

*Clarington*

# Municipality of Clarington

## Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan

March 2024

DRAFT

*mbpc*  
**Monteith♦Brown**  
planning consultants

**tra.**  
TUCKER-REID & ASSOCIATES

 **Watson  
& Associates**  
ECONOMISTS LTD.

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Community Engagement Strategy .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Public Open Houses .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Enhancing Indoor Recreation Facilities .....	4
2.2 Enhancing Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Facilities .....	4
2.3 Enhancing Cultural Facilities, Libraries and Museums .....	5
2.4 Enhancing Programs and Services .....	5
<b>3. Community Survey .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Survey Respondent Profile .....	6
3.2 Participation in Parks, Recreation and Culture Activities .....	6
3.3 Requests for Parks, Recreation and Culture Activities .....	8
3.4 Participation Barriers .....	8
3.5 Use of Clarington Library, Museum and Archives .....	9
3.6 Importance and Satisfaction Levels .....	12
3.7 Support for Additional Spending .....	13
3.8 Level of Agreement on Parks, Recreation and Culture Statements .....	15
3.9 Other Survey Comments .....	15
<b>4. Stakeholder Focus Groups .....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1 Arts and Cultural Groups .....	16
4.2 Baseball and Slo-Pitch Groups .....	17
4.3 Bowmanville Older Adult Association .....	18
4.4 Conservation Authorities .....	19
4.5 Durham Region .....	19
4.6 Firehouse Youth Centre .....	21
4.7 Indoor and Outdoor Sports and Recreation Groups .....	21
4.8 Indoor Sports and Recreation Groups .....	22
4.9 Parks Organizations .....	23
4.10 School Boards .....	24
<b>5. Advisory Committee Meetings .....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1 Accessibility Advisory Committee .....	24
5.2 Active Transportation and Safe Roads Committee .....	26
5.3 Agricultural Advisory Committee .....	26
5.4 Community Hall Boards .....	27
5.5 Diversity Advisory Committee .....	28
5.6 Heritage Advisory Committee .....	29
5.7 Clarington Library, Museum and Archives Board .....	29

**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
**Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report**

5.8 Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee .....	30
<b>6. Staff Workshops .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>7. Council Interviews .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>8. Next Steps .....</b>	<b>36</b>

**Limitations**

This Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report was prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. and Tucker-Reid & Associates (herein referred to as “the Consulting Team”) for the account of the Municipality of Clarington. The material in this report reflects the Consulting Team’s best judgment in light of the information available to it at the time of preparation. Any use which a third party makes of this report, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of such third parties. The Consulting Team accepts no responsibility for damages, if any, suffered by a third party as a result of decisions made or actions based on this report.

DRAFT

Community engagement is critical to the success of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (Master Plan). The perspectives of residents, stakeholders, and Municipality staff and Council are important elements in the development of strategies to address current and future needs. This document provides an overview of community input received through the planning process to date. The Municipality has reached out to Indigenous Peoples to provide input on the development of the Master Plan. The invitation to provide input will remain open throughout the planning process and the Municipality will continue to share information about the project as it becomes available.

Additional consultation sessions will be held once the draft Master Plan has been developed to test preliminary directions and receive feedback prior to finalization. Additional staff interviews and engagement sessions may also need to be made to support the Organizational Structure and Staffing Review, which is being undertaken as a concurrent process.

**The information and suggestions presented throughout this report should not be interpreted as recommendations. Community input has not been altered even in instances where comments incorrectly reflect the Municipality of Clarington's or Clarington Library, Museum and Archives (CLMA) actual policies, practices, or level of provision. Some facility needs suggested by the community may already be addressed through the future South Bowmanville Recreation Centre.**

**It should also be recognized that the requests and suggestions expressed by residents, stakeholders and staff may not result in recommendations. The comments collected from these community engagement sessions will be considered with other inputs, including local demographics, population projections, trends, current inventory, and usage data as part of the analysis that will be undertaken in the next phase to identify community needs.**

## **1. Community Engagement Strategy**

A Community Engagement Strategy was created that outlined the consultation activities planned to collect input from residents, stakeholders, Municipality and CLMA staff, Council, and other representatives to make their voices heard.

A project webpage was created on Clarington Connected and the Master Plan was promoted through a Council Briefing Note, radio interviews and commercials (including Spotify advertisements), media press release, posters and pop-up banners, bookmark handouts, calendar event listings, digital signage promotion, print advertisements, including in the Clarington Connected newsletter that was mailed to all residents in the Municipality, word of mouth, a robust social media campaign, and more.

**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
**Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report**

The following consultation activities were held. Each technique has been proven to be an effective, accessible, and efficient method of communication and deliberation. Additional public consultation will be held once the draft Master Plan is available for public review and feedback.

- Public Open Houses (4 in-person and 1 online, with approximately 200 direct engagements with individuals)
- Community Survey (3,203 survey submissions)
- Stakeholder Focus Groups (10 sessions, 31 groups)
- Advisory Committee and Board Meetings (6 advisory committees and 2 boards)
- Staff Workshops (2 workshops, 55 staff)
- Council Interviews (Mayor and 6 Councillors)
- Written Submissions (6 received as of February 2024)

Common themes heard through the consultation activities are highlighted below in no particular order:

- Clarington's parks, recreation and culture system is viewed as a strength of the community that attracts new residents, visitors and economic development to the Municipality and it should continue to be a high priority.
- Access to parks and open spaces is important and there are opportunities to strengthen connections with nature through the development of Camp 30 and the Bowmanville Zoo. Connecting these lands with the Municipality's broader parks and trails system, including to the rural area, valleylands and waterfront, also needs to be considered. Creating a looped trail around Bowmanville, known as the "circle of green" was expressed.
- The Municipality's waterfront is highly valued by the community and there is potential for enhancement to encourage greater use such as passive recreation opportunities, including trails and outdoor spaces for special events and performing arts, and more.
- Emphasis should be placed on maximizing the use of existing parks, recreation, and cultural facilities, which may require consideration for park or facility renewal or enhancement.
- As population growth occurs, there is a need to ensure that Clarington's parks, recreation, and culture system expands to respond to community needs and public expectations. This will also result in staffing and financial needs, as well as municipal support for community organizations, service providers, and community facility operators to ensure they are successful such as direct funding, pursuit of grants, volunteerism, promotion, and awareness and more.

**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report

- The community is proud of all the services and resources that the CLMA provides such as the food pantry, borrowing library, and social services. There is support for updating the Bowmanville branch to better respond to trends such as the demand for study rooms and makerspaces. Library services to serve the rural area of the Municipality was also suggested, and consideration should be given to incorporating library spaces as part of multi-use community centres, such as what is currently offered at the Courtice Community Complex. Enhanced library services in the rural area were suggested, including establishing a bookmobile.
- There is a desire for the Municipality to offer more popular recreation activities at convenient times that work for families to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in registered programs.
- There is a strong desire for casual, unstructured activities for residents of all ages.
- Requests were made for more facilities including, but not limited to, indoor pools and ice pads, indoor artificial turf fields, pickleball courts, cricket pitches, gymnasiums, youth drop-in space in the rural area, off-leash dog parks, squash courts, outdoor fitness equipment, program and sensory rooms, indoor walking tracks, performing arts space, and more.
- Parks, recreation, and culture facilities, programs, and services should be accessible to persons with disabilities and inclusive of all residents, regardless of age, ability, income, background, and orientation.
- Clarington's natural heritage spaces and local history is an important part of the Municipality's identity and their protection and preservation need to be considered. Promoting their enjoyment is encouraged, although it should be done in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on the environment.



## 2. Public Open Houses

Public open houses were held in November and December 2023, including four in-person sessions in Courtice, Bowmanville, Newcastle and Orono, as well as a virtual session for residents who were unable to attend the in-person sessions. In total, there were approximately 200 direct engagements with individuals. Each in-person session was scheduled over a two-hour period, but in most cases, the timing of open houses was extended due to the volume or interest.



The purpose of the sessions was to raise awareness about the Master Plan and encourage residents to get involved in the planning process by completing the community survey. Residents were also invited to provide their initial input on how we can enhance parks, recreation, and culture in Clarington. Through the consultation process, written input was also received. This section highlights key themes from the comments received through the open houses and written input.

### 2.1 Enhancing Indoor Recreation Facilities

Residents expressed the desire to enhance Clarington's existing facilities such as improving and updating washrooms, showers, and larger family change rooms, and ensuring that audio and visual equipment in the Municipality's facilities are functioning. Renovating the Orono and Newcastle Arenas was also suggested. Requests for new or more indoor recreation facilities was also identified, including indoor pickleball courts, indoor pool, indoor walking track, squash courts, indoor artificial turf fields, arenas (a comment opposed to more arenas was also received), multi-purpose program space, fitness centre and studio space, and squash courts. A suggestion was made to create community hubs that centralize a variety of civic amenities and services at one location.

### 2.2 Enhancing Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Suggestions to enhance Clarington's parks and trails were identified, including winter trail maintenance (although the use of salt should be avoided), invasive species management in parks and valleylands, and developing the Bowmanville Zoo lands. There is a desire for more trails, with specific requests for more connections in the north end of Courtice, as well as strengthening north to south connections to draw residents to the waterfront; ensuring that there are continuous linkages and to avoid crossing

major roads. Refurbish the Bowmanville Marina and providing a community board within parks was also suggested.

With respect to outdoor recreation facilities, suggestions were made to improve the quality of soccer and football fields, as well as to provide sports more fields. The need for a range of outdoor recreation facilities was suggested, including BMX pump track, skate park (including upgrading existing locations), pickleball courts (including resurfacing the courts at Orono Park), ball diamonds, basketball courts, cricket pitch, watercraft rentals, off-leash dog park, outdoor skating rinks, and park amenities such as seating, shade, and ping pong tables. The need for a playground in south Courtice was also mentioned, as well as developing the Courtice waterfront.

### **2.3 Enhancing Cultural Facilities, Libraries and Museums**

Support for more library space was heard and it was mentioned that new library facility space should be combined with a multi-use community facility. The desire for makerspace at in the Bowmanville and Newcastle library branches was suggested, and a comment was also made for a museum in Courtice to bring more awareness to local history.

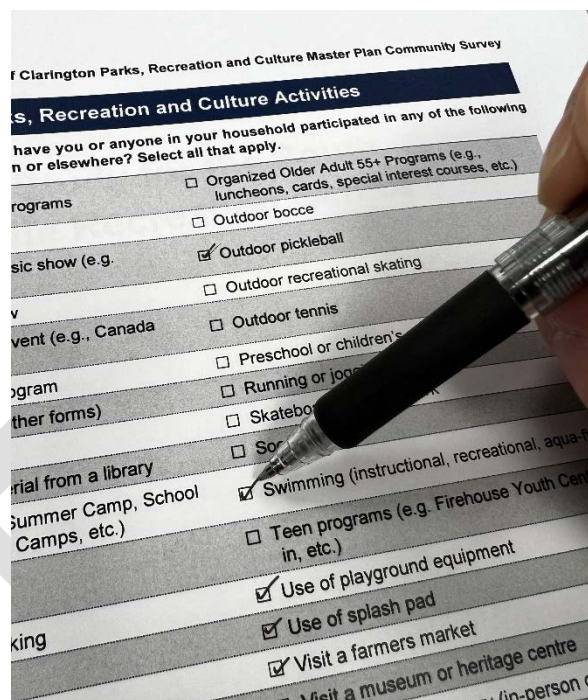
### **2.4 Enhancing Programs and Services**

To improve parks, recreation, and cultural programs and services, suggestions were made to expand the variety of activities that are offered for key age groups such as children and youth, and adults 55+. More swim classes were suggested, including during the daytime and for adults. Concerns were raised about challenges with registering for popular programs due to high demand but limited availability. Fitness programs and pickleball activities were also requested.



### 3. Community Survey

A community survey was conducted in late fall 2023 to collect input about participation preferences and barriers, satisfaction levels and priorities related to parks, recreation, and culture opportunities. The community survey was available to complete online or by hardcopy and it was promoted through the project webpage, social media, print media, public events, newspaper, and radio advertisements, through community stakeholders, word of mouth, and more. A total of 3,203 surveys were received and analyzed, representing over 8,500 people across all age groups. As a voluntary, self-directed survey, respondents were not required to answer every question and the results are not necessarily representative of the entire Municipality as the respondents were not randomly selected.



#### 3.1 Survey Respondent Profile

The following is a high-level summary of the survey respondents.

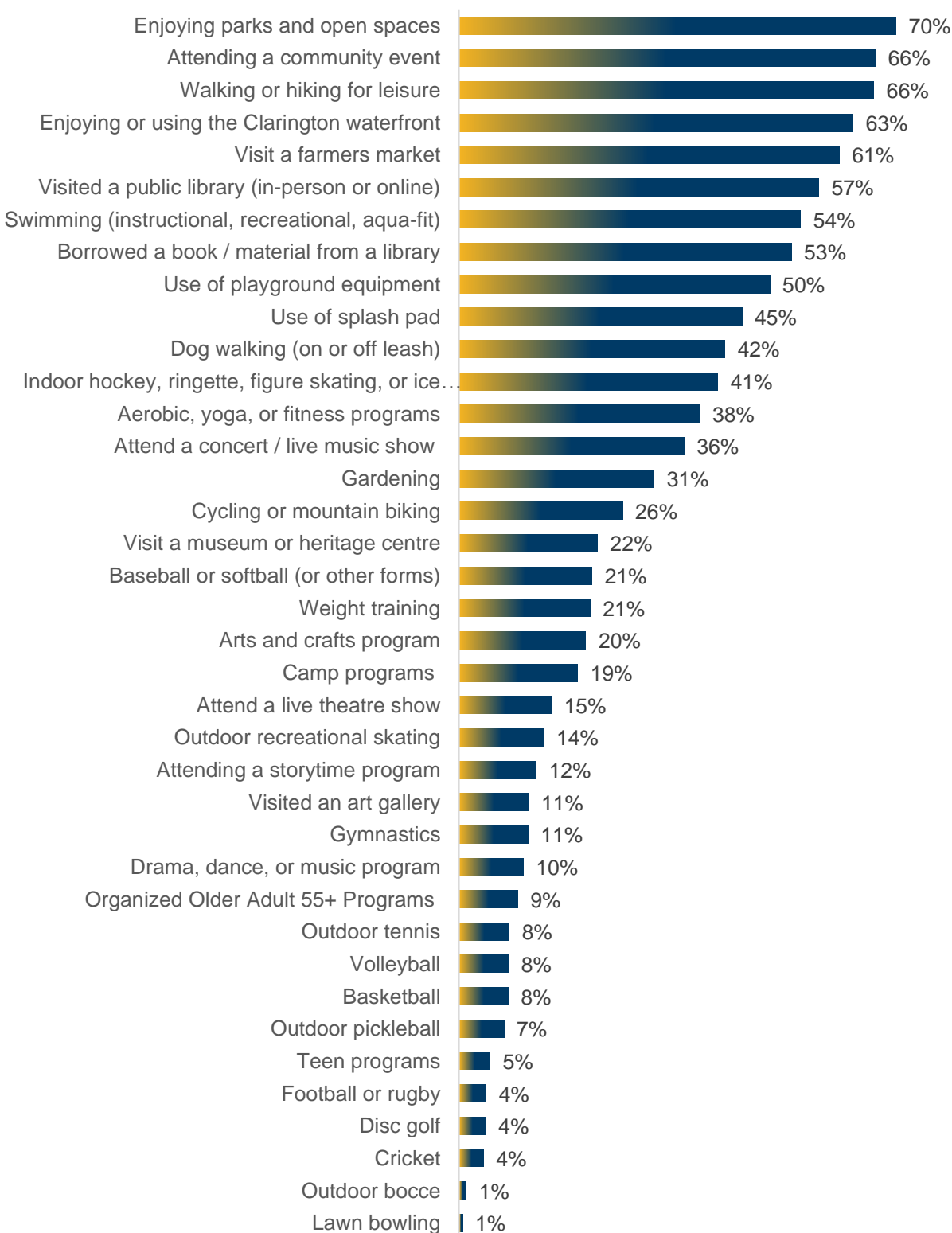
- The median age of the survey respondent was 47 years (2021 Census Median Age: 39.2 years)
- Households with children were more likely to complete the community survey.
- More than half (51%) of survey respondents were Bowmanville residents, 24% were from Courtice and 13% were from Newcastle. The remaining 11% were from the rural area and less than one percent were non-residents.

#### 3.2 Participation in Parks, Recreation and Culture Activities

Enjoying parks and open spaces (70%) was identified as the most popular activity respondents participated in over the past five years. Other popular activities that were identified included attending a community event (66%), walking, or hiking for leisure (66%), enjoying or using the Clarington waterfront (63%), and visiting a farmers' market (66%). What's common among these top activities is that they are all unstructured and self-scheduled activities, which is consistent with broader participation trends. These activities rank highly as they appeal to wide interests and age groups. Other recreation activities and sports ranked lower as they tend to be played by a sub-set of the community.

**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
**Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report**

**Figure 1: Participation in Parks, Recreation and Culture Activities in the Past Five Years (n=3,188)**



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

### 3.3 Requests for Parks, Recreation and Culture Activities

Respondents had an opportunity to identify what parks and recreation activities they would like to see offered in the Municipality through an open-ended comment. The most common requests were for more swimming programs, indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, outdoor skating rink or trails, indoor walking track, outdoor trails, cricket field, and fitness activities (e.g., yoga and Zumba).

Similarly, survey respondents identified what arts and cultural opportunities they would like to see offered in Clarington through an open-ended comment. The most common requests were for a performing arts space for theatre and concerts, and more art classes for painting, pottery, and cooking. Performing arts classes were also suggested such as dance, as well as programs and activities about Indigenous Peoples.

### 3.4 Participation Barriers

One-third (33%) of survey respondents identified that they are not able to participate in parks, recreation, and culture activities as often as they would like. This is common in many communities as people lead increasingly busy lifestyles and it is a barrier that municipalities have little control over. Other top barriers that were identified included the lack of desired facilities or programs (29%), programs not offered at a convenient time (29%), and lack of information or being unaware of opportunities (25%). More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents identified that they have no barriers to participation. This is consistent with other municipalities although it varies depending on many factors such as local community demographics and the levels of service currently being provided, as well as the sample of survey respondents given that these surveys are not representative of the entire community.

Figure 2: Participation Barriers in Parks, Recreation, and Culture Activities (n= 3,203)

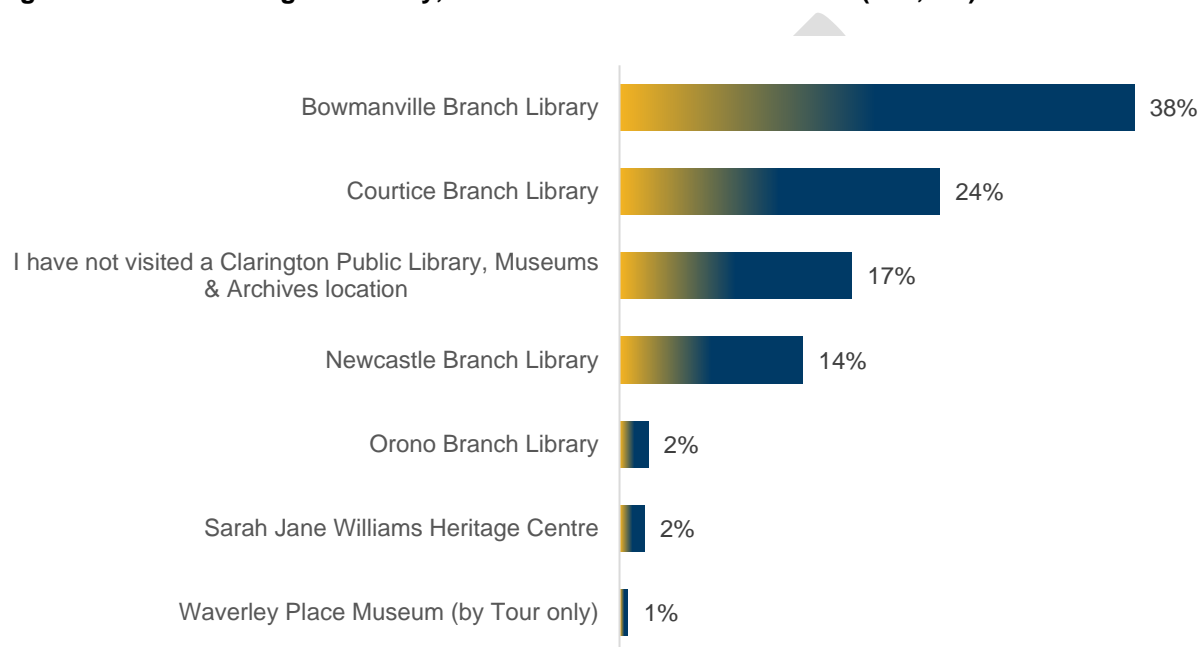


Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

### 3.5 Use of Clarington Library, Museum and Archives

More than one-third (38%) of survey respondents reported that they have visited the Bowmanville Branch Library the most in the past five years. This was followed by the Courtice Branch Library (24%) and Newcastle Branch Library (14%); 17% of respondents reported that they have not visited any CLMA location in the past five years.

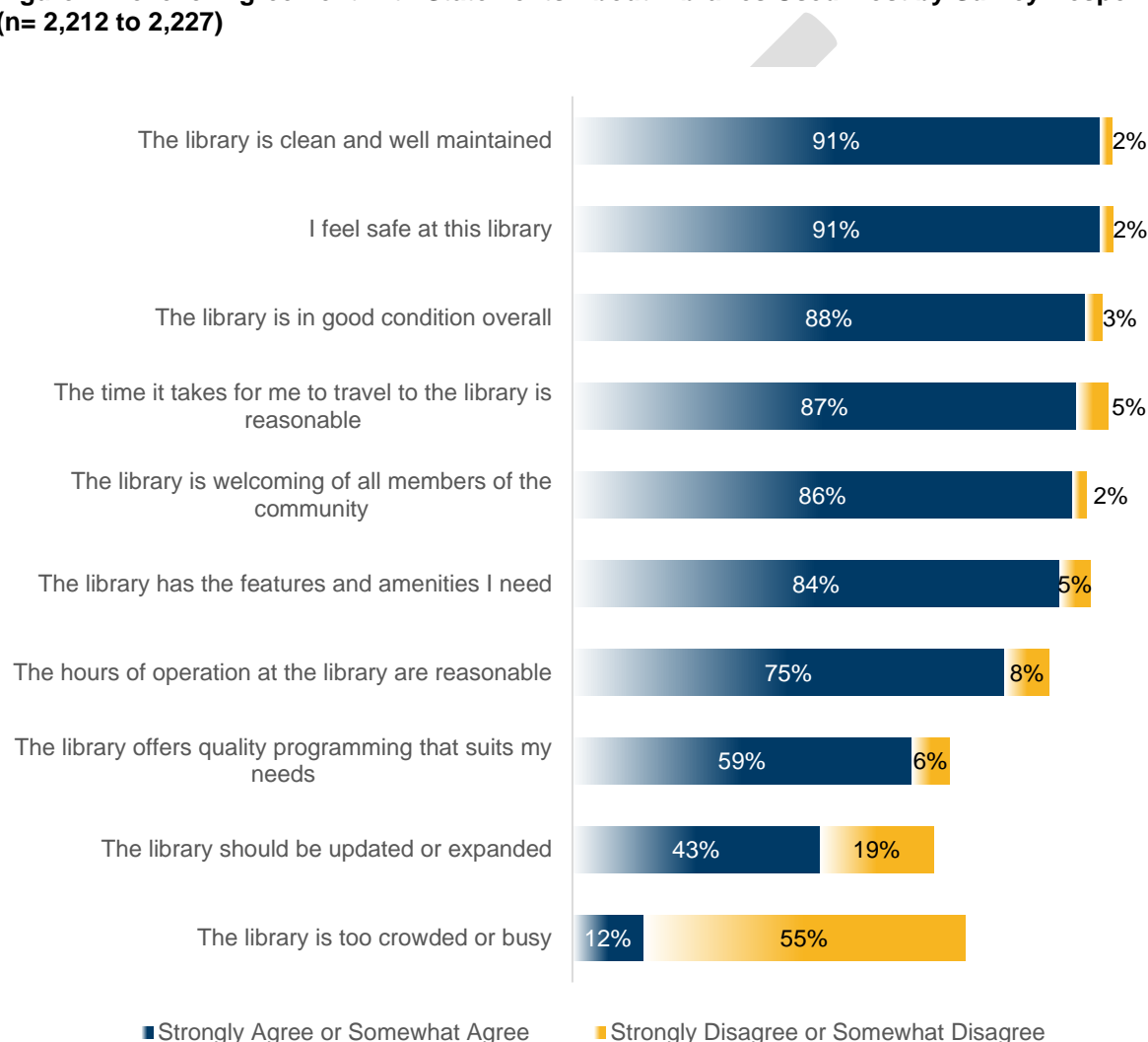
Figure 3: Use of Clarington Library, Museums & Archives Locations (n=2,859)



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

Thinking about the library location that survey respondents used the most, they were asked to rate their level of agreement with various aspects about the facility, which is summarized in the following figure. Four out of five respondents felt that the library branch they used the most was clean and well maintained (91%), they feel safe (91%), the library is in good condition (88%), the time it takes to get to the library is reasonable (87%), the library is welcoming (86%), and the library has the features and amenities that respondents need (84%).

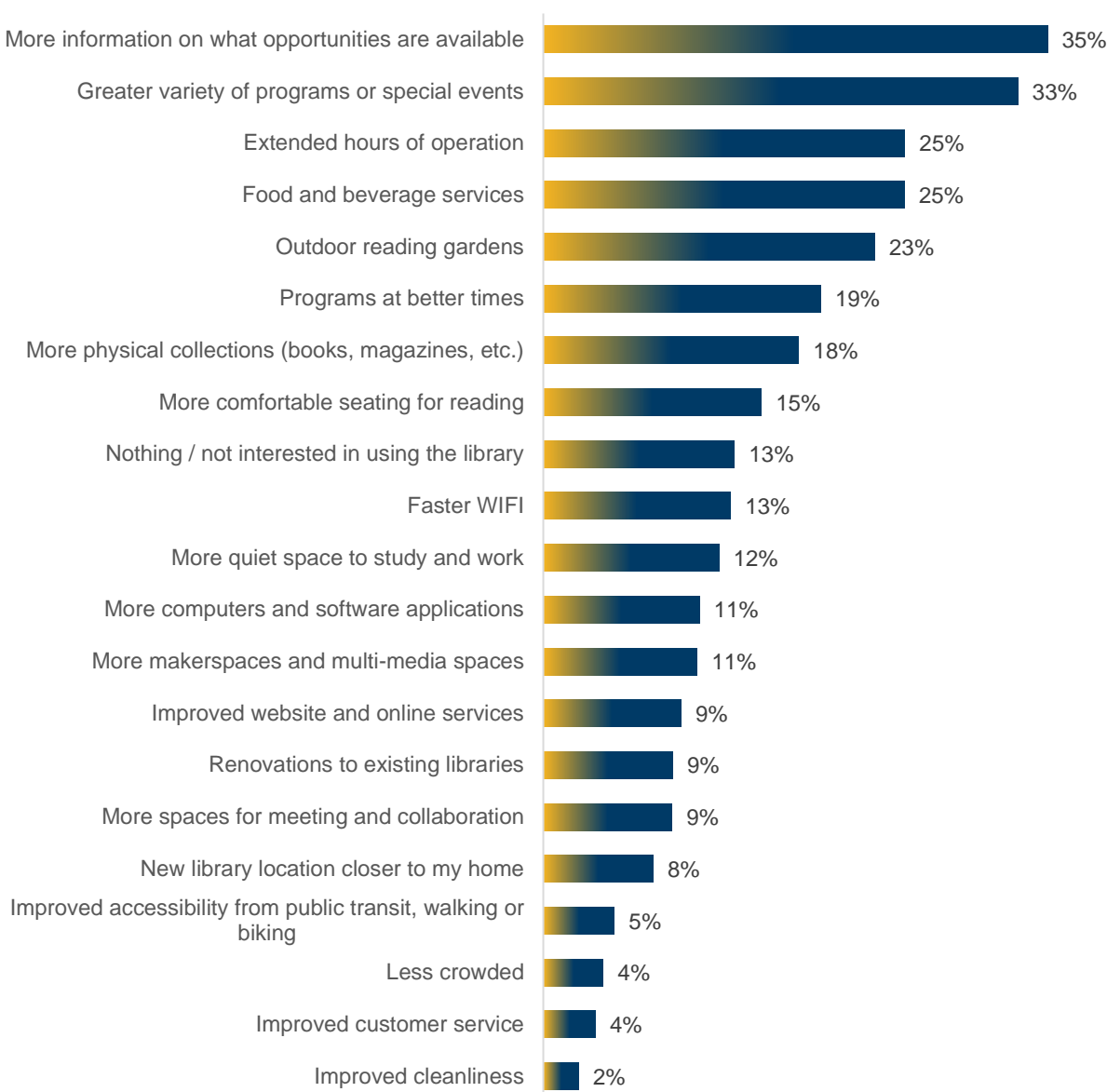
**Figure 4: Level of Agreement with Statements About Libraries Used Most by Survey Respondents (n= 2,212 to 2,227)**



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

Respondents identified suggestions on what would encourage them to use CLMA facilities more. More than one-third of respondents suggested that there should be more information on what opportunities are available (35%) and there should be a greater variety of programs or special events (33%). One-quarter of respondents suggested having extended hours of operation (25%), food and beverage services (25%) and outdoor reading gardens (23%), and one-fifth suggested programs at better times (19%). Other comments that were submitted included suggestions for free parking at Bowmanville library branch location.

**Figure 5: What Would Encourage Respondents to use the Clarington Library, Museums & Archives more (n=2,595)**

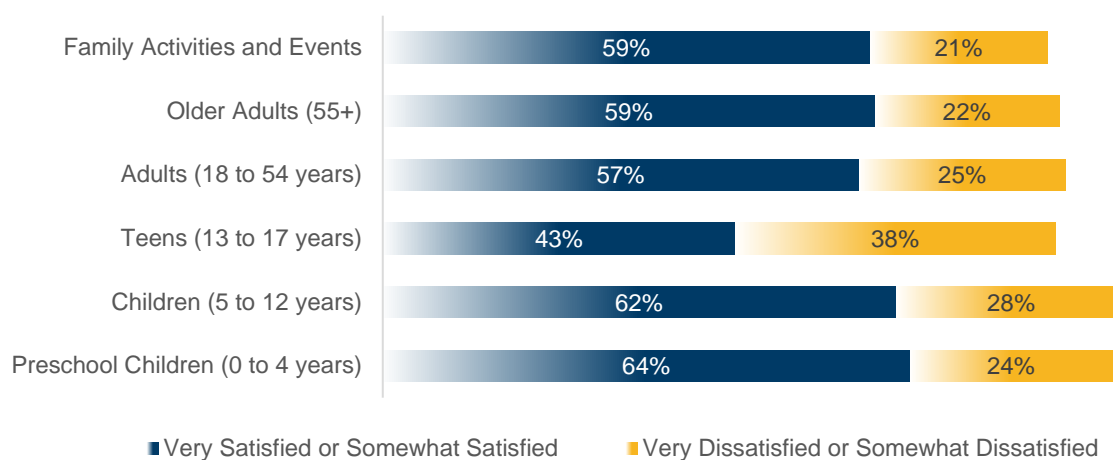


Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

### 3.6 Importance and Satisfaction Levels

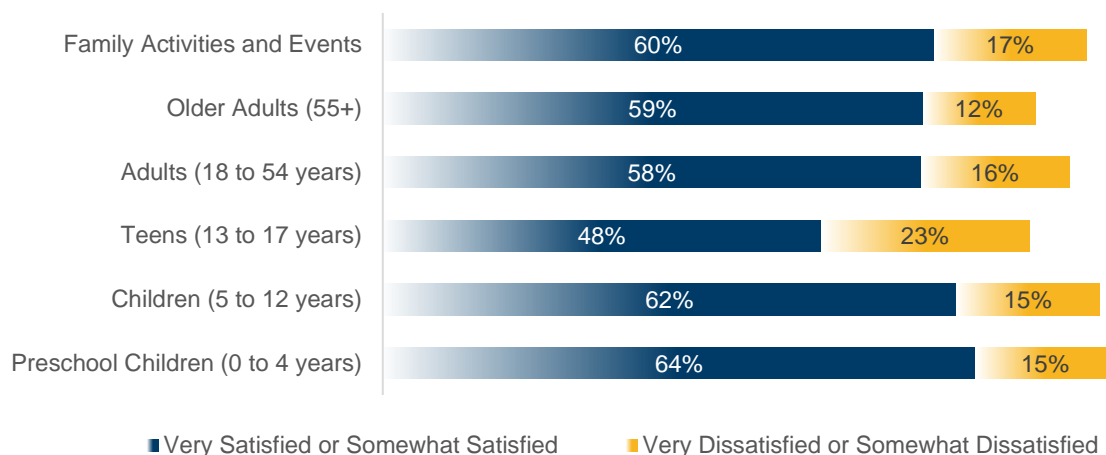
Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with Clarington’s parks and recreation opportunities, as well as for cultural (including library) opportunities, for different age groups. The highest satisfaction levels were reported for pre-school children (ages 0 to 4 years) and children (ages 5 to 12 years). Lower satisfaction levels were reported for teens (ages 13 to 17). This is a common finding in many communities as there is often a perception that there are not enough things to do for teens although this will be assessed in the Master Plan. These results suggest that there are opportunities to improve satisfaction levels across all age groups.

**Figure 6: Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation Opportunities in Clarington (n=2,456 to 2,510)**



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

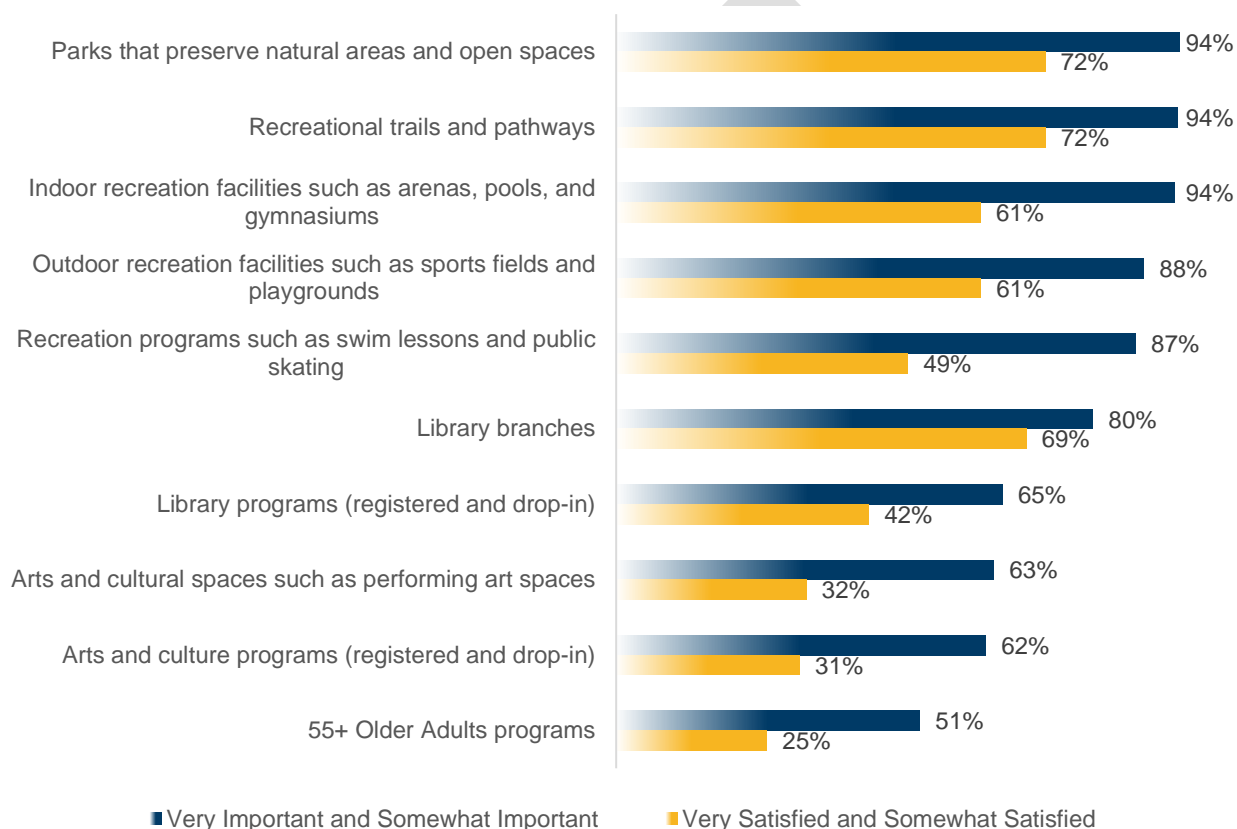
**Figure 7: Satisfaction with Cultural and Library Opportunities in Clarington (n=2,442 to 2,506)**



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of importance and satisfaction with various aspects of the parks, recreation, and culture system such as trails, facilities, and programming. High levels of importance paired with high levels of satisfaction suggest that expectations are being met. There is room for improvement across all areas that were measured, although the area requiring the greatest attention is improving satisfaction levels in recreation programming such as swim lessons and public skating. Other areas where attention is needed include indoor recreation facilities, such as arenas, pools, and gymnasiums, and arts and cultural spaces and related programming.

**Figure 8: Importance and Satisfaction Levels for Parks, Recreation and Culture Opportunities (n= 2,548 to 2,604)**



Neutral and don't know responses not shown.

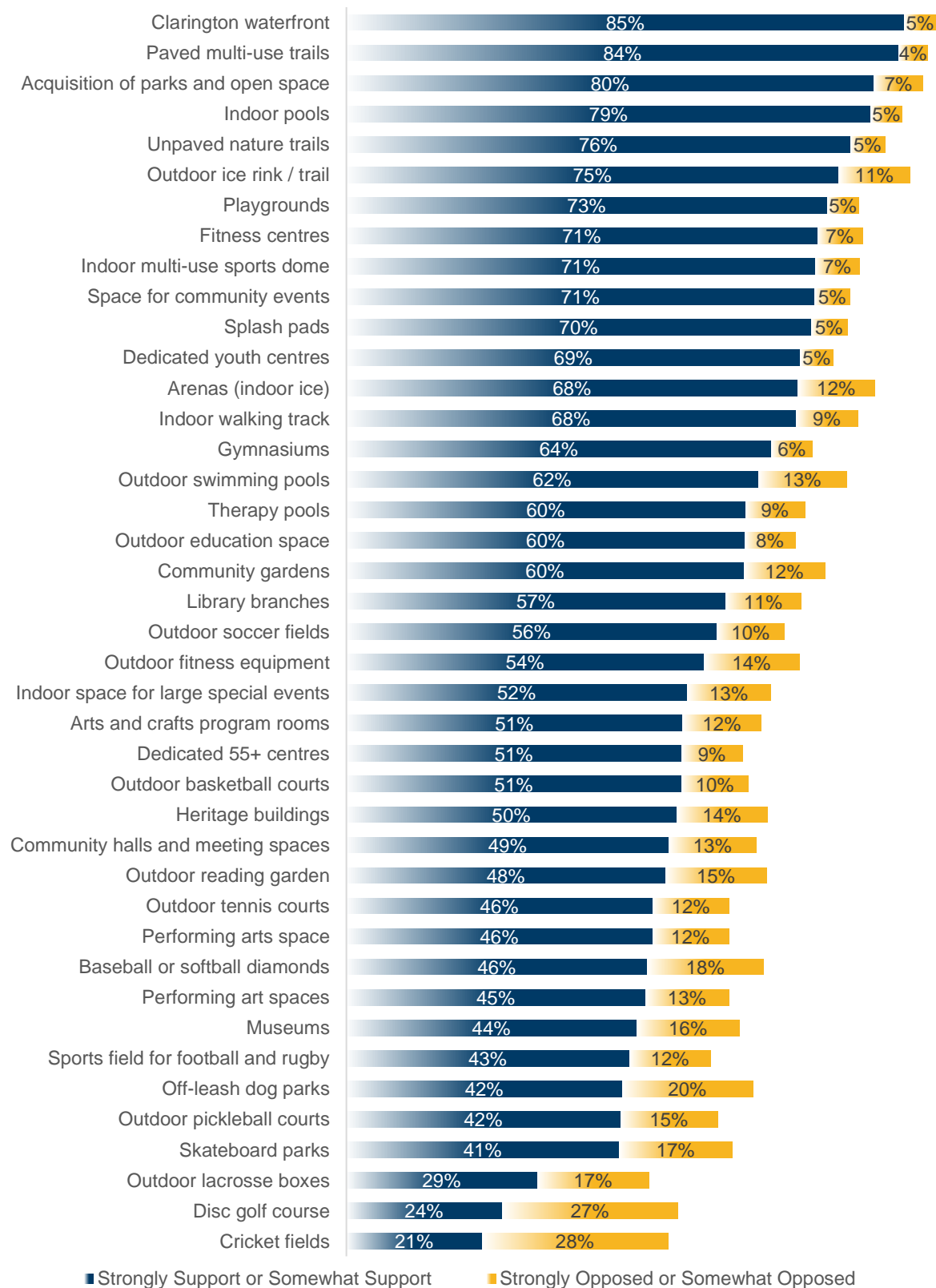
### 3.7 Support for Additional Spending

The following figure illustrates respondents' level of support for spending additional public funds on improving existing or developing new parks, recreation, and culture facilities. Consistent with trends in the sector, facilities that support unstructured and self-scheduled activities were most supported for additional spending. The top supported facilities paved multi-use trails (84%), acquisition of parks and open space (80%), indoor pools (79%), unpaved nature trails (76%), and an outdoor ice rink/trail (75%).



**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report

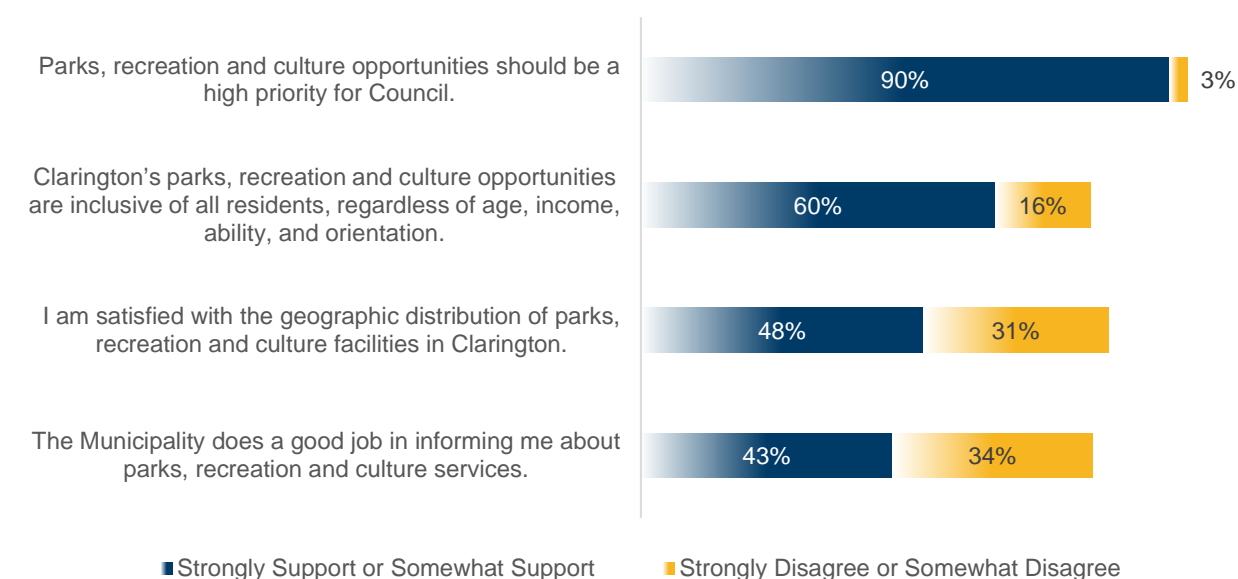
**Figure 9: Support for Additional Public Investment in Parks, Recreation and Culture Facilities**  
(n= 2,482 to 2,515)



### 3.8 Level of Agreement on Parks, Recreation and Culture Statements

Respondents shared their level of agreement with statements about parks, recreation, and culture in Clarington. Nine-out-of-ten (90%) survey respondents indicated that parks, recreation, and culture opportunities should be a high priority for Council (90%). Lower levels of agreement were found for other statements, including ‘Clarington’s parks, recreation and culture opportunities are inclusive of all residents, regardless of age, income, ability and orientation’ (60%), ‘I am satisfied with the geographic distribution of parks, recreation and culture facilities in Clarington’ (48%), and ‘the Municipality does a good job in informing me about parks, recreation, and culture services (34%).

**Figure 10: Level of Agreement with Statements about Parks, Recreation, and Culture in Clarington (n=2,435 to 2,443)**



Neutral and don’t know responses not shown.

### 3.9 Other Survey Comments

Additional comments were provided in an open-ended format. Key themes from these comments centered around the need to ensure that programs are affordable for families, with specific reference to the cost of swimming classes that may be unaffordable for some households. Suggestions were made to promote subsidy programs for residents. Requests for new or more parks and recreation amenities and facilities were expressed, including a desire for developing the Bowmanville Zoo, indoor pools and ice pads, playgrounds, cricket pitches, trails and programming for children, youth, and older adults 55+. There was also a desire for more cultural activities and special events, as well as space for performing arts such as music concerts and theatre.

## 4. Stakeholder Focus Groups

Stakeholder Focus Groups were held with various community organizations that have an interest in parks, recreation, and culture in Clarington to understand what trends and challenges they may be facing, how groups expect to evolve over the next five to ten years, how facilities can be improved or where there are gaps, and how the Municipality and organizations can work better together help to respond to their needs. Nearly 70 stakeholders were invited to participate in the focus groups, including indoor and outdoor sports clubs, parks groups, service organizations, facility and program providers, and arts and cultural groups. 30 groups attended the focus groups and following the sessions, organizations (including groups that did not attend) were invited to provide any additional written comments to ensure that all organizations had an opportunity to get involved. Input was received from the following groups and a summary of key themes from each focus group is highlighted in this sub-section:

- A Gift of Art
- ACO Clarington Branch
- Autism Home Base Durham
- Bowmanville Older Adult Association
- Boys & Girls Club of Durham
- Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA)
- Clarington Concert Band
- Clarington Eagles
- Clarington Girls Hockey Association
- Clarington Minor Football Association
- Clarington Minor Football Association
- Clarington Minor Hockey Association
- Clarington Minor Lacrosse
- Clarington Recreation Hockey League
- Clarington Renegades
- Clarington Slo Pitch
- Clarington Squash Club
- Clarington Swim Club
- Clarington Thunder
- Durham Region
- Firehouse Youth Centre
- Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)
- Kawartha Pineridge District School Board
- Kawartha Region Conservation Authority
- Kendal Baseball Association
- Kendal Eagles
- Orono Figure Skating Club
- PVNC District Catholic School Board
- Valleys 2000
- Visual Arts Centre of Clarington

### 4.1 Arts and Cultural Groups

**Embracing Arts and Culture in Clarington** – Participants felt that the arts and culture opportunities offered in Clarington is one of the driving factors that are attracting new residents to Clarington as people are often looking for what community amenities are available. The arts and cultural community is made up of passionate individuals and organizations that are excited about the potential of new residents in Clarington as the Municipality is expected to grow in the future. Participants expressed that the arts and cultural sector must also grow to be able to respond to public expectations and interests. To succeed, there is a need for more support through space and funding.

**Financial and Volunteer Support** – Organizations have a desire to build up arts and cultural opportunities in Clarington, although their plans are often limited by the amount of funding that's available. Many organizations rely on fundraising and grants, and there is a desire for greater financial support from the Municipality to invest in grassroots organizations to offer community programs and events. Organizations recognize that there is a Municipal grant program, although they feel that the eligibility requirements are restrictive, and the grant amount does not offset the rising service delivery and facility costs that groups incur.

There is also a deficit of volunteers to help run programs and events. There is an increasing challenge in finding dedicated volunteers and as a result, groups were unable to run popular events. There may also be an opportunity for the Municipality to help seek out volunteers or assist with event delivery.

**Need for Arts Space** – There is a desire for affordable performing arts space for events, as well as multi-purpose space for musical practices, meetings, and storage. It was mentioned that some existing spaces may not be affordable for groups due to high rental costs or insurance requirements.

Investing in the Municipality's arts and cultural spaces was also suggested, such as ensuring that spaces are accessible so that programs and services that take place within them are inclusive of all users, such as at the Visual Arts Centre and outdoor park spaces that are used for arts and cultural activities and events. There are also a lot of opportunities to use Clarington's parks for arts and cultural opportunities, particularly those with historical significance (Camp 30 was noted as an example).

## 4.2 Baseball and Slo-Pitch Groups

**Ball Diamond Participation Trends** – While participation among ball diamond organizations was impacted by COVID-19, interest is on the rise in Clarington. Organizations reported they are having to turn teams/participants away due to the lack of sufficient diamond time. It is recognized that there may be some available diamond time within the current system, but their locations may not be suitable due to their condition.

**Demand for High Quality Ball Diamonds** – To alleviate current pressures and allow groups to grow in the future, requests were made for more high-quality diamonds that are suitable for games, as well as more lit and larger diamonds. To meet future needs, future ball diamonds should be co-located together to create a sports complex where games can be centralized.

Locating ball diamonds in appropriate locations was identified as a consideration as it was mentioned that some diamonds have drainage issues. Other concerns were raised about diamonds, including vandalism (or improper use of the diamonds), fencing and infield quality, and the placement of field lighting. Suggestions were made for additional trained staff that are dedicated to maintaining Clarington's ball diamonds.

**Municipal Support and Communication** – Enhancing communication between ball groups and the Municipality was suggested to help identify opportunities to improve existing ball diamonds and to help plan for new facilities. Working together to improve how diamonds are booked was also suggested to direct rentals to higher quality locations, and to reduce use of facilities that have field condition issues or flooding.

#### 4.3 Bowmanville Older Adult Association

**The BOAA is Growing** – Over the past number of years, the use of BOAA’s Beech Centre has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. The BOAA had between 1,500 to 1,700 members in 2023 and much of its membership are Bowmanville residents, recognizing that the Municipality also provides adult 55+ programming in Courtice, as well as in other areas of Clarington. BOAA’s members range in age between 70 and 80 years old, although more recently there has been an increase in younger members. Most residents learn about BOAA’s programs and opportunities through word of mouth and their marketing methods such as radio advertisements.

**Evolving BOAA Programming** – BOAA’s programming is continually evolving to respond to member interests. During the COVID-19 pandemic, BOAA introduced virtual programs and while the Beech Centre has fully reopened to its members, the organization plans to continue offering online programs. Coupled with providing more outdoor programming in Clarington’s parks and trails, as well as offering day trips, the BOAA has been successful in finding new ways to engage members outside of the Beech Centre.

One of the strengths of the BOAA is the staff’s ability to respond to offering new programs as suggestions from members are always welcomed. There have been requests for education and technology classes, as well as low impact sports. There continues to be a strong desire for low to no cost programs, and activities, gatherings and events that include meals and refreshments. There is a desire from its members for more evening and weekend activities. The BOAA’s Wheels in Action Program is also very important to make the Beech Centre more accessible for its members. In 2023, the Wheels in Action Program provided nearly 5,000 rides that supported 130 members.

**Overcoming Challenges and Looking to the Future** – The BOAA expressed that its primary challenge is the availability of staffing and volunteers (there currently are approximately 300 volunteers) to respond to the desire for more programming, particularly in the evening and during the weekend. The need for more parking at the Beech Centre was also highlighted, though the BOAA hopes to alleviate this pressure through other strategies such as expanding the Wheels in Action Program, as well as finding other satellite parking lots to shuttle members to the Beech Centre. As BOAA uses Clarington’s public spaces for day trips and outdoor activities, it was mentioned that there is a need to ensure that parks and trails are accessible, particularly along trails and walkways.

#### 4.4 Conservation Authorities

**Protecting and Preserving Natural Areas** – Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) and Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) spoke highly about the need to protect and preserve natural areas and resources in Clarington and in the surrounding area and thus the range of recreational activities should be limited to passive uses and programmed spaces should be limited.

Suggestions for minimizing the public impact on natural areas were made by the conservation authorities, including avoiding constructing built infrastructure within floodplains such as playgrounds, although certain exceptions may be made such as walking pathways. Incorporating green infrastructure within parks was suggested such as rain gardens and pollinator gardens. The use of wayfinding and educational signage would also help raise awareness and educate the public on safe use of parks and open spaces, particularly if there are areas of natural significance. Other strategies to educate the public on protecting and preserving natural areas were also identified such as creating mailouts and educational programming.

**Continued Collaboration with the Municipality** – CLOCA and GRCA expressed positive working relationships with Clarington staff on past initiatives and are supportive of continuing to work together to promote and preserve natural heritage areas and habitats, while encouraging responsible public use. There is support to continue to permit passive recreational uses on conservation area lands such as trails, which are beneficial to provide designated walking routes through natural areas and to minimize the creation of informal walking routes. CLOCA and GRCA are also open to working with the Municipality to connect their lands to walking infrastructure being planned to strengthen active transportation opportunities.

#### 4.5 Durham Region

**Alignment with the Durham Region Strategic Plan and other Strategies** – Durham Region's strategic plan identifies several goals and actions that guide key initiatives that have relevance to Clarington's Master Plan. Such actions include:

- Protect, preserve, and restore the natural environment, including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails, and farmlands.
- Expand sustainable and active transportation.
- Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- Enhance community safety and well-being.
- Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
- Expand access to existing life stabilization programs.

Durham Region also has other strategies to be considered as part of this Master Plan, including a new Official Plan that supports parks and recreation opportunities, and a Regional Cycling Plan. The Region has also been actively working with community partners, including the Clarington Library, Museum and Archives to provide social programs to support vulnerable populations, as well as a Public Art and Creative Placemaking Initiative.

**Supporting Economic Development and Tourism Opportunities** – Durham Region's Ready Set Future provides a strategy and action plan for economic development and tourism. Key actions for the Region to implement (in collaboration with municipalities including Clarington) that are relevant to parks, recreation and culture include:

- Promoting Durham Region as a weekend destination for GTA visitors.
- Explore the creation of a fund that supports the Region's diverse arts and cultural industry.
- Establish a process that considers sponsorship opportunities for events that enhance the Region's quality of place.
- Explore the potential for establishing a festival incubator.
- Host sports events that engage, inspire, and connect the community, creating sport and social legacies.
- Support the growth of inclusive and accessible sport opportunities, infrastructure, and participation.

Durham Region is also supportive of sport tourism opportunities to foster economic development and tourism. Clarington's recreation facilities and supporting infrastructure are encouraged to consider sport-friendly features that can strengthen the Region's ability to attract major multi-sport, multi-day, or large capacity events across Durham.

The Region noted that the growing the creative industry is also important for economic development. Durham Region has a growing creative economy and continuing to foster this growth is important to attract skilled workforces, new businesses, and increase quality of life.

**Access and Inclusion** – Ensuring that the development of parks, recreation, and culture opportunities are accessible and inclusive of all residents, Durham staff expressed that consideration needs to be given to diverse voices such as the BIPOC community (Black, Indigenous and people of colour). Physical accessibility in parks and facilities is also important, with consideration given not assisted mobility aids, heights and widths of park/facility features, signage and wayfinding, audio/visual aids, sensory spaces, shade, and seating, and more. The availability of washrooms in parks was also suggested, particularly accessible washrooms. Annual accessibility audits were suggested. Additionally, the use of plain language was advised.

#### 4.6 Firehouse Youth Centre

##### **Providing Important Community, Recreation and Social Programs and Services –**

Through the John Howard Society, the Firehouse Youth Centre provides a range of drop-in programs and activities that centre around sports, life skills, social, recreation, arts, community engagement and volunteering. Sports continue to be one of the organization's most popular activities, although activities are also available for those with other interests such as the arts as the group provides resources and equipment for youth to harness their creativity. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization has seen an increased interest in youth seeking social services and support and noted that many are experiencing challenges such as food insecurity and financial barriers. The organization seeks to help individuals wherever possible over and above providing safe spaces through food, providing transportation, wellness checks, job and volunteer services, counselling, and more.

**Enhancing Youth Space** – It was expressed that co-locating youth space within community centres in Clarington is positive to be able to access other public spaces. With food insecurity being a concern among users who visit youth centres, requests were made for a kitchen space for cooking and classes. The organization is also open to the opportunity for providing youth services in more locations to increase their geographic reach to this age group, particularly in the rural area such as Orono as it was reported that many users of the drop-in spaces, particularly in Newcastle, are rural youth. As part of multi-use community centres, suggestions were also made to have exterior access to the youth space as it was mentioned that some users may not feel comfortable using the main community centre access.

**Collaboration Opportunities for Volunteering** – It was expressed that visiting the Firehouse Youth Centre to find volunteer hours is one of the many reasons why youth come to these centres. The Firehouse Youth Centre engages many youths in volunteer activities and actively works with other community organizations to connect youth with other volunteer opportunities. The organization expressed an openness to working with the Municipality and others to strengthen this service to help other groups that are seeking volunteers.

#### 4.7 Indoor and Outdoor Sports and Recreation Groups

**Recreation Participation Trends** – There is interest in field sports such as lacrosse and football, particularly among younger age groups, as more people are seeking outdoor sports beyond soccer and baseball.

**Sports Field Requests** – There is a desire for more indoor and outdoor fields to allow football and lacrosse organizations to grow and respond to increased interest in their sports. Groups use several outdoor fields around the Municipality, although there is an increased need for indoor field access; school gymnasiums are currently being used, but indoor field time is needed.



**Supporting Amenities** – In addition to the use of fields, requests were made for supporting field amenities, which may not currently be available at locations groups currently use, such as water fountains, permanent washrooms and change rooms. It was also mentioned that there is no score board at South Courtice Park, which can make a game challenging when the score isn't displayed.

**Municipal Support and Communication** – Greater support and communication from the Municipality was requested when booking indoor and outdoor facilities. The organizations mentioned that it is difficult to find additional field time under the current booking system. Organizations suggested regularly meeting with the Municipality to book facility time to allow for better use of the facilities and understand what fields other groups are using. There is also a desire for enhanced communication with the Municipality to better understand when arena floor pads are ready for use so scheduling can be done efficiently and accurately.

**Accessibility** – There is a desire for more accessibility to outdoor facilities. Organizations have noticed it can be challenging for the older population and/or persons with disabilities to make it to the fields to watch a game. It was also mentioned that there is not a lot of space for people to sit and watch the game.

#### 4.8 Indoor Sports and Recreation Groups

**Strong Municipal Support** – Stakeholders agreed that one of the biggest strengths in Clarington was the quality of Municipality staff and their ability to respond to requests quickly. Organizations also appreciated the convenience of being able to view their ice bookings online and see where available timeslots are. It was expressed that there is a need to ensure that all Municipality staff have the appropriate customer service training so that all residents feel welcome and included.

**Desire for More Prime-Time Ice** – There was general agreement from arena users that there is a desire for more prime time ice to accommodate their programming as many groups mentioned that there are waitlists for new participants, although they cannot be accommodated through their current allocation of ice time at Municipality-operated arenas. It is particularly a challenge for minor organizations that are seeking early prime time hours due to the young age of their participants. To alleviate pressure, groups are renting ice in other municipalities such as Oshawa, or at private arenas, which can be at a significant cost to user groups. Support was voiced for constructing two additional ice pads at South Courtice Arena to create a quad-pad location.

**Demand for Indoor Spaces** – Requests were made for more multi-purpose spaces for general community programming, as well as space that could be used for dryland training as complementary space for arena users. Dedicated indoor space was requested for childcare services. To accommodate persons for disabilities, a suggestion was also made for sensory rooms in Clarington's facilities, as well as calming spaces that could be incorporated within parks. The need for storage space was also expressed by groups.

**Squash Courts** – There is strong demand for squash courts, which is a success although it can be a challenge for the squash organization to manage bookings and the use of the courts, particularly as the group has seen an increase in interest from the public post-COVID. Requests were also made for additional squash courts to better accommodate tournaments.

**Indoor Aquatic Opportunities** – The aquatic club is experiencing pressure from residents interested in joining the organization, but the club is unable to accommodate new participants due to the lack of additional pool time as the club is competing with other pool users. As a result, there is currently a waitlist of potential swim participants. There is a desire for an additional indoor pool, preferably one that is conducive for competitive swimming, with associated amenities including modern change facilities, spectator seating, viewing areas, and storage. A 50-metre pool was also requested.

#### 4.9 Parks Organizations

**Bowmanville Zoo and Valley Lands** – Participants expressed that the Bowmanville Zoo and Bowmanville and Soper Creek Valleys are important outdoor spaces that form part of the Municipality's parks system. There were several unique features that groups were proud of including the butterfly garden, Camp 30, commemorative forest, and Rotary Park. In particular, the dam and fish ladder were also identified as important features and their long-term maintenance needs were identified as a concern due to the closure of the Goodyear Plant and the significance of the location that provides passage for trout and salmon.

Encouraging passive uses, trail development and connectivity, and preserving natural features and historical significance is also supported. In particular, the Bowmanville Zoo concept was highlighted as an important initiative for the Municipality and moving forward with implementation should be priority. It was expressed that appropriate funding needs to be allocated to support trail use and other active and passive uses proposed for the site as identified on the concept including, but not limited to, amphitheater, and areas for play, picnics and social gatherings, education, large events, and more.

**Increased Trail Use** – A heightened interest in trail use was noted due to various factors such as population growth and a greater desire to be outdoors following the COVID-19 pandemic. While this is an overall benefit for the community and for residents and visitors, there is a need to ensure that trail users are educated on the importance of remaining on designated trails to minimize the disturbance of vegetation. Ensuring that the public is aware of the Municipality's trail maps and using signage was encouraged. It was suggested that only non-motorized forms of travel should be permitted along the Municipality's trails. It was also expressed that new trail development should avoid tree removal and environmental impacts. It was recognized that with increased trail use, there is a greater need for maintenance and necessary resources, including funding and staffing. Concerns about appropriate maintenance practices were identified to support and encourage trail use. Suggestions were made for repairing or repaving pathways,

ensuring that pathways are clear of debris and vegetation, emptying garbage cans more frequently, and winter snow clearing.

**Focusing on Connectivity** – Trail connectivity was a high priority for park groups. Establishing trails within the Bowmanville Zoo lands was identified as a high priority for the Municipality. Ensuring that there is a continuous, unobstructed walking pathway from the Bowmanville Zoo lands along Soper Creek Valley Trail towards the Clarington Waterfront Trail was also identified. As part of strengthening connectivity, participants also identified that consideration needs to be given to the Active Transportation Master Plan that's also being undertaken to ensure that recommended plans are in alignment.

#### 4.10 School Boards

**Maximizing the use of Shared Spaces** – Both school boards identified that there are school properties that are adjacent to Municipality parks, which have provided opportunities to share outdoor park space such as playgrounds, sports fields and parking. While there is no shared indoor space, community organizations can rent indoor school space such as gymnasiums outside of school hours. Continuing to plan for the co-location of schools and public park spaces is supported and there may be future opportunities for joint school and community centre facilities, although future negotiations would need to take place with consideration given to key matters such as safety and access between shared facilities and users.

## 5. Advisory Committee Meetings

Clarington has advisory committees and boards that oversee various areas of interest in the Municipality and make recommendations to Council. This section highlights the key themes from key advisory committees and boards that have relevance to Clarington's parks, recreation, and culture system. Key groups that were engaged included:

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Active Transportation and Safe Roads Committee
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Community Hall Boards
- Diversity Advisory Committee
- Heritage Advisory Committee
- Clarington Library, Museum and Archives Board
- Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee

### 5.1 Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Designing Accessible Indoor Facilities** – A variety of suggestions were expressed to ensure that Clarington's indoor recreation facilities are accessible for persons with disabilities. For arenas, it was identified that there should be accessible viewing areas together with the spectator seating area to bring persons with disabilities closer to the game, rather than outside in a viewing gallery as it was mentioned that people can feel

disconnected from the ice pad activities (this also applies to other venues). Suggestions were also made for larger spectator seating space for larger/taller individuals (seat and leg room) and accessible concession areas, including lower table heights as standing tables are not suitable for persons in wheelchairs. Additionally, it was suggested that new or redeveloped ice pads should be designed to accommodate sledge hockey; there should also be a location in the community to rent sleds and skates for people who do not own or can purchase the equipment.

Other suggestions to enhance the accessibility of indoor facilities included providing braille signs that are not positioned too high on the wall, sensory features (e.g., foot pathway), universal and accessible changerooms, family changerooms, providing more than one accessible stall in washrooms (or more dedicated accessible washrooms), adult and baby change tables, and mobility charging stations. A request was also made for a Snoezelen room, which is a multi-sensory environment, that can be used for education, therapy, and support space for persons with disabilities.

With respect to libraries, it was identified that the multi-purpose rooms at the branches are important for programs, activities, and social events but concerns were raised about rental costs associated with the CLMA's new use of space policy that is viewed as a financial barrier to participation for some residents.

**Inclusive Outdoor Park Spaces** – A number of comments were expressed to ensure that Clarington's outdoor parks are designed to be inclusive of all users. The importance of trails and pathways (with an appropriate slope and grade) was raised to ensure that people have a designated walking area. Supporting trail amenities that should be considered were identified including distance markers, denoting the edges of trails and pathways with painted lines as a visual aid, and providing wheelchair parking areas (also usable for baby strollers) adjacent to benches at rest areas. Other inclusive park features were suggested, including park lighting, emergency phones, seating and rest areas, shade shelters and trees, outdoor fitness equipment, and accessible playground features, as well as play features or designated spaces for older youth, teens, and adults such as adult or accessible swings and equipment. The desire for beach access mats for wheelchairs was also identified. It was raised that amenities should be in visible locations to avoid vandalism.

**Programs and Services** – The importance of offering accessible recreation programs was identified to be inclusive of all residents in Clarington. It was identified that the Municipality's Accessible Recreation program should be promoted to ensure that people are aware that it is offered and that support persons can participate in activities to support a participant that requires assistance at no additional cost. It was also suggested that the Accessible Recreation program should be available for all Municipality's programs.

## 5.2 Active Transportation and Safe Roads Committee

**A Connected Clarington** – There is a strong desire to strengthen active transportation connections in Clarington to facilitate safe movement throughout the Municipality. Building upon existing trail systems and linking them together was expressed for both on and off-road infrastructure. A particular point of emphasis should be placed on connecting active transportation users with the waterfront, GO Station, and in the emerging secondary plan areas where it may be more feasible to develop trails as development occurs.

**Draft Active Transportation Master Plan** – The Municipality is preparing a separate Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP) to guide infrastructure development. While still in draft form, the preliminary goals of the ATMP include, but are not limited to the following (which will be considered as part of this Master Plan):

- Create connections to the waterfront.
- Connect to transit.
- Create safe, inclusive, and accessible communities.
- Create sustainable communities.
- Address major barriers.
- Support community health.
- Implement comfortable and direct connections between urban areas.
- Connect hamlets with rural routes.
- Provide and support a variety of transportation options.

## 5.3 Agricultural Advisory Committee

**Enhancing Recreation Facilities** – Participants identified that there are opportunities to enhance the use of the rural community halls, particularly during the daytime. It was suggested that Municipalities work with hall boards and establish partnerships to increase the use of these facilities and expand the range of opportunities within these spaces where it can be accommodated, such as indoor sports and fitness. Kendal Community Centre was identified as an example that has a gymnasium that is currently used for pickleball and could accommodate other active activities. Concern over the cost of improving the rural community halls was also raised.

With respect to outdoor spaces, suggestions were made for more frequent garbage pickups and public education about park etiquette, such as keeping dogs on leashes and appropriate facility use. Requests were also made for more shade and seating, which could be funded through sponsorships and dedications.

It was mentioned that greater awareness about the opportunities that are available is needed to encourage more use of the rural community halls and there is a need to provide a mix of digital and print marketing materials, as well as the use of QR codes. Reviewing the governance of community hall boards was also suggested as it was

expressed that those operating community halls should be elected and not volunteers to ensure that the use and booking of space is fair and transparent.

**Building upon Clarington's Trail Network** – Positive comments were heard about Clarington's trail system, and it was mentioned that there are opportunities to improve connections. It was identified that trail users prefer to avoid walking along the road and as a result, the Municipality needs to work with landowners to provide designated walking routes to establish continuous trail connections. The desire for year-round trail use was also expressed, which would require resources for snow maintenance; it was suggested that partnerships should be considered in this regard.

**Raising the Profile of Culture** – It was identified that many rural residents are willing to drive to Clarington's urban areas such as Newcastle and Bowmanville to attend and participate in annual special events. There are also many special events that take place in the rural area such as in Orono and Kendal, although it is recognized organizations have been challenged with finding volunteers to help. It was believed that enhancing marketing and communication about arts and cultural opportunities would be beneficial to increase participation as it was suggested that there should be a blend of online and print marketing material. Requests for a theatre were also made as some participants are currently travel to nearby municipalities such as Port Hope, Oshawa, Peterborough and Lindsay.

**Expanding Library Services in the Rural Area** – Participants identified that there have been many "Little Libraries" being installed throughout the rural area where residents can share books and other small items, which have been well received. Expanding library services to the rural area was suggested to better connect with residents, including the provision of a bookmobile service.

#### 5.4 Community Hall Boards

**Connecting Rural Residents** – Participants expressed that Clarington's community halls are important community assets that bring together residents to celebrate a range of social events, including birthdays, barbeques, weddings, breakfast and dinners, holidays, and more. Spaces are also booked for user group rentals and programming. Since facilities have re-opened after the COVID-19 pandemic, many groups have experienced an increased interest in booking the community halls, with holidays and weekends typically being the busiest periods.

The increased use is also being driven by the fact that people are looking to hold larger gatherings that do not fit within residents' homes, and holding a gathering at a community hall also provides users with services that are not offered at home such as setup and cleanup. Some locations also benefit from other amenities that make renting attractive such as outdoor recreation facilities and churches. The affordability of hall rental rates also makes them popular locations compared to spaces within more urbanized locations that may be more costly, with some indicating that they have attracted use from non-Clarington residents.

**Maintaining Community Halls** – A concern shared among community hall boards is their ability to maintain the facility as many are older facilities that have aging mechanical equipment or structural issues. Many locations are also not accessible, which limits potential users from renting the space, both indoors and outdoors. Examples of accessibility upgrades that are needed include entrance ramps, automated doors, wider hallways and bathrooms, and elevators. In addition to maintaining facilities, participants also felt that updating their facilities is needed to respond to public expectations for modern meeting spaces.

**Collaboration with Clarington** – Community hall board members indicated that increased communication and collaboration with the Municipality is needed to help identify facility challenges and prioritize investment. Many felt that additional municipal funding was needed to help address the aging facilities and to undertake accessibility retrofits. Assistance with securing grant funding is also an area to strengthen, recognizing the community hall boards must be recognized as a non-for-profit organization and some do not meet this requirement. The lack of volunteers has also been a challenge where the Municipality may be able to provide some support.

**Outdoor Recreation Enhancements** – While it is recognized that community hall boards are not responsible for outdoor space, facility suggestions were made such as pickleball courts in Kendall and resurfacing the tennis courts in Solina. Providing designated walking pathways in parks was also suggested to enhance accessibility.

## 5.5 Diversity Advisory Committee

**Planning for a Multi-Cultural Clarington** – Participants recognized that Clarington is a growing community that is becoming more diverse in cultural backgrounds and in the range of leisure interests. As a result, there is a growing demand for a broader range of parks and recreation opportunities to be more inclusive and welcoming of all residents. To respond to an increasingly diverse population, participants expressed the desire for new or more recreation amenities, including cricket fields, pickleball courts, indoor artificial turf field, outdoor soccer field, indoor walking and running track, outdoor skating rink or trail, and track and field facilities. Updating Clarington's indoor pools and squash courts was also identified. The group also expressed that the Bowmanville Zoo lands also have a lot of potential to address a wide range of needs for residents and visitors.

**Minimizing Barriers to Parks and Recreation** – Minimizing barriers to parks and recreation is important to ensure that all residents can participate. Suggestions included locating facilities in places that are accessible by public transit and providing facilities in more locations as well as expanding the trail network to encourage walkable communities. Providing low to no cost activities was also suggested as the cost to participate may be a challenge for low-income households; it was mentioned that Durham Region offers an Action Pass to all Grade 5 students, which provides passholders with free public swimming and skating and is a benefit in the community. From a physical accessibility perspective, example facilities that were identified as a

best practice included the Abilities Centre in Whitby and the Walker Sports and Abilities Centre in St. Catharines.

## 5.6 Heritage Advisory Committee

**Celebrating Local Heritage through Parks and Facilities** – The Heritage Advisory Committee has been actively undertaking research to identify parks with significant heritage features or locations such as Courtice Memorial Park, Samuel Wilmot Nature Area, and Bowmanville Valley Creek (including the fish ladder and dam). Preserving cultural heritage assets such as Camp 30 and the former Bowmanville Zoo lands was also identified. Through new park construction and renewal opportunities, it was expressed that attention needs to be given to preserving or highlighting heritage features and history, including consideration given to Indigenous Peoples.

**Enhancing Heritage Assets** – The Heritage Advisory Committee is currently implementing a QR Code program in Clarington to connect residents and visitors in the community with online resources to educate and bring awareness to local history and there is a desire from the organization to continue this initiative. QR Codes have benefits over installing plaques to reduce vandalism, though it is recognized that not everyone may be able to use a QR Code. Suggestions were made to showcase physical artifacts in public spaces and there is an opportunity to implement this within public spaces. The need to preserve and protect Camp 30 and the Jury Lands was also mentioned as the property has significant potential to educate residents and visitors about the importance and history of the site and its buildings.

Reinvesting in aging assets was also identified as an area that should be considered. Examples included restoration of Waverly Place and infrastructure associated with the Municipality's cemeteries. Other suggestions included developing trails along or near areas of significance such as heritage properties or along railways. Adequate funding was identified as a need to support these initiatives as well as the suggestions identified above.

## 5.7 Clarington Library, Museum and Archives Board

**People are the Strength** – The Clarington Library, Museum and Archives (CLMA) team are viewed as a strength in the community as they have fostered strong relationships with the community and the Municipality. CLMA staff are a strong team and are efficient with deploying its resources to respond to traditional library programs and services, and most recently museum and archive needs. The CLMA also provides community resources for employment, newcomers, and the unhoused, as well as a food pantry.

**Responding to Emerging Needs** – CLMA's strong staff team has been able to quickly pivot and offer new services, programs, and materials to respond to emerging needs. As the Municipality continues to diversify, CLMA is proud to offer a wide selection of multi-lingual materials, there is also an increased interest in other library services including genealogy, technology assistance and computer and internet, makerspaces,



DVDs, and lending library. CLMA is also offering expanded library hours to adapt to the public's desire for more flexible library use, including more evening and weekend time. To continue to respond to public demands for enhanced services, CLMA has identified key initiatives they hope to accomplish through their new Strategic Plan, including renovating the Bowmanville Library Branch, launching a bookmobile program to serve the rural area, promoting the museum and archives, and centralizing heritage resources in downtown Bowmanville. To expand CLMA's public reach, there is also a desire to establish satellite locations.

**Overcoming Challenges** – Clarington's population is growing and becoming more diverse and while CLMA identified that they can quickly respond to the changing community, their ability to address is limited by available funding to allow staff to offer the resources that the public desires. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the types of patrons visiting CLMA locations are changing and becoming broader and there is also a need to ensure that staff have the proper training and knowledge to respond to customers, and security measures are put into place to ensure that all users are safe. The CLMA is also three years into the harmonization of library, museum, and archive services, which has been working well, although there is a need to better understand how the new organization can grow and respond to public needs.

From a space perspective, staff expressed the need for more physical space to be able to offer the things that the public wants such as more meeting rooms and study spaces. There is also a need for more space for library staff. It was mentioned that the CLMA is currently not meeting the library space target recommended by the Ontario Library Association. While there are plans to renovate the Bowmanville Library branch, it will not result in any net increase in additional library space. In taking on archives that are stored at the Sarah Jane Williams Heritage Centre, concerns were raised about the fact that the storage methods currently being used are not ideal. They are currently looking to digitize their collection, although this is a time-consuming process.

## 5.8 Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee

**Uniqueness is its Strength** – Participants describe the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area as a hidden gem in Clarington that has a diverse range of natural habitats that supports biodiversity and wildlife. The trails were also described as a strength as it encourages residents and visitors to enjoy the natural area while minimizing the impact on the natural area. It also functions as an outdoor education area to bring awareness to important environmental issues, habitats and animals that live in the area. Another strength is that it is one of the few public spaces that provides waterfront access to Lake Ontario.

**Protecting and Preserving the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area** – Continuing to protect and preserve the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area is a priority for the Management Advisory Committee. There are currently plans for some events at the site, including clean-up days and plantings. There is also a desire to continue to raise awareness and educate

the community about the importance of the natural area through signage and directing visitors to online resources through QR codes.

Additional Municipal support was identified, including assistance with by-law enforcement to ensure that the site is being used as intended. Some challenges experienced at the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area include people overnight camping, motorized vehicle use (e.g., dirt bikes and ATVs), and visitors picking plants and flowers that need to be protected. There is also a desire for paved parking lots and snow-clearing to promote year-round use. There may also be some trail routes that could be paved to make walking routes more accessible and opportunities to increase trail connections to the waterfront should also be considered. Additionally, assistance to manage invasive species was requested and there should be consideration for maintenance and preservation plans for naturalized and passive parks and recreation spaces, and financial support to help implement future initiatives and current projects such as tree plantings.

## 6. Staff Workshops

Two staff workshops were held with Municipality and CLMA staff to capture their valuable knowledge, insights, and experiences to be considered as part of the Master Plan. Over 50 staff members participated in the workshops that were organized by senior management and frontline positions, including directors, managers, supervisors, assistants, coordinators, customer service representatives and service associates, clerks, and more. Discussion topics were wide-ranging and key themes are highlighted in this section.

**Parks, Recreation and Culture Visioning** – Staff identified key terms that expressed the desired state of Clarington’s parks, recreation, and culture system, which are highlighted below.

- Going from good to great
- Progressive
- Proactive
- Collaborative
- Focused on parks, trails and green spaces
- Responsive
- Innovative
- Accountable
- Implementable
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Measurable
- Welcoming
- Competitive
- Adaptable
- Caring

**The Municipality is Growing and Diversifying** – Clarington is a growing municipality. By 2051, the Municipality is expected to experience substantial population growth in its urban centres such as in designated Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs). There is also growth in cultural diversification of Clarington’s residents. These factors are impacting how the Municipality’s facilities are used and the services that are in demand or being requested.

**Responding to Evolving Needs** – Population growth is driving the need to provide enhanced parks, recreation, and culture experiences that are expected in large municipalities, particularly for new residents moving to Clarington from other GTA municipalities. Cultural diversification is resulting in requests for new services and differing levels of service. It is recognized that there is a need to balance the provision of new and existing services in a manner that reflects the needs of residents and is inclusive of all segments of the community.

These trends have resulted in requests for ice pads, indoor pools, indoor walking track, accessible playgrounds, park amenities (e.g., washrooms and parking), cricket fields, pickleball courts, indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, outdoor special event space, facilities to serve the rural area, cultural spaces and more. An expanded range of programs are also being requested, including adult swimming lessons, general interest programs for adults, and activities for teenagers. From a library perspective, continuing to support, enhance, and promote access to social services was raised, in addition to building upon their efforts to meet the multi-cultural needs of the community. In addition to these requests, it was identified that approved levels of service will set the stage for operational and staffing needs.

**Recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic** – A key strength of the Municipality is its ability to quickly respond to provincial and public health recommendations regarding social distancing, gatherings, and the use of public facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the importance of parks, recreation, and culture and its role in bringing people together, combating isolation, and building community, and as a result, there was a pent-up demand for these services in Clarington. As restrictions were lifted and facilities re-opened, the Municipality was quick to recover from the impact of the pandemic as facility use and programming have generally returned to or exceeded pre-COVID usage levels. In some areas, the Municipality has experienced a greater demand for new or expanded facilities, programs, and services because of the pandemic, which is also linked to the change in Clarington's community profile that has occurred during this period. For example, there is more interest in trail use and outdoor programming, demand for adult learn to swim programs and other activities such as pickleball, family programming, cricket, etc. There has also been a change in customer behaviour and increased use of facilities by people seeking mental health support, general assistance, and from the unhoused population.

**Organizational Effectiveness and Staffing** – The Municipality recently underwent a re-organization of departments that are involved with the provision, maintenance, and operations of the Municipality's parks, recreation, and culture to streamline processes and decision-making, and minimize service duplication. While there has not been sufficient time to fully understand the success of this change, staff indicated that there continues to be areas of duplication or opportunities for greater/continued coordination that needs to be addressed to operate more efficiently.

Staff have identified that Council has been supportive of expanding the staffing complement in the past and this should continue to be supported if the Municipality

continues to provide more facilities, programs, and services. The CLMA also identified the need for more staffing to meet the needs of users; it was mentioned that the CLMA's existing staffing complement is not currently meeting industry standards set by the Ontario Library Association. It will be particularly important to ensure that consideration be given to a diversified staff team that is qualified and competent to deliver and implement programs and services, and that reflect the changing diversity of the Municipality. Physical space for staff was also identified by the Municipality and CLMA team.

As residents become more sophisticated and expectations are higher, staff training and professional development will continue to be important, particularly on the front line to manage customer expectations and behaviours. Following the pandemic, staff are facing a broader range of requests and inquiries, which is reflective of the Municipality's changing community profile.

**Strategic Partnerships and Volunteers Increase Programs and Services** – The Municipality and CLMA works collaboratively with community organizations and volunteers to provide parks, recreation, and culture services. This has worked well and as Clarington continues to grow and the range of services increase; continuing to build upon these relationships and explore new partnerships will be important, particularly in areas where community partners may have the expertise and resources that the Municipality may not have. Collaborating with the private sector to provide facilities and services in intensification areas should be considered. Exploring strategies to attract and retain volunteers will also be important as this has been an increasing challenge that many communities face, including Clarington.

**Operational Considerations to Improve Inclusion, Service Delivery and Satisfaction Levels** – Staff had further suggestions as to how to improve service delivery which included:

- The development of an Accessible Playground Strategy to identify opportunities within the Municipality to improve access for persons with physical limitations and prioritize these applications.
- Consider amenities such as washrooms, shade, and lighting would improve access to parks for all populations.
- The impact of the Pandemic has seen a reduction of volunteers to manage community hall spaces; consideration should be given to how these spaces can be operated through partnerships or staff given decreased volunteerism.
- Volunteerism has decreased in many other areas of service, reducing enhancements in these areas. A plan to increase volunteers and provide more enhanced support should be addressed.

**Municipality of Clarington Parks, Recreation, and Culture Master Plan**  
**Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report**

- Staff would like guidance as to when to seek out partners and when to keep services in-house. This would provide a framework for decision-making.
- A look to increasing the capacity of aquatic staff to provide adequate programs as many programs are waitlisted due to lack of pool space and staff.
- Staff suggested some assistance in ensuring that programs and services are reflective of the diverse needs of the community.
- Setting targets and performance measures and offering a report card would assist in ways to continually improve service delivery by identifying strengths and gaps in service. It is noted that there are performance measures in place in some program areas, however, there is not a consistent approach within the departments.
- It was suggested that there is duplication in servicing sport field users as one division permits, and another maintains the fields. A consistent approach would serve sport field users more effectively.
- There is a need to engage developers in providing recreational spaces within condominium and apartment towers to provide local and accessible spaces.

**Staff Top Priorities**

- Planning for future residents while recognizing the needs of existing residents, particularly in established areas that are underserved with parks, recreation, and cultural services.
- Balance new facility needs and repair/replacement of aging infrastructure.
- Making efficient use of resources will be important and should include exploring partnerships with community groups and the private sector.
- Changing legislation such as Bill 23 will impact future park acquisition and development opportunities and alternatives to be considered.
- Future actions need to be implementable, achievable, and measurable.
- Parks, recreation, and culture features need to be connected to strengthen community walkability.

## 7. Council Interviews

Individual interviews with Council members were undertaken to provide an opportunity for Councillors to provide their perspective and priorities on parks, recreation, and culture in Clarington. This section highlights key themes from the discussions.

**Connecting Clarington through Trails** – Trails for walking and cycling are important amenities in Clarington and continuing to enhance these features should continue to be encouraged to ensure that there are safe and accessible with both east-west and north-south connections across the Municipality. Consideration should be given to the use of railways and hydro corridors, exploring strategies to link together parks (including within Camp 30 and Bowmanville Zoo lands), expanding the waterfront trail, and creating a green trail around Bowmanville. Encouraging year-round trail use was also suggested, which could be tied in with a winter holiday lighting event.

**Bowmanville Zoo Lands** – The Bowmanville Zoo lands has a lot of potential to create a unique park space such as New York's Central Park. It was identified that these lands should primarily be geared towards passive and cultural uses, although some organized recreation uses may be permitted, such as sports fields. Ensuring that the public is continually engaged in the development of these lands will be important. While private involvement is discouraged, it was identified that the Municipality should be open to meaningful partnership opportunities that benefit the public.

**Camp 30** – Camp 30 is a historically significant site that has a lot of potential to support the arts and culture industry, such as providing space for community organizations and a venue for performing arts and special events. It was also suggested that the buildings at Camp 30 could be leased for commercial uses; Toronto's Distillery District was mentioned as an example that could be explored. The need to investigate external funding and partnerships was identified as it is recognized that a significant investment will need to be made to modernize the buildings.

**Investing in the Waterfront** – Clarington's waterfront is a natural asset that is underutilized. As the Courtice waterfront is developed, opportunity exists to create a destination for residents and tourists including, but not limited to, parks, trails, recreation, performing arts, and cultural spaces. Securing additional waterfront land for public use was suggested. Waterfront communities that were identified as ideal models include Oakville, Orillia, and Mississauga.

**Library Services** – Opportunities to strengthen library services in Clarington's rural area was suggested such as creating a mobile bookmobile service; this idea was previously explored but it has not yet been implemented. Additional funding for library services was suggested to help deliver this program and achieve other goals such as increasing its online presence and staffing, particularly as the library is increasingly being viewed as a place to access social resources.

**Responding to Emerging Recreation Facilities** – There is an increasing desire for new or additional recreation facilities such as outdoor pickleball courts, cricket fields, indoor pool, ice pads, gymnasium, tennis courts, outdoor skating rinks, and more. The need to construct regulation-sized recreation facilities is important to attract and support tournaments and competition uses. Updating existing parks and facilities was also viewed as important to ensure that they are well-equipped and modern.

**Arts and Cultural Opportunities** – The desire for a performing arts space was identified. It was expressed that the Municipality should establish a cultural hub in downtown Bowmanville, which could contribute to creating a vibrant downtown. As part of this, it was suggested to relocate the Clarke Schoolhouse in Orono to downtown Bowmanville, as it is currently underutilized.

## 8. Next Steps

This Phase 2 Community Engagement Summary Report highlights the input received from the activities undertaken to date, including public open houses, community survey, stakeholder focus groups, meetings with advisory committees and workshops and interviews with Staff and Council. The comments collected from these community engagement sessions will be considered with other inputs, including local demographics, population projections, trends, current inventory, and usage data as part of the analysis that will be undertaken in the next phase to identify community needs, which will ultimately form the draft Master Plan.