond Hill. Council Strategic Priorities 2020-2022. <https://pub-richmondhill.escribemeetings.com/>

## 2.4 Scan of Supporting Background Documents

A wide range of supporting background documents have been reviewed to inform the development of the PRC Plans. To ensure alignment, findings and directions from these reports – as they relate to parks, recreation and culture – will be incorporated into the PRC Plans, where appropriate. The following is a list of background documents that were reviewed; detail summaries can be found in the appropriate sections of the Appendix.

- Provincial policy documents and supporting legislation (e.g., Planning Act, 2020 Provincial Policy Statement, Bill 73, Bill 108, Bill 138, Bill 197, Bill 213, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, etc.).
- National parks and recreation documents (Framework for Recreation in Canada, Parks for All)
- Regional land use, parks and open space planning documents (e.g., Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Oak Ridges Corridor Park Management Plan, Oak Ridges Park East Management Plan).
- Municipal planning documents (e.g., Richmond Hill Official Plan, Richmond Hill Parkland Dedication By-law, Park Master Plans).
- Municipal land-use planning studies (e.g., North Leslie Secondary Plan, West Gormley Secondary Plan, Yonge and Bernard Key Development Area Secondary Plan, Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan, Transportation Master Plan Update, etc.).
- Cultural planning documents (e.g., Richmond Hill Public Library Strategic Plan, Richmond Hill Economic Development Strategy, Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts Review, Public Art Policy, etc.).
- Other relevant documents (e.g., Cross-jurisdictional BILD Position: Parkland Dedication)

## 2.5 Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Given the rapid pace of change that the COVID-19 global pandemic has brought, planning for an uncertain future is a challenge with people trying to find new ways of living, working, playing, and connecting with each other. Clearly, this is uncharted territory and municipal parks, recreation, and culture departments must continually assess and adjust their expectations, practices, and norms.

The pandemic has the potential to affect the long-term demand for, and delivery of, parks, recreation, and culture services; however, the ultimate scope and scale of change is unknown. Long-range planning and strategic investment are believed to be as vital as they have ever been in order to support the significant role that the parks, recreation and culture sectors play in the personal, social, and economic recovery/revitalization of communities.

The PRC Plans are being prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to shifting in-person consultation initiatives to online formats, analysis of many parks, recreation, and culture components relies upon data compiled between 2017 and 2019. Any year-to-date data presented for 2020/21 may not be directly comparable to past years nor may it be a strong indicator of expected future performance due to facility closures, changes in rental activities and/or program participation, or shifts in recreation preferences such as changes in demand/usage of parks resulting from COVID-19.

Recognizing that the situation is evolving and new information and guidance is emerging on a regular basis, the City must prepare for a wide range of scenarios. The following are some preliminary thoughts about how the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the sector in the short to longer-term.

- Emphasis on health equity and access to parks and trails;
- Growing interest in unstructured, individual, and small group activities;
- Desire for outdoor recreation (including four seasons use), placing pressure on trails, parks, washrooms, etc.;
- A possible shift in prime-time demand as people work more flexible hours;
- Volatility in volunteerism and special events;
- Substantial changes to operations (e.g., demand for touchless services, cleaning, visitor management, staff training, delivering special events, etc.), possibly requiring higher levels of subsidy;
- Significant impacts on building design (ventilation, spacing, access/egress, mid-door spaces, etc.);
- Constant engagement and communication – people need accurate and real-time information;
- Rethinking of some third-party partnerships (schools, etc.); and
- Greater use of technology to help support changes (virtual programming, services and events, etc.).

## 3.0 Status of Current Plans

### 3.1 Parks Plan

The 2013 Parks Plan provided the City with direction on the planning and development of Richmond Hill’s park system over a 20 year period. The Parks Plan was guided by four key goals:

1. To understand current and future parks and outdoor recreation facility needs in Richmond Hill.
2. To make recommendations regarding how the City’s inventory of parks and outdoor recreation facilities should be focused to meet community needs now and in the future.
3. To examine the role and function of the various types of parks in Richmond Hill, and determine parkland needs in relation to the City’s planned urban structure.
4. To develop a methodology for deciding when older parks should be redeveloped to meet the changing needs of the community.

The Parks Plan identified City-wide park needs with consideration given to key guiding documents including the Strategic Plan and Official Plan, socio-demographic data, forecasted development, relevant trends, and the existing parks and outdoor recreation system. Opportunities for park enhancement, replacement or repurposing was also identified. Table 2 highlights park needs as identified in the 2013 Parks Plan, as well as land that has been secured since the Parks Plan was completed. Table 3 identifies outdoor recreation facility needs as per the Parks Plan together with facilities that have been constructed and replaced.

*Table 2: Summary of Parkland Needs as per 2013 Parks Plan*

Park Type	Park Needs (hectares)	Parks Secured Since 2013 (hectares)
Destination Parks	0.8	20.5*
Community Parks	18.0	5.4
Neighbourhood Parks (Local Parks and Parkettes)	34.0	2.8
Urban Squares & Linear Parks	11.2	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>30.4</b>
Parkland Secured Through Existing Development Approvals (e.g., North Leslie, West Gormley, Bernard KDA, etc.)		22.0

\*Includes lands re-classified for active parkland uses through the Council approved David Dunlap Observatory Master Plan (2016).

Table 3: Summary of Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs as per 2013 Parks Plan

Facility Type	New Facility Needs Identified	New Facilities Completed Since 2013	Planned Facilities Since 2013*
Soccer Fields	14	3	6
Ball Diamonds	5	2	0
Tennis Courts	12	2	13
Basketball Courts	13	1	0
Splash Pads	6	4	2
Playgrounds	1 per 400 metres of residential areas	18	27
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	1 per block	4	10
Community Gardens	As per Community Garden Policy	8	1
Skateboard/BMX Parks	2	1	1
Off-Leash Dog Areas	2 (one in north end and one south end)	2	1
Outdoor Skating Rinks	2 artificial skating rinks	0	2
Bocce Courts	Provide in response to public demand	0	0
Tobogganing Hills	Investigate this need	0	1
Ball Hockey/Multi-use Courts	Provide in response to public demand	5	7 (replacing basketball courts with multi-use courts)
Beach Volleyball	Provide in response to public demand	1	0
Table Tennis	Locate at Local Parks in urban areas, as appropriate	1	0
Dirt Bike Tracks	As per public demand and volunteers	0	0
Pickleball Courts	n/a	2	8

\*Planned facilities identified in the Capital Plan or in park blocks in the process of being secured through draft approvals. Note that the number of planned facilities exclude any additional facilities identified through the update process.

## 3.2 Recreation Plan

The 2013 Recreation Master Plan was a guiding document for the City’s indoor recreation facilities over a 10-year period. The primary objectives of the Recreation Plan were to:

1. Understand the needs of Richmond Hill’s current and future residents through a combination of community engagement, review of trends and best practices, and application of accepted needs assessment methodologies.
2. Provide recommendations centred around the type and quantity of indoor recreation facilities required in Richmond Hill.
3. Develop strategic directions for the City to consider as it implements recommendations to effectively and efficiently meet community needs.

Together with an understanding of background research, community benchmarking, community engagement and facility analysis, specific attention was paid to service delivery efficiencies and facility provision, with analyses and assessments regarding programming, facility needs, potential partnerships, and financial requirements. Table 4 summarizes key achievements or the status of pending recommendations.

*Table 4: Summary of Indoor Recreation Facility Achievements and Development Status as per 2013 Recreation Plan*

Facility Type	Achievements / Status
Arenas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One ice pad added to the Ed Sackfield Arena &amp; Fitness Centre</li> <li>• Two ice pads planned for the North Leslie Community Centre</li> <li>• One ice pad not yet implemented/planned</li> </ul>
Aquatic Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One indoor aquatic centre planned for the North Leslie Community Centre</li> </ul>
Gymnasiums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One gymnasium planned to be located at the North Leslie Community Centre</li> <li>• Bocce courts at Rouge Woods Community Centre converted to gymnasium</li> </ul>
Fitness Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One fitness centre planned for the North Leslie Community Centre</li> <li>• Fitness centre added to the Ed Sackfield Arena &amp; Fitness Centre</li> <li>• Fitness studio at Bayview Hill Community Centre &amp; Pool closed during COVID and it is recommended to be repurposed</li> <li>• Fitness studio at Centennial Pool closed; aerobic room remains</li> </ul>
Multi-Purpose Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-purpose rooms planned for the North Leslie Community Centre</li> <li>• Lake Wilcox Community Hall decommissioned</li> <li>• Richmond Green Agricultural Building #2 used for indoor portable bocce courts</li> <li>• Connor Room main floor leased; potential use for municipal works yard</li> </ul>
Indoor Walking Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor walking track added to the Ed Sackfield Arena &amp; Fitness Centre</li> </ul>
Indoor Artificial Turf Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second location not completed due to land constraints</li> </ul>
Indoor Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tennis Strategy completed</li> <li>• Second indoor tennis facility to be investigated at the community club courts planned for the future West Gormley Community Park.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Cultural Plan

Cultural Planning is recognized by Richmond Hill as the cornerstone to the development of a vibrant community. The 2011 Cultural Plan was guided by the community's desire to be a place where people can come together to celebrate natural and cultural diversity, where creativity is fostered and ideas exchanged, and where the arts are appreciated.

The vision statement of the 2011 Cultural Plan is “Richmond Hill is admired as a vibrant community in which culture is a part of all facets of the Town's planning and decision-making; where diversity, gender and age are reflected in all aspects of cultural expression; and where an authentic and distinctive identity inspires a creative spirit.”

The goal of the Cultural Plan was to ensure that the texture, voices and memories of the community are firmly integrated into the City's physical and recreational planning, as well as its long-term economic objectives. The Cultural Plan also provided a shared vision of the needs, aspirations and priorities related to cultural development, cultural infrastructure and cultural planning in Richmond Hill over a 10-year time horizon. To that end, primary considerations for the refresh of the Cultural Plan remains the same as in 2011:

1. Engaging community and stakeholders in a broad and ongoing discussion of culture and cultural planning in Richmond Hill;
2. Heightening local awareness and increasing community support and recognition of the importance of arts and culture to Richmond Hill's prosperity and the community's livability;
3. Improving access to information on cultural resources and activities in Richmond Hill for residents, visitors, businesses, and organizations;
4. Increasing the stability and sustainability of Richmond Hill's arts and cultural organizations and fostering collaboration across a wide cross-section of cultural groups and activities; and
5. Understanding and addressing gaps in services and cultural facilities that reflect both Richmond Hill's geography and its cultural diversity.

Table 5 highlights some of the key accomplishments that have been achieved for each of the five goal areas contained in the Cultural Plan.

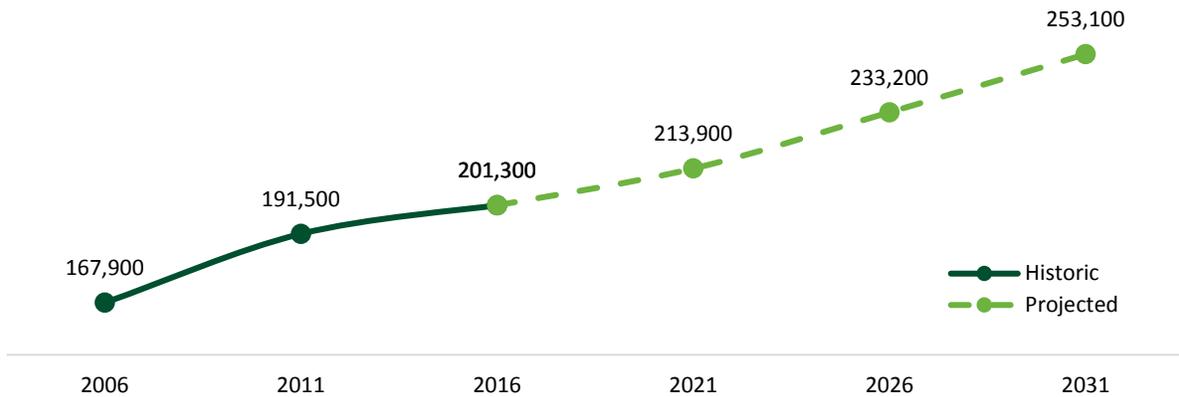
*Table 5: Summary Achievements, 2011 Cultural Plan*

Goal Area	Achievements
Goal 1: Demonstrated Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Leadership Council was established</li> <li>• Cultural Summits are held annually</li> <li>• Park Stories Scavenger Hunt was developed</li> <li>• Community Cultural Grant was established (Note: On January 22, 2020, the 2020 Community and Cultural Grant program was not approved by Council and was not renewed in 2021)</li> </ul>
Goal 2: A Dynamic Cultural Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Festival and Events Strategy was completed</li> <li>• The Small Business Enterprise Centre was engaged to promote business development and technical assistance among arts and cultural groups</li> <li>• Creative industries Symposium is held annually</li> </ul>
Goal 3: An Inclusive Cultural Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community program calendar promoted to arts and cultural organizations</li> <li>• A partnership was initiated between Richmond Hill and the York Region Arts Council</li> </ul>
Goal 4: Places and Spaces for Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Improvement Plan was prepared</li> <li>• Funding SpaceFinder York Region to help identify cultural spaces, build capacity of organizations by sharing and renting spaces, and creating an online inventory (Note: This project ended in 2020)</li> <li>• Public Art Policy was launched</li> <li>• Economic Development Strategy was updated</li> </ul>
Goal 5: A Celebrated Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Arts Awards program was created to recognize artistic talent and community contributions</li> <li>• Cultural Icons film series was developed</li> <li>• Richmond Hill Cultural Portal was launched on the City's website</li> </ul>

## 4.0 Community Profile

While Richmond Hill experienced substantial growth during the 1990s and early 2000s, recent population growth has slowed. The 2016 Census recorded a population of 195,022 residents, which was an increase of 5% from 2011. Future population projections suggests that growth will continue to be slower compared to historical levels. Population projections developed for the City through the Official Plan Update process estimate that Richmond Hill currently has a population of 214,000 (rounded) for 2021, which will be used as the basis for the PRC Plans. By the end of the planning period (2031), Richmond Hill will reach a population of 253,000 (rounded), representing a growth of 18% (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1: Historical and Projected Population Growth by Census Year (includes census undercount), 2006 – 2031



Note: Population includes a census undercount of 3.2%.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and the City of Richmond Hill. 2021.

Over the next 10 years, future population growth within Richmond Hill is expected to occur in a number of areas. The City is expected to continue to face greater pressures for intensification and infill-related development to accommodate new residents. Focusing residential development through intensification and infill supports the City’s goals for creating walkable streets and transit-oriented development (the Yonge Street subway station in Richmond Hill Centre is expected to be completed by 2030) and will likely foster even greater intensification pressures. The City’s Official Plan identifies that intensification and infill development will be concentrated within designated centres, corridors and key development areas (Figure 2). During the planning period, these intensification and infill areas are expected to accommodate approximately 15,000 residents. Notably, the Downtown Local Centre, North Yonge Street Corridor, Richmond Hill Centre and the Yonge 16<sup>th</sup> Key Development Area are each planned to accommodate 5,000 residents by 2031.

The City’s remaining greenfield lands, located within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas, are expected to accommodate approximately 15,100 and 4,600 additional residents by 2031, respectively. These two Secondary Plans account for the City’s remaining designated greenfield areas.

Richmond Hill’s growth has placed many pressures on the City’s parks, recreation, and culture system. Combined with a dynamic socio-economic make-up that continues to evolve as Richmond Hill grows and attracts new residents, together with shifting land use patterns through intensification, the City must ensure that its parks, facilities, programs and services are positioned to respond to the community needs and priorities.

<sup>5</sup> Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Updated Population and Employment Growth Forecast by Traffic Zone. 2021.

Figure 2: Proportion of Population Growth by Traffic Zone, 2021 - 2031

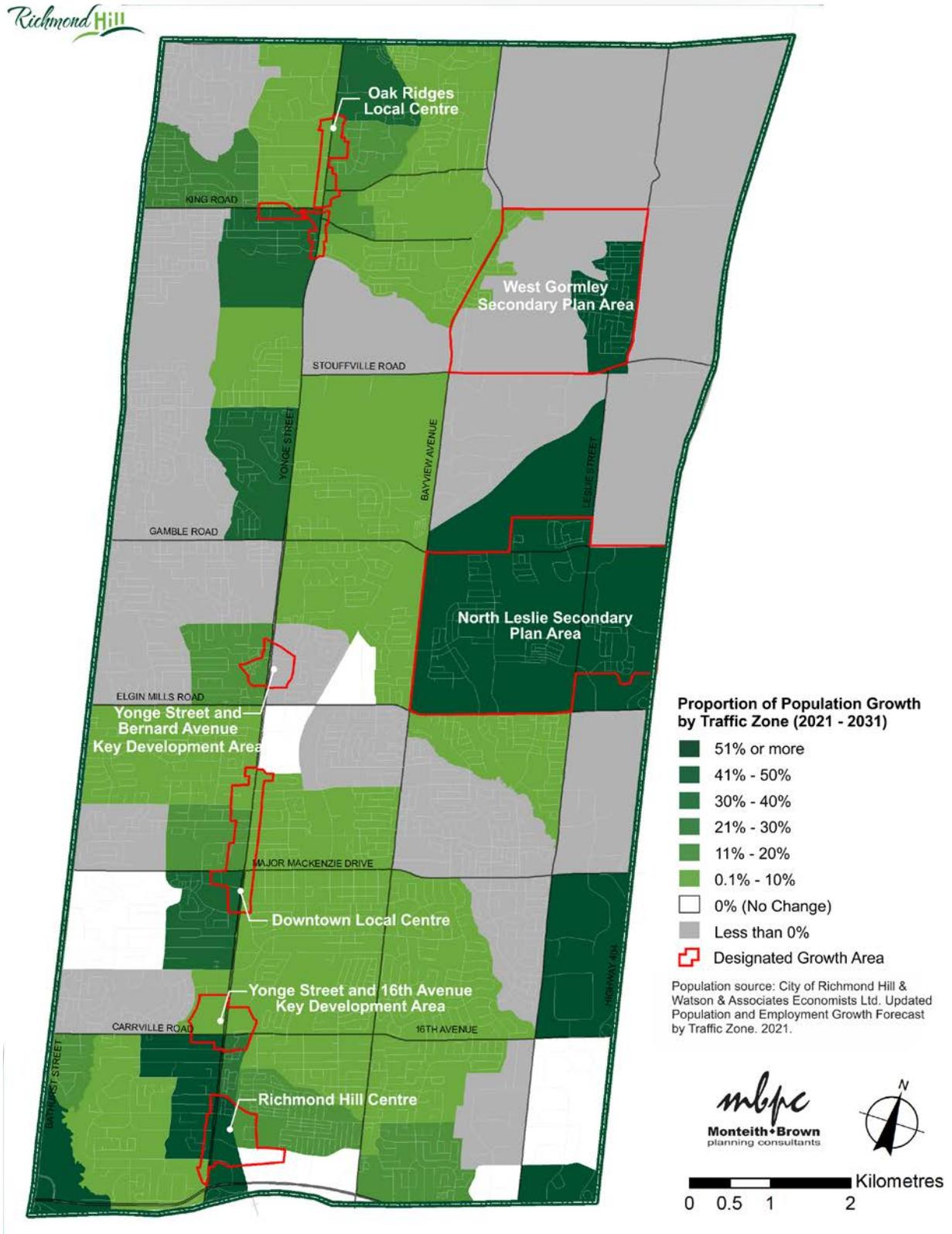


Table 6 summarizes a number of key indicators along with their implications on parks, recreation, and culture services. Additional details about Richmond Hill’s socio-economic profile can be found in the Appendix.

Table 6 : Community Profile Summary

Indicator	Trend	Implication on Parks, Recreation and Culture
<b>Population Growth</b>	Over the past 15 years, Richmond Hill has experienced considerable growth. Population growth over the planning period is expected to be focused within built-up areas, particularly along centres and corridors where intensification and infill development is occurring, with the remaining growth occurring in the City’s remaining two greenfield areas (North Leslie and West Gormley). Growth in Richmond Hill (and York Region as a whole) has slowed in recent years, although this may change once the subway extension is completed.	Continued population growth will place pressures on parks, recreation, and culture services. A growing focus on centres and corridors where intensification and infill are expected to occur will require creativity in utilizing existing and new spaces to meet the needs of residents.
<b>Age Growth</b>	Richmond Hill is an aging community, consistent with trends across Canada. It is expected that this trend will continue over the planning period.	While the aging of the population will drive increased demands for services geared towards adults age 55+, parks, recreation, and culture needs across all age groups will need to be considered.
<b>Income</b>	Richmond Hill has a higher level of income compared to the Province. The high cost of living, however, will leave less disposable income for parks, recreation, and culture activities, particularly among low-income households.	Generally, higher levels of income tend to correlate with higher levels of participation, placing greater pressures on the City to deliver high quality parks, recreation, and culture activities. At the same time, affordable and free opportunities can help lower income groups gain access to similar types of opportunities.
<b>Education</b>	A greater proportion of Richmond Hill residents have a post-secondary degree compared to the Region and Province.	Similar to income, higher levels of education tend to correlate to higher levels of participation.
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	Richmond Hill is a culturally diverse community; the largest visible minority group is represented by Chinese residents. The population is expected to continue diversifying given that newcomers tend to be attracted to established ethnic communities and associated social ties.	Richmond Hill’s strong level of cultural diversity can influence the demand for programs, services, and activities. Flexibility in the design of facilities and services in multiple languages could be a key consideration in the development of the PRC Plans.
<b>Place of Work and Mode of Transportation</b>	Richmond Hill has a large commuter population working in York Region and beyond. Most employed residents travel by car.	The large commuter population will place pressures on prime-time activities as well as those that can be self-scheduled depending on one’s availability.

## 5.0 Community Survey

A community survey was undertaken over a three-week period between mid-June and early July 2021 to collect input on a variety of topics related to parks, recreation, arts and culture including local participation preferences and barriers, usage frequency and satisfaction levels. The survey was hosted online through a third-party website (Survey Monkey) and hardcopies were made available as an alternative format. The survey was promoted through a variety of means including the City's website and facility LED signs, social media, an e-blast, QR code signs placed throughout parks and in park kiosks, and word-of-mouth.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the way in which people participate in parks, recreation, and culture activities, survey respondents were asked to report their participation levels from 2019 (pre-COVID) to provide an accurate picture of what activities residents typically engage in. How the COVID-19 pandemic impacted respondents' participation in parks, recreation, and culture opportunities was also explored through this survey.

A total of 1,169 surveys were completed and analyzed. Due to the self-administered format of the survey, the results are not considered statistically representative of Richmond Hill's entire population. Key findings from the survey are highlighted in this section with a full data summary contained in the Appendix. In certain instances, references to survey results undertaken for the previous Parks Plan, Recreation Plan and Cultural Plan are presented to understand how preferences, opinions and frequency of use has changed over the past 10 years, although they may not be directly comparable due to the method of data collection that was used.

### 5.1 Respondent Profile

The following is a high-level summary of the demographic profile of responding households:

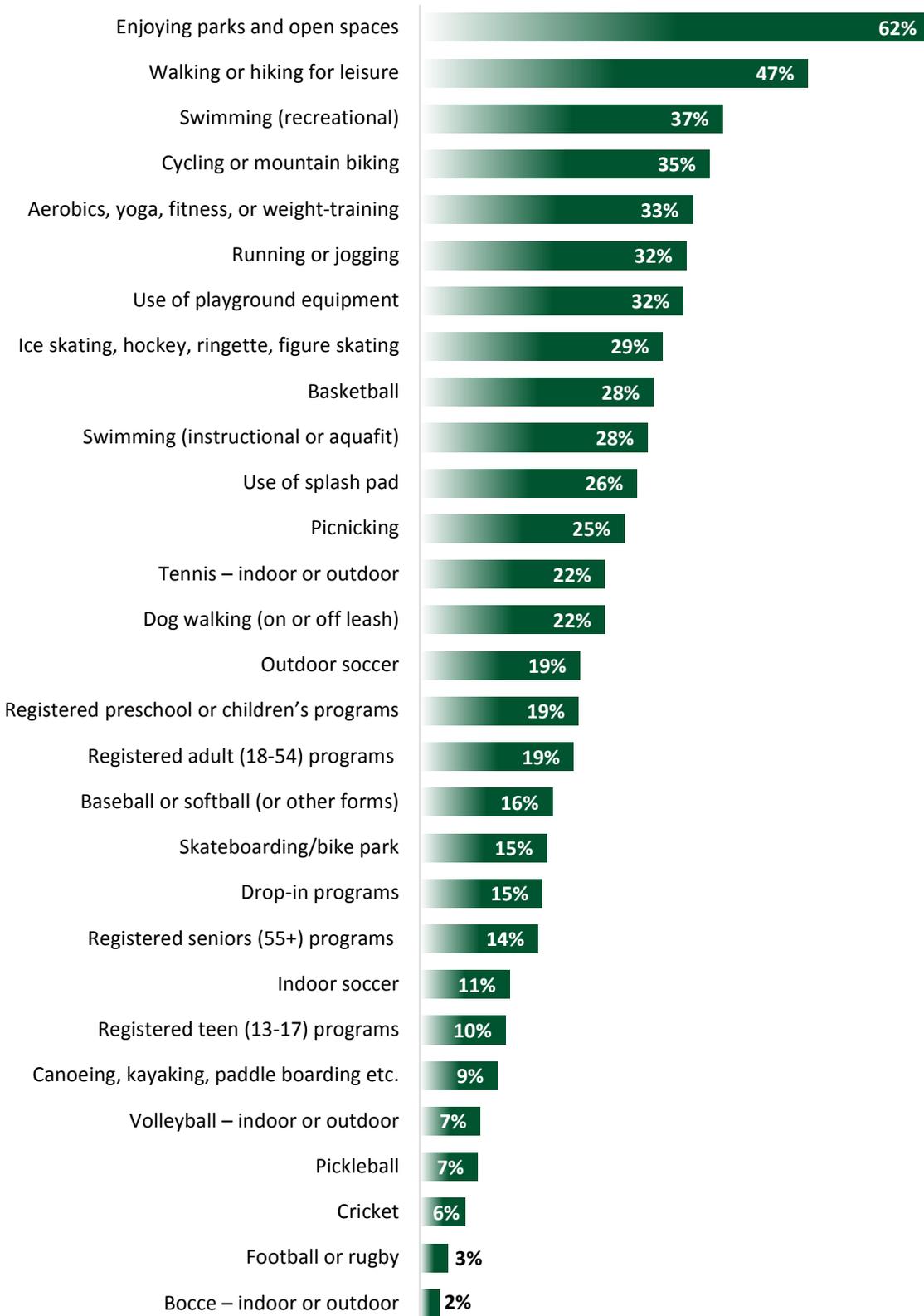
- The average household size was 3.9 persons, which is higher compared to the 2016 Census (3.0 persons).
- Households with children and youth were more likely to complete the survey. When compared to the 2016 Census, responding households were over-represented in children and youth (ages 0 to 19) and adults (ages 35 to 54), while being under-represented in older adults (ages 55+).
- The southwest area (south of Elgin Mills Road West and west of Bayview Avenue) and north area (north of Elgin Mills Road) had the most representation of Richmond Hill with 55% of respondents living in these areas.
- 54% of responding households have lived in Richmond Hill for ten years or more.

### 5.2 Participation in Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Enjoying parks and open spaces (62%) was identified as the most popular activity that respondents and/or their households actively participated in prior to the pandemic. Other top parks and recreation activities that were identified included walking or hiking for leisure (47%), recreational swimming (37%), cycling or mountain biking (35%), and aerobics, yoga, fitness, or weight-training (32%). Figure 3 highlights respondents' participation in parks and recreation activities.

A commonality among the top five activities is that they are all unstructured and self-scheduled activities, which is consistent with broad participation trends as well as the results from the previous plans prepared for the City. These types of activities tend to rank high as they can be undertaken through all ages and stages of life. Organized sports such as hockey, soccer and baseball ranked lower and tend to be played by a subset of the community. Lower ranked activities tended to be more specialized or age-specific in nature.

Figure 3: Participation in Parks and Recreation Activities in 2019, (n=1,156)



Respondents were asked to reflect upon their usage of parks, trails, open spaces, and indoor and outdoor recreation activities. Figure 4 illustrates the frequency in the use of parks, trails, and open spaces, while Figure 5 summarizes the frequency in use of indoor and outdoor parks and recreation facilities, either in Richmond Hill or elsewhere. Respondents reported a high frequency of using paved multi-use trails, unpaved nature trails, and general use of natural parks and open spaces. Respondents also frequently used playgrounds, indoor pools, and fitness centres.

I am amazed at the number and variety of walking trails within walking distance of my home. The trails are very easy to follow and well-maintained.

Respondent comment

Figure 4: Frequency in use of Parks, Trails and Open Spaces in 2019

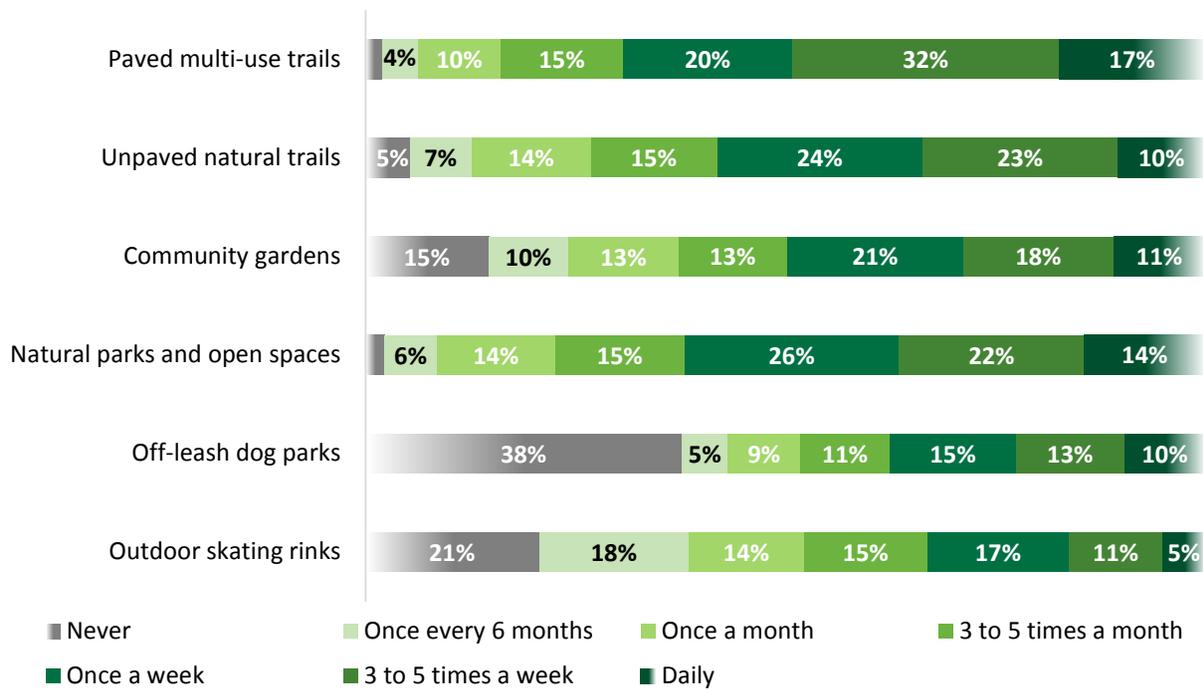
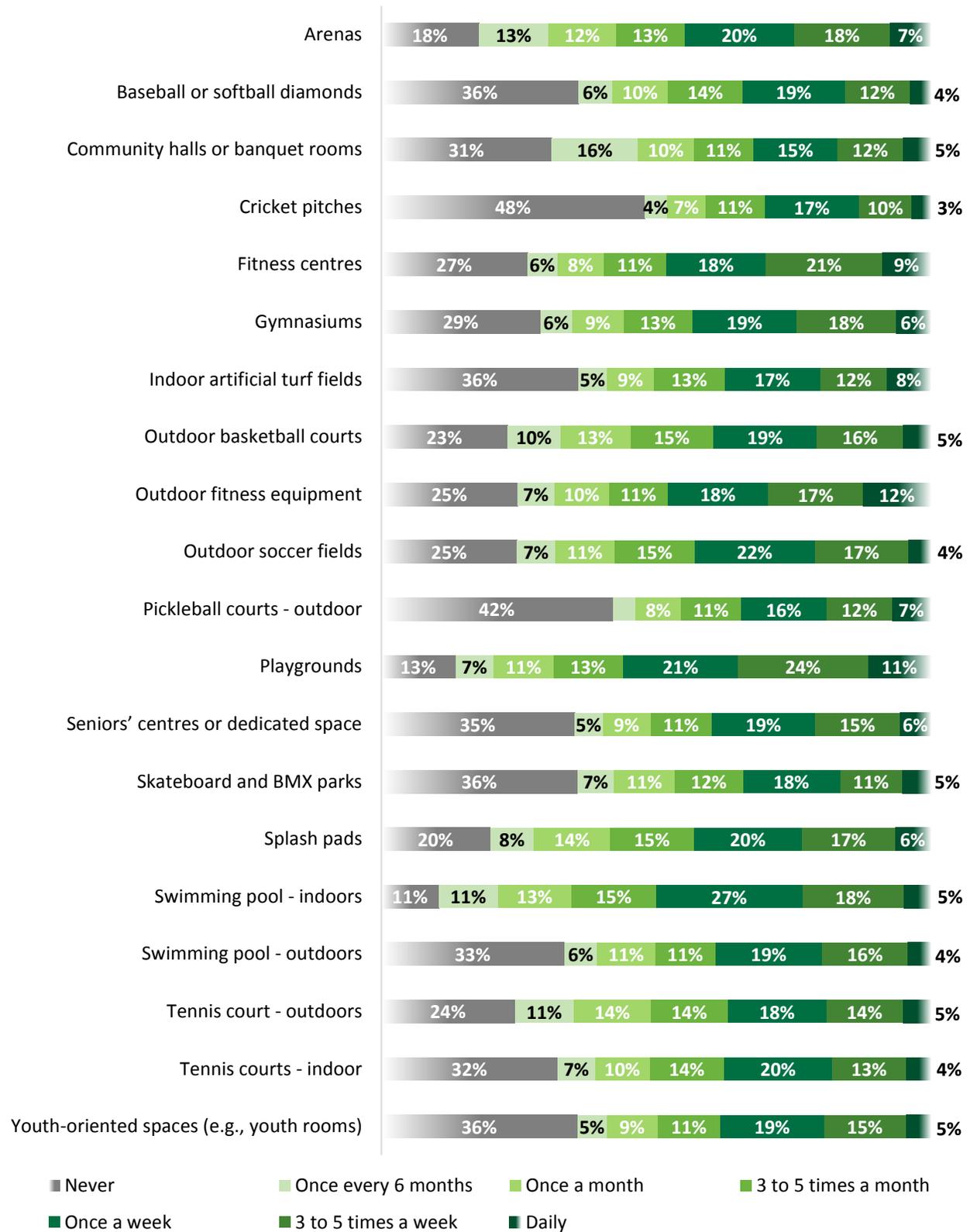


Figure 5: Frequency in use of Indoor and Outdoor Parks and Recreation Facilities



### 5.3 Barriers to Participation in Parks and Recreation Opportunities

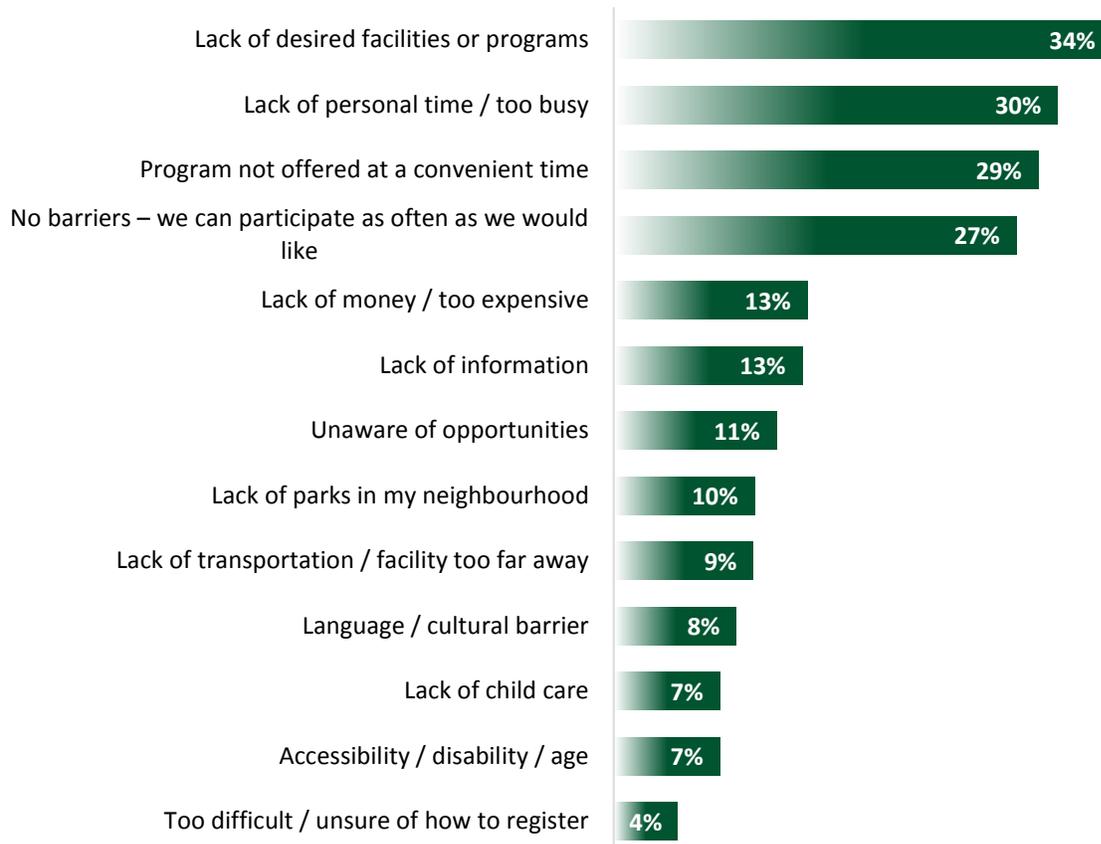
Respondents identified that the lack of desired facilities or programs was the most common participation barrier (34%) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to the survey results for the previous Plans, the most common barrier was lack of personal time/too busy and only 7% of respondents indicated a lack of desired facilities or programs was a barrier. Other common barriers included a lack of personal time/too busy (30%) and programs not offered at a convenient time (29%). A summary of participation barriers identified by respondents is contained in Figure 6. 27% of respondents reported that they did not face any barriers to participating in parks and recreation opportunities.

I have small children I wish I knew there were more parks and festivals geared to their specific age group.

Make your parks and trails more accessible for persons with disabilities.

Respondent comments

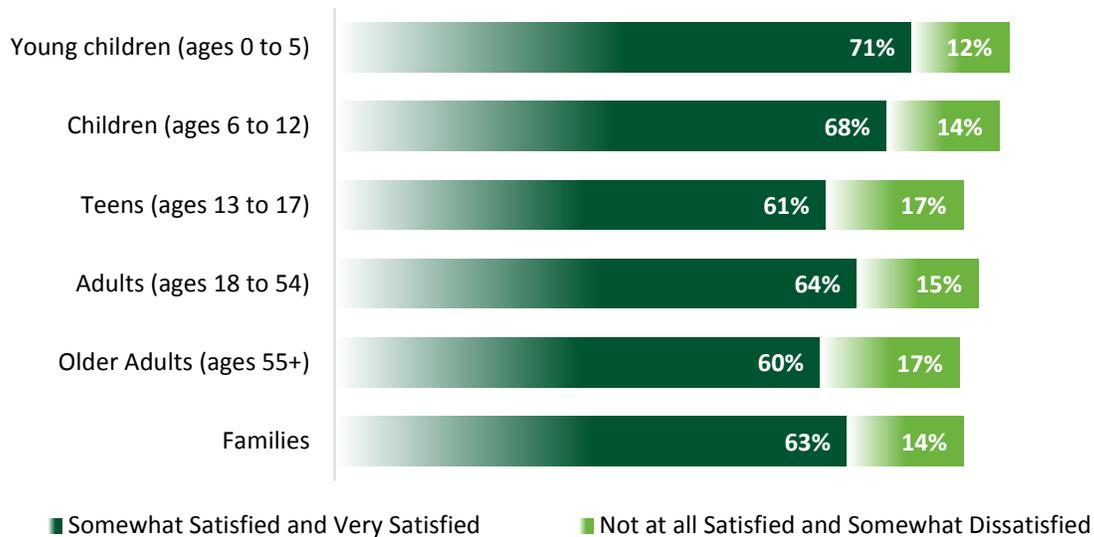
Figure 6: Participation Barriers to Recreation and Park Activities in 2019 (n=1,147)



## 5.4 Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Respondents' level of satisfaction with respect to the City's parks and recreation opportunities by age group is illustrated in Figure 7. Respondents were generally satisfied with opportunities for each age group as satisfaction levels ranged between 60% and 70%. Compared to the survey results for the previous Plans, satisfaction levels increased across all age groups; however, the current findings suggest that there is still room for improvement.

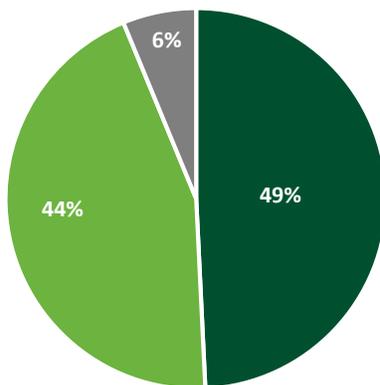
Figure 7: Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation Opportunities by Age Group



## 5.5 Development of Future Parks and Open Spaces

Figure 8 illustrates that 49% of respondents identified that parks and urban open spaces are as important along the City's growing centres and corridors (e.g., Yonge Street and Highway 7), where there are high-rise residential buildings, as they are in the surrounding neighbourhood. 44% of respondents also felt that parks and urban open spaces are more important along these centres and corridors than in the surrounding neighbourhood. 6% of respondents felt that parks and urban open spaces in the centres and corridors are less important compared to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Figure 8: Importance of Parks and Open Space in High Density Areas (n=1,109)



- Parks and urban open spaces are as important along the City's growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings as they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods
- Parks and urban open spaces are more important along the City's growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings than they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods
- Parks and urban open spaces are less important along the City's growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings than they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods

## 5.6 Participation in Arts and Cultural Opportunities

Using a library was the most popular arts and culture activity (64%) among respondents prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Attending a festival or event (53%), attending a play or live performance (47%), visiting a museum (33%) and visiting an art gallery (30%) were also among the top five most popular activities. Compared to the survey results from the previous Cultural Plan, respondents favoured the same opportunities, although participation rates were higher. Figure 9 summarizes respondents' participation in arts and cultural opportunities.

Figure 9: Participation in Arts and Cultural Activities and Programs in 2019 (n=1,114)

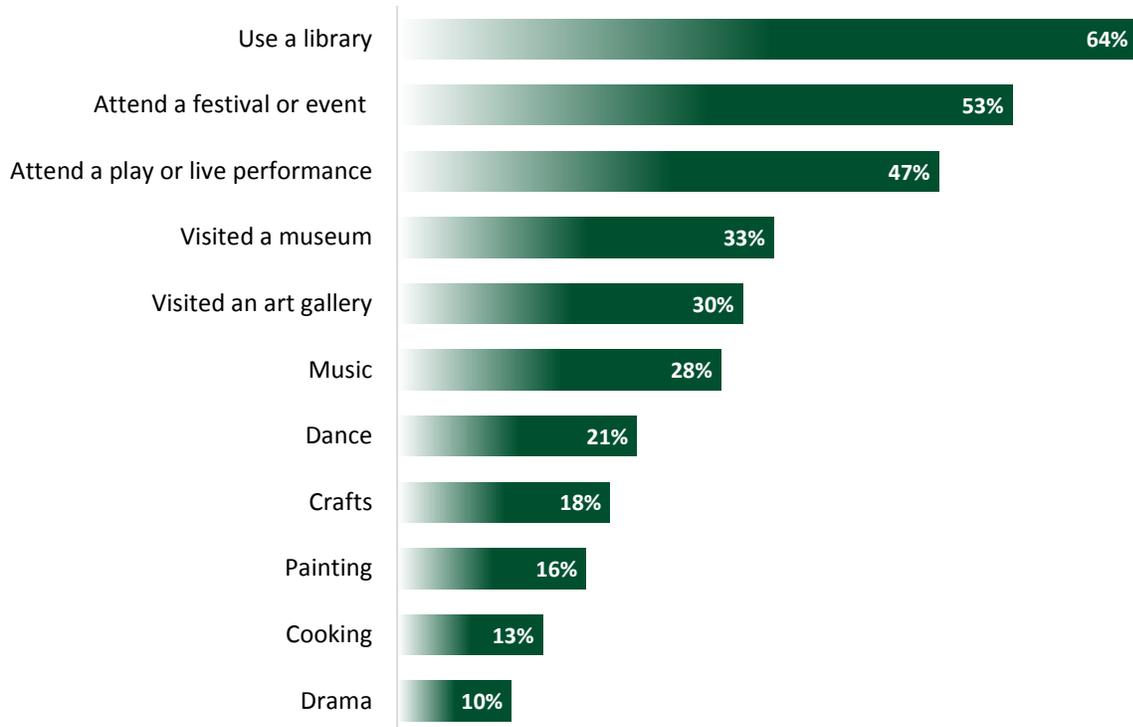


Figure 10 illustrates respondents' frequency of visiting arts and cultural facilities and Figure 11 summarizes frequency of participating in City-run arts and cultural activities. From a facility use perspective, respondents most frequently visited the library about once a week. Participating in a music class was the most common activity, where respondents were likely to attend once every six months. Cooking and dance classes were also popular activities that were frequently attended between three to five times a month and once a week, respectively.

Figure 10: Frequency of Visiting Arts and Culture Facilities in 2019

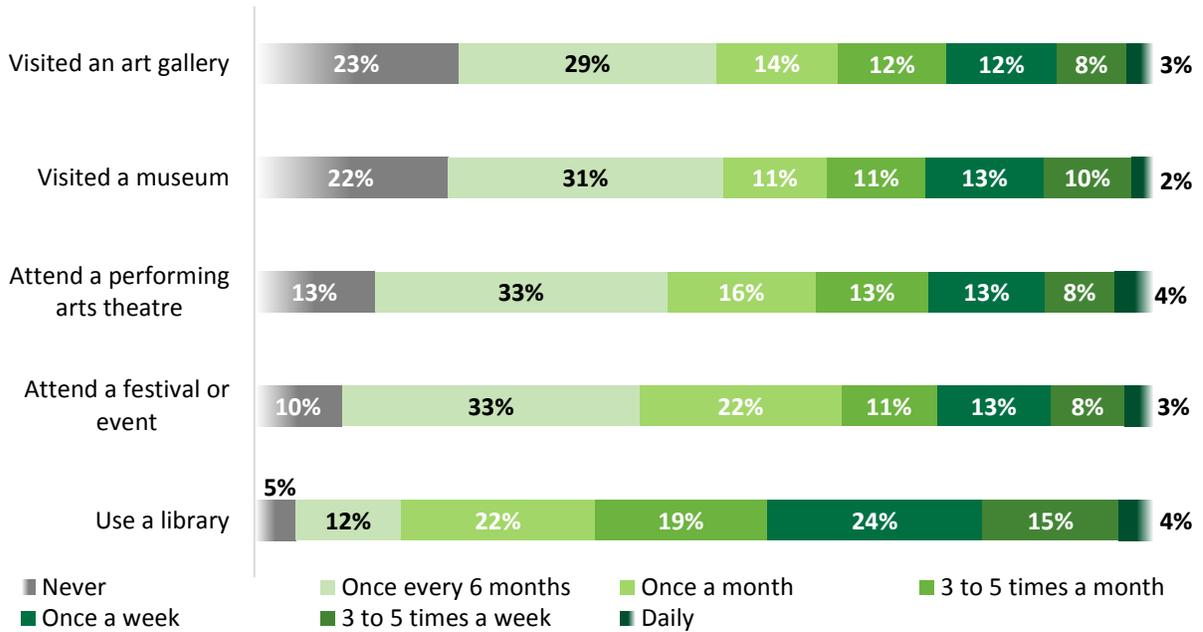
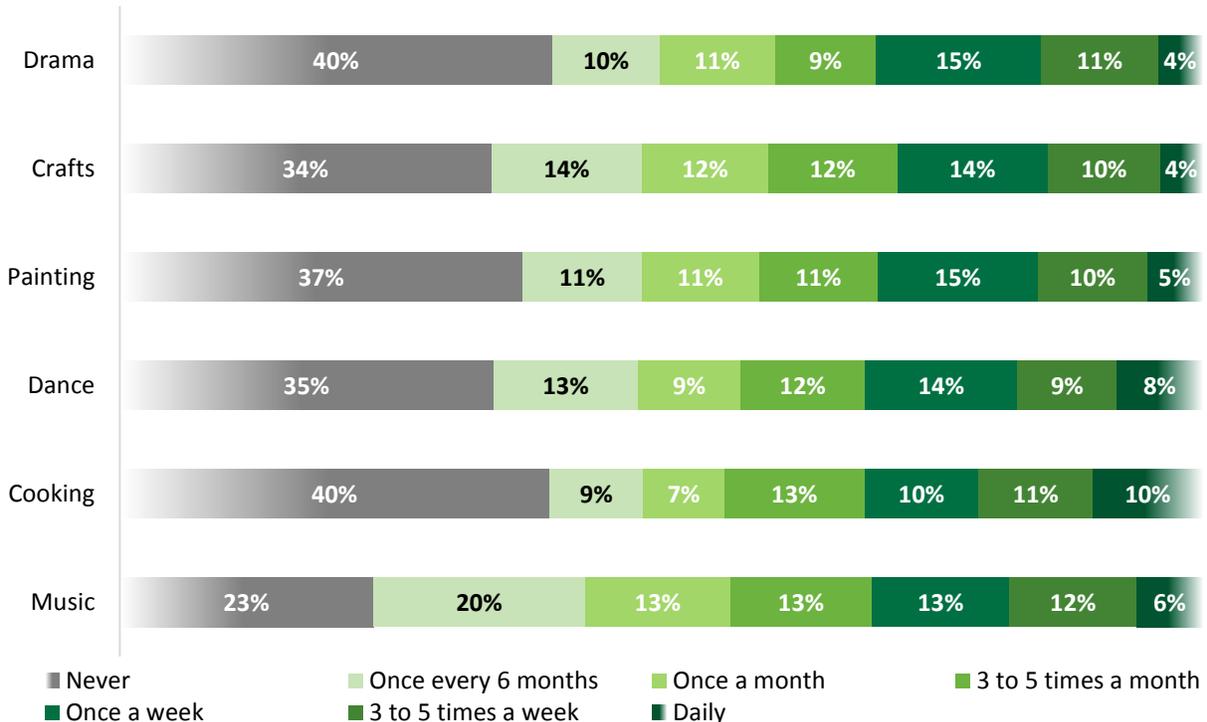


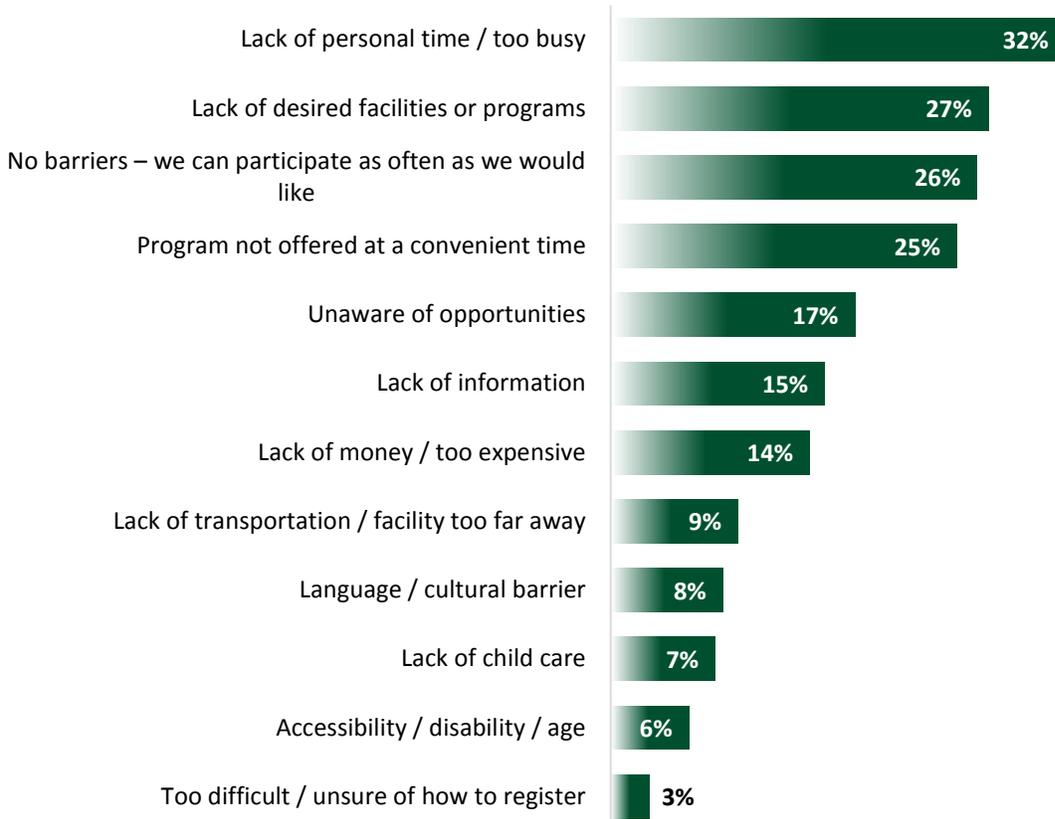
Figure 11: Frequency of Participation in Arts and Culture Activities in 2019



## 5.7 Barriers to Participation in Arts and Cultural Opportunities

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of personal time/too busy was the most common participation barrier for arts and cultural opportunities (32%). Other common participation barriers that respondents faced was the lack of desired facilities or programs (27%) and the program not being offered at a convenient time (25%). Figure 12 contains a summary of participation barriers identified by respondents. It is noted that 26% of respondents identified that they did not face any barriers to participating in arts and cultural opportunities.

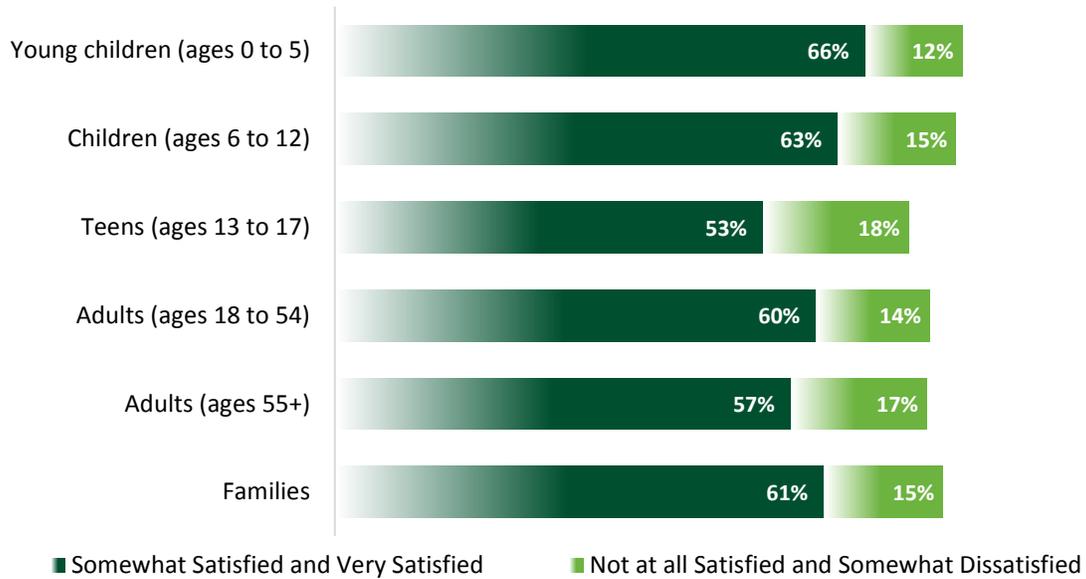
Figure 12: Barriers to Participation in Arts and Culture Activities in 2019 (n=1,114)



## 5.8 Satisfaction with Arts and Cultural Opportunities

Figure 13 illustrates satisfaction levels with arts and cultural opportunities by age group among respondents. Arts and cultural opportunities for teens (ages 13 to 17) had the lowest satisfaction level (53%), while two thirds- (66%) of respondents were most satisfied with opportunities for young children (ages 0 to 5). These findings demonstrate that there are opportunities to improve satisfaction levels among all age groups.

Figure 13: Satisfaction with Arts and Culture Opportunities by Age Group



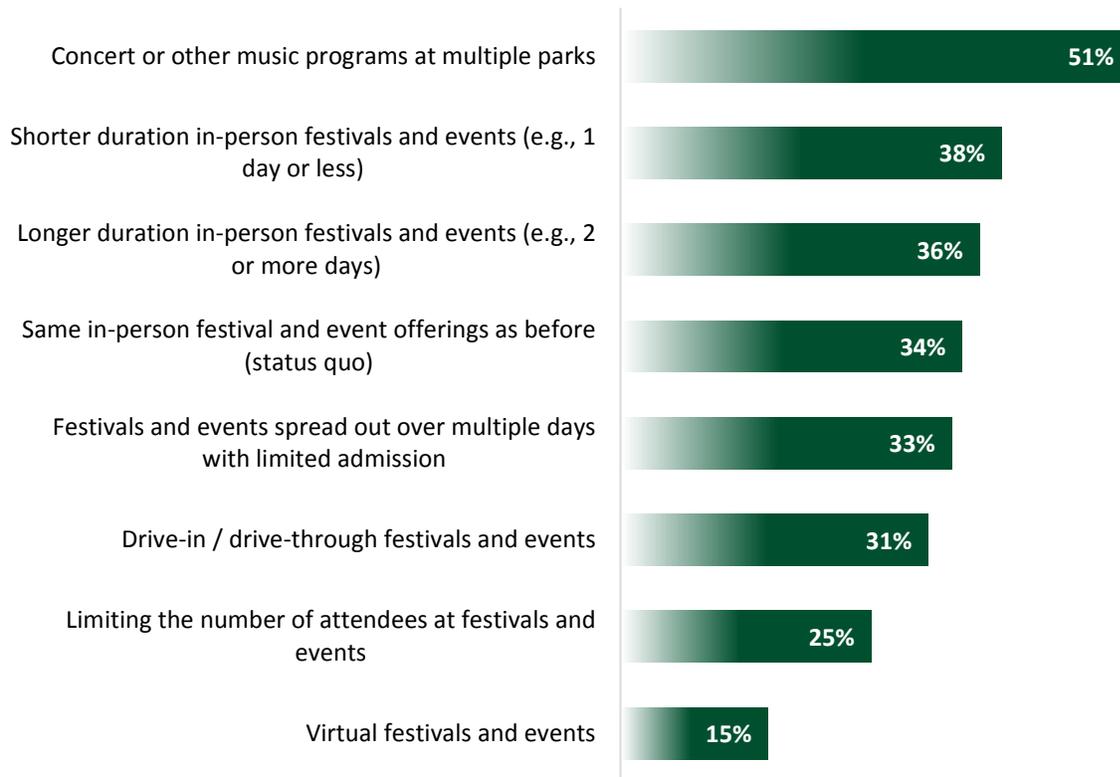
## 5.9 Participation in Future Festivals, Events and Cultural Programs

Approximately half of the respondents (51%) reported a preference for concerts or other music programs held at multiple parks. Preferences for participating in future festivals and events in Richmond Hill is highlighted in Figure 13. Other ideas suggested by respondents included offering smaller, neighbourhood-focused events.

Provide more concerts, events and festivals in the park such as at Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park.

Respondent comment

Figure 14: Preferences for Future Participation in Festivals, Events and Cultural Programs (n=1,110)



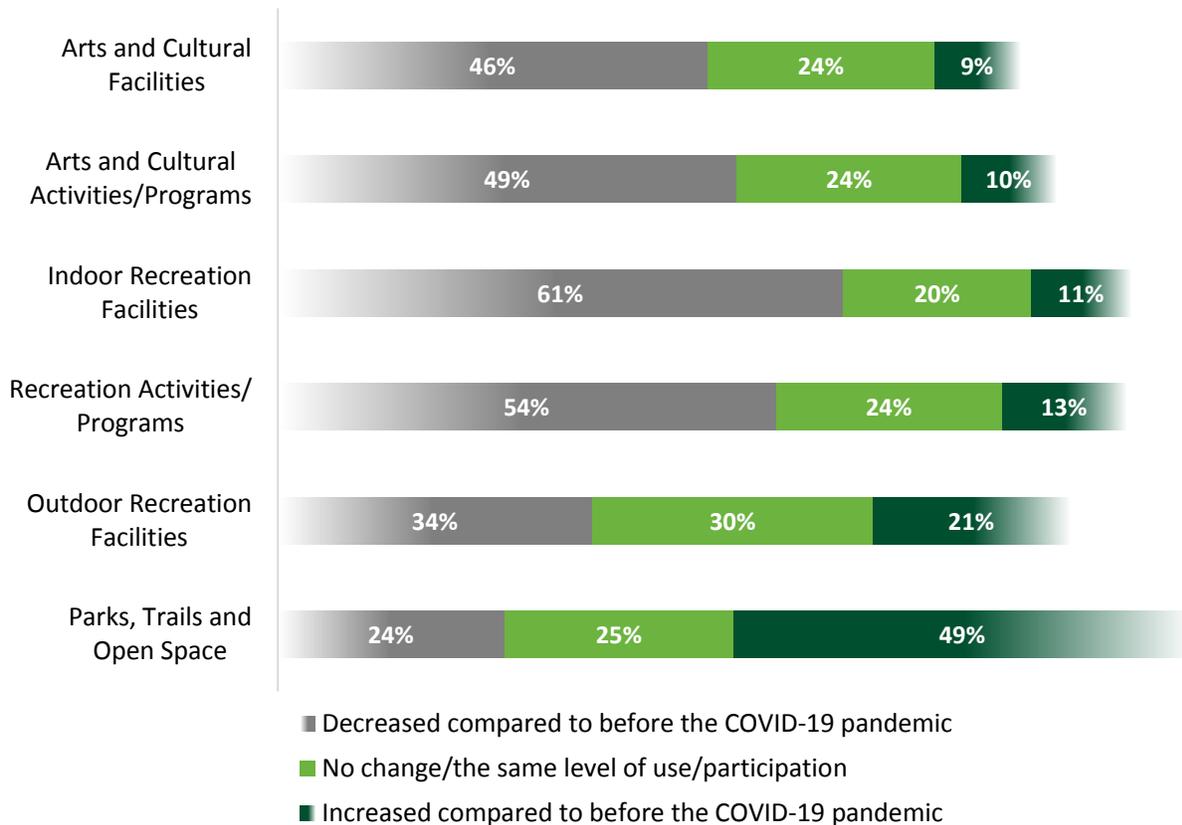
## 5.10 Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Participation in Parks, Recreation and Culture

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way that residents participate in parks, recreation, and culture. The use of indoor recreation facilities had the greatest impact as 61% of respondents reported that their use of these facilities decreased during the pandemic. Half of respondents also indicated that their participation in programming also decreased. These trends were largely due to the facility closures and program cancellations that occurred during the pandemic. By contrast, half (49%) of respondents reported an increase in using parks, trails, and open spaces. A summary of responses is contained in Figure 14.

As a result of COVID, we now see that there are benefits in online programs. I would like to see some fitness classes continue online and perhaps some instructional classes. This would benefit those who have mobility issues, as well as those who want to make the best use of their time or even who aren't in Richmond Hill when the class is offered.

Respondent comment

Figure 15: Impact of COVID-19 on Parks, Recreation and Culture Opportunities



## 5.11 Other Responses

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to provide additional input to be considered in the development of the PRC Plans. Key themes from the input received identified that there is a desire for more parkland and open spaces in Richmond Hill, as well as revitalization of existing parks. Residents expressed the preference for multi-functional and multi-generational parks that offer amenities that can be enjoyed by all age groups. Specific requests were made for parks and recreation amenities including, but not limited to, dedicated pickleball courts, outdoor pool, outdoor fitness equipment, seating, and washrooms. The desire for enhancing the City's trails system was also identified, particularly with respect to paved multi-use pathways to improve connectivity between trails and the broader parks and open space system. With respect to cultural opportunities, requests were for more cultural events such as live music, art and exhibits to embrace the cultural diversity in Richmond Hill.

## 6.0 Key Themes and Findings for Parkland

Based upon the research completed, to date, including the review of background reports, population data, trends, meetings with staff, key informant interviews, and the community survey, this section outlines key themes and preliminary findings that serve as the point of departure for developing the PRC Plans. These themes and preliminary findings will be utilized to inform the development of the Parks Plan and the Recreation and Culture Plan. Additional details including the rationale for the preliminary findings can be found in the Appendix.

### 6.1 Key Themes and Preliminary Findings for Parkland

#### 6.1.1 Parkland to Address Future Population Growth

As the focus of Richmond Hill's growth continues to shift from greenfield development towards intensification within the City's centres and corridors, Richmond Hill's park hierarchy and parkland service levels continue to be appropriate and should be maintained. To address future population growth, an emphasis should be placed on acquiring and developing new parkland, particularly within the growing centres and corridors. This practice should be augmented by the revitalization of aging parkland, particularly those within proximity to centres and corridors, to ensure that they are designed in a manner that responds to current and future needs, as well as a greater intensity of uses. The following key findings are advanced in this regard:

1. Consider broadening the parkland service standard to include a square metres per person standard (in addition to the existing hectares per 1,000 people standard) to provide a greater level of clarity of the provision standard to the public. Also consider using a park catchment area analysis based on the traffic zone (versus the current Concession block approach) to determine park needs.
2. Enhance the City's trail network by further linking together existing and planned parks and trails in a connected system with the City's larger Greenway System, with consideration given to the development of Linear Parks, Urban Squares, streetscape enhancements and other creative strategies. This should be integrated with the active transportation and trail directions emerging from the Transportation Master Plan to inform an Urban Open Space Master Plan.
3. Expand the 2013 Parks Plan to incorporate a planned Urban Open Space Master Plan for Richmond Hill's intensification and infill areas. This system should link residents living in these areas to existing parkland in the neighbourhoods through a series of Linear Parks, Urban Squares, streetscape enhancements and other creative strategies, aiding in creating a clear and transparent expectation for the planned parkland system in these areas.
4. Evaluate opportunities to establish master parks agreements for development within centres and corridors, similar to the approach used for the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area, to ensure parkland obligations are shared equitably amongst landowners.

#### 6.1.2 Responding to Parkland and Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs

Since the 2013 Parks Plan was completed, there have been changes in how people live, work and play, along with how our environment is adapting to the changing climate. Coupled with a growing emphasis on residential intensification, the rising cost of land, and other factors that have resulted in the development of smaller parks, outdoor recreation facility service targets must be revised or reconfirmed to keep pace with these changes and address community demands. In addition, the development of new parks, the revitalization of older parks, and the repair/replacement of existing park facilities provide an opportunity for the City to provide resiliency

enhancements to help our infrastructure mitigate/adapt to the changing climate. As a result, the following key findings should be considered:

5. Reconfirm or revise established service targets for outdoor recreation facilities. The preliminary needs assessments identified the following:
  - a) Adopting a new service target for rectangular fields to recognize that lit artificial turf fields and lit natural fields offer increased capacities compared to unlit natural fields. This approach requires the City to add ten unlit equivalent fields; an emphasis should be placed on developing lit artificial turf fields and senior lit natural fields, as well as improving the existing supply or relocating fields to more appropriate areas to encourage use. This creates an opportunity to work with user groups to identify opportunities to re-purpose under-utilized fields to other passive and/or active recreation uses.
  - b) Adopt a new service target for ball diamonds to recognize that lit ball diamonds offer increased capacities compared to unlit ball diamonds. This approach requires the City to add 8.5 unlit equivalent ball diamonds; an emphasis should be placed on lighting and improving the existing supply or relocating diamonds to more appropriate areas to encourage use. This creates an opportunity to work with user groups to identify opportunities to re-purpose under-utilized diamond to other passive and/or active recreation uses.
  - c) Increase the service target for basketball and multi-use courts, which would require the City to add seven new courts.
  - d) Maintain the existing service target for tennis courts until the Tennis Strategy is updated (which should also consider pickleball court needs). The existing target requires that the City add 13 tennis courts. As part of the implementation of the Tennis Strategy, undertake a data collection exercise to determine tennis court usage levels during daytime, evening, weekend, and weekday with an intended outcome being the identification of courts suitable for multi-use play (e.g., tennis and pickleball) and/or repurposing of underutilized tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts to improve overall court utilization. A fair access policy/procedure should also be part of this review. Depending on the outcome of this analysis, the City should update the Tennis Strategy to be a combined Tennis/Pickleball Strategy.
  - e) Adjust the service target for outdoor fitness equipment to one per major concession block at a minimum, with additional locations to be considered in areas of intensification or to create outdoor fitness circuits between local parks and trails.
  - f) Maintain the service target for splash pads, resulting in the need for three new locations at Bayview Hill Park, David Dunlap Observatory Park and at a future park in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.
  - g) Maintain a service target for skateboard parks, which would require two new locations.
  - h) Maintain the service target for playgrounds to ensure that residential areas are generally within 400-metres walking distance of a playground.
6. Establish new service targets for outdoor recreation facilities to respond to community demands and trends. Preliminary assessments identify additional facility needs including:
  - a) Eight pickleball courts comprised of two new courts in the south and six new courts in central Richmond Hill. Consideration for additional new pickleball courts in north Richmond Hill should be assessed through public consultation processes for new park and revitalization projects.

- b) Three artificial (refrigerated) outdoor skating rinks; the City already has two locations planned and a third location will need to be identified.
  - c) New standards for community and neighbourhood ice applications following an investigation by staff.
  - d) One community allotment garden.
  - e) Four off-leash dog areas (which should be located in or within close proximity to areas of intensification and varying in size).
7. Design higher-order Destination and Community Parks to facilitate year-round use, as well as extended use during the day and evenings with consideration given to outdoor skating opportunities, winter activities, public washrooms, park lighting, and other strategies to optimize the use of outdoor public space. Lighting sports fields and sport courts, as well as developing artificial turf fields may also assist with extending playing periods, while making more efficient use of existing assets.
8. Ensure that parks incorporate passive outdoor space that encourage unstructured play and social gatherings, particularly in parks that are located adjacent to centres and corridors, where residents living in high-density apartments may seek outdoor public spaces for relaxation, leisure, entertainment and more. The placement of park amenities including, but not limited to, seating, shade, walking pathways, landscaping, outdoor fitness equipment, signage, lighting, and other features should be considered in strategic locations to create welcoming and comfortable environments.
9. A climate change lens should be applied to the development and redevelopment of parks to ensure that they are designed with environmental sustainability in mind. Strategies include open space naturalization, planting native species, enhancing tree canopies, establishing pollinator gardens, bioswales, rain gardens, habitat restoration including invasive species management, and other opportunities.

### **6.1.3 Strengthening Parkland Tools**

Richmond Hill has several tools available at its disposal to ensure that the funding, acquisition, planning, design, development, operations and maintenance of parkland is undertaken effectively and efficiently to meet community needs over the planning period. The following key findings are identified to facilitate this:

- 10. Undertake a review the City of Richmond Hill Development Charges By-law and Parkland Dedication By-law to ensure that it is in alignment with the parkland needs identified in the updated Parks Plan and the parkland projects outlined in the Capital Plan.
- 11. Incorporate park and trail assets into the City's EAM and Asset Management Planning approach to identify the repair and replacement of these assets following a lifecycle service-based risk approach for informing Capital Budgets.
- 12. Consider using the Community Benefits Charges By-law to fund a portion of park revitalization and park repair and replacement costs that support the population growth to ensure greater long-term financial sustainability of the City's Reserves.
- 13. Where appropriate, utilize creative solutions to meet parkland needs within centres and corridors, such as partnerships, grants, master parkland agreements, establishing a procedure to guide development-related staging on park blocks, alternative parkland delivery methods such as privately operated public spaces, and other strategies.

## 6.2 Key Themes and Findings for Recreation

### 6.2.1 Developing New Indoor Recreation Facilities

Over the next 10 years, Richmond Hill is expected to face pressure for intensification along designated centres and corridors. It will be important to ensure that the City's existing recreation facilities and community spaces are adequately positioned to respond to the needs of the evolving community within these areas.

Population growth is also expected to occur within Richmond Hill's two remaining greenfield lands. While the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area is expected to draw nearly 5,000 residents by 2031, the North Leslie Secondary Plan is anticipated to accommodate over 15,000 residents during the same period. Future residents within these areas will expect high quality recreation opportunities that residents currently enjoy in other areas of Richmond Hill. With the level of growth anticipated in this area, the analyses revealed a gap in indoor recreation facilities.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool was the most popular municipal facility with strong facility usage and program participation levels. As Richmond Hill emerges from the pandemic, historical usage and participation levels are not expected to return over the short term due to user and participant hesitancy, although the City will be required to closely monitor usage levels and promote opportunities, particularly given that this facility will also serve residents in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area. The following key findings should be considered:

14. The City should continue to monitor recreation facility needs in areas of intensification with consideration given to partnership opportunities with the private sector and development industry. The provision of indoor recreation facilities within or in close proximity to intensification areas should have regard for public access, flexible and sufficiently sized spaces, parking accommodation and other associated amenities.
15. Move forward with the development of the planned North Leslie Community Centre in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area. The new recreation facility should include a single pad arena with the potential to be twinned in the future, indoor aquatic centre, college-size gymnasium, large fitness centre (with equipment, aerobic studio and indoor walking track), dedicated youth and adult 55+ space, multi-purpose program spaces. Recognizing slower than anticipated population growth and adjustments in facility service targets, the future community centre should be constructed towards the end of the planning period (around 2031).
16. Confirm the location for an indoor artificial turf field, including engaging sports field users if needed, and advancing an implementation strategy.
17. Undertake an indoor tennis study to confirm the need for this facility in the West Gormley Community Park.

### 6.2.2 Optimizing the Use of Existing Recreation Facilities

While recreation and community facilities are a reflection of when they were constructed, it is vital that they are assessed from time to time to ensure that they continue to respond to the needs of the community, particularly as trends and interest change over time and as residents continue to age and new people move to the area. Given the high value residents place on public recreation and community facilities, it is prudent that the underutilized spaces are identified and adapted to address emerging opportunities, demands and gaps in services to optimize the use of existing spaces. In this regard, the following key findings have been identified:

18. Re-purpose the undersized fitness centre at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool to address other in-demand needs such as dedicated youth space or adult 55+ space.

19. Discontinue use of the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre for drop-in, programs and events and evaluate alternative uses for this space.
20. In light of a continued decrease in participation, continue to use the indoor bocce courts at the Richmond Green Agricultural 2 building for year-round bocce use as an alternative to constructing a new indoor bocce facility.
21. Undertake an analysis of other single-use facilities as they approach end of life and/or as part of Park Master Plan projects.

### **6.2.3 Enhancing the Delivery of Recreation Services and Programs**

A key goal of every municipality engaged in the delivery/enabling of recreation services is to increase participation in recreation and active pursuits. All actions are focussed on improving delivery of service and engaging the people who participate to best understand their needs. Maximizing participation in safe and welcoming activities will result in stronger and healthier residents, families, and communities. The social, physical, and emotional benefits of participating in recreation and sport are very positive outcomes – every effort must be made to understand needs, assess trends, and continually improve the satisfaction levels of participants through various actions.

It must be stated that Richmond Hill's recreation service delivery system is in a mature state after decades of focussed work to improve service delivery. The City is proactive and is positioned as a strong leader in this field provincially and nationally. Continued efforts will improve physical activity levels of all residents and better include marginalized and underrepresented populations in the development and the delivery of recreation services. Specific emphasis will need to be made to increase the participation rates of females, youth and older adults in recreation as well as to refine policies to keep ahead of trends and community concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant financial and workforce impacts for the Canadian and global arts, culture, entertainment and recreation sectors.<sup>6</sup> Several factors have contributed to these declines, including the in-person nature of the sectors; venue closures, cancelled events, festivals and performances; operating restrictions; and changing consumer preferences for physically distanced, at-home and online activities.<sup>7</sup>

While the ability of businesses to pivot and use digital technologies has alleviated some of the financial pressures and staffing issues, challenges remain, particularly as long-term impacts are not yet clear. The changing nature of work and consumer activities and habits are also unknowns that need to be tracked to understand their impacts. Economic recovery is not linear and similar across all industries. For example, industries that were already restructuring (e.g., newspaper publishers) may not rebound as other culture and arts industries. Similarly, performing arts industries will continue to feel the impact as it may take time before audiences, visitors, and tourists return, and companies can resume operating at the same scale as before the pandemic.

In its April 2021 budget, the federal government earmarked close to \$800 million in specific funding to help rebuild the sectors, complementing the relief programs already in place.<sup>8</sup> The following key findings have been identified to further increase participation and engagement in Richmond Hill:

22. Collaborative, continued and focussed efforts are needed to encourage a greater percentage of the Richmond Hill population inclusive of all age groups in meeting Canada's Physical Activity Guideline (24-Hour Movement Guidelines) to ensure sustained health.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2021001/article/00033-eng.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

23. Investigate opportunities to better connect with youth and adults 55+, potentially with these age cohorts and organizations that support them. Monitoring the use of dedicated youth and adults 55+ spaces is encouraged to identify gaps and areas of improvement. Dedicated staff time may be required to support adult 55+ participating within City spaces.
24. Ensure that underrepresented segments of the population are consulted and fully engaged in meaningful sport and recreation experience. Broaden the definition of marginalized populations to include but not be limited to Indigenous Peoples, residents with diverse cultural backgrounds, girls, women and gender diverse people, persons experiencing low income, the LGBTQI2S+ community, persons with disabilities and new Canadians at a minimum. The review of policies and practices, engagement approaches, adapting and creating new experiences, and staff development and training will be required to strengthen this area of service delivery. Aligning and participating with the City's newly formed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is encouraged - recognizing that a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is planned to be developed in 2022.
25. Review the City's approach to providing recreation programs and opportunities with the goal of maximizing participation and facility utilization. Specific strategies will include undertaking an aquatic programming review to eliminate duplication and continue to provide localized opportunities, studying the impact of the popularity of drop-in programming versus registered programs, establishing a blended fee for all drop-in activities (potentially establishing a "try it" drop-in pass), and auditing sports field usage to better understand how they are utilized.
26. Undertake a review of key policies such as the Community Affiliation Policy and Sports Field Allocation Policy to ensure that they are responsive to the needs of emerging and existing groups, promoting equity and maximizing the use of public assets.
27. Establish performance metrics and set targets to measure outputs, efficiencies and satisfaction levels in the delivery of services provided by the Recreation & Culture Division.
28. Continued implementation of the recently revised organizational structure will remain a key focus. The refined structure is aligned with the needs of a changing community and has created efficiencies by serving like functions and users/user groups within staff units. Reemphasizing a strong Divisional culture, creating learning opportunities and a review of current practices will best serve residents now and into the future.

## **6.3 Key Themes and Findings for Culture**

### **6.3.1 Leadership and Networking Equates to Sustainability and Inclusivity in the Cultural Sector**

The 2011 Cultural Plan introduced opportunities to better connect cultural organizations and industries to address the needs of the City's broader cultural sector. One of the objectives the previous Cultural Plan set out to accomplish was to assist in building connections between the artists, arts and cultural groups and creative businesses. The resulting Cultural Leadership Council assisted in building a platform that bridged the various groups within the cultural sector leading to a better allocation of resources and enhanced innovative activity in the community, all while supporting cultural growth in Richmond Hill. This form of networking also incorporated diverse voices (ethno-cultural communities, youth) to oversee and comment on the implementation of the Cultural Plan.

Continuing to leverage the Cultural Leadership Council and identifying ways to involve the group in municipal decision-making will help to ensure that culture remains a key element of the City's growth and development.

Cities today are increasingly turning to these types of advisory councils to understand how their actions would impact equality and to inform how design and programming would impact different people and communities. With this in mind, the following key findings should be considered:

29. Continue to deliver cultural programming and services through the Recreation and Culture Division in partnership with other departments and stakeholders.
30. Explore different leadership models and revisit the Cultural Leadership Council's Terms of Reference to reflect the outcomes of Richmond Hill's updated Cultural Plan.
31. Bring other municipal staff and divisions to Cultural Leadership Council meetings to provide them with information to assist in understanding cultural crossovers, shared interests and benefits such as cultural recreation programs, opportunities to incorporate / leverage cultural spaces during development processes and integration of heritage elements, and public art into parks planning or Secondary Plan updates.
32. Strengthen leadership capacity of cultural sector individuals and businesses by having the Cultural Leadership Council connect them to skills training opportunities in arts management, business and entrepreneurial skills development, as well as leadership training, marketing, digital media, volunteer recruitment, and management and grant writing workshops.
33. Use the Cultural Leadership Council as an expert roundtable of cultural growth in Richmond Hill and have the Council play a more active role in building interactions and exchanges between ethno-cultural communities, Indigenous communities and Richmond Hill's arts and cultural organizations to develop new programming and funding opportunities.

### **6.3.2 Fostering Growth in the Arts and Cultural Community**

Arts and culture is widely accepted as a key economic driver for communities. In 2019, culture contributed \$27.5 billion to Ontario's GDP. Richmond Hill accounted for 1.49% of provincial culture GDP with contribution of \$428.5 million. These organizations are a vital part of the social fabric of communities promoting inclusion, tolerance and as a source of civic pride.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on both individual artists and organizations in the arts and culture community. Lockdowns have resulted in many organizations cancelling and postponing programs, special events, and festivals. Sales and admission fees of all kinds have all declined leaving many organizations unable to operate. Likewise, opportunities for donations, sponsorships, and fundraisers have slowed dramatically.

Municipalities cannot ignore these realities, and in lieu of cancelling grants many municipalities are reviewing their funding program models to foster a revival in its arts and cultural organizations. As a result, the following key findings should be considered:

34. Conduct a review of the impact of the Community and Cultural Grant Program for the three year period it was active in the community. Identify opportunities to improve and reintroduce the program in 2022.
35. Explore alternative funding models to support arts and cultural community organizations and the provision of public art. Specific models that should be examined include those that require arts and cultural community organizations to integrate programs, events, and activities with other local arts and cultural community organizations or requirements of arts and organizations in sharing space with local arts and cultural community organizations at a reduced cost. Consider using the Community Benefits Charges By-law to fund a portion of public art projects. Consider funding models that support project based initiatives that are funded from the annual operating budget.

36. Share information and contacts with local arts and cultural organizations about existing grants from larger regional, provincial, and national art councils. This may include activities such as supporting awareness of larger regional, provincial and national grants, encouraging joint partnerships for grant applications, and providing content to support applications. Investigate opportunities for sponsorships, business partnerships, etc. (e.g., ArtVest model).
37. Direct engagement of the arts and culture community to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and identify how the City can better support these organizations through the recovery process.

### **6.3.3 The Changing Nature of Arts and Cultural Programming and Events**

Technological changes, together with changing demographics, lifestyles, and interests are impacting the delivery of local programs, festivals and events. The internet and social media have fundamentally changed the way programs, festivals and events are marketed, providing a more effective way to reach target audiences than traditional advertising. Online registration and ticketing are now common across all program and event sizes. In addition, online registrations and ticketing allows for the collection of information on audiences and a better understanding of the effectiveness of marketing tactics.

Program and event goers are also becoming more demanding. They expect more choices, experiences and authentic programming. There is increased demand for activities that have anything to do with food, wine and craft beer. Additionally, hybrid events – those that broaden the appeal of an event by adding complementary activities either in person or in tandem online – are increasing. This helps to grow audiences, give them more ways to spend money, and helps to expand the sponsor pool.

The impact of COVID-19 saw organizers pivot to delivering many experiences through online mediums. A growing number of events are now offering virtual experiences catered to specific audiences. Events such as virtual tours of museums, art exhibits, online music festivals, and workshops have provided opportunities for individuals to stay connected to the arts and culture community.

In Richmond Hill, organizers have followed these trends with several community groups offering online experiences. Additionally, the City has revamped its Programming, Festival and Event Booking process in accordance with emerging best practices from the Province's Reopening Ontario Act. This includes encouraging organizers to go digital, introduce digital registration and double up on experiences where possible. To that extent, the following key findings were identified:

38. Update the Festival and Events Strategy to provide a refreshed vision for the arts and culture sector taking into account the effectiveness of on-line events/activities, including a review of the staffing resources and roles and responsibilities of staff to deliver a three-pronged approach to events (City-led, community-led, and Council-led).
39. Increase the number of regularly held special events to revive the community and neighbourhood spirit. Performance metrics should be developed to measure the success of special events, including attendance numbers and economic impact.
40. Create a framework that clarifies the in-kind service delivery provided by City Staff to effectively manage Council-led Events and align it in part with the implementation of the Council-approved Member of Council Events Policy and the City's policies, procedures, and by-laws where City Staff and/or resources are requested.
41. Increase awareness of and support low-cost access to exhibitions, performances and events, particularly targeting families, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities. This includes assisting these communities in accessing programming online either through the Library or Community Centre computer labs.

42. Examine opportunities to leverage local and regional cultural assets and build capacity among volunteer-based organizations by providing training and assistance to strengthen program planning, management and promotion of cultural opportunities on digital mediums or COVID-19 restricted practices.

### 6.3.4 Optimizing Places and Spaces for Arts and Culture

Another emerging trend in cultural planning is the repurposing of community facilities to better integrate arts, culture, and heritage. This includes the sharing of resources and operation costs with parks and recreation, and better leveraging of strategic partnerships (e.g. with Libraries and For-Profit facilities). In Richmond Hill, it has been suggested that there is a need to review the inventory of existing cultural facilities and the nature of these facilities (from floor plans and programming limitations) to determine if the assets are being used to full potential.

A further consideration in how best to optimize places and spaces for culture is the introduction of outdoor spaces that enable culture to thrive. This can include defined cultural districts, often in downtown areas, which offer a concentration of public art, facilities with arts and cultural programming, commercial cultural industries and entertainment venues and workspaces for artists and creators that make them an integral part of the cultural fabric of the area. In this regard, the following key findings have been identified:

43. Implement the findings of the Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts Review and Implementation Plan to achieve operating efficiencies, improve the theatre experience, and promote and preserve cultural experiences in Richmond Hill.
44. Undertake a feasibility study to create an arts and cultural district to facilitate the attraction of creative individuals and organizations in a central location (Central Library area, Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts area). As a part of this study, opportunities to re-purpose standalone buildings currently being used for arts and cultural purposes should be evaluated, recognizing that some existing spaces may have historical significance that should be preserved.
45. Investigate potential opportunities to expand for-profit arts and cultural opportunities such as film and production in Richmond Hill, potentially through the promotion of the David Dunlap Observatory and other notable sites and landmarks across the City.
46. Evaluate the use of the current Public Art Policy and examine the creation of a Public Art Master Plan.
47. Revisit the recommendations of the Museum Feasibility Study that proposed either an expanded facility in a new or renovated building sufficient in size to accommodate a number of multipurpose spaces for exhibitions and larger programming capacity or a new Heritage Museum and Cultural Centre either at the Library/Civic Centre site or another undeveloped City owned site.
48. Continue the working group with the Richmond Hill Public Library to identify areas that Recreation and Culture can be integrated into Library facilities and programming.