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**Item No. 4**

**Halifax Regional Council  
March 7, 2023  
Committee of the Whole  
March 21, 2023  
April 4, 2023**

**TO:** Mayor Savage Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
Councillor Patty Cuttell, Chair, CPED Standing Committee

**DATE:** February 16, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Playing Field Strategy**

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**ORIGIN**

February 16, 2023 meeting of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, Item 12.1.1.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee – Terms of Reference  
Purpose

- (1) The purpose of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee is to recommend to the Council directions to support Community and Economic life “making HRM the most livable community in which to live, work and play”.
- (2) The specific areas of oversight include:
  - a. the Municipality’s Regional Plan and community planning programs;
  - b. the Municipality’s Economic Strategy and Economic Prosperity Outcomes including the implantation of “Capital Ideas” and the Immigration Action Plan;
  - c. Community building initiatives in the areas of arts, culture, recreation and heritage and related facility strategies; and

**RECOMMENDATION ON PAGE 2**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the Halifax Playing Field Strategy (Attachment A) as a guiding municipal document for the planning, programming, and operation of playing fields; and
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify applicable implementation actions and directions as contained in the Halifax Playing Field Strategy within future business plans.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated February 1, 2023 to consider the Playing Field Strategy.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee considered the staff report dated February 1, 2023 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

## **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Meetings of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated February 1, 2023.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated February 1, 2023.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated February 1, 2023.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:       Catie Campbell, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 782.641.0796

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### Item No.12.1.1

#### Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee February 16, 2023

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 1, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Playing Field Strategy**

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#### **ORIGIN**

February 7, 2017 Regional Council Meeting 14.2.3 Motion MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Deputy Mayor Craig

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

- Approve the use of the Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) as a framework for municipal decision-making regarding recreation facilities; and
- Approve the categorization of the CFMP2 recommendations outlined in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated January 6, 2017, and direct staff to incorporate the recommendations in future annual Business Plans for Council's consideration.

Parks and Recreation Business Plans

#### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*

Section 7A, the purposes of the Municipality are to ...

- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; ...

Section 79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the Halifax Playing Field Strategy (Attachment A) as a guiding municipal document for the planning, programming, and operation of playing fields; and

2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify applicable implementation actions and directions as contained in the Halifax Playing Field Strategy within future business plans.

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 7, 2017, Regional Council approved the Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) as a framework for municipal decision-making across recreation facilities. The CFMP2 provided an overview of municipal playing fields and recommended the development of a Playing Field Strategy. The CFMP2 highlighted the need to improve the quality of existing playing fields, and data collection; as well as strengthen stewardship of fields with local groups.

The Halifax Playing Field Strategy (Strategy) is the Municipality's first comprehensive examination of the full range of playing field types, and builds on the themes identified in the CFMP2, while identifying current challenges, opportunities, and future approaches. The Strategy's purpose is to enable informed decisions and provide guidance for improvements to municipal playing fields over the next 15 years.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Approach**

The Strategy methodology models an approach used for the Long-Term Arena Strategy (2012) and the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy (2019). It is guided by the Parks & Recreation Vision and Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) Values. Important background information about playing fields was outlined and analyzed, within subject areas that included:

- Demographics and Service Delivery;
- Usage and Participation Trends;
- Classifications and Conditions; and
- Community and Stakeholder Consultation.

Analysis was also informed by key planning documents, that in addition to the CFMP2, includes:

- HRM's Strategic Priorities Plan;
- Diversity and Inclusion Framework;
- Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy;
- Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and Centre Plan;
- HRM's Community Access Plan; and
- Parks and Recreation's Updated Fee Structure Review

The community and stakeholder consultation was integral to the development of the Strategy. An online public survey was available for two months and had input from over 2,500 respondents. The survey was intended for all citizens, regardless of whether they use playing fields for sports or for other informal and non-sport activities. It explored how and why citizens use playing fields and what their priorities are for the future. Additionally, a series of focus sessions were held with stakeholder groups, comprised primarily of a variety of sport and recreation organizations. Similar to the survey, these sessions identified issues, opportunities, and priorities.

Analysis found that the municipality has a sufficient number of playing fields across all categories to meet current needs, except for cricket. There are a number of challenges and opportunities associated with the service delivery of existing playing fields. This analysis has prompted the development of strategic directions and actions within the following subject areas:

- Quality of Inventory Data;
- Hub and Spoke Model;
- Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships;

- Scheduling and Allocation;
- Site Conditions;
- Playing Field Classifications;
- Playing Field Lighting;
- All-weather Sport Fields;
- Grass Sport Field Fields;
- Ball Diamonds; and
- Cricket Grounds.

The strategic directions and actions in these subject areas are compiled in an implementation table that includes prospective timelines.

## **Highlights**

Each of the subject areas outlines important information from the background findings, with some sample highlights as follows:

### Quality of Inventory Data

The accuracy, and in some cases the absence, of inventory information has been a substantial challenge in the analysis and planning of playing fields. This information has been steadily improving with an emphasis on continued improvements to data collection including a wide range of conditions and factors. Additional direction is to integrate the playing field inventories of partner organizations.

### Hub and Spoke Model

The CFMP2 established a hub and spoke service delivery model where top tier facilities serve a regional population and local needs are met with community playing fields. The hub and spoke model is supported throughout the Strategy, with complimentary recommendations to direct enhancements to hub facilities and support these locations to meet regional recreation needs. Given that issues have been identified with the existing hubs of Halifax Common and Range Park, the development of at least one new hub facility is recommended.

### Scheduling and Allocation

The current scheduling system is based on historical usage, which favours past users over new, emerging, or underserved sports. The Municipality has implemented allocation guidelines for other facility types, such as arenas. Similar guidelines are recommended for playing fields.

The municipality has varied lengths of playing seasons, which do not provide for sufficient field condition recovery. A defined playing season is recommended that accommodates turf growth and renewal in the spring and fall.

### Site Conditions

Improvements to site conditions are a high priority among community consultation respondents. There are substantial issues in addressing the condition of many of the Municipality's playing fields such as their age, substandard initial construction, and school siting which results in shared use challenges. A site assessment tool is recommended as an approach to address and prioritize field conditions.

### Playing Field Classifications

The Municipality's current playing field classification system can be difficult to decipher. There are multiple categorizations often with few differences between some classifications. There are discrepancies about

which accessory facilities might be expected at certain classification fields. A new classification system is proposed, which reduces the categories to differentiate fields for sport and fields for general play.

#### Field Lighting

Community and stakeholder consultation identified field lighting as an opportunity to extend playing field usage. Lighting is expensive and could contribute to the overuse of grass playing fields. Guidance is provided to direct most field lighting to regional hubs.

#### All-weather Sport Fields

The Municipality's all weather sport fields have capacity to accommodate additional usage. While there is not a present need for additional all-weather fields, an additional multi-field facility is recognized as a potential need in the longer term. Comparatively, hub all-weather facilities are viewed as advantageous to single fields. Enhancements to school sport fields, based on background findings, are not viewed favourably in most circumstances.

#### Grass Sport Fields

The Municipality has enough grass sport fields, but HRM needs to consider acquiring lands for these facilities as new communities are established.

#### Ball Diamonds

Many ball diamonds have overlapping outfields and other such issues that need to be addressed through a rationalization and improvement approach. It is recommended that land be identified for one to two multi diamond complexes (6 to 8 diamonds within each) within the region and dedicated for programmed use.

With a growing number of accessible ball diamond sport play, there is a need to plan and implement accessible facilities.

#### Cricket Grounds

There is a substantial waitlist for cricket, with the only field being a temporary one on the Halifax Common. The need for a dedicated and permanent cricket ground is recognized and outlined as a recommendation.

### **Implementation**

The Strategy's Implementation section outlines the directions and actions from each of the preceding sections, along with timeframes for them to be undertaken. Some are identified as guidance actions, to be followed on an ongoing basis, while others may be tasks or projects, with timeframes that range from 1 - 3 years; to longer periods of up to 15 years.

The adoption of the Strategy would lead to its implementation and would be identified through the Municipality's business and budget planning.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report. However, there are financial implications that will need to be considered for future budget and business cycles which will be the subject of future staff reports or business plans.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

The primary risk in not adopting the Strategy would be the absence of an overall guiding document to improve the service delivery of municipal playing fields.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The community engagement process for the development of the Strategy involved consultation through stakeholder groups and the public through a broad based two-month online public survey.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate environmental implications associated with this report. While environmental implications are not the focus of the Strategy, the recommendations within it serve to provide greater efficiencies to the delivery of playing field services that in part, address the energy and resources to maintain them.

Range Park is identified in the Strategy as a significant regional facility that is within an identified flood plain, with regular flooding that may have impacts on capital infrastructure. Strategic actions call for the assessment of the park's function as a regional hub in consideration of this situation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Regional Council may choose to direct staff to consider alternatives to the proposed Playing Field Strategy. This may involve additional analysis and revisions, and a new report to Regional Council.
2. Regional Council may choose to not approve the Playing Field Strategy, thereby resulting in the continued use of the Community Facilities Master Plan 2 for broad guidance on the service delivery of playing fields.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Halifax Playing Field Strategy

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Richard Harvey, Manager of Policy and Planning, 902.476.5822

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# Halifax Playing Field Strategy

Fall 2022



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# Executive Summary

The Playing Field Strategy (Strategy) outlines approaches and actions to improve the service delivery of playing fields in the Municipality. It addresses a variety of subjects, including:

- the appropriate number and types of playing fields;
- field conditions and maintenance;
- field classifications; and
- scheduling and field allocations.

## Approach

The Strategy is similar to the Municipality's Long-Term Arena and Aquatic Strategies. Important background information about playing fields is outlined and analyzed, within subject areas that include:

- Demographics and Service Delivery;
- Usage and Participation Trends;
- Classifications and Conditions; and
- Community and Stakeholder Consultation.

The background information led to the identification of challenges and opportunities, and the development of strategic directions and actions within the following subject areas:

- Quality of Inventory Data;
- Hub and Spoke Model;
- Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships;
- Scheduling and Allocation;
- Site Conditions;
- Playing Field Classifications;
- Playing Field Lighting;
- All-weather Sport Fields;
- Grass Sport Fields;
- Ball Diamonds; and
- Cricket Grounds.

The strategic directions and actions in these subject areas are compiled into an implementation table that includes prospective timelines.

## Background Analysis Highlights

Some of the key findings from the background analysis are outlined below:

### Demographics and Service Delivery

Halifax is a fast-growing municipality with an increased density of development. Within such new subdivision areas, the Municipality is often challenged in obtaining suitably sized lands for new playing fields through means such as parkland dedications. Coupled with this, while new school development typically includes a sports field, they are not of a standard that they can be used for a fulsome variety of sports. They are also under provincial ownership and subject to agreements.

Playing fields are provided through a hybrid service delivery model, often with community groups and other organizations that may undertake their own scheduling and determine usage. While offering some local benefits, this system may also present service delivery inconsistencies and other challenges.

There is a good overall distribution of playing fields within the Municipality, with a high percentage of people having access to these facilities within reasonable travel times by vehicle and public transit.

The Municipality's scheduling and allocation practices have traditionally placed a preference on existing organizations and groups. However, this could be to the detriment of new users or new emerging sports.



*Football at Mainland Common*

### Usage and Participation Trends

Usage and sport participation trends are important factors in determining the number and type of playing fields that may be needed within the Municipality. Inventory and other data gaps have been longstanding issues, but these have been the subject of steady improvements.

Based on usage, the Municipality has more than an ample supply of grass sport fields, all-weather sport fields, and ball diamonds. However, certain individual playing fields may be overused, that in the case of some grass sport fields, results in scheduling and maintenance issues.

Most sports are experiencing steady participation levels, meaning that there are not new demands for playing fields. Cricket is an exception, with recognized higher demands and the absence of a dedicated pitch.

### Classifications and Conditions

HRM has several playing field classification categories, without a clear

distinction between them. Community consultation identified confusion over whether classifications are to represent service levels, the types of amenities provided, the type of field, usage, or level of play.

Certain playing fields have inherently poor conditions and simply cannot properly accommodate intended usage. The municipality has an active recapitalization program, but there are a significant number of fields that require improvements and that need to be prioritized.

Regional recreation hubs, comprised of several playing fields, are recognized as important facilities in providing efficiencies in service delivery.

### Community and Stakeholder Consultation

The community and stakeholder consultation played an important part of the development of the Strategy. An online public survey was open for two months and resulted in input from over 2,500 respondents. The survey was intended for all citizens, regardless of whether they use playing fields for sports or for other informal and non-sport activities. It explored how and why citizens use playing fields and what their priorities are for the future. In addition, a series of focus sessions were held with stakeholder groups, primarily comprised of a variety of sport and recreation organizations. Similar to the survey, these sessions identified issues, opportunities, and priorities.

Highlighted themes from the community engagement include:

- ensuring reasonable access for recreation;
- improving scheduling and allocation of field time
- encouraging unstructured/informal play such as pick-up games
- providing for extended play;
- improving the maintenance and condition of playing fields;
- providing facilities that are the proper size, dimensions, and standards;
- improving facilities and provide for new and updated features and amenities;
- improving partnerships; and
- improving accessibility.

The community consultation also revealed certain challenges, including that while many survey respondents indicated a strong desire for improved field conditions, few were willing to support a reduction in field access that would permit field rehabilitation.

## Strategic Directions and Actions Highlights

The background analysis led to the identification of challenges and opportunities, and the development strategic directions and actions. These are categorized within a series of subject areas, with selected highlights outlined below.

### Quality of Inventory Data

The accuracy and in some cases the absence, of inventory information has been a substantial challenge in the analysis and planning of playing fields. This has been steadily improving. An emphasis on continued improvements to data to include a wide range of conditions and factors. Additional directions are to integrate the inventories of playing fields of partner organizations.

### Hub and Spoke Model

The CFMP2 established a hub and spoke service delivery model where top tier facilities serve a regional population and local needs are met with community playing fields. This model is supported through the Strategy, with directions to direct enhancements to hub facilities and support these locations to meet regional recreation needs. With identified issues with the Halifax Common and Range Park as existing hubs, the development of at least one new hub facility is recommended.

### Scheduling and Allocation

The current scheduling system is based on historical usage, which favours past users over new, emerging, or underserved sports. The Municipality has implemented allocation guidelines for other facility types, such as arenas. Similar guidelines are recommended for playing fields.

The municipality has varied lengths of playing seasons, which do not

provide for sufficient field condition recovery. A defined playing season is recommended that accommodates turf growth and renewal in the spring and fall.

### Site Conditions

Improvements to site conditions are a high priority among community consultation respondents. There are, however, substantial issues in addressing the condition of many of the Municipality's playing fields based on factors such as their age, substandard initial construction, and school siting which results in shared use problems. A site assessment tool is recommended as an approach to address and prioritize field conditions.

Other recommendations focus on improvements to recapitalization and improvements to irrigation systems.

### Playing Field Classifications

The Municipality's current playing field classification system can be difficult to decipher, with multiple categorizations, and there are few differences in some classifications. There are discrepancies about which accessory facilities might be expected at certain classification fields. A new classification system is proposed, that reduces the categories to differentiate fields for sport and fields for general play.

### Field Lighting

Field lighting was identified as a way to extend playing field usage through the community and stakeholder consultation. However, lighting is expensive and could contribute to the overuse of grass playing fields. Guidance is provided to direct most field lighting to regional hubs.

### All-weather Sport Fields

The Municipality's all weather sport fields have additional capacity to accommodate additional usage. While there is not a present need for

additional all-weather fields, an additional multi-field facility is recognized as a potential need in the longer term. Such hub all-weather facilities are viewed as advantageous to single fields. Further to this, enhancements to school sport fields are not viewed favourably in most circumstances.

### Grass Sport Fields

The Municipality has a sufficient number of grass sport fields but needs to consider acquiring lands for these facilities as new communities are established.

### Ball Diamonds

Many ball diamonds have overlapping outfields and other issues that need to be addressed through a rationalization and improvement approach. With this, it is recommended that land be identified for one to two multi diamond complexes (6 to 8 diamonds within each) within the region and dedicated for programmed use.

With a growing number of accessible ball diamond sport play, there is a need to plan and implement accessible facilities.

### Cricket Grounds

There is a substantial waitlist for cricket, with the only field being a temporary one on the Halifax Common. The need for a dedicated and permanent cricket ground is recognized and outlined as a recommendation.

## Implementation

The Implementation section outlines the directions and actions, along with timeframes for them to be undertaken. Some of these are identified as guidance actions, to be followed on an ongoing basis, while others may be tasks or projects, with timeframes that range from 1 to 3 years; to longer-term periods of up to 15 years.



*Big Beazley Ball Diamond*



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The 2017 Community Facilities Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) is the Municipality's framework for recreation facility planning. It includes an overview of municipal playing fields and recommendations, including the need to develop a comprehensive plan, which is realized in this Playing Field Strategy (Strategy).

'Playing fields' are fields that are used for competitive sports and within the Strategy, include:

- rectangular sport fields, which are used for a multitude of sports such as soccer, football, rugby, and lacrosse;
- ball diamonds, which are specialized playing fields for softball, baseball, and other similar sports; and
- cricket grounds, which are designed for cricket.

## 1.2 Purpose and Scope

The Strategy outlines approaches and actions to improve the service delivery of playing fields in the Municipality. It addresses a variety of subjects, including:

- the number and types of playing fields;
- field conditions and maintenance;
- field classifications; and
- scheduling and field allocations.



*Mainland Common Baseball Diamond*

The strategy does not include:

- a detailed analysis of specific programming;
- specific locational site assessments;
- a detailed analysis of user charges, facility costs, or third-party proposals; or
- detailed business cases of any specific facilities.

## 1.3 Approach

The Strategy is similar to the Municipality's

Long-Term Arena and Aquatic Strategies. Important background information about playing fields is outlined and analyzed, within subject areas that include:

- Demographics and Service Delivery;
- Usage and Participation Trends;
- Classifications and Conditions; and
- Community and Stakeholder Consultation.

Analysis was also informed by key planning documents, that in addition to the CFMP2,

includes:

- HRM’s Strategic Priorities Plan;
- Diversity and Inclusion Framework;
- Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy;
- Regional Municipal Planning Strategy and Centre Plan;
- HRM’s Community Access Plan; and
- Parks and Recreation’s Updated Fee Structure Review

The community and stakeholder consultation played an important part in the development of the Strategy. An online public survey was open for two months and resulted in input from over 2,500 respondents. The survey was intended for all citizens, regardless of whether they use playing fields for sports or for other informal and non-sport activities. It explored how and why citizens use playing fields and what their priorities are for the future. In addition, a series of focus sessions was held with stakeholder groups that were primarily comprised of sport and recreation organizations. Similar to the survey, these sessions identified issues, opportunities, and priorities.

The background information analysis led to the identification of challenges and opportunities, and strategic directions and actions, categorized within the following subject areas:

- Quality of Inventory Data;
- Hub and Spoke Model;
- Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships;
- Scheduling and Allocation;
- Site Conditions;

- Playing Field Classifications;
- Playing Field Lighting;
- All-weather Sport Fields;
- Grass Sport Fields;
- Ball Diamonds; and
- Cricket Grounds

The strategic directions and actions are compiled into an implementation table that includes prospective timelines.

### Foundational Statements

The following foundational statements formed an important basis in the development of the Strategy.

#### *HRM’s Vision*

The Municipality’s vision is to enhance our quality of life by fostering the growth of healthy and vibrant communities, a strong and diverse economy, and a sustainable environment.

#### *HRM’s Mission*

We take pride in providing high quality public service to benefit our citizens – We make a difference.

### HRM’s Values

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Sustainability
- Evidence-Based Decision Making

### Parks and Recreation’s Vision

We work together to create a Halifax where everyone has access to meaningful recreation experiences that foster healthy lifestyles, vibrant communities, and a sustainable environment. We make a difference.

### Strategy’s Goal

To promote lifelong participation through quality playing fields that enable active lifestyles, attract events that are beneficial to the region, and provide access to green spaces for a wide range of recreational opportunities fostering healthy vibrant communities.

### Municipal Focus

The Municipality is focused on providing recreation facilities that facilitate lifelong sport and recreation opportunities, enabling active and healthy lifestyles for all ages and abilities. The Municipality also supports sport development and events that provide substantial economic benefits to the region. Elite sport is generally the responsibility of other levels of government and is not the primary mandate of the municipality. However, municipal support has been provided to specialized sport infrastructure to host elite level competitions that may also provide general public access for recreation.

## **Goal**

To promote lifelong participation through quality playing fields that enable active lifestyles, attract events that are beneficial to the region, and provide access to green spaces for a wide range of recreational opportunities fostering healthy vibrant communities.

# 2. Demographics and Service Delivery

## 2.1 Demographic Overview

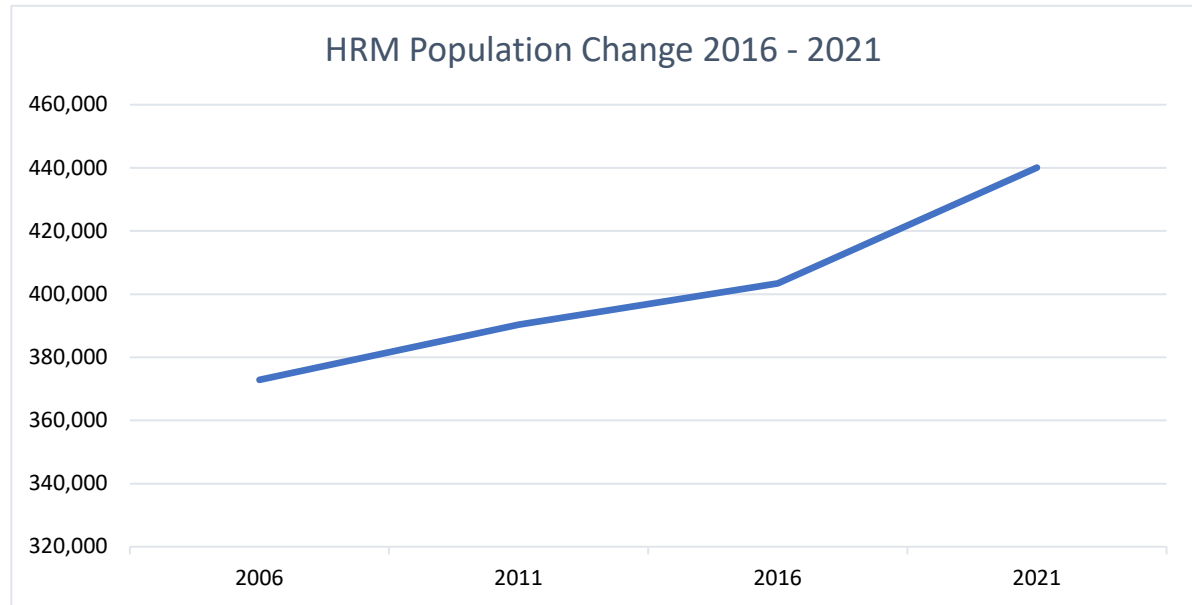
### Population Growth

The Municipality is a vast area of 5,928 square kilometres, from a dense urban core to sparsely populated rural areas. The municipality's overall population grew from 425,871 (Statistics Canada) to 450,586 (Canmac) between 2016 and 2020, an increase of 24,715. The Municipality's growth is a combination of relatively high intra provincial and interprovincial migration, and steady immigration from outside Canada. This immigration from other countries may in turn lead to increased interest in non-traditional playing field sports and activities.

While playing fields are used by people of all ages, there are higher usage rates among younger age brackets. Twenty percent of the Municipality's population is 19 years old and younger, and there are high population percentages within the next older age brackets.

Areas of highest population growth between 2016 and 2020 include Bedford South, Bedford West, Hammonds Plains/Tantallon, Clayton Park West, Armdale and Spryfield, Russell Lake/Portland Hills, and Middle Sackville.

The Integrated Mobility Plan's Household (residential) Growth Scenario indicates that 40% of the Municipality's anticipated growth



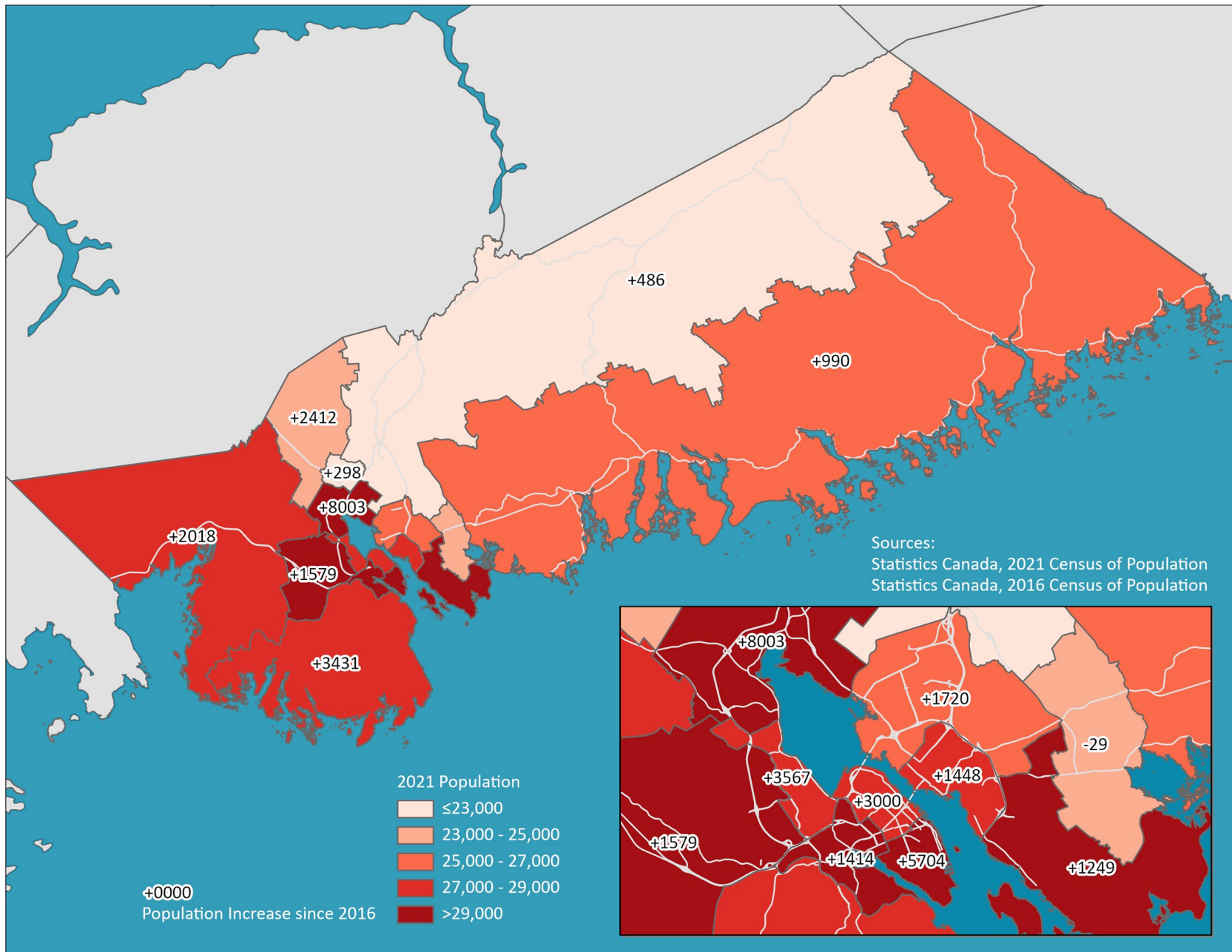
will be within the Regional Centre (Peninsular Halifax and Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway), 50% within suburban areas outside of the Regional Centre (Urban Service Area) and 10% within rural areas

### New Development and Playing Fields

The 2014 Regional Plan projected a one percent annual rate of population growth. However, in the past few years the Municipality has grown at a rate of approximately two percent. Such an accelerated population increase has implications on the delivery of services such as playing fields that may be required in the medium and long term,

depending on the location of such growth.

The form of residential growth has also been changing from a prevalence of subdivisions comprised of single detached dwellings and other "ground-based units" (e.g., townhouses, semi-detached dwellings, duplexes, and mobile homes) to multi-unit dwellings (apartments and condominiums). In the Regional Centre, it is forecasted that 90 percent of the housing within identified growth centres will be comprised of multi-unit dwellings. This form of the development is also occurring within suburban areas at an increasing prevalence.



Population and Population Growth by District

The transition to higher density multiple-unit development creates advantages, but it also presents challenges to the delivery of parkland that might be developed with playing fields which occupy large areas:

- Higher density multi-unit dwellings, without backyards or other open space areas, or subdivisions with high density ground-based units, increase the needs for parkland when compared to lower density development.
- Parkland dedications from new developments require a maximum of ten percent of the area of land being subdivided and, on that basis, the higher the density of development, the smaller the amount of parkland dedication per capita.
- The limited size of the parkland dedications in higher density development areas are not typically able to accommodate playing fields.
- Even if parkland in higher density development areas was of a size that could accommodate playing fields, there would be a tendency for this to be at the expense of flexible open space that would be required, first and foremost, meet local needs for general unstructured recreation.

The Halifax Common provides an example of the impacts of additional urbanization, where the North Common is largely occupied by ball diamonds. With new multi-unit development, scheduled sport use is increasingly at conflict with the needs for general open space. In such instances, it may not be reasonable to retain or situate playing fields in

close proximity to growing urban areas in the core of the city when it comes at the cost of unstructured recreation.

In suburban environments, new schools are increasingly the only sources of open space areas with playing fields. However, while they are the subject of service joint-use agreements, unlike older schools that are on municipal properties, new schools are established on provincial lands, thereby providing less control and management of their use in the long-term. Further, the province's construction standards and sport field sizes, in which only soccer-sized pitches are developed, mean they may be not ideal for a wide variety of sports. A recent example is the development of a replacement grass sport field at JL Ilsley High School, which cannot accommodate the school's football program or other sports that may require a larger field.

While there was a tradition of each of the former pre-amalgamation municipalities establishing or reserving large land areas, often referred to as "commons", for playing fields and other recreation and institutional facilities, this is not presently occurring.

#### Household Income

In 2020, the municipality had an average household income of \$94,009 (EnviroNics) or a median household income of \$75,965. However, a 2017 HRM anti-poverty strategy presentation to Regional Council highlighted that 1 in 8 people (12.5%) are living in poverty within the municipality. This has implications regarding the ability to participate in

playing field activities.

## 2.2 Service Delivery

Playing fields within the Municipality include those that broadly fit within the following categorizations:

- owned and managed by the Municipality;
- owned by the Municipality, but managed by a community group or organization under a partnership agreement;
- school sites owned by the Municipality or the province, and are under a Service Exchange Agreement (SEA) or joint-use agreements (JUA) between the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) and the Municipality;
- owned and managed by an organization or a community group, which might include a sport organization such as Soccer Nova Scotia, a university, or a community association; or
- privately owned and managed.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the main focus is on *municipal playing fields*, which are those that are:

- owned and managed by the Municipality;
- playing fields owned by the Municipality, but managed by a community group or organization under a partnership agreement or other arrangement; and
- school sites.

All-weather fields and other playing fields which are owned and managed by other organizations are also an important part of the overall supply of facilities.

This *hybrid* system of municipal playing field service delivery can be complex when accounting for the inventory and distribution of playing fields. It can also result in service delivery inconsistencies with scheduling, fees, levels of maintenance, classifications, inventories, and usage statistics. Some differences may simply be reflective of the history and preferences of certain communities or established systems of service delivery that were

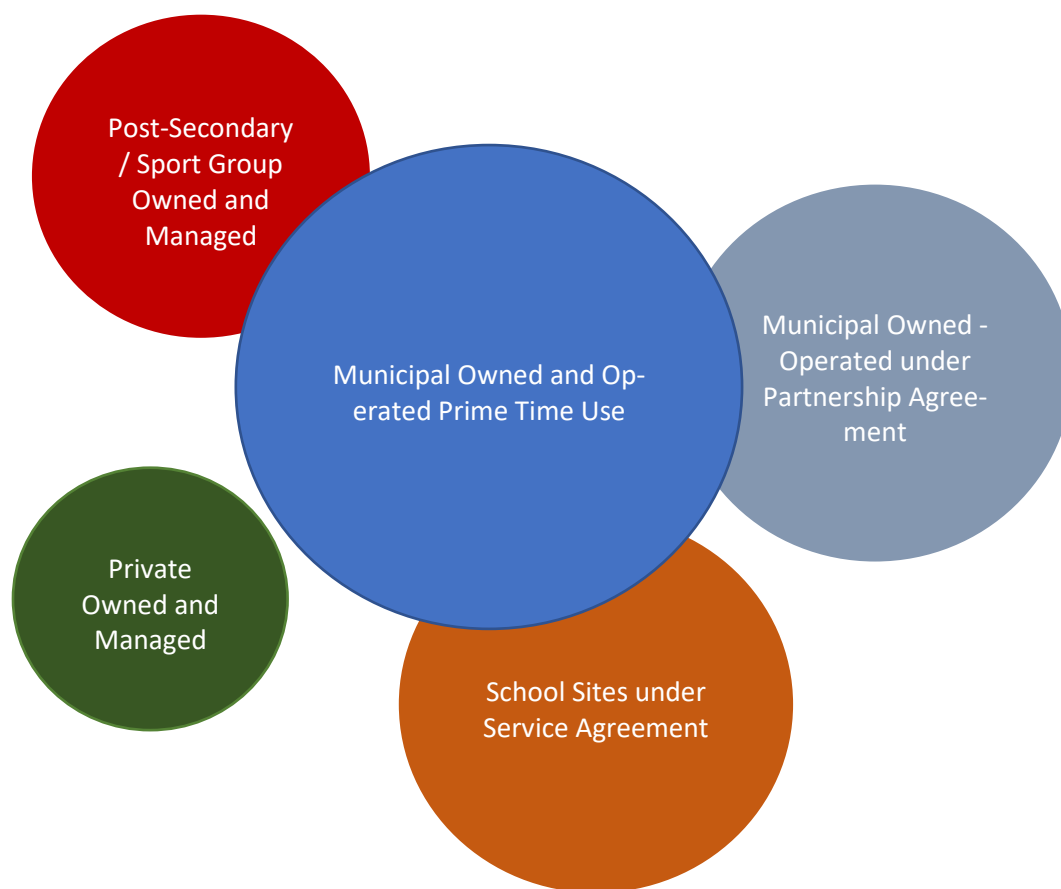
present amongst the different pre-amalgamation municipalities. For example, in many rural (former Halifax County) areas of the Municipality, there was and continues to be playing fields which are maintained and managed by community organizations. For example, until recently, the Prospect Road Community Recreation Association managed and scheduled the use of playing fields within the entire Prospect Area.

Although varied forms of playing field management may be desirable to address individual community circumstances, attention should also be placed on ensuring there are consistent levels of service and access. As the municipality continues to grow, it may be desirable for the Municipality to increasingly assume service-delivery responsibilities. There are, however, cost considerations as the further an asset is away from Municipal infrastructure such as service depots, the more expensive it is to maintain. This makes consistent service delivery and access a key components of any community partnership agreements and service exchange agreements with the HRCE.

### 2.3 Inventory and Distribution

With the inventory and distribution of playing fields being varied within the municipality, the complete inventory of municipal playing fields is not easily discernable, which has been an issue in the development of the Strategy. As noted, this partly stems from the varied arrangements and responsibilities between the Municipality and community groups. Improvements continue to be made to account for the complete inventory of municipal playing fields. Statistics in the ensuing sections are being updated to accurately reflect the complete number of playing fields and responsibilities between the Municipality and service partners.

The overall distribution of playing fields is one in which there is a greater prevalence of sport fields in urban and suburban areas, and ball diamonds in rural areas.



## 2.4 Playing Field Service Delivery

### Grass Sport Fields

There are 134 municipal sport fields, of which, 126 are scheduled directly by the Municipality. There are three additional private sport fields, for a total of 137. Municipal sport fields are more dispersed in rural areas of the municipality where there is less of a concentration of population. Solely from a spatial perspective, relative to the presence of established communities, there are some regional gaps particularly areas towards Hubbard's, East St Margarets, Sambro, and parts of the Eastern Shore. Also, as highlighted within the Population Growth section, there are some possible emerging gaps with the development of new subdivisions and an absence of municipal playing fields, with a greater reliance on school playing fields.

### All-weather Sport Fields

All-weather sport fields are lighted and serve as regional facilities. They can accommodate more usage than grass sport fields, based on their durability, ability to be used in a variety of climatic conditions, and with them being lighted, their ability to be used at night. There are 11 all-weather sport fields within the municipality, including:

- seven sport fields that are owned and managed by the municipality;
- three sport fields that are owned and

managed by post-secondary institutions and a sport group (Dalhousie University, St. Mary's University, and Soccer Nova Scotia, that has an indoor facility<sup>1</sup>), with availability for community booking; and

- one privately owned field (East Coast Varsity), also with availability for community booking.

The overall number of playing fields represents a ratio of 30.4 fields per 100,000 people. According to the CFMP2, this is reasonably consistent from a benchmarking perspective with other comparably sized Canadian municipalities.

### Ball Diamonds

There are 168 municipal ball diamonds within the municipality. Unlike sport fields, a high number of these, 46 in total, are scheduled and may be managed by community organizations. There are also 15 private ball diamonds, for a total of 183 ball diamonds within the municipality. As noted earlier, there is a greater propensity of ball diamonds in rural areas of the municipality and for many to be scheduled and managed by community organizations. The CFMP2 also noted that there was no shortage of ball diamonds within the municipality.

The overall number of ball diamonds is a ratio of 40.6 per 100,000 people. According to the CFMP2, this is relatively consistent with

the number of ball diamonds that might be found in other comparably sized Canadian municipalities.

There are no all-weather ball diamonds in the municipality. A better indication of premiere ball diamonds is represented by those that are lighted, of which there are 32 within the municipality. 24 of these are scheduled by the Municipality.

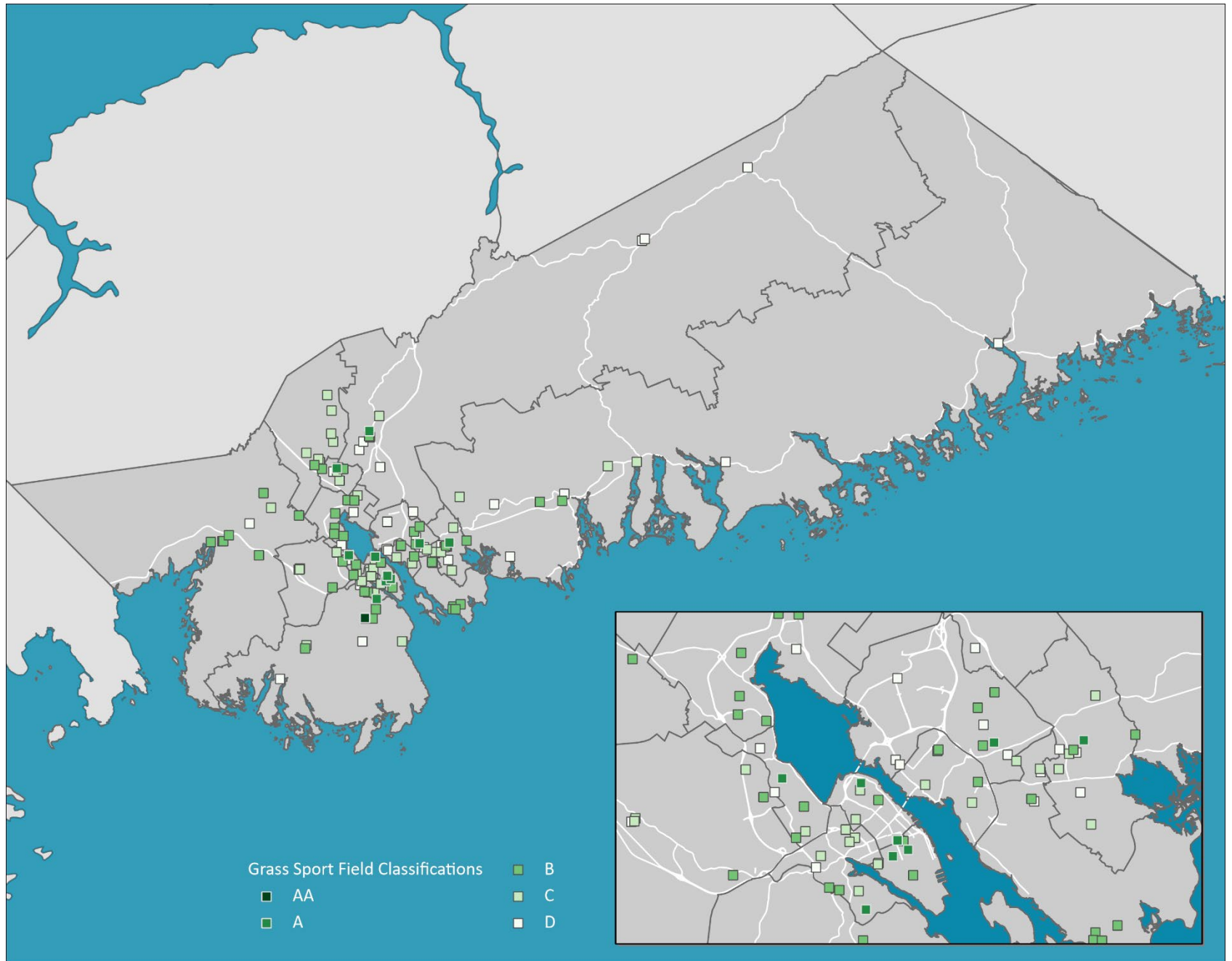
### Cricket Grounds

Most field sports are played on rectangular fields or ball diamonds, but cricket is played on large oval fields. Cricket has been played for decades on the North Common of the Halifax Common on a general field with pylons that are placed to demarcate the extent of the field during matches. Games are typically held once per week during the summer.

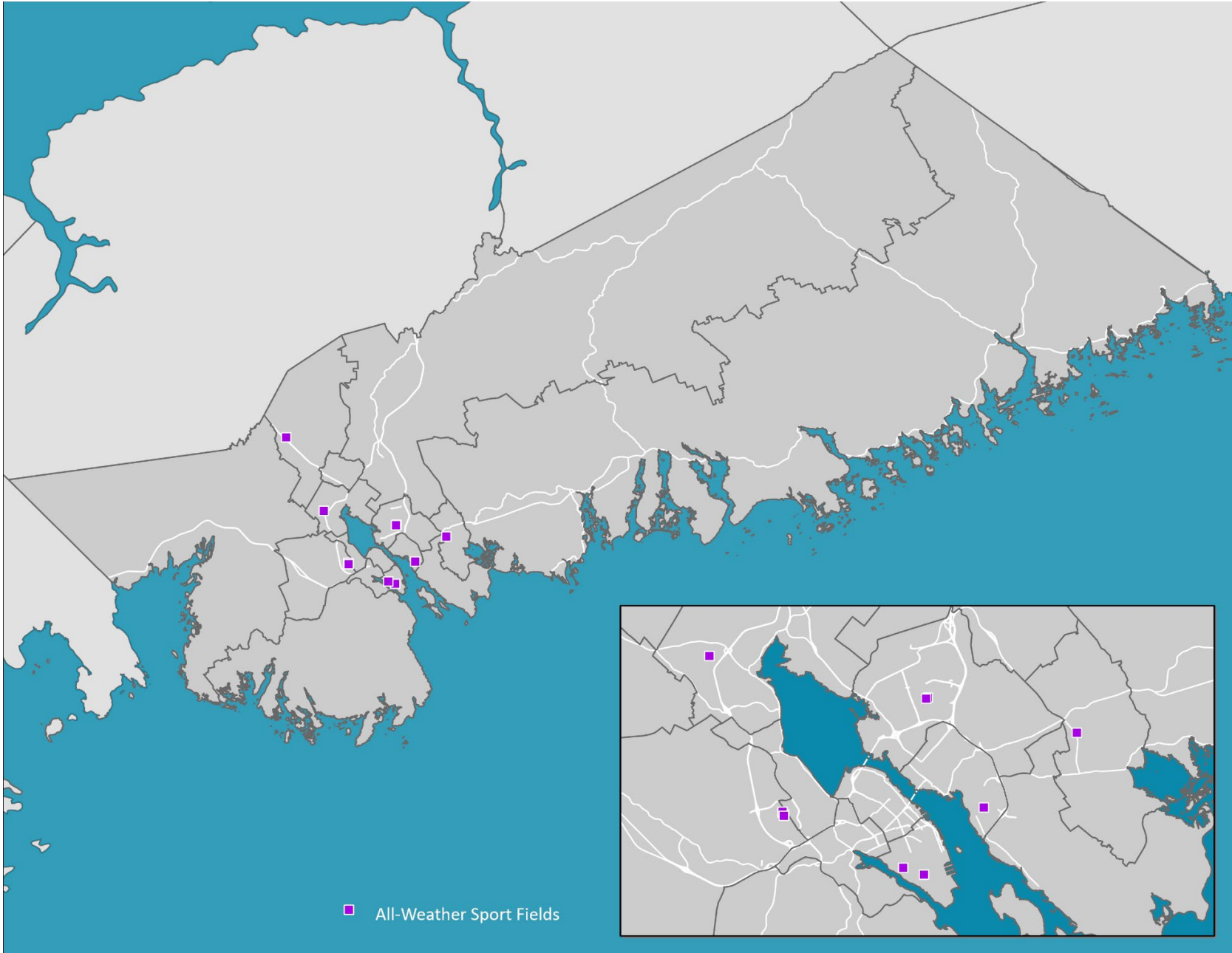
Cricket is a highly popular sport in many areas of the world. Although it has been a longstanding sport on the North Common, this is not a proper cricket field. Continued immigration to Halifax is expected to increase demand for a permanent field and there is a long waitlist for participants.

<sup>1</sup>Soccer Nova Scotia is an indoor facility that includes a full sport field that is divisible into three smaller pitches, along with an additional smaller pitch within a separate building

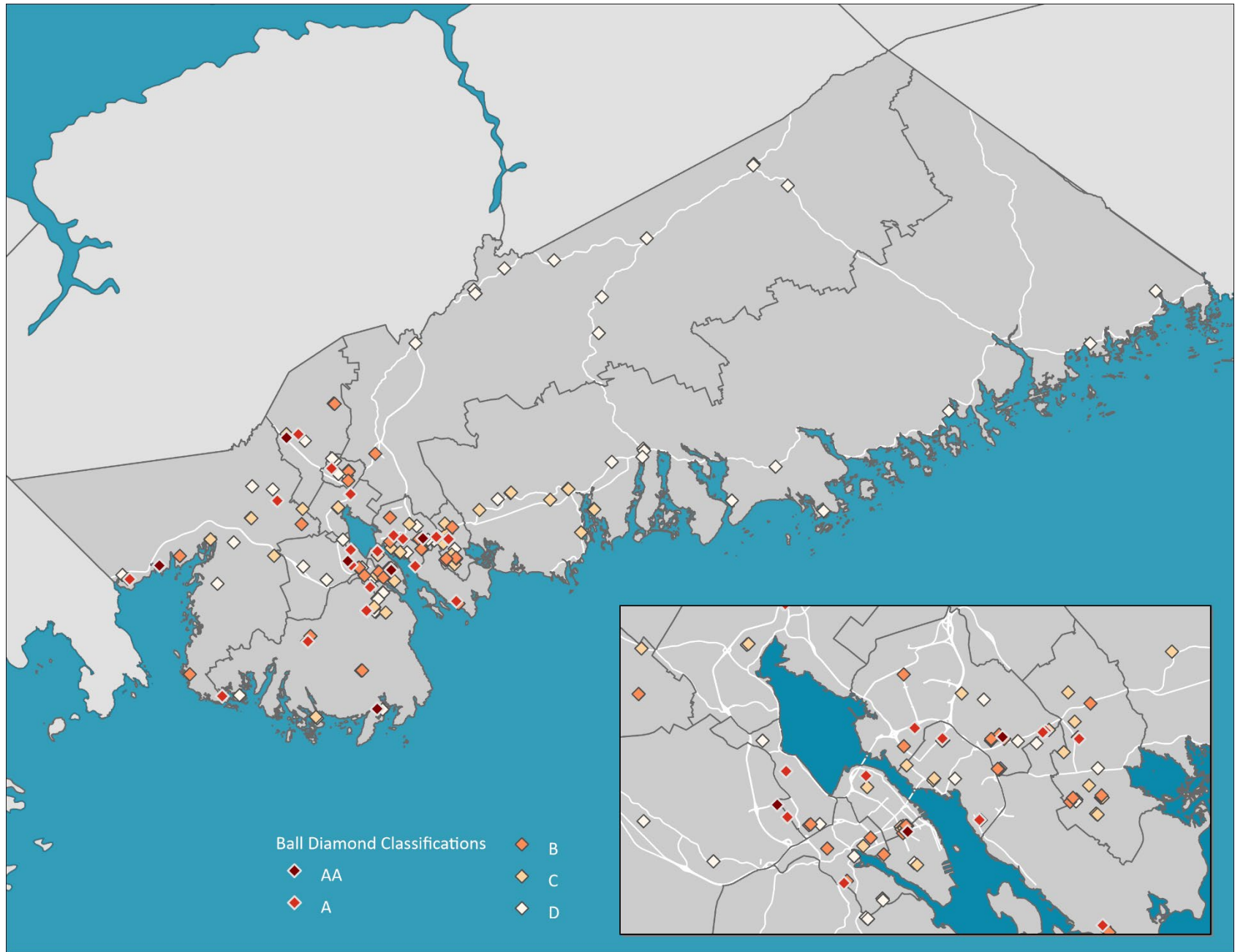




*Grass Sport Field Distribution*



*All-weather Sport Field Distribution*



*Ball Diamond Field Distribution*

## 2.5 Travel Time to Playing Fields

Playing fields are common within many communities, but they are specialized facilities. Unlike other park features such as playgrounds, play lawns, and courts, they are not necessarily found in most parks. On the basis of their specialized nature, sport participants would be expected to access playing fields with a personal vehicle or by public transit.

Table 1 identifies that almost all HRM residents are within a 20 minute drive time of a ball diamond or grass sport field. 75% are within 20 minutes of an all-weather sport field. Given the wide distribution of playing fields across the municipality, the number of facilities that are accessible by public transit is substantially lower. However, almost all of the all-weather sport fields are near a public transit stop.

The high percentages identified in Table 1, even in the lower category of 'up to 10 minutes' is an indication that residents generally have very good access to playing fields.

*Over 89% of the Municipality's population is within a 10 minute drive of a playing field*

## 2.6 Allocation System

The scheduling and allocation of municipal playing fields are largely based on historical usage by organizations. Organizations that

Table 1 - Drive Time Estimates and Public Transit Access			
Drive Time (minutes)	% of Municipality's Population Served		
	Ball Diamonds	Grass Sport Fields	All-weather Sport Fields
Up to 10 min	93	89	56
Up to 20 min	96	92	75
Up to 30 min	97	95	76
% of Facilities Served by Public Transit			
< 400m to nearest stop	54	61	91

have regularly booked playing fields in past seasons are given priority over new user groups. While this provides predictability to these established organizations, this system can:

- limit usage by other organizations or sports;
- preclude usage for new or emerging sports, such as female baseball programs;
- result in an initial over-booking of playing fields, that may in turn be cancelled at a later time, resulting in their underutilization; and
- result in usage by certain organization or individual teams that exceeds guidelines by sport governing bodies.

For other facilities such as arenas, the Municipality has instituted allocation policies through a Community Access Plan that provides better access to a wide array of organizations and sports.

## Demographics and Service Delivery Summary

- Halifax is a fast growing municipality, with a growing diversity of people which may bring increased demands for different types of playing fields such as cricket grounds.
- New development in the Municipality is denser than what has previously occurred.
- High density development presents challenges in obtaining new parkland that may be suitable or readily available for the establishment of new playing fields.
- New playing fields in new communities are often associated with new schools, on lands that are owned by the Province rather than the Municipality.
- Playing fields are provided through a hybrid service delivery model which presents some challenges relating to understanding inventories, usage and overall management.
- Despite possible new challenges, there is a good overall distribution of playing fields, with a high percentage of people being within reasonable travel times by vehicle and public transit. Cricket is an exception, as there is not a dedicated facility within the municipality.
- Although there is a good overall distribution of playing fields within the municipality, scheduling and allocation practices have traditionally placed a preference to existing organizations and groups, which is recognized to be at the possible detriment to new users and emerging sports.

# 3. Usage and Participation Trends

The amount of playing field usage and sport trends are useful indicators in understanding the demands for playing field facilities.

## 3.1 Overview of Usage

The amount of programmed usage is an important determinant in evaluating whether the Municipality has the appropriate amount of playing fields. The following analysis is based on a complete season (pre-Covid-19) of scheduling data from municipal outdoor playing fields in 2019. A new registration software system was introduced in 2018 and more fully implemented in 2019 for playing fields. While this data is three years old, it provides a full season of usage data prior to playing fields being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Early reviews of summer 2022 data appear to be relatively consistent with the 2019 information.

Consistent data was not available on some ball diamonds that are not scheduled directly by the Municipality, except for those with formalized partnerships agreements.

The data does not account for informal use (non-programmed use) that largely occurs on grass playing fields, as this is not tracked.

### Components of Usage Analysis

#### *Used Time*

The usage analysis focuses on used time rather than booked time. Used time accounts for cancellations and provides a more accurate indicator of actual usage. It addresses situations where organizations might book field time for an entire season, but then not use some of that time after registration or as the season progresses. This is captured by recording the instance where a booking refund or credit is sought, which is a regular occurrence. It does not however, include instances where an organization pays for a playing field, but does not use it, which may be due to situations such as an insufficient number of participants for a game to be played. These situations are not common and therefore, used time provides a very good indication of usage.

#### *Usage Capacity*

Playing fields have different capabilities to accommodate usage depending on factors such as field lighting, length of season (all-weather versus grass surfaces), and weather conditions. Usage capacity is the total time available to be scheduled on a playing field over a season. For this analysis, all-weather field capacity is calculated over a 35-week season and grass sport field and ball diamond

capacity is over a 22-week season.

Prime time use refers to the periods when there is the highest demand for playing fields, which is:

- 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays; and
- 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

For scheduling, these times reflect situations where playing fields are lit. This includes all of the municipal all-weather sport fields and numerous ball diamonds. Otherwise, for both the scheduling and analysis of non-lit playing fields, adjustments throughout the season are made to reflect the availability of daylight conditions.

Table 2 outlines the percentage of the total time used within prime hours. It highlights that most usage occurs within prime time, especially for ball diamonds and grass sport fields. When non-prime time usage occurs, it tends to relate to playing fields that are associated with schools. However, schools do not necessarily book sport fields during the day, despite there being no cost to do so, which needs to be accounted for in planning and maintenance of these fields.

Table 2 - Percentage of Usage Within Prime Time		
Playing Field Type	No. of Municipally Scheduled Playing Fields	% of Usage Within Prime Times
Ball Diamonds	122	92.4
Grass Sport Fields	133	83.6
All-weather Sport Fields	7	68.0

### Usage

During 2019 season there were 44,000 of programmed prime and non-prime hours that were used across 259 municipally scheduled playing fields. Approximately 15 percent of playing fields had no scheduled usage data, which were therefore not accounted for in the analysis.

### Grass Sport Field Usage

The Municipality has a grass sport field classification system that ranges from AAA (Wanderers Field), a higher standard, to D, a lower

standard (see Chapter 4 for explanations of the classifications). The number of playing fields by classification is outlined in Table 3. As might be expected, there are fewer higher standard fields, with only 14 of the 133 grass sport fields being AA and A. There is a fairly equal distribution in the other field classifications.

The overall supply of grass sport field, represented by the “% of Prime Time Use” shows there is considerable amount of scheduling capacity. Only 27.1% of the available prime time is used for A class fields. However, this also represents a comparatively high use of

Table 3 - Overall Usage by Grass Sport Field Classification				
Class	No. of Fields	Hours of Prime Time Capacity	Prime Time Hours Used	% of Prime Time Use
AA*	1	0	0	0
A	13	6816	1595	23
B	44	30668	5012	16
C	39	27183	3849	14
D	36	24395	1817	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>89062</b>	<b>12273</b>	<b>(Aver.) 15</b>

\*Graves Oakley was being recapitalized in 2019, and subsequently assigned AA classification. Usage was not available. The Wanderer’s Grounds was not assigned a classification at the time of this analysis.

this category of field, which should be generally reserved for competitive play.

While Class A sport fields are generally highly used, fields across the classifications have a high amount of total prime hours usage. Table 4 identifies the highest used grass sport fields, based on the total prime hours of usage. In some cases, these fields may be used to such an extent that they are in a regular state of damage and may not be able to recover during playing seasons. Additionally, the lifespan of such sport fields may be diminished, leading to need for substantial refurbishment. The condition of these and other playing fields need to be assessed and greater efforts may be required to redistribute usage to ensure that the condition of certain grass sport fields does not deteriorate. Attention is also required to consider the impact of non-peak hour usage by some schools. The implementation of rest periods, or blocks of time for fields to recover without being scheduled, are also important consideration to maintaining playing field conditions.

There are other challenges to the conditions and refurbishment of grass fields that are outlined in Chapter 4, Classifications and Conditions.

Closing school fields or carrying out capital work during the school year is challenging as the students may not adhere to the closure.

Table 47 - Highest Used Grass Sport Fields

Name	Total Hours Used	Total Non-Prime Hours Used	Total Prime Time Capacity	Total Prime Hours Used	% of Prime Time Use	Class
Dartmouth High School	411	84	697	327	47	C
Rocky Lake Jr. High School	342	15	697	327	47	C
Seaside Element School	288	0	697	288	41	B
St. Francis Field Gorsebrook	356	72	697	285	41	B
Millwood High School	275	0	697	275	39	C
Portland Est. School No. 1	274	5	697	269	39	B
Cole Harbour High School	393	125	697	268	39	C
Portland Est. School No. 2	271	5	697	266	38	D
Hfx North Common Football Field	288	23	351	265	76	A
Bud Bremner	318	68	697	250	36	B

Notes: None of the sport fields have lights.

Some grass sport fields, in addition to having high levels of bookings, are also known to be extensively used for informal (pick-up) games that may place additional strain on field conditions. Such is the case with the Halifax North Common Football Field. The amount of play, and subsequent ongoing field damage, led to a recommendation in the Halifax Common Master Plan for the establishment of an all-weather sport field. These are unique circumstances where the extensive informal use results in ongoing damage and may therefore warrant such an installation.



## Rest Periods

While the playing field seasons are identified as 35 weeks for all-weather fields and 22 weeks for grass sport fields and diamonds, a defined schedule for the start and end of seasons has not always been followed until recently. Such defined playing seasons, ensuring that play does not commence too early in the spring or extend too late into the fall, are important to playing field conditions, particularly for grass playing fields. When these fields are used too early or too late within shoulder seasons, grass may not be able to be sufficiently reestablished, contributing to more serious long-term damage.

Within playing field seasons, it is not realistic or operationally desirable, to achieve 100 percent of prime time usage, without impacting field conditions. Different playing fields have varying abilities to accommodate usage demands, with grass sport fields, as an example, having less turf tolerance than all-weather or ball diamonds because of the amount of shared used and intensity of sports played on them. Playing field conditions may deteriorate with repetitive play during prime-time periods, even when such fields are not extensively used during non-prime time periods.

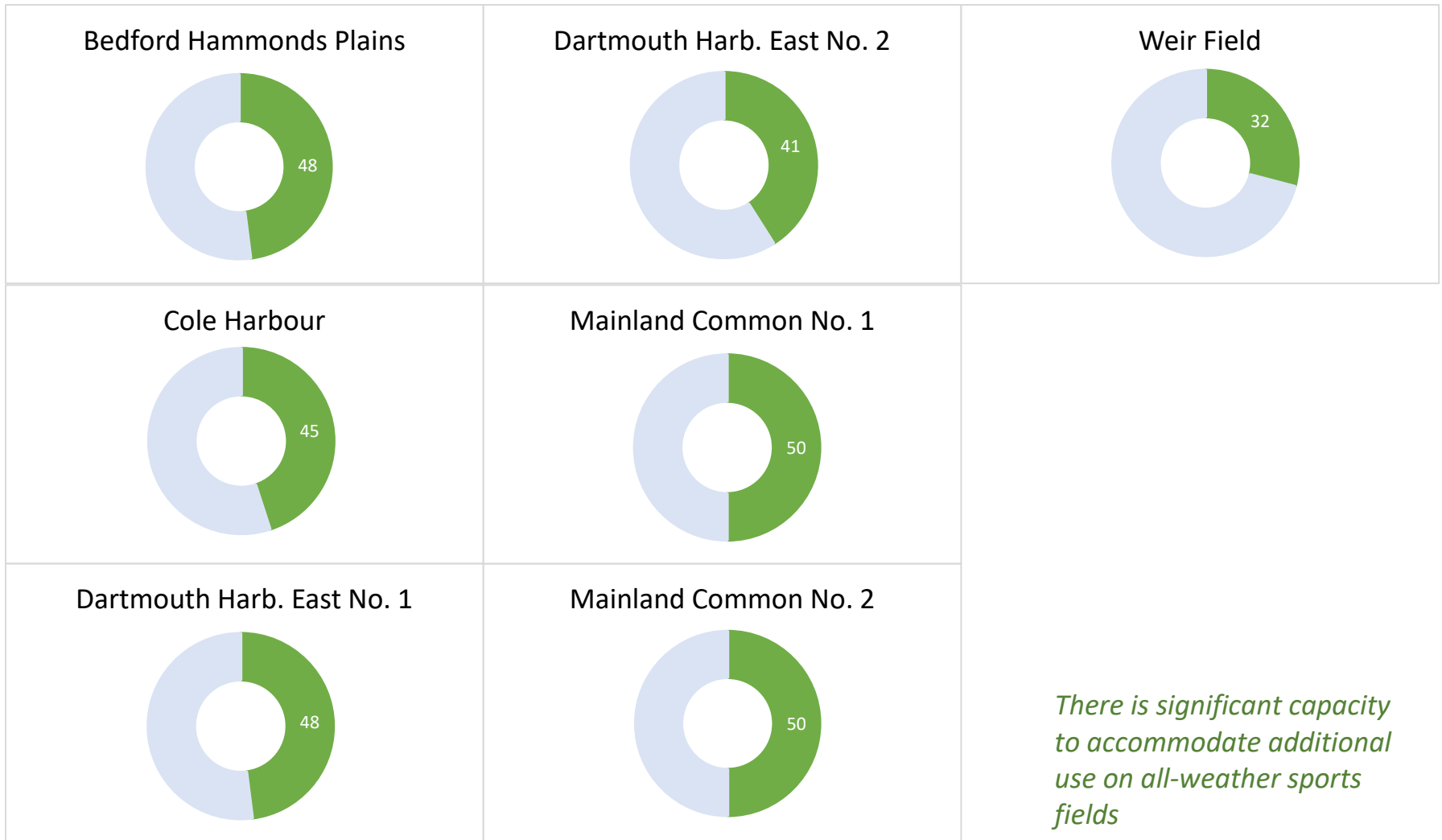
The CFMP2 identifies that grass playing field conditions can deteriorate after more than 200 hours of regular usage within a season. In contrast, most of the municipality's playing fields are capable of being scheduled for over 600 hours in a season. Although none of them would be booked so extensively, many are used for more than 200 hours, and several fields regularly have damaged conditions. While there are number of factors to maintaining proper field conditions, the incorporation of rest periods or weekly rest days is important to promote grass regeneration. In the past two years, the municipality has implemented a full rest day on the only two AA ball diamonds (Mainland & Beazley) as a pilot, which has contributed significantly to improvements in field quality.

### *All-weather Sport Field Usage*

Usage on the Municipality's all-weather sport fields is represented on the adjoining graphic. Both Mainland Common No. 2 and Bedford Hammonds Plains have significant non-prime time use due to school usage. Although Cole Harbour's all-weather field is close to Cole Harbour High and Auburn High Schools, it tends not to be used much during non-prime time for school use as there is also a grass sport field in the area.

While the number of total hours used on all-weather fields is significant compared to grass sport fields, prime time usage is not excessive, being at 50% or less. This indicates there is ample capacity on the existing all-weather fields. Some of this may be explained by the availability of grass sport fields for community use, and possibly a preference for these fields on the basis of lower booking fees.

Despite the overall capacity for the all-weather sport fields to accommodate substantially more use, there are often requests for the Municipality to support or lead the development of such new facilities at existing or new schools. These requests are often based on a view that these should be local facilities. However, this is inconsistent with the regional nature of all-weather fields and the available capacity of existing facilities.



Percentage of Prime Time Use on All-weather Sport Fields

### Ball Diamond Usage

Table 5 highlights ball diamond prime time usage based on classifications. There are 24 lit ball diamonds. Most are concentrated in and around the Regional Centre and to the east of Halifax Harbour. There is a substantial amount prime time availability on weekends. Scheduling feedback indicated that unlike other field sports, baseball organizations generally prefer utilizing weekday evenings over weekends.

Without necessarily accounting for a preference for weekday play, the prime time usage data illustrates that there is overall capacity within the inventory of municipal ball diamonds to accommodate demands.

Table 6 highlights the most used lit ball diamonds. Range Park (Robert and Joan Lenihan Memorial Diamonds) are the most used lit ball diamonds with 54% and 52% of prime time capacity being used. Interestingly, some of this usage is attributed to non-baseball bookings, such as football groups, that are using such fields for their lights, because other than Wanderers Field, there are no grass sport fields with lights.

In terms of non-lit diamonds, Table 7 identifies that Tremont Plateau Park has a high percentage of prime time usage, followed by three diamonds on the Halifax Common, which, as noted elsewhere, there have been identified needs to accommodate more unstructured play.

**Table 58 - Overall Usage by Class for Ball Diamonds**

Class	No. of Fields	Hours of Prime Time Capacity	Prime Time Hours Used	% of Prime Time Use
AA	4	4196	1519	36
A	17	14614	5855	40
B	28	20055	5584	30
C	34	24402	4434	20
D	39	27535	1988	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>90802</b>	<b>19381</b>	<b>(Aver.) 27</b>

**Table 69 - Highest Used Municipally Booked Lit Ball Diamonds**

Name	Total Non-peak Hours Used	Total Hours Prime Time Capacity	Total Prime Time Hours Used	% of Prime Time Usage	Class
Robert Lenihan Memorial	124	1049	565	54	A
Joan Lenihan Memorial	95	1049	541	52	A
Merv Sullivan	51	859	529	62	A
Eisenhauer Park	0	1049	428	41	A
Eddie LeBlanc No. 1	2	1049	427	41	B
Carl Morash No. 1	41	1049	419	40	A
Graves Oakley No. 1	45	1049	419	40	A
Weir Park	12	1049	419	40	AA
Mount Edward Road No. 1	77	1049	417	40	A
Beazley Park Big Ball No. 1	79	1049	413	39	AA

### Other Ball Diamond Usages

There are over 40 other ball diamonds that have varied relationships with the Municipality. They may receive some form of maintenance or other support, but are not scheduled by the Municipality. Nine do have formalized partnerships, with overall usage for 2019 that was recorded, but not necessarily in detail to allow analysis. Of these, usage

data indicates that Peace Park, Dale Bennett, Springfield Lake Recreation Centre, and Brookside diamonds are well booked locations.

### Cricket Usage

The municipality's one non-permanent cricket field on the Halifax North Common had 234 hours of peak time use, but because

it is overlapping with two ball diamonds and two sports fields it has very limited availability. As a result, virtually all its available time is used.

Table 710 - Highest Used Municipally Booked Non-Lit Ball Diamonds					
Name	Total Non-Prime Time Hours Used	Total Hours Prime Time Capacity	Total Prime Time Hours Used	% of Prime Time Usage	Class
Tremont Plateau Park	0	316	278	88	A
Halifax North Common No. 3	33	697	312	45	C
Halifax North Common No. 1	28	697	293	42	C
Halifax North Common No. 2	34	697	286	41	C
Charles L. MacDonald	7	697	284	41	B
Bissett Lake Park No. 1	0	697	255	37	B
Greenough Ballfield	67	697	247	35	C
Halifax North Common No. 4	25	697	245	35	C
W.D. Piercey No. 2	0	697	240	34	B
W.D. Piercey No. 1	0	697	235	34	B

## 3.2 Participation Trends

In addition to usage, sport and recreation participation trends provide indications of possible needs for playing fields. Major sport categories that have been identified include soccer, baseball, softball (slo-pitch and fastpitch), football (non-contact and tackle), rugby, field lacrosse, cricket and ultimate. To account for participation trends, data was collected from sport governing bodies and other recreation organizations and supplemented by community engagement feedback. Detailed participation information is provided in Appendix A, “Participation Trends Summary.”

Soccer, football (non-contact and tackle), rugby, field lacrosse, and ultimate (frisbee), being played on rectangular sport fields of various dimensions, make up most participation. This is followed by baseball and softball (slo-pitch and fastpitch). Cricket, as noted elsewhere has limited facilities and is the third most popular by participation. The municipality has not formally collected participation trends from user groups on an annual basis as part of the scheduling process of playing fields, but recognizes the importance of this to help further inform playing field needs.

### Sport Participation in Canada

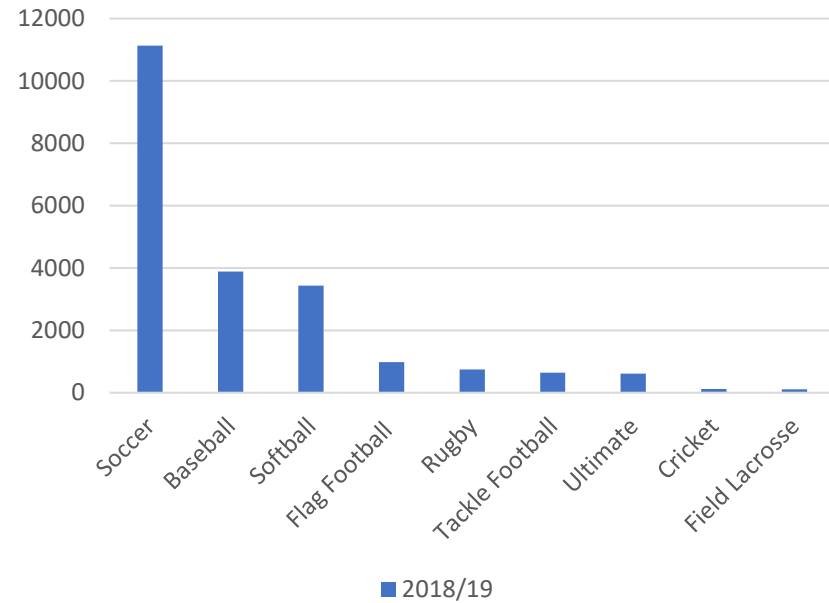
Statistics Canada (2016) notes that 27% of all Canadians over the age of 15 regularly participate in sports and 86% of those did so recreationally.

### Sport Participation and Population Growth

While population and residential growth are indicators for the delivery of recreation facilities, population growth does not necessarily translate to increases in participation of all organized sporting activities. Participation in various sport and recreation activities can fluctuate and be impacted by factors such as demographics, cost, transportation, access, or other factors.

### Regional Sport Participation

The adjoining graph outlines sports with high levels of participation,



*Participation by Sport*

recorded for the 2019 season, except for soccer and ultimate, where 2018 season participation was only available.

### *Soccer*

Soccer is the region’s largest sport. In 2018, there were over 11,000 participants, with the largest segment being the mini children’s program. While there are a high number of participants compared with other sports, soccer participation overall has declined since 2015 when there were over 12,000 participants.

*Soccer is the region’s largest sport, but participation has been declining in recent years.*

### *Minor Baseball*

In 2019, minor baseball's overall participation was about 3,900 players. Growth in baseball was relatively flat between 2014 and 2018 but increased in 2019. The largest user categories were the Rally Cap program (introductory skills) and Under 11 children. Hammonds Plains Minor Baseball, Halifax Minor Baseball, LWF Minor Baseball, and Sackville Minor Baseball are the largest minor baseball associations.

### *Softball*

Softball had approximately 3,400 participants in 2019, combined between fastpitch and slo-pitch. There was only one season of data provided and participation of recreational softball leagues is not collected. Notionally, based on the number of recreational leagues within the region, adult slo-pitch appears to be popular, which was further highlighted through the engagement survey feedback.

### *Flag Football*

There were 980 non-contact football (flag and touch) participants with the largest proportion (729) playing youth flag football. This sport is played cross field with multiple games at a time on one sport field and has been growing steadily over several seasons.

*Youth flag football is a growing sport and can be played with multiple games on one sport field.*

### *Rugby*

In 2019, there were a total of 740 rugby participants. Rugby has increased in participation from 2015, especially for the under 15 age category and was noted as a growing high school sport.

### *Tackle Football*

In 2019, tackle Football had 638 participants. Tackle football participation decreased after 2015 and remained generally flat since this time.



*Softball at Musquodoboit Harbour Peace Park*

### *Ultimate*

Halifax Ultimate (frisbee) is one of the largest clubs offering multiple year-round leagues for adult and junior user categories. There was a total of 610 participants in 2019. However, this was down from 823 in 2014.

### *Field Lacrosse*

In 2019, there were a total of 112 field lacrosse participants. This includes men's U13, U15, U18, senior and women's U15 and U19 user categories. Participation overall has been declining since 2015, but female participation has been increasing.

### *Cricket*

In 2019, cricket participation was at 120. The limited participation is due to the presence of only one non-permanent cricket ground with

limited capacity for usage. As a result, cricket has a growing waiting list for new members.

### *Other Activities*

As noted in the community engagement feedback, playing fields are used for other activities. Many of these are unstructured and include walking, kite flying, cross country skiing, informal games, and dog use. Examples of other activities include disc golf, personal training, children's activities, track and field, modified recreational sports, school use and special events, including tournaments, employee events, and fundraisers.

## 3.3 Estimated Number of Needed Playing Fields

Usage analysis and participation trends suggest that the municipally has a sufficient number of playing fields at current programmed usage levels, although overuse on some individual playing fields does need to be addressed with some scheduling changes. This does not account for the distribution or current conditions and classifications of fields. Nor does it reflect the incorporation of rest periods, which should be considered for implementation as a combination of established standards periods, assessments of individual field conditions, and usage.

Most individual playing field usage issues are capable of being addressed through an improved distribution of usage across other fields through scheduling, a greater emphasis on using existing all-weather sport fields, and field condition improvements. While there may be a sufficient number of playing fields at this time, attention needs to be paid to ensure that new playing fields are added as the municipality grows.

The finding that there are enough playing fields, does not address their condition, which is discussed in the next chapter.



## Summary

- Usage and sport participation trends are important factors in determining the number and type of playing fields that may be needed within the Municipality.
- While school playing fields may be regularly used during the day, most usage demands are in Prime-time periods, which are in the weekday evenings and on weekends.
- Although inventory and data collection are matters with ongoing needs for improvement, the Municipality's 2019 data that was used for analysis provides improved information relative to past years, particularly with respect to actual usage.
- Based on usage, the Municipality has more than an ample supply of grass sport fields, all-weather sport fields, and ball diamonds. However, certain individual playing fields may be overused, that in the case of some grass sport fields is resulting in damage. This can be addressed through scheduling changes and the implementation of resting periods.
- Most sports are experiencing steady level amounts of participation, meaning that there is a consistent and regular need for playing fields at current levels. Cricket is an exception, with recognized higher demands and the absence of a dedicated pitch.
- While there are enough playing fields, as new communities are established, new playing fields may need to be considered. Increased density within established communities may also need to be considered as such intensification places demands for more general and flexible recreation spaces rather than specialized playing fields.

# 4. Classifications and Conditions

The public engagement findings highlighted that the condition and maintenance of playing fields is the top concern and priority for respondents. There were also concerns expressed about the way in which fields are classified.

## 4.1 Classifications

The municipality currently maintains playing fields to service standards based on five classifications (Table 8). Fields are assigned a classification to reflect their condition, intended use, and expected maintenance. For grass sport fields, an additional “AAA” classification was recently created for the Wanderers Grounds, a premiere lighted facility that is used for top tier sports, including professional soccer. It is not reflected in the table. Nor are all-weather sport fields. The inclusion of these two types means that the Municipality has seven playing field types.

A jurisdictional scan of several other municipalities found that classification approaches and systems are varied, including classifications such as:

- A, B, C
- Premier, Non-Premier
- A, B, C, Mini, Artificial
- A, B, C, Premier
- Adult, Youth
- A, B, C, Grass Area

- 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B
- AA, A, B, C
- Irrigated, Non-Irrigated, Artificial

While these classification systems vary between municipalities, they uniformly consist of a lower number of classifications.

### Assessment of Current Classifications

The following has been observed about the current classifications system:

- Based on a jurisdictional scan, HRM has many classification categories
- All-weather facilities are not classified, even though they represent a major asset type for programmed sport use.
- With many classification categories, there is not a clear distinction between them, with C and D classes being similar. As noted in the usage section, many D class playing fields are not being programmed and are likely acting as unstructured greenspace. Differentiating between dedicated programmed sport use, shared uses (programmed sports and other general community use), and unstructured greenspaces could be helpful in planning, programming, and maintenance.
- Feedback indicates there is confusion on how classifications are applied. For example, the amenities that may be provided at playing fields have traditionally

been the primary determinant of a classification, but other factors have included service levels, field type, usage, or level of play.

- The municipality has not collected consistent data on field of play dimensions, but the classifications do incorporate such standards.
- Although inventories are improving, a consistent baseline of infrastructure and amenities for programmable playing fields has not been established.

Table 811 - Current Playing Field Classifications			
Ball Diamonds		Grass Sport Fields	
Class	Description	Class	Description
AA	These facilities are regarded as premiere diamonds. They are of national calibre dimensions for sport-specific use. They are lighted and fenced. They have dugouts and bleachers for spectator seating, a washroom building with water, and dedicated staff on site. They are for game use only.	AA	These facilities are regarded as premiere sport fields. They are of standard dimensions for sport-specific use and able to host national events. They are lighted and fenced. They have player benches or shelters, bleachers for spectator seating, washroom buildings with water, and dedicated staff on site. They are for game use only.
A	These facilities are of standard dimensions for sport-specific use. They are fenced and/or lighted. They have dugouts and bleachers for spectator seating, and a washroom building with water or portable toilets. They are for game and practice use.	A	These facilities are regarded as high-level fields. They are of standard dimensions as designated by sport-specific use and able to host national events. They have player benches, bleachers for spectator seating, and a washroom building with water or portable toilets. They are for game and practice use.
B	These facilities are of standard dimensions for sport-specific use. They have bleachers for spectator seating and portable toilets. They are for game and practice use.	B	These facilities are of standard dimensions for sport-specific use. They have player benches and bleachers for spectator seating. They are for game and practice use.
C	These facilities are of less than standard dimension for sport-specific use. They have bleachers pending availability, and possibly portable toilets, which are considered pending hours of use. They are for game and practice use.	C	These facilities are of less than standard dimensions for sport-specific use. They have bleachers pending availability and possibly portable toilets, which are considered based on hours of use. They are for game and practice use.
D	These facilities are the most basic diamonds. They have bleachers pending availability and possibly portable toilets, which are considered pending hours of use. They are for game and practice use.	D	These facilities are the most basic sport fields or may be green space used to accommodate client needs. They have bleachers pending availability and possibly portable toilets, which are considered based on hours of use. They are for game and practice use.

## 4.2 Conditions

Grass sport fields are more susceptible to damage since they are more widely used for multi-sport and often for general community use. They also have higher turf intensity sports played on them, such as football, soccer, and rugby. 72% of grass sport fields are located on school grounds which results in

them being used for a variety of purposes and makes major maintenance or recapitalization very difficult. These are also some of the oldest grass sport fields and were not necessarily constructed using the proper construction methods and materials for sport use. Older playing fields, regardless of their maintenance, cannot perform to meet expectations. As outlined earlier, the CFMP2 identifies that grass sport fields start to wear

after 200 hours of use within a season and adequate rest periods along with regular maintenance are important.

In terms of ball diamonds, issues have been regularly observed for the sand/soil infield conditions, drainage, field of play dimensions, and the condition of infrastructure such as fencing. However, the intensity of use on ball diamonds is less intensive on the

grass outfield and therefore, ball diamonds can accommodate more hours of programmed use.

There was significant consultation feedback related to the use of programmable sport fields and ball diamonds for off leash dogs within the municipality. The vast majority noted that this use is adversely impacting field of play conditions for programmable sports. In some situations, playing fields are permitted to be used for certain hours during playing field seasons. Even where off leash sites have been designated for “off season” (i.e., winter) use, it was noted damage is occurring and impacting conditions for the start of the season. This includes dug holes, turf damage, and owners not picking up after their pets.

*Grass sport fields are more susceptible to field damage but are also more flexible for multi-uses.*

In addition to what has already been observed, there are several other key external factors that impact playing field conditions which include:

- Weather conditions are variable and unique to a coastal region (wet spring seasons, and dry summers).
- The number of playing fields over a large geographic area and the associated level of maintenance service that is required is a challenge.
- As noted earlier, there is a public desire to not impact use for maintenance, such

as rest periods, while also requesting longer seasons especially for natural turf playing fields.

- There are some playing fields which are not properly sized, or are poorly sited, such that they have water drainage or other similar issues.
- Irrigation systems are non-existent or in use on some sites.

### Recapitalization

Based on Industry feedback, a 15-year time frame is a guideline for recapitalization all-weather turf. Recapitalization of grass sport fields is highly dependent on its usage, rest periods, and other factors. However, the Municipality has suggested 15-20 years should be a general guide for grass sport field replacement, which could be extended to 25 years with proper usage limits and maintenance. Recapitalizing fields can only occur



*2022 Ravenscraig Sport Field Recapitalization*

incrementally, as having too many fields out of commission at the same time can impact services.

The Municipality has been active with recapitalizing playing fields over the past five years, including:

- BJ Higgins ball diamond
- Dennis Naugle ball diamond
- Don Bayer ball diamond
- East Preston ball diamond
- Wanderers Grounds sport field
- Graves Oakley sport field
- Tremont ball diamond
- Conrose ball diamond
- North Preston (Arnold D Johnson) sport field (net new sport field)
- Meadowbrook ball diamond
- Brownlow sport field.

Additional Condition Considerations

*All-weather Sport Fields*

Most of the municipal all-weather sport fields were built over the last 20 years with many having been recapitalized (Table 15). The last municipal all-weather field was built in 2016 (Cole Harbour) and the latest recapitalization occurred in 2021 on the Dartmouth Harbour East facility. The oldest all-weather field is Upper Sackville (Wier) which was recapitalized in 2011. In all, the all-weather fields are being well maintained and have good recapitalization programs.

*Condition Assessments*

Currently, there is no formal assessment tool that rates field conditions for capital prioritization. Condition assessments should prioritize sites with known issues and those that have been identified in past plans. Siting issues include:

- conflicts with park infrastructure (i.e., pathways) and uses;
- overlapping fields;
- isolated/constrained sites that cannot accommodate appropriate amenities;
- sites that conflict with surrounding property owners;
- sites with drainage issues or located within flood zones; and
- sites that do not meet the recommended standards for programmable play (highlighted below) and/or lack accessibility for users and spectators

The condition of field of play lighting on ball diamonds across the inventory also needs to

be addressed. In addition, field irrigation systems, which help sustain field conditions, exist on at least eight sites, but may have issues, with older playing fields having aged systems.

*Regional Hubs*

Range Park is an important regional hub that regularly floods. The *Sackville River Floodplains Study (2017)* notes that flooding incidents and impacts will likely increase in the future. While passive and naturalized parks are often suitable within flood areas, this site has built infrastructure including field lighting and accessory buildings that are susceptible to flood damage. The longer-term viability of Range Park should be assessed.

The Halifax Common and Maybank Park are regional hub locations that have been identified in plans (1994 Halifax Common Plan (1994), Halifax Common Master Plan (2021) and Maybank Master Plan (2007) for rationalization.

Table 912 - All-weather Sport Fields - Age and Year of Recapitalization		
All-weather Sport Field	Year Built/Age	Year of Major Recapitalization
Mainland Common #1	2003	2015
Mainland Common #2	2003	2015
Dartmouth Harbour East #1	2006	2021
Dartmouth Harbour East #2	2006	2021
Cole Harbour	2016	No major Recap
Bedford-Hammonds Plains	2010	No major Recap
Upper Sackville (Weir)	2000	2011

The Halifax Common is the Municipality's largest multi diamond site for adult softball, but it is not a purpose built to meet sport field requirements. Its nine diamonds are well used but occupy much of the North Commons shared public space, overlapping with other fields, open spaces, and conflicting with pathways. As observed elsewhere, it is anticipated that conflicts for limited park space will continue as the region grows.

The 2007 Maybank Park Master Plan identified site constraints and recommended modifying the existing ball diamond layout to provide for two higher quality regulation size diamonds to correct the three constrained diamonds. This is the subject of a current capital design project. Similar site issues may be found at other locations throughout the municipality.

### *Field of Play Dimensions*

Field of play dimensions refers to the recommended dimensions for a sport and age level as determined by sport governing bodies. Recommended dimensions are important when planning new facilities or upgrading fields to meet requirements and reduce user conflicts. It is also important for scheduling so that users are assigned the appropriate facilities to meet their requirements. When playing fields are recapitalized, they should not be automatically replaced to its existing conditions without a review of the recommended dimensions and accessibility standards. Field dimensions are more flexible for younger children at a beginner/recreational level but are important at the youth and

## **Playing Field Dimension Observations**

### **Ball Diamonds**

- Most ball diamonds do not meet the recommended dimensions due to a multitude of standards and older diamond sites. 85% do not meet recommended outfield dimensions for baseball and slo-pitch; most distances from backstops to home plates are inadequately sized and 55% have no outfield fences to define the field of play. Many co-located diamonds have overlapping outfields or have other site constraints and sitting issues.
- Baseball uses pitching mounds at the youth and adult levels but they are not a recommended standard for softball diamonds. The municipality does not identify which ball diamonds are best suited for which sport (softball vs baseball) or level of play - primarily relying on user feedback.
- There are no ball diamonds designed for accessible play and amenities for both spectators and players. Accessibility standards must be included when updating or building new playing fields.
- There are no all-weather ball diamonds within the municipality to facilitate extended seasons or accessible play. Baseball has a challenger program (an adaptive program for participants with cognitive/physical disabilities) that is steadily growing.

### **Sport Fields**

- Most grass sport fields can accommodate child, youth, and adult soccer (72%), and children's ultimate, mites' football and 5v5 flag football (80%).
- There are fewer grass sport fields that meet the recommended dimensions for full size tackle football (10%), rugby (22%) and ultimate (26%). However, there are fewer participants overall in these sports when compared to soccer.
- The Municipality's all-weather sport fields accommodate many multi-sports uses and provide good accessibility. However, they may not be lined for sports such as field lacrosse and rugby, or for cross field play (modified games).

adult levels of play.

A desktop review of field dimensions was conducted over the Municipality's playing fields. These were compared with the recommended dimensions from sport governing bodies for various sports and user categories. The collected data has a degree of error due to the measuring limitations of the desktop reviews, but findings from this analysis indicate there are issues, which are highlighted in the adjoining call-out box.

Without a permanent field, observations were not made about cricket.

### Summary

- With many classification categories, there is not a clear distinction between them, with C and D classes being similar. As noted in the usage section, many D class playing fields are not being programmed and are likely acting as unstructured greenspace. Differentiating between dedicated programmed sport use, shared uses (programed sports and other general community use), and unstructured greenspaces is an issue.
- Community consultation indicated confusion about how classifications are applied. For example, it is unclear if they are primarily applied on the service levels, the types of amenities provided, the type of field, usage, or level of play.
- The municipality has not collected consistent data on field of play dimensions, while this is an important part of the classifications system.
- A consistent baseline of sport infrastructure and amenities for programable playing fields has not been established.
- The absence of practices such as rest periods and other maintenance measures contribute to poor field conditions.
- Certain playing fields have inherently poor conditions and simply cannot properly accommodate intended use.
- Some shared off-leash activities can lead to poor field conditions.
- The Municipality has an active recapitalization program, but there are a significant number of fields to address meaning that assessment tools to prioritize projects are very important.
- Regional recreation hubs comprised of several playing fields are important facilities in providing efficiencies in service delivery and need to be strengthened and planned into the future. There are inherent issues with Halifax Common and Range Park as Regional Hubs. Maybank's overlapping ball diamonds highlights issues that need to be addressed.
- There are numerous field of play dimension issues, including overlapping outfielders for ball diamonds and grass sport fields that do not meet sport standards.

# 5. Community Consultation

Community consultation provided essential information about playing fields in the Municipality. Broad engagement occurred through an online public survey, and stakeholder engagement was conducted with a variety of sport and recreation organizations. Key questions related to playing fields, ideas and directions, and priorities were explored.

The survey was promoted through public service announcements, media promotion, the municipal web site, area Councillors, sports organizations, and social media. Residents who do not use playing fields specifically for organized sport, but for other forms of recreation were encouraged to participate in the survey. The participation resulted in 2,551 respondents. Highlights from the consultation are outlined as follows, with more detailed information in Appendix C.

## 5.1 Public Survey

### Demographics of Survey Respondents

- Most survey respondents were either a member of a sport team, club, or league (71%).
- The largest age category of survey respondents was between the ages 40 to 49 years (34%).
- 17% were young adults and youth under the age of 29.
- 61% were male.
- 32% had 4 individuals (including themselves) living in their household.
- 59% had at least one child under the age of 18 years living in their household.
- Approximately 25% of the respondents live within the Regional Centre, 47% in urban areas outside the regional centre and 27% from rural areas.



*Flag football at Harbour East*

### Types and Locations of Playing Fields

- 38% of respondents use ball diamonds at least once a year with 30% using sport fields and 28% using both types. Only (4%) of respondents indicated that they do not use either type.
- The most used playing field locations were all-weather sport fields at Mainland Common, grass sport fields on the Halifax Common, and the ball diamonds on the Halifax Common.
- Overall, the most used locations that were noted by respondents were playing fields that were co-located (grouped together).

### How Playing Fields Are Used

- “Sport and competition” are the primary reasons why respondents use sport fields and ball diamonds. This was followed by



“recreation and fun”.

- “Organized sport” was how respondents used sport fields and ball diamonds the most, followed by “unstructured play”.
- Respondents had more responses for “others use” on sport fields than for ball diamonds.
- Examples of other non-sport playing field uses included private/personal training, unstructured activities, commuting through with bicycles, dog exercise, special events, tournaments, fundraising events, company events, disc golf, children’s activities, walking, practices for sports, school use, and spectating.
- Some respondents highlighted issues with all-weather sport fields being unavailable for unstructured uses.
- Comments noted that playing fields should not be used for dogs.

#### Types of Organized Sports Used on Playing Fields

- For sports fields, soccer was the most played sport followed by flag football.
- For ball diamonds, baseball was the most played sport closely followed by slo-pitch.
- There were a much higher percentage of “other sports” that use sport fields than ball diamonds, which included: dry land training, practices for baseball and softball (which also occurred on sport fields), playing catch, Australian Rules, disc golf, cross country skiing, lacrosse, cooperative games, track and field, lawn bowling, kite flying, modified soccer games, unstructured activities.

#### Frequency of Use on Playing Fields

- Respondents used playing fields most frequently during the summer followed by fall/spring. There is very limited use of sport fields in the winter that was identified.

#### Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Recent use of Playing Fields

- Many respondents noted significant impacts to organized sports, leagues, and practices because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This ranged from cancellations to modified and reduced schedules, games, and practices. Registrations, spectating, and tournaments

were cancelled. Some stopped using them altogether.

- Respondents also noted that the pandemic resulted in more use of more local playing fields for unstructured and passive recreation. Many comments highlighted positive benefits of more access to unstructured spaces for recreation, which are typically booked for sports, such as the Halifax Common.

#### Sport Fields - Level of Agreement with Statements

- “Everyone having reasonable access to a sport field” was the most strongly agreed statement (77% completely agree).” Other strongly agreed statements included:
  - “The public should be able to view available field time of municipal sport fields online anytime.”
  - “Unstructured/informal play (i.e., pick-up games) should be encouraged on sport fields when they are not scheduled for organized sport.”
  - “More sport field sites should have lighting to extend playing time in the evenings.”
  - “Sport fields should be the proper size, dimensions, and standards for their intended sport and level of play.”
- Highlighting the challenges to taking playing fields offline (rest periods) to improve their quality, only 4% of respondents completely agreed that “The length of the booking season should be reduced to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality on grass sport fields”. Other lesser agreed statements included:
  - “Some sport fields should not be able to host practices (only games) to lessen damage and maintain field quality.”
  - “The municipality should have fewer, lesser used (not scheduled/programmed) sport fields and ensure that more utilized fields are updated and well maintained.”
  - “The number of scheduled hours over a season should be limited to conduct maintenance tasks and maintain field quality.”

#### Sport Fields - Top Rated Priorities

- The #1 priority for sport fields was “the maintenance and condition of the field”



- The #2 priority was “the ability to have extended play”
- The # 3 priority was tied between “the availability of field time” and “having a sport field close to my neighbourhood and community”.

#### Ball Diamonds - Level of Agreement/Disagreement with Statements

- “More ball diamond sites should have lighting to extend playing time in the evenings” (74% completely agree) closely followed by “Ball diamonds should be the proper size, dimensions, and standards for their intended sport and level of play” (73% completely

agree) were the most strongly agreed statements. Other strongly agreed statements included:

- The public should be able to view available field time of municipal ball diamonds online anytime (this functionality was implemented Summer 2022).
- The municipality should provide ball diamond sites that can host tournaments (multiple games played at one time close to one another).
- The municipality should focus on providing a few large modern ball diamond sites (complexes with many diamonds together in

one location) that provide updated amenities such as wash-rooms, parking, seating, field lighting, fencing, and player dug-outs.

- Everyone should have reasonable access to a ball diamond.
- Only 3% completely agreed with “The length of the booking season should be reduced in order to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality”. Other lesser agreed statements included:
  - “Some ball diamonds should not be able to host practices (only games) to lessen damage and maintain field quality.”
  - “The number of scheduled hours over a season should be limited to conduct maintenance tasks and maintain field quality.”
  - “The municipality should have fewer, lesser used (not scheduled/programmed) ball diamonds and ensure that more utilized fields are updated and well maintained.”

#### Respondents Top Rated Priorities – Ball Diamonds

- The #1 priority for ball diamonds was “the maintenance and condition of the field”
- The #2 priority was “new and updated features and amenities”
- The #3 priority was “the ability to have extended play (longer season, later evening play etc.)”

*“maintenance and condition of the field” was the top priority for users of both sport fields and ball diamonds, yet few respondents supported reducing availability to improve field conditions*

## 5.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken with 13 sport and recreation organizations including provincial sport bodies who represent local member clubs. The engagement provided a representative sample of

user organizations with an interest in playing fields. Highlights of the stakeholder feedback is summarized and themed below and individual stakeholder summaries are also provided in Appendix B.

### Highlights

#### *Scheduling/Allocation*

- The availability of playing fields during certain times can be a challenge.
- There are challenges/frustrations with the historical (block) booking system which limits access to preferred playing field times for some groups/sports.
- There is a need to view bookings online.
- Field availability and field time has improved over the last few years for rugby.
- Impacts of frequent weather cancellations on grass fields are challenging for clubs.
- Users should have more involvement in weather cancellation decisions.

#### *Condition/Standards*

- The condition of playing fields was expressed as a common issue.
- Improving field of play standards/dimensions is important.
- There is a desire to provide more “full size” diamonds.
- Competitive players sometimes must utilize “non-standard” fields.
- It was expressed that grass fields can deteriorate as the season progresses.
- Dogs on playing fields is a concern for users.
- Field dimensions are important for game play for most sports, but some recreational sports can adapt using cones and other demarcations.

#### *Extending Play*

- Providing ball diamonds for training and hosting training, practices, and games is needed.
- There is a need for an all-weather turf diamond for extended play

and accessible programming.

- There are limited options to access field lighting on grass sport fields.
- All-weather facilities are important as an alternative in poor weather.
- Field lighting is important for training in the shoulder seasons.
- Fields in the North end of Halifax and on the Common are in high demand – more extended use is needed.

#### *Improved Facilities and Amenities*

- Providing multi diamond complexes is desired.
- There needs to be more access to facilities such as washrooms and change rooms, providing “home game” fields, seating for spectators, and storage facilities for equipment.
- Providing a spectator atmosphere is an important part of rugby.
- Several high schools have expressed a desire for on-site all-weather sport fields.
- A Fall River stakeholder group expressed the need for an all-weather field at the Lockview High School, which would facilitate practices and games while reducing travel to other facilities, thereby promoting greener communities.
- An additional track facility within the western region of the municipality would assist with school sporting events.
- Improvements to the distribution of fields can help with program flexibility for clubs.
- Cricket is a growing sport but has limited participation due to a current lack of facilities.
- Cricket grounds generally require little in terms of maintenance, and they are relatively easy to construct.

#### *Accessibility*

- There is a need to improve accessibility at playing fields.
- There is a need for an accessible all-weather infield diamond for the Challenger Baseball program.

#### *Access*

- Access to current indoor all-weather sport fields can be unpredictable and costly.
- Some sport clubs prefer grass sport fields because they are less expensive to book.
- Washrooms on the Halifax Common are often locked.
- The Canada Games ball diamond on the Halifax Common is frequently locked and inaccessible.
- The loss of the Wanderers Grounds sport field for recreational use has impacted access and demand on other sites.
- It is important that playing fields are accessible for recreational use.

#### *Partnerships*

- More partnership opportunities should exist that allow clubs to be involved in maintaining certain fields, stewardship, administering programming and providing storage needs.
- Partnerships foster local pride and care of community facilities.
- Having local organizations involved in providing maintenance can address issues quickly and provide quality service.
- Partnerships can enhance municipal services but need to be further strengthened, recognized, and supported once they are established.
- Areas for improving partnerships include better communication, more access to specialized equipment, and being considered for capital funding.
- More collaboration and coordination between HRM and sport bodies/clubs can help improve the effective use of field time and maintenance.
- There is a need for greater awareness of the Service Exchange Agreement between HRM and HRCE and communication and collaboration between HRM and HRCE is important.
- Some organizations have the financial capacity to assist with improvements to facilities

#### *Other*

- Availability of officials for certain sports can be an issue.

## Summary

- Community engagement included a public survey with over 2,551 respondents and stakeholder engagement with a variety of user organizations.
- Overall observation themes from the community engagement included:
  - ensuring reasonable access for recreation;
  - improving scheduling and allocation of field time;
  - encouraging unstructured/informal play (i.e., pick-up games);
  - providing for extended play;
  - improving the maintenance and condition of playing fields;
  - providing facilities that are the proper size, dimensions, and standards;
  - improving facilities and provide for new and updated features and amenities;
  - improving partnerships; and
  - improving accessibility.

# 6. Strategic Directions and Actions

The findings from the preceding chapters contain important information related to: demographics; municipal service delivery; usage and participation trends; classifications and conditions; and community consultation observations. While these are wide ranging, several distinct themes are identified to improve the service delivery of playing fields in the municipality:

- Quality of Inventory Data
- Hub and Spoke Model
- Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships
- Scheduling and Allocation
- Site Conditions
- Playing Field Conditions
- Playing Field Lighting
- Grass Sport Field Improvements
- All-weather Field Improvements
- Ball Diamond Improvements
- Cricket Pitch Service Delivery Improvements

Strategic directions and actions are outlined under each of these themed areas.

## 6.1 Quality of Inventory Data

**Goal: To improve the consistency and quality of inventory data for the effective management and planning of playing fields.**

Playing fields make up one of the largest



*Harbour East All-weather Sport Fields*

parks and recreation asset categories with respect to the number of facilities, the amount of public land they occupy, and the resources that are necessary to maintain and operate them. The quality of inventory data is critical for effective management and future planning. The Municipality has made significant inventory improvements, which needs to continue.

Several challenges have been identified:

- There are several inventory data bases that may have inconsistent information.
- The Municipality does not typically have usage data for playing fields that are operated by partnership organizations.
- There are facilities with multiple or incorrect names, and locations that may not

- be accurately identified.
- Information may be lacking about site characteristics, such as amenities, field of play dimensions, and intended sport uses.
- There is inconsistent information about the age, condition, and past recapitalization projects.
- There is incomplete information about the nature of ball diamonds which may partly be supported by local organizations, but are not necessarily the subject of more formalized partnership arrangements.
- There is inconsistent information about annual sport and recreation participation and the tracking of school usage.
- Sport club and school usage need to be consistently recorded and tracked.

*Quality of inventory data is crucial for effective management and future planning.*

#### Strategic Actions

- 6.1.1 Recognize the importance of data quality for the effective management and future planning of playing fields.
- 6.1.2 Establish a holistic and consistent inventory data approach with a single source for data quality and maintenance.
- 6.1.3 Improve the data quality throughout the inventory including a subset of ball diamonds which are not directly

scheduled by the municipality.

- 6.1.4 Improve the tracking of sport club participation trends and track school usage hours more consistently on playing fields.

## 6.2 Hub and Spoke Model

**Goal: To continue a hub and spoke model in the planning and implementation of a hierarchy and distribution of playing fields**

The municipal delivery system for playing fields should be viewed within the Hub and Spoke model which was suggested in the CFMP2. This supports co-locating playing fields within *Regional Hubs* to meet region wide needs. Hub facilities may have enhanced amenities and specific facility requirements. The model also recognizes the need for local community “spoke” facilities and their relationship to hubs. The model strengthens relationships between larger regional facilities and smaller community sites within a shared geographic area. It aims to optimize management, utilization, and program delivery by organizing facilities to match needs and efficiency while avoiding duplication. The municipality has not formally recognized regional hub locations where several co-located fields exist or how they could be improved upon from a planning perspective.

#### *Examples of Regional Hubs*

There are several sites within the municipality that have the characteristics to be recognized as potential regional playing field hubs:

- Existing all-weather sport fields
- Graves Oakley
- Eastern Passage Common
- Maybank Park
- Beazley Park
- Weir and Springfield Lake
- Peace Park
- Halifax Common
- Mount Edward Road Park
- Cole Harbour Common
- Range Park

These are sites with co-located facilities, specialized facilities, or those with enhanced amenities where residents are expected to drive longer distances to access. Other locations where multiple fields are co-located could also be identified and considered as playing field hubs in addition to the list above. The Municipality should begin to further recognize such sites and emphasis improvements to have them fully functional as premiere regional facilities.

Some of the existing regional hubs have issues that require attention. For example:

- With the increased demands for unstructured recreation space, there is a recognized need to reduce the number ball diamonds on the North Common.
- Range Park has ongoing issues related to its location within the Sackville River floodplain that brings its viability for continued investment into question.
- Maybank Park would benefit from a rationalization, reducing its number of ball diamonds in order to remove

overlapping outfields, which is a current municipal project

These changes will require scheduling reallocations to other fields and the possible long-term development of a new hub. One such location that has previously been identified through the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan is to the south of Ragged Lake Business Park.

#### Strategic Actions

- 6.2.1 Recognize the relationships between playing fields with geographic areas (Hub and Spoke model) when planning new and upgraded facilities.
- 6.2.2 Place an emphasis on improving existing regional hubs with field enhancements and additional field development where possible based on land availability and site conditions.
- 6.2.3 Support the unstructured recreation needs upon the Halifax Common by reducing its number of ball diamonds and reallocate bookings to other fields.
- 6.2.4 Conduct a review of Range Park, within the context of the Sackville River Floodplains Study, to confirm its longer-term capability of accommodating-built infrastructure.
- 6.2.5 Consider the establishment of a new regional hub, with the Western Wilderness Common being a possible location.
- 6.2.6 Place an emphasis on the development of premiere playing fields within regional hubs, rather than as

- single field situations.
- 6.2.7 Place an emphasis on providing premiere field conditions and amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, change rooms, and spectator seating within regional hubs.



## 6.3 Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships

**Goal: To ensure municipal facilities are effectively planned and partnership approaches are consistent and strengthened.**

As outlined in the background section, the municipality's mandate is to provide recreation facilities that facilitate lifelong participation, enabling active and healthy lifestyles for all ages and abilities (accessible opportunities for all) while also supporting sport development and events that provide substantial economic benefits to the region. Elite level sport development is generally supported by other levels of government and is not the primary mandate of the municipality. However, it is recognized that municipal supported specialized sport infrastructure can also provide access for public recreation use.

In serving the many diverse communities within a large geographic area, municipal playing fields are provided through a hybrid delivery system (direct delivery and partnerships). There are also non-municipal institutions and organizations providing facilities. Engagement feedback noted community support for a collaborative approach in the provision and stewardship of playing fields. The municipality recognizes that partnerships help to share resource enhancements to services that the municipality may not be able to provide. However, partnerships must also ensure there are reasonably consistent and broad public opportunities to access playing fields.

Through the information gathered and identified in preceding chapters, it is noted that:

- The existing municipal hybrid delivery system results in certain service inconsistencies in some areas such as scheduling, fees, maintenance, agreements, and data quality which should be improved upon.
- There is a large sub-set of ball diamonds (outside of formal partnerships) which have a municipal relationship but where information is lacking.
- Agreements with Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), where schools have priority access to facilities, means that some school fields may not be available at certain times for community access.
- Planning of playing fields has historically occurred without fully considering surrounding facilities that may be capable of meeting regional and local needs, which can lead to duplication or ineffective use.

While partnerships have benefits, in most situations, it is important that, when practical, the Municipality should exercise primary control over the delivery of playing field services.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.3.1 Place an emphasis on municipal land ownership and management of playing fields to ensure that recreational opportunities are provided to citizens and consider partnerships when municipal interests are secured.
- 6.3.2 Recognize, support, and strengthen

partnerships with consistent approaches/agreements to ensure public access.

- 6.3.3 Improve the consistency in the application of service exchange and joint use agreements with the HRCE.

## 6.4 Scheduling and Allocation

**Goal: To improve equity, fairness, and transparency of the scheduling and allocation process for playing fields.**

Most municipal playing fields are scheduled directly by the Municipality, except for those operated by partnership organizations and a number of ball diamonds without any such formal arrangements. Within the scheduled inventory there is overall available time, but there are pinch points of demand for popular playing fields during peak times. The current scheduling system is based on historical usage, which favours past users over new, emerging, or underserved sports.

There are several challenges to the current situation:

- The current scheduling process is not aligned with other existing allocation processes, such as those of ice arenas and aquatic facilities, which were approved to improve fairness and transparency. Engagement findings also confirmed public frustrations with the current historical process.
- Until recently, the public had not been able to view available playing fields in real time; although this is steadily improving with, for example, a rollout of online posting of A and B ball diamond available in June 2022
- Public engagement noted a desire for more public access for unstructured sport on playing fields, including all-weather sport fields. These assets are

usually locked when they are not programmed for organized sport.

- There are individual fields which are heavily used, while others are underused, suggesting a need to improve where time is allocated. School sports often book grass sport fields in the shoulder seasons, which impacts field quality.
- Annual seasonal start/end dates are inconsistent, creating unpredictability among users and impacting field conditions.
- Administering many rain-out cancellations each season and providing user credits has been noted as a challenge by users and staff.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.4.1 Implement the adjoining Playing Field Allocation Guidelines to improve fairness and transparency of playing field scheduling and allocations.
- 6.4.2 Implement the adjoining Defined Playing Field Season Standards.
- 6.4.3 Continue to enable users to view and schedule available playing field time online and prevent users from “holding” booked time which they are not intending to use.
- 6.4.4 Allocate programmed public access times to all-weather sport fields as a pilot project.
- 6.4.5 Improve the distribution of usage among certain heavily used playing fields through scheduling improvements.
- 6.4.6 Update the policies and procedures

for rain-out cancellations, including a consideration of best practices of other municipalities.

- 6.4.7 Allocate intensive sports, including school sports, to all-weather facilities.

*The current scheduling process for playing fields is not aligned with other processes such as ice arenas which were approved to improve fairness among users*

### Defined Playing Field Season Standards

The following seasons are to be implemented for the use of municipal playing fields:

Natural Turf Sport fields	June 1 to October 31
Ball Diamonds	May 15 to October 31
All-weather	April 1 to November 30

(Current practices have often varied the commencement and conclusion of seasons)

### Playing Field Allocation Guidelines

The following process and guidelines are to be applied by the Municipality for the regular booking of playing fields:

- application requests are to be submitted from all user groups and organizations along with their previous season participation data by age and level;
- allocations are to be assessed based on participation data, training standards set by sport governing bodies, priority user categories and alignment with municipal mandate;
- priority user categories are to include child/youth, programs that promote gender equity, accessible programming, underserved groups, new and emerging sports, recreational level sport;
- efforts are to be made to assign appropriate facilities to meet user groups level of play, program requirements and geographic location where possible;
- in advance of the seasonal applications, facility requests for tournaments, championships, and larger event hosting are to be considered to minimize disruption to regular seasonal play;
- youth and younger age groups are to be prioritized for earlier evening times over adults;
- collaboration is to be facilitated between user groups to resolve conflicts for locations and times;
- schools will be given priority access over other bookings through the SEA when submitted by application deadline;
- consideration of rest periods into scheduling;
- consideration of transitioning many high school sports including practice, training and games allocated to all-weather facilities.

## 6.5 Site Conditions

**Goal: To improve the condition and quality of playing fields and ensure that new and updated facilities are planned to meet community needs.**

The condition and maintenance of playing field as well as overall siting, site planning considerations, and accessibility are important components of the Municipality's playing fields. Feedback from the public engagement expressed that the condition and maintenance of playing fields is a top priority. However, the feedback also noted that some measures that could improve field quality, such as limiting hours of play or the length of season, were not popular.

*“Public engagement expressed that the condition and maintenance of playing fields is a top priority but that measures to limit play to improve conditions was not popular”*

There are many factors that can impact the condition of playing fields. Analysis indicates that grass sport fields experience more frequent turf condition issues while ball diamonds experience more sand/soil infield condition issues. Ball diamonds not being the proper field of play dimensions were also highlighted. Other common issues and impacts include:

- Playing fields that may also be used as off-leash areas may be causing some issues with field conditions and conflicts among users.
- The existence of variable weather conditions, particularly with locations that are under the influence of our coastal region, with wet shoulder seasons and dry summers, may cause issues with the availability and use of playing fields.
- The public's desire for extended seasons on grass fields is a challenge to maintaining field conditions.
- While field rest periods have been incorporated into the scheduling, of AA ball diamonds, the practice has not been fully or consistently been implemented across the inventory of playing fields.

- The quality of initial field construction, including the quality of sub-surface material and the siting facilities in locations with drainage or other physical problems exist are issues with some playing fields.
- Unscheduled school usage of playing fields contributes to playing field condition issues.
- There are instances where there are poorly sited or designed playing field facilities that may include overlapping fields, isolated and constrained sites, conflicts within multi-use parks, and fields with associated conflicts with adjacent property owners.
- The number of playing fields over a large geographic area presents maintenance challenges.
- While all-weather facilities are built to accessibility standards, many other sites are not accessible when considering players, spectators, or other park users.

There are also particular topics relative to the condition of playing fields that warrant attention, as follows.

### *Off Leash Dogs*

Playing fields are frequently used by dogs and some are designated as off leash dog sites during the off-season or during morning hours. However, damage to playing fields can occur from this practice. This includes turf damage, infield damage, dug holes, and people not picking up after their dogs as common examples.

Playing fields that are designated as off leash dog sites need to be considered on a regular basis to assess the amount of programmed use and compatibility with dog use. Providing places for people to recreate with their dogs is important. Particularly within more urbanized areas, there may be few local alternatives to the practice of shared off-leash areas without substantial investments in specialized off-leash area facilities that are expensive and often difficult to site. However, where possible, other suitable greenspaces or underused sites should be considered first for off-leash areas.



### *Condition Assessments*

The relative physical condition of playing fields is important to ensuring there is an adequate supply of good quality facilities. To support the capital planning for playing fields, a condition rating tool is found in Appendix C. Condition assessments should be undertaken on all playing field sites to inform capital prioritization and to improve quality of data about the condition of facilities. Playing fields sites with known ongoing condition issues should be identified first. This includes drainage problems, siting conflicts, accessibility issues, safety concerns and older infrastructure.

### *Range Park*

Range Park, identified earlier, has the characteristics of being a regional recreational hub. It is well used and consists of several playing fields along with built infrastructure including an accessory building, skate park, fencing, roadway, lawn bowling facility and parking. The ball diamonds have field lighting which is near the end of its lifecycle. Flooding typically occurs in shoulder seasons and does not normally impact game

play during the dry summer. However, it may have impacts on capital infrastructure over the longer term and the *Sackville River Floodplain Study (2017)* indicates that there is the potential for larger flooding impacts upon active recreation infrastructure in the future. Prior to any further larger capital projects, an assessment should confirm Range Park's long-term capability of accommodating such infrastructure. This is addressed in Section 2.4 and Strategic Action 6.2.4.

### *Recapitalization*

Lifecycle replacement of field turf should be reviewed at approximately 15-years for all-weather fields and approximately every 20-25 years for grass fields if they are well maintained and scheduled to avoid overuse. It is important that when playing fields are recapitalized that they are not automatically restored to their existing conditions. Recapitalization provides an opportunity to improve site conditions for the longer term and assess any current needs. When capital improvements are undertaken, it is important to continue best practices such as phasing work, pre-construction site planning, and geotechnical evaluations which can mitigate costly longer-term issues. It is also necessary, to ensure sites are brought up to current accessibility standards.

### *Irrigation*

Field irrigation systems can improve the condition of grass playing fields. While several municipal playing fields have had irrigation infrastructure installed, an updated inventory and operational condition of existing sites should be documented. An irrigation plan should be developed for municipal playing fields that outlines approaches, benefits, and costs and places an emphasis on their installation when needed.

### Strategic Actions

6.5.1 Undertake field condition improvements through actions and approaches that include:

- Allocating higher impact sports to all-weather facilities.
- Monitoring heavily used playing fields for damage and implementing rest periods.
- Establishing limits to playing seasons.

- Reviewing weekend maintenance requirements.
- Establishing and supporting stewardship partnerships.
- Rationalizing and consolidating to focus maintenance efforts.

- 6.5.2 Use the Field Condition Assessment Tool in Appendix C, with refinements as may be necessary, for playing field capital planning.
- 6.5.3 Conduct condition assessments on playing field sites with a priority on sites with reported and ongoing issues and those that lack accessibility.
- 6.5.4 Review playing fields that are assigned as off leash dog areas to understand the amount of programmed use and determine if other greenspaces would be more suitable.
- 6.5.5 Review lifecycle replacement of field turf at 15 years for all-weather fields and 20-25 years for grass turf.
- 6.5.6 Incorporate accessibility standards, recommended field dimensions, and other standards for the recapitalization of existing facilities.
- 6.5.7 Continue best practices of phasing capital work with pre-construction site planning and geotechnical evaluations to mitigate costly longer-term issues.
- 6.5.8 Review irrigation infrastructure and implement improvements as warranted, based upon factors such as field condition and usage.
- 6.5.9 When replacing or constructing new all-weather fields, ensure they are lined for additional sport uses, such as field lacrosse and rugby.

## 6.6 Playing Field Classifications

**Goal: To provide clarity of the purpose of playing field classifications for users and staff and ensure that they reflect the full playing field inventory.**

Playing field classifications are important as they outline the maintenance service standards assigned to various categories of playing fields. Clear and consistent classifications are also needed for the end user when scheduling the appropriate level/type of programmed play to the appropriate type of facility. A lack of clarity among how classifications are applied can result in challenges with user expectation who have specific program requirements. It is noted that:

- Based on a jurisdictional scan, HRM has more classification categories than other municipalities.
- Not all playing fields are classified.
- All-weather facilities are not classified, while representing a major asset category for programmed sport use.
- With many categories, current classifications lack clear distinctions between them. As an example, C and D classifications are not easily differentiated. Clearer distinctions are also required to differentiate fields that are for programmed sport use, those for shared uses (programed sports and other general community use), and those that are more suitable as unstructured green-spaces.
- It is not commonly understood how

classifications are assigned and if they are based upon the field type, level of play, amount of usage, amenities provided, or the level of maintenance service.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.6.1 Update playing field classifications and Fees By-law to reflect the full municipal inventory and provide clearer distinctions and consistent descriptions, using the framework in Appendix D for guidance.
- 6.6.2 Provide a consistent baseline of field amenities for programmable playing fields

*Playing field classifications are important for the user so that their requirements match the appropriate type of facility*

## 6.7 Playing Field Lighting

**Goal: To ensure that field lighting is implemented with consideration of factors such as need and field conditions relative to matters such increased use.**

Public engagement feedback highlighted support for providing more playing fields with field lighting to extend usage. However, not much is currently known about the age, condition, or effectiveness of current locations with lighting infrastructure. Field of play lighting is an important planning and capital consideration as it enables more use, but it also has sizable cost (approximately \$600,000 per site in 2021 dollars). As a result, it is important that field lighting be appropriately planned.

There are several challenges:

- There is only one existing natural grass sport field lighting within the municipality (Wanderers Grounds), which is programmed for limited premier sport use. Because grass sport fields damage more easily, adding lighting may result in more field condition impacts. They may also divert use away from the existing all-weather sport fields, which can accommodate the extended usage demands.
- There are many more ball diamonds with field of play lighting. There is a trend of sport field users to request the ability to use ball diamond outfield sites to use field lighting especially in the shoulder seasons. However, these uses should be directed to existing all-weather sport

fields.

- Assessments regarding the condition and effectiveness of lights on existing sites has been initiated and should be completed to assist in determining future needs, particularly as there are more sites on the eastern region of the Municipality.
- Many of the lighting systems are inconsistent, with some operated manually with a key or switch and others being automated.
- There is a challenge with all-weather lit fields in some residential areas, such as in Bedford-Hammond Plains where there is a need to turn lights out earlier than other fields limiting extended use.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.7.1 Prioritize field lighting on all-weather sport fields or if necessary, grass sport field location with specific requirements such as the need to host evening events on a regular basis.
- 6.7.2 Complete field lighting assessments on existing ball diamond sites to determine age, condition, regional distribution, and needs prior to considering new sites.
- 6.7.3 Consider new lighting infrastructure on ball diamonds only within purpose-built sites that serve older youth or adult age groups when there is an identified need based on factors such as usage.
- 6.7.4 Ensure that sites can feasibly support lighting infrastructure over the longer term before upgrading or providing new infrastructure.

6.7.5 Ensure light pollution to surrounding residents is minimized when upgrading or providing new infrastructure.

6.7.6 Continue to ensure that new or upgraded lighting is modernized through an automated system and integrated with facility scheduling.





*Ball Diamond at Merv Sullivan*

## 6.8 All-Weather Sport Fields

**Goal: To recognize all-weather facilities as regional assets and ensure that they are sufficiently utilized for multi-sport participation.**

Engagement findings showed support for more all-weather sport fields within the municipality, but also a desire for better overall access to existing facilities. Existing all-weather sport fields currently serve programmed sport uses (scheduled usage) rather than informal play and are locked when not being use for organized sport. All-weather sport fields are costly to initially build, but turf maintenance costs are considerably less than grass sport fields. However, they also have costly amenities such as field lighting, accessory buildings, washrooms, parking, and perimeter fencing and are monitored by staff.

All-weather sport fields accommodate many more hours of use on significantly fewer fields, with longer seasons and later evening play. As such, they should be viewed as regional rather than local facilities. The municipality has invested in all-weather sport fields since 2000. The current number of these fields based on usage is sufficient to meet current demand, as there is still available capacity within the all-weather sport field inventory. The regional distribution also appears to be appropriate with 75 percent of residents being within a 20-minute drive to an all-weather sport field.

*All-weather sport fields accommodate many more hours of use on significantly fewer fields. As such, they are regional assets which are not required in every local community*

Several challenges have been observed:

- Usage efficiencies exist with all-weather sport fields (i.e., more hours used on less fields and with less damage). Available capacity currently exists, and it is important to avoid an over-supply of major facilities which could lead to further underutilization.
- There has been a trend of declining soccer participation over the

*Efficiencies exist with all-weather sport fields (more hours used on less fields and with less damage), but the existing inventory must be sufficiently utilized on an ongoing basis.*

past several years which is the largest sport user of all-weather sport fields.

- Lower user fees on natural turf sport fields divert use away from all-weather sport fields.
- New fees provide a reduced rate for non-prime hours to encourage better utilization.
- Public feedback expressed frustration with locked and gated facilities when these facilities are not booked.
- Many organized sport groups such as flag football, rugby, and field lacrosse are seeking to access more all-weather field time.
- There are emerging recreational leagues that play modified cross field games.
- Implementing rest periods may increase demand on other fields such as all-weather facilities.

There are also particular topics relative to all-weather fields that have been discussed in earlier chapters that warrant attention, as follows.

### *Halifax Central Common*

The Halifax Common Master Plan (Master Plan) identified exceptionally high use of the sport field on the Central Common for informal play, that coupled with scheduled bookings, leads to poor field conditions. This field is not of a size that can accommodate many competitive sports, but it is extensively used for cross field pick-up games. Based on the high amount informal community needs, the Master Plan suggests the implementation of an all-weather surface, which would be unique in the Municipality's inventory.

Implementing an all-weather surface at the Halifax Common could address its high community usage and corresponding poor condition, but

does need further assessments relative to factors such as: costs, site security and monitoring, and programming. If successful, this could be implemented for any similar situations in the municipality.

#### *Future Multi-Sport Field Complex*

Within the timeframe of this plan, it is recommended to identify suitable municipal lands that would accommodate a future multi-sport field complex (at least 2-4 sport fields grouped together with associated amenities). This would be a purpose-built sport complex in anticipation of longer-term regional needs which are anticipated beyond this plan's timeframe. While not anticipated to be operationally required within this plan's timeframe, population growth and usage trends should continue to be monitored and evaluated and, if required, timelines reassessed.

This complex should accommodate multiple all-weather sport fields, or a combination of all-weather and natural turf sport fields depending on future need. Planning consideration of undeveloped municipal lands and/or existing multi field locations that could potentially be upgraded should be undertaken. This action is for site identification with the timeline for construction implementation to be determined.

#### *Requested School Enhancements*

Often the municipality receives community requests to enhance sport fields on school sites. These can include natural turf or all-weather but are often larger scale capital projects such as an expansion or total reconstruction to a higher standard than what is typically provided. In terms of playing field enhancements, these requests are often at high school locations that offer extracurricular school sport programs.

Providing all-weather sport fields is not currently part of the Province's or (HRCE) standards and school sites continue to be developed with natural grass with soccer dimensions when they may have football programs. School fields are maintained by the municipality and operate under a Service Exchange Agreement with the HRCE. While school athletic programs are not part of the municipality's mandate, they do utilize municipal infrastructure both on and off school sites.

As noted, municipal all-weather fields are recommended to be co-located on municipal land to meet region wide municipal needs. The municipality should only consider major stand-alone school field enhancements (such as an all-weather sport field) on a case-by-case basis when it is in the municipality's interest, there is a defined municipal need, a partnership project has been initiated and is being led by the province, and shared funding commitments confirmed.

#### *Year-Round Facilities*

Enclosed year-round all-weather sport fields can be effective for extended seasonal use. Currently, there are 3 facilities which are either operated privately or by Soccer Nova Scotia (SNS).

The need for additional indoor facilities for municipal purposes has not been identified at this point. SNS allocates nonpeak field time for municipal programming, but this time has not been utilized by the municipality. Adding a seasonal dome to an existing municipal facility could be evaluated if the need emerges in the future.

#### *Promotion of Public Access at Existing Facilities*

As noted in the scheduling section it is recommended that programmed public access times be piloted on existing all-weather sport fields as a pilot project. A communication and promotion plan to increase utilization and public programming should be developed to further this action.

#### Strategic Actions

- 6.8.1 Recognize all-weather sport fields as regional facilities.
- 6.8.2 Promote public usage and public programming on existing all-weather facilities.
- 6.8.3 Adopt an overall approach for the provision of municipal all-weather sport fields that includes co-location (multiple fields) on municipal land which serve as regional recreation hubs.
- 6.8.4 Initiate preliminary site planning and feasibility of the Central Common sport field for potential upgrade to a municipal all-weather sport field.
- 6.8.5 Identify municipal lands that can accommodate a regional co-

located, multi-sport field complex site in anticipation of longer-term needs required beyond this plan's timeframe.

- 6.8.6 Consider major school enhancements of playing fields only when:
- requested and led by the province;
  - a clearly defined municipal need is identified; and
  - shared funding opportunities are confirmed from other orders of government.
- 6.8.7 Consider a seasonal dome (for winter use) on an existing municipal all-weather facility if a need emerges in the future.
- 6.8.8 Develop a communication and promotion plan to increase utilization and public programming on all-weather sport fields.

## 6.9 Grass Sport Fields

**Objective: To recognize that natural turf sport fields facilities are required for programmed multi-sport uses as well as for unstructured recreation and leisure.**

Grass sport fields provide important access to greenspaces for unstructured uses, facilities for programable sport and recreation including hosting local or premier events. They are more flexible than ball diamonds for multi-uses including different sports and unstructured uses, but they have difficulty sustaining turf quality with higher levels of sport demands. It's important to provide flexible multi use spaces moving forward for recreational purposes, while understanding what is needed for programmable sport use.

*Grass sport fields provide important access to greenspaces for unstructured uses and for programable sport*

Through the background analysis, it was found that:

- The municipality has enough natural turf sports fields to meet current program demands, but the usage distribution among them requires improvement. Some sports fields are heavily used (mostly higher classifications) while many lower-classification fields are under programmed and underutilized.

- Some sites next to schools are well used with both prime and non-prime times but school usage may not always be consistently tracked.
- Sports fields which act as public green-spaces are important in high density areas where there may be limitations to acquiring additional parkland.
- There are some rural areas where there appears to be regional gaps of sport fields.
- Natural turf sport fields cannot tolerate heavy usage demands – they require regular turf maintenance and rest periods.
- As new communities are developed there will be needs to provide flexible greenspaces for recreational use.
- There is a need to ensure the appropriate balance when providing fields for hosting premier events with higher standards than those needed for general recreational and sport use.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.9.1 Recognize that grass sport fields act as important public spaces providing access to greenspace for unstructured and programmed multi-sport use.
- 6.9.2 Assess under-programmed sport fields and those not properly sized within the context of surrounding sites and determine if they should be upgraded for programmed use or assessed as greenspaces for other recreation uses.
- 6.9.3 Continue to provide regional locations for hosting specialized or

premier events but ensure opportunities exist for general community sport and recreation.

- 6.9.4 Allocate more turf intensive sports to all-weather facilities to assist with the usage distribution on natural turf sport fields.
- 6.9.5 Balancing the needs for general recreation, retain grass sport field spaces within existing high-density areas where limited opportunities exist to acquire new parkland.
- 6.9.6 Place an emphasis on acquiring lands for additional grass sport fields when new large-scale communities are planned.
- 6.9.7 Ensure future programmable sport fields avoid overlapping with other existing playing fields.
- 6.9.8 Further evaluate sport field needs where rural geographic gaps have been identified.

## 6.10 Ball Diamonds

**Goal: To provide ball diamonds to meet regional and community program needs and improve overall site planning, facility accessibility, and usage.**

There are more ball diamonds overall than sports fields within the municipality when factoring in partnerships and those which are not scheduled by HRM. Ball diamonds are generally less versatile for multi-sport use than sport fields as they have specific infield material and specialized fencing (backstops). They primarily serve the sports of baseball and softball (slo-pitch and fastpitch). It is important to recognize that softball and baseball as distinct sports with different facility requirements, especially for youth and adults.

Growth in minor baseball has fluctuated in the past with recent spikes in participation. The highest rates of minor baseball participation occur within the communities of Hammonds Plains, Fall River, Sackville, and Halifax. Participation in recreational adult softball is not tracked but feedback from the public survey and scheduling use indicate that adult recreational slo-pitch is popular. Other notable observations are:

- There is more than an ample supply of ball diamonds with available capacity, including considerable available time on weekends.
- The need for net additional ball diamonds, beyond the existing inventory, has not been identified.
- While the number of ball diamonds may be sufficient, there are notable issues, such as siting that conflicts with other park features/users; diamonds that do not meet playing standards, including overlapping outfields.
- There is a lack of ball diamonds designed for accessible play.
- There is no all-weather ball diamond to facilitate extended play within the region.
- There is not a “purpose built” ball diamond complex for tournament play.

Further topics warrant additional consideration as follows.

### *Assessments and Rationalization*

The Hub and Spoke section, and preceding analysis, highlighted the challenges with the existing number of ball diamonds on the Halifax Common and the identified direction to reduce the number of fields at Maybank Park to address overlapping outfields. Beyond this, due to the extent of ball diamonds with issues, assessments should be undertaken to identify sites to be rationalized; upgraded, consolidated, relocated, or reclassified as greenspace for other park purposes. Rationalization provides the opportunity to improve siting, quality, usage, and accessibility. The assessment should be conducted within the hub and spoke framework (understanding of surrounding sites).

As part of a rationalization review, it is recommended that land be identified for one to two multi diamond complexes (6 to 8 diamonds within each) within the region and dedicated for programmed use. These would be specialized facilities built to proper field standards and accommodate amenities such as washrooms, field lighting, spectator seating and parking and an accessory building for maintenance and storage functions. In addition, one all-weather baseball diamond should be considered for extended play. As an example of a future site possibility, the former 1999 Western Common Master Plan identified lands for these types of uses near Ragged Lake Industrial Park. Planning for one of these complexes should be initiated within the medium term. Softball, baseball, and cricket could also be considered within the complexes. However, if the Halifax North Common ball diamonds are rationalized, adult softball (slo-pitch) may need to be prioritized.

*Rationalization provides the opportunity to improve siting, field quality, usage, and accessibility*

Ball diamonds for younger children learning to play should be located within/closer to the geographic areas served by their minor ball associations. Children’s diamonds are smaller, tend to be shared, and can function better in shared multi use parks - if properly sited. For example, they may not need to be completely fenced. However, they should be spaced properly and avoid overlapping with each other. These diamonds are less specialized than adult diamonds. Areas where there is

consistent growth in local minor ball participation could be considered for these types of diamonds if demand warrants.

### *Accessible Facilities*

When ball diamonds are upgraded, accessibility must be reviewed with both player and spectators in mind. There is an immediate need within the municipality to provide a fully accessible ball diamond for play. This includes an all-weather infield, accessible bases, and field dimensions to U-11 standard. Accessible player shelters and amenities should be

included. This diamond could be a new site or upgraded existing site. Scheduling should prioritize the Challenger Baseball Program\* but could also be shared with other minor baseball teams when not in use. Possible site locations should be considered within areas that currently offer Challenger Programs.

\*The Challenger baseball is an adaptive program specifically designed to empower children, youth and adults living with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.



*Maybank Park*

## Strategic Actions

- 6.10.1 Recognize softball and baseball as distinct sports with different facility requirements when planning and identifying ball diamonds.
- 6.10.2 Identify ball diamonds to be upgraded, consolidated, relocated, or reclassified as greenspace for other park purposes with the aim to improve siting, condition, usage, and accessibility.
- 6.10.3 Plan that when future ball diamonds serving older youth/adults are considered, they be purpose-built to the proper field dimensions and with demarcation of the field of play.
- 6.10.4 Plan that when future ball diamonds serving younger children are considered, they are located within or close to the geographic areas served by their minor ball associations.
- 6.10.5 Prioritize the Halifax Common and Maybank Park for initial site assessments and potential rationalization.
- 6.10.6 Within a rationalization review, identify municipal lands for 1-2 multi diamond sport complexes.
- 6.10.7 Plan for a fully accessible all-weather turf ball diamond to meet regional needs within the short term.



## 6.11 Cricket Grounds

**Goal: To ensure cricket grounds are provided to meet current and future needs.**

The municipality has only one cricket ground located on the Halifax (North) Common overlapping with other playing fields restricting its utilization. Cricket grounds are a specialized type of facility and is specifically designed for one sport. The future provision of additional facilities beyond the Halifax Common site, requires dedicated space and should be purpose built.

Cricket appears to be a growing sport within the municipality. Because of the lack of cricket facilities, the sport faces challenges to provide programming to grow the sport. As a result, informal games are occurring on existing ball diamonds throughout the municipality.

Nova Scotia Cricket Association has expressed an interest in working collaboratively with the municipality to establish a permanent facility site.

### Strategic Actions

- 6.11.1 Work with interests such as the Nova Scotia Cricket Association to establish a permanent and dedicated cricket ground.



*Cricket at the Halifax Common*

# 7. Implementation

The actions from the preceding chapters are summarized in Table 10 with timelines. Some of these are ongoing directions that are to be considered immediately and into the future, for various programs and projects, while others have a prospective schedule that is subject to annual reviews, that will be balanced against other business plan priorities.

Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions			
6.1 Quality of Inventory Data			
	Direction	Actions	Timeframe
6.1.1	Guidance	Recognize the importance of data quality for the effective management and future planning of playing fields.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.1.2	Guidance	Establish a holistic and consistent inventory data approach with a single source for data quality and maintenance.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.1.3	Assessment	Improve the data quality throughout the inventory including a subset of ball diamonds which are not directly scheduled by the municipality.	Medium Term 3 -10 years
6.1.4	Guidance	Improve the tracking of sport club participation trends and track school usage hours more consistently on playing fields.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.2 Hub and Spoke Model			
	Direction	Actions	Timeframe
6.2.1	Guidance	Recognize the relationships between playing fields with geographic areas (Hub and Spoke model) when planning new and upgraded facilities	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.2.2	Assessment/ Capital Planning	Place an emphasis on improving existing regional hubs with field enhancements and additional field development where possible based on land availability and site conditions.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.2.3	Assessment	Support the unstructured recreation needs upon the Halifax Common by reducing its number of ball diamonds and reallocate bookings to other fields.	Medium Term 3 -10 years
6.2.4	Assessment	Conduct a review of Range Park, within the context of the Sackville River Floodplains Study, to confirm its longer-term capability of accommodating-built infrastructure.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.2.5	Assessment	Consider the establishment of a new regional hub, with the Western Wilderness Common being a possible location.	Long Term 10-15 years

Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions			
6.2.6	Guidance	Place an emphasis on the development of premiere playing fields within regional hubs, rather than as single fields situations.	Medium Term 3 -10 years
6.2.7	Guidance/Capital Planning	Place an emphasis on providing premiere field conditions and amenities such as washrooms, drinking fountains, change rooms, and spectator seating within regional hubs.	Ongoing 1-15 years
<b>6.3 Municipal Delivery System</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.3.1	Guidance	Place an emphasis on municipal land ownership and management of playing fields to ensure that recreational opportunities are provided to citizens and consider partnerships when municipal interests are secured.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.3.2	Guidance	Recognize, support, and strengthen partnerships with consistent approaches/agreements to ensure public access.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.3.3	Guidance	Improve the consistency in the application of service exchange and joint use agreements with the HRCE.	Short Term 1-3 years
<b>6.4 Scheduling and Allocation</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.4.1	Guidance	Implement Playing Field Allocation Guidelines (Section 6.4) to improve fairness and transparency of field time.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.4.2	Guidance	Implement the Defined Playing Seasons (Section 6.4).	Short Term 1-3 years
6.4.3	Guidance	Continue to enable users to view and schedule available playing field time online and prevent users from “holding” booked time which they are not intending to use.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.4.4	Guidance	Allocate programmed public access times on all-weather sport fields as a pilot project.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.4.5	Guidance	Improve the distribution of usage from certain heavily used playing fields.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.4.6	Assessment	Update the policies and procedures for rain-out cancellations, including a consideration of best practices of other municipalities.	Short Term 1-3 years
<b>6.5 Site Conditions</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.5.1	Guidance	Facilitate field condition improvements through the following approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocating higher impact sports to all-weather facilities.</li> </ul>	Short Term 1-3 years

**Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring heavily used playing fields for damage and implementing rest periods.</li> <li>Establishing limits to playing seasons.</li> <li>Reviewing weekend maintenance requirements.</li> <li>Establishing and supporting stewardship partnerships.</li> <li>Rationalizing and consolidating to focus maintenance efforts</li> </ul>	
6.5.2	Assessment	Use the Field Condition Assessment Tool in Appendix C, with refinements as may be necessary, for playing field capital planning.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.5.3	Assessment	Conduct condition assessments on playing field sites over time with a priority on sites with reported and ongoing issues and those that lack accessibility.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.5.4	Assessment	Review playing fields that are assigned as off leash dog sites to understand the amount of programmed use and determine if other greenspaces would be more suitable.	Medium Term 3 -10 years
6.5.5	Guidance/ Capital Planning	Review lifecycle replacement of field turf at 15-years for all-weather fields and 20-25 years for grass turf.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.5.6	Guidance/ Capital Planning	Incorporate accessibility standards, recommended field dimensions, and other standards for the recapitalization of existing facilities.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.5.7	Guidance/ Capital Planning	Continue best practices of phasing capital work with pre-construction site planning and geotechnical evaluations to mitigate costly longer-term issues.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.5.8	Assessment	Review irrigation infrastructure and implement improvements as warranted, based upon factors such as field condition and usage.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.5.9	Guidance/ Capital Planning	When replacing or constructing new all-weather fields, ensure they are lined for additional sport uses, such as field lacrosse and rugby	Ongoing 1-15 years
<b>6.6 Playing Field Classifications</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.6.1	Guidance	Update playing classifications and Fees By-law to reflect the full municipal inventory and provide clearer distinctions and consistent descriptors using the framework in Appendix D for guidance.	Short Term 1-3 years

Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions			
6.6.2	Guidance	Provide a consistent baseline of field amenities for programmable playing fields.	Ongoing 1-15 years
<b>6.7 Field Lighting</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.7.1	Guidance	Prioritize field lighting on all-weather sport fields or if necessary, grass sport field location with specific requirements such as the need to host evening events on a regular basis.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.7.2	Assessment	Complete field lighting assessments on existing ball diamond sites to determine age, condition, regional distribution, and needs prior to considering new sites.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.7.3	Guidance/ Capital Planning	Consider new lighting infrastructure on ball diamonds only within purpose-built sites that serve older youth or adult age groups when there is an identified need based on factors such as usage.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.7.4	Guidance	Ensure that sites can feasibly support lighting infrastructure over the longer term before upgrading or providing new infrastructure.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.7.5	Guidance	Ensure light pollution to surrounding residents is minimized when upgrading or providing new infrastructure.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.7.6	Guidance	Continue to ensure that new or upgraded lighting is modernized through an automated system and integrated with facility scheduling.	Ongoing 1-15 years
<b>6.8 All-weather Sport Fields</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.8.1	Guidance	Recognize all-weather sport fields as regional facilities.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.8.2	Guidance	Promote public usage and public programming on existing all-weather facilities.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.8.3	Guidance	Adopt an overall approach for the provision of municipal all-weather sport fields that includes co-location (multiple fields) on municipal land which serve as regional recreation hubs.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.8.4	Capital Planning	Initiate preliminary site planning and feasibility of upgrading the Central Common sport field to a municipal all-weather sport field.	Medium Term 3-10 years
6.8.5	Assessment/ Capital Planning	Identify municipal lands that can accommodate a regional co-located, multi-sport field complex in anticipation of longer-term needs required beyond this plan's timeframe.	Long Term 10-15 years

**Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions**

Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions			
6.8.6	Guidance	Consider major school enhancements of playing fields only when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requested and led by the province;</li> <li>• clearly defined municipal need is identified; and</li> <li>• shared funding opportunities are confirmed from other levels of government</li> </ul>	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.8.7	Guidance	Consider a seasonal dome (for winter use) on an existing municipal all-weather facility if a need emerges in the future.	Long Term 10-15 years
6.8.8	Guidance	Develop a communication and promotion plan to increase utilization and public programming on all-weather sport fields.	Short Term 1-3 years
<b>6.9 Grass Sport Fields</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.9.1	Guidance	Recognize that grass sport fields act as important public spaces providing access to greenspace for unstructured and programmed multi-sport use.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.9.2	Assessment	Assess under-programmed grass sport field and those not properly sized within the context of surrounding sites and determine if should be upgraded for programmed use or assessed as greenspaces for other recreation uses.	Medium Term 3-10 years
6.9.3	Guidance	Continue to provide regional locations for hosting specialized or premier events but ensure opportunities exist for general community sport and recreation.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.9.4	Guidance	Allocate more turf intensive sports to all-weather facilities to assist with the usage distribution on natural turf sport fields.	Medium Term 3-10 years
6.9.5	Guidance	Balancing the needs for general recreation, retain grass sport field spaces within existing high-density areas where limited opportunities exist to acquire new parkland.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.9.6	Guidance	Place an emphasis on acquiring lands for additional grass sport fields when new large-scale communities are planned.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.9.7	Assessment	Ensure future programmable sport fields avoid overlapping with other existing playing fields.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.9.8	Assessment	Further evaluate grass sport field needs where rural geographic gaps have been identified.	Medium Term 3-10 years
<b>6.10 Ball Diamonds</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>

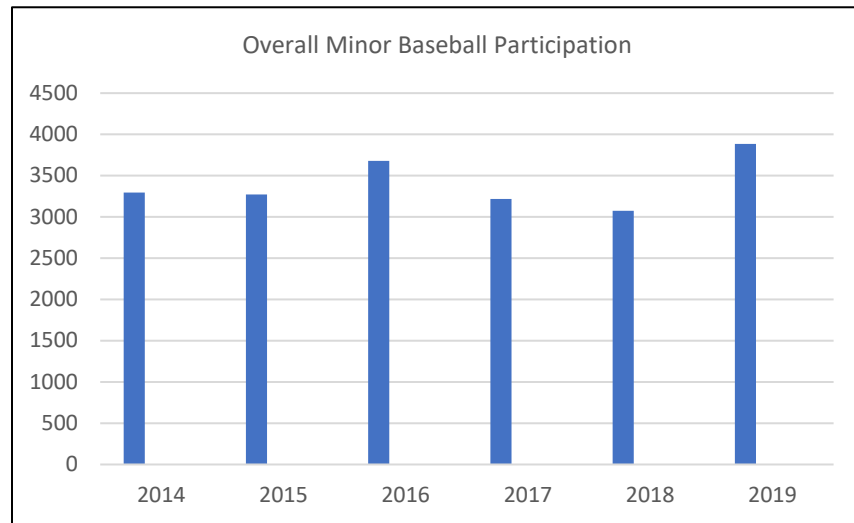
Table 1013 - Summary of Directions and Actions			
6.10.1	Guidance	Recognize softball and baseball as distinct sports with different facility requirements when planning and identifying ball diamonds.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.10.2	Assessment	Identify ball diamonds to be upgraded, consolidated, relocated, or reclassified as greenspace for other park purposes with the aim to improve siting, condition, usage, and accessibility.	Medium Term 3-10 years
6.10.3	Guidance	Plan that when future ball diamonds serving older youth/adults are considered, that they be purpose-built to the proper field dimensions and with demarcation of the field of play.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.10.4	Guidance	Plan that when future ball diamonds serving younger children are considered, they are located within or close to the geographic areas served by their minor ball associations.	Ongoing 1-15 years
6.10.5	Assessment	Prioritize the Halifax Common and Maybank Park for initial site assessments and potential rationalization.	Short Term 1-3 years
6.10.6	Capital Planning	Within a rationalization review, identify municipal lands for 1-2 multi diamond sport complexes.	Medium Term 3-10 years
6.10.7	Capital Planning	Plan for a fully accessible ball diamond for play to meet regional needs.	Short Term 1-3 years
<b>6.11 Cricket Grounds</b>			
	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
6.11.1	Capital Planning	Work with interests such as the Nova Scotia Cricket Association to establish a permanent and dedicated cricket ground.	Short Term 1-3 years

# Appendix A - Participation Trends Summary

Where available, sport organizations provided yearly participation figures.

## Minor Baseball

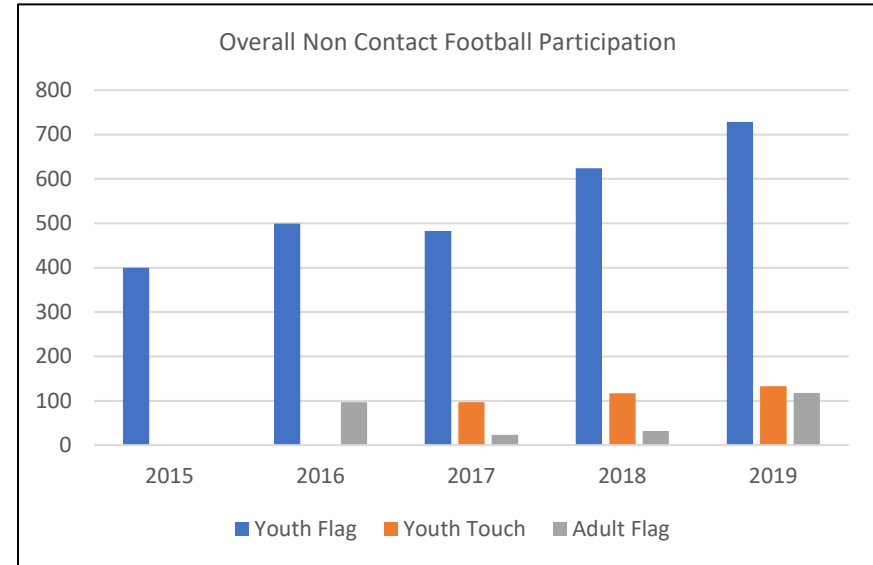
In 2019, Minor Baseball consisted of associations serving younger children up to U21. Participation in baseball was relatively flat between 2014 and 2018 but then spiked to almost 3,900 participants in 2019. Hammonds Plains Minor Baseball, Halifax Minor Baseball, LWF Minor Baseball, and Sackville Minor Baseball in order are the largest associations. The largest user categories include the introductory skills (Rally Cap program) building program.



## Non-Contact Football

Non-contact football includes the sports of flag football and touch football. Total participation in 2019 was 980 with youth flag football comprising of the largest proportion (729 participants). Youth flag has been growing since 2015 growth and is currently larger than tackle football in

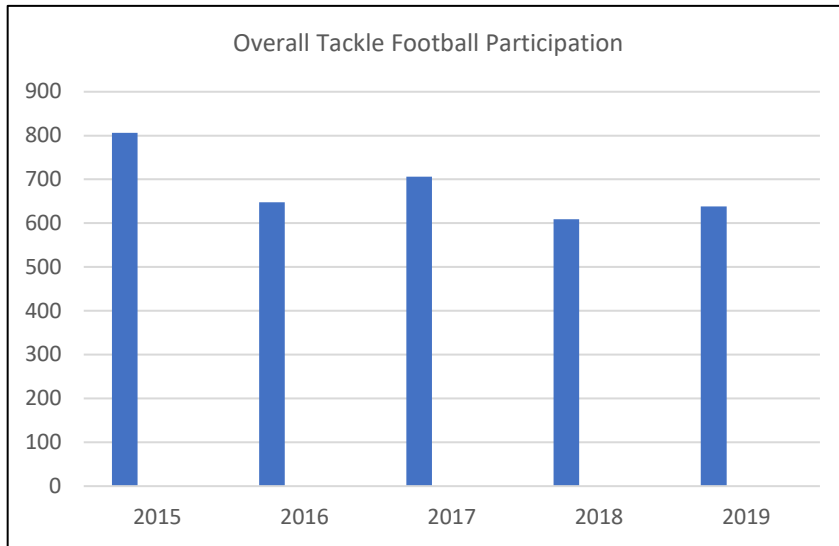
terms of overall participation.





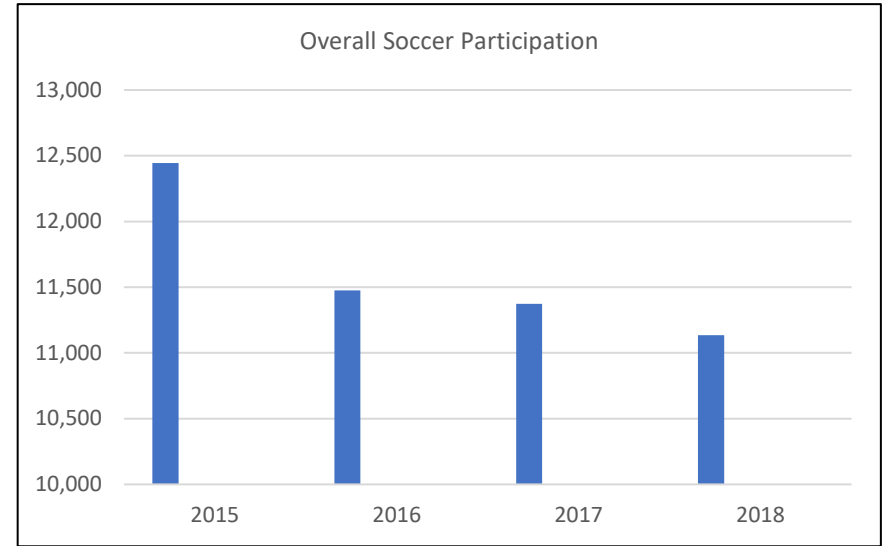
### Tackle Football

In 2019, tackle football totaled 638 participants. Tackle football participation decreased after 2015 and remained generally flat.



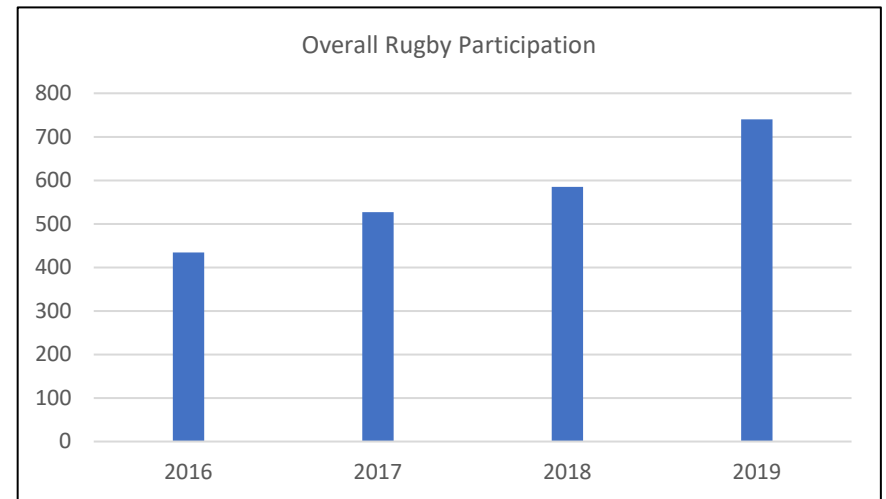
### Soccer

Soccer is the region’s largest sport. In 2018, there were just over 11,000 soccer participants. The largest participation category is mini (children’s program). However, soccer participation overall has declined since 2015 where it had over 12,000 participants.



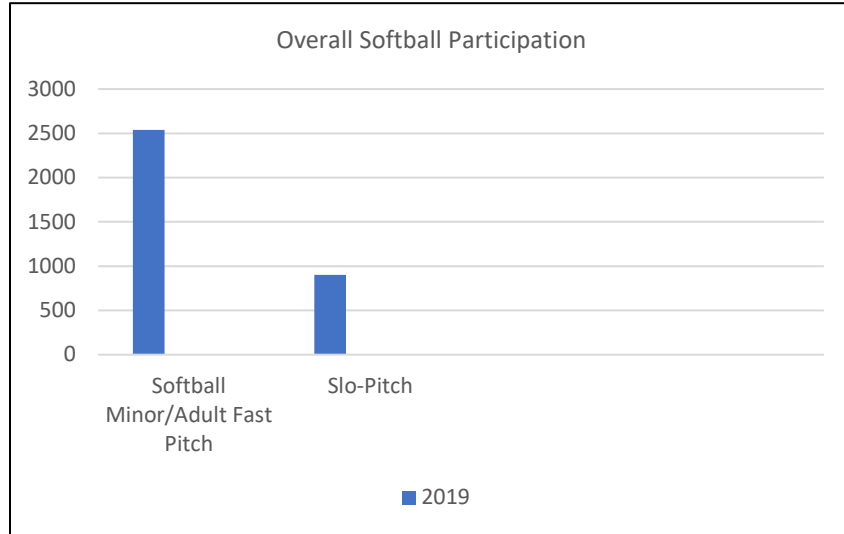
### Rugby

Rugby has seen a steady increase in participation from 2015 especially in the Minor Under 15 age category. Rugby has also been reported as a growing sport in high schools. In 2019, there were a total of 740 participants. The Halifax Tars is currently the largest rugby club in the region.



## Softball

The municipality received data for the 2019 softball season only. At that time, softball had about 3,400 combined participants between fastpitch and slo-pitch. However, data on adult recreational leagues is not collected. Notionally, based on the number of recreational leagues in existence, it appears that adult slo-pitch is popular even though it is not captured in the data below.

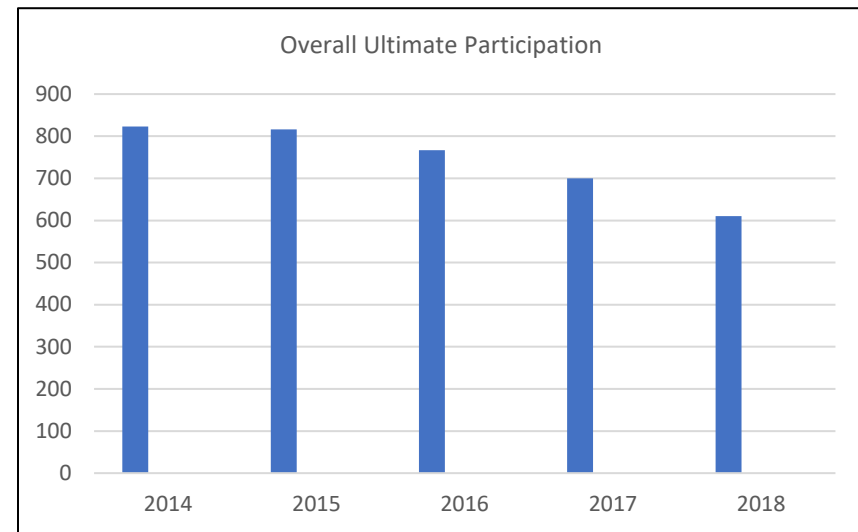
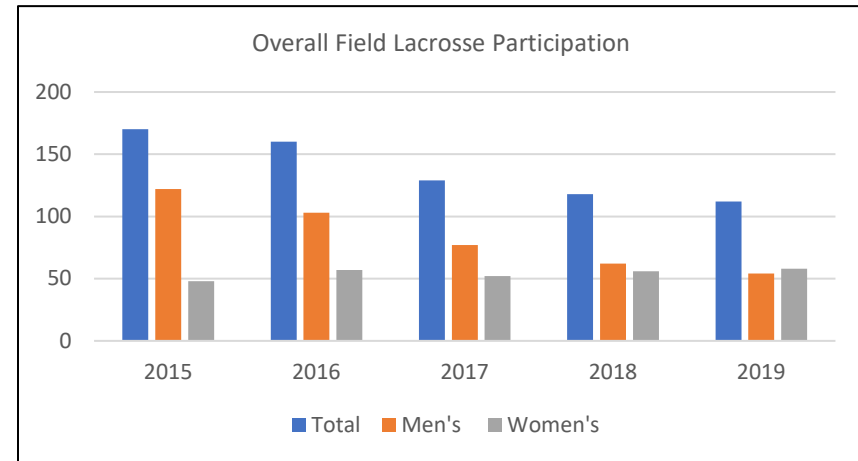


## Field Lacrosse

Field Lacrosse includes men's U13, U15, U18, senior and women's U15 and U19 user categories. In 2019, there were a total of 112 participants. Field lacrosse participation overall has been declining since 2015 although women's participation has increased.

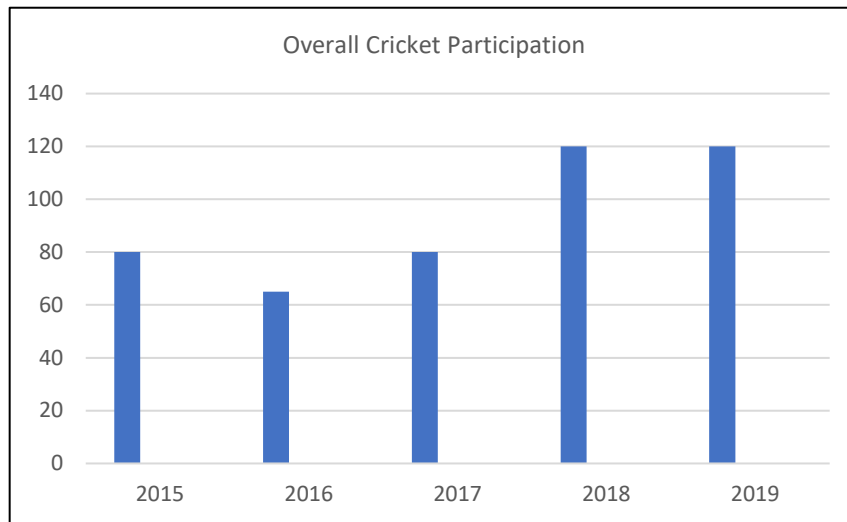
## Halifax Ultimate

Halifax Ultimate is a large club that offers multiple year-round leagues for adult and junior user categories. There was a total of 610 participants in 2019 down from 823 in 2014.



## Cricket

Cricket participation has been increasing but has reached a maximum of 120 in 2018 and 2019. The limited participation is due to only one cricket ground with limited capacity. The NS Cricket Association noted that it has a growing waiting list for new members.



# Appendix B - Consultation Results

Community Engagement informed the development of the Playing Field Strategy and largely occurred through an online public survey, which was promoted through public service announcements, media promotion, the municipal web site, area Councillors, sport clubs, and through social media. Key questions related to playing fields, ideas and directions, and priorities were explored. Valuable insights were also obtained through interviews with sport organizations, the results of which are also outlined.

## Public Survey Summary

### Number of Respondents

- There were 2,551 survey respondents.

### Affiliation Highlights

- Most survey respondents are either a member of a sport team, club, or league or have another individual in their household who is a member of a sport team, club, or league (Table B1).

Table B1 - Respondent Association with Organized Sport	
Affiliation	Percentage
Member of a sport team, club, or league	71
Another individual in my household is a member of a sport team, club, or league	49
No one in my household is a member of a sport team, club, or league	11

### Respondent Profile Highlights

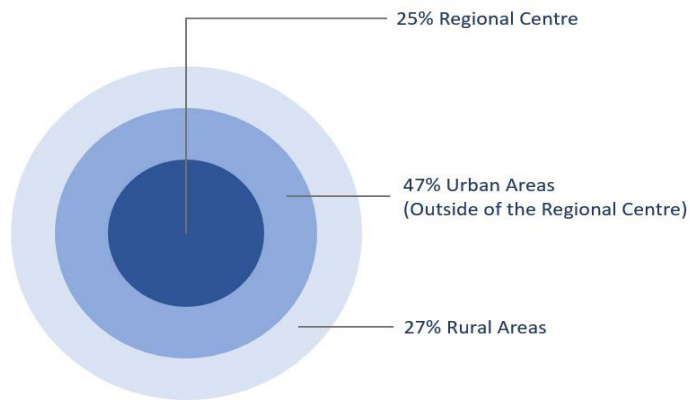
- The largest age category of respondents (34%) was between the ages 40 to 49 years (Table B2).
- 61% of respondents were male; 36% were female; 1% were non-binary or other; and 3% preferred not to say.
- 32% of respondents are from household sizes of four persons (Table B3).
- 59% of respondents have at least one child under the age of 18 years (Table C4).

Table B2 - Respondent Age	
Age Bracket	% of Respondents
13-15	3
16-18	2
19-24	5
25-29	7
30-39	25
40-49	34
50-59	16
60-69	5
70+	1
Prefer not to answer	2

Table B3 - Household Size	
Number of Persons in Household	% of Survey Respondents
1	5.6
2	25.0
3	22.0
4	32.0
5	13.0
6	2.3
More than 6	0.6

Table B4 - Respondents with Children Under 18	
Number of children	% of Survey Respondents
0	41.0
1	21.0
2	28.0
3	9.0
4	1.4
5	0.3

Approximately 25% of the respondents live within the Regional Centre, 47% in urban areas outside the Regional Centre and 27% from rural areas.



### Types and Locations of Playing Field Use

- 38% of respondents use ball diamonds at least once a year; 30% use sport fields; and 28% use both types of playing fields. Only 4% of respondents indicated that they do not use playing fields (Table B5).
- The most used playing field locations were all weather sport fields (Mainland Common), grass sport fields (Halifax Common) and ball diamonds (Halifax Common) (Table B6).
- The most used locations tended to be playing fields that were co-located with other playing fields.

Table B5 - Playing Fields Used by Respondents (Min. Once a Year)	
Field Type	% of Respondents
Sport fields	30
Ball Diamonds	38
Both Types	28
Do not use either type	4

Table B6 - Highest Used Playing Field Locations from Respondents	
Playing Field Type	Locations
All-weather sport field locations	Mainland Common Dartmouth Harbour East BMO Indoor Facility Cole Harbour Weir Bedford-Hammonds Plains
Grass sport field locations	Halifax Common Sport Fields (overall) Graves Oakley
Ball diamond locations	The Halifax Common (overall) Lenihan Mainland Common Beazley Mount Edward Road Weir

## Reason for Use

- “Sport and competition” were the primary reasons why respondents use sport fields and ball diamonds. This was followed by “recreation and fun” (Table B7).
- “Organized sport” was how respondents used playing fields the most; followed by “unstructured play”. Respondents had more responses for “others use” on sports fields than for ball diamonds (Table B8).

Table B7 - Primary Respondent Use of Playing Fields by Percentage		
Reason for Use	Sport Fields	Ball Diamonds
Sport and Competition	64	69
Recreation and Fun	13	13
Exercise and Being Active	8	4
Spectating	6	5
Meeting people	1	1
Other	9	8

Table B8 - How Respondents Use Playing Fields by Percentage		
Type of Use	Sport Fields	Ball Diamonds
Organized sports	84	89
Unstructured play	56	45
General exercise	40	18
Being active with pets	29	18
Social gatherings	13	8
Winter specific activities	10	3
Other	5	3

Multiple answers were permitted

## Types of Organized Sports on Playing Fields

- Soccer is the most played sport on sport fields, followed by flag football (Table B9).
- There is a high percentage of “other sports” on sport fields, which is representative of the flexibility of these fields.
- Baseball was the most played sport closely followed by slo-pitch on ball diamonds (Table B10).
- There is a much higher percentage of “other sports” that use sport fields than ball diamonds.

Table B9 - Respondent Use of Sport Fields	
Sport / Activity	Percentage of Use
Soccer	65
Flag Football	18
Touch Football	13
Contact Football	13
Ultimate Frisbee	12
Rugby	12
Field Lacrosse	4
Cricket	2
Field Hockey	1
*Other Sports	22

\*Examples of other sport activities that were identified include dry land training, practices for baseball, softball, playing catch, Australian rules, disc golf, cross country skiing, lacrosse, cooperative games, track and field, lawn bowling, kite flying, modified soccer games, unstructured activities.

Table B10 - Respondent Use of Ball Diamonds	
Sport/Activity	Percentage of Use
Baseball	58
Softball/Slo-pitch	53
Softball/Fastpitch	20
Other Sports	4

Frequency of Playing Fields Use

As expected, respondents use sport fields (Table B11) and ball diamonds (Table B12) more frequently during the summer followed by fall/spring. However, playing fields do have some winter use, although this would not be scheduled by the Municipality.

Table B11 - Respondent Frequency of Sport Field Use by Season by Percentage					
Season	Few Times/Wk.	Once/Wk.	Once/Few Wks.	Once/Month	Not at all
Fall	60%	25%	7%	3%	2%
Winter	19%	17%	13%	9%	27%
Spring	58%	26%	7%	3%	3%
Summer	76%	16%	4%	1%	2%

Respondents were asked to identify use pre-pandemic use

Table B12 - Respondent Frequency of Sport Field Use by Season by Percentage					
Season	Few Times/Wk.	Once/Wk.	Once/Few Wks.	Once/Month	Not at all
Fall	53%	29%	8%	3%	4%
Winter	5%	6%	6%	6%	62%
Spring	58%	28%	7%	2%	3%
Summer	80%	13%	3%	1%	2%

Respondents were asked to identify use pre-pandemic use

### Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on recent use of Playing Fields

Many respondents noted significant impacts to organized sports, leagues, and practices because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These ranged from cancellations to modified and reduced schedules, games, and practices. Registrations were impacted as well as spectating and tournaments. Some noted only using local fields nearby or stopped using them altogether. However, respondents also noted that the pandemic also resulted in more use of playing fields for unstructured and passive recreation. Many comments highlighted positive benefits of more access to unstructured spaces for recreation, which are typically booked for sports, such as the Halifax Common.

### Level of Agreement/Disagreement with Statements - Sport Fields

Respondents were asked about their levels of agreement with a variety of statements/questions for sport fields. Statements with strongest agreement are highlighted in green while those with the least agreement are highlighted in red (Table B13).

- “Everyone having reasonable access to a sport field” was the most strongly agreed statement (77% completely agree).
- “The length of the booking season should be reduced to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality on grass sport fields” was the least supported (only 4% completely agree), representing the challenges of improving field conditions.



Table B13 - Respondent Level of Agreement with Sport Field Statements by Percentage					
Statements	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree nor Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Everyone should have reasonable access to a sport field.	77.0	19.0	2.0	1.0	0.2
Some sport fields should be dedicated only for structured organized sport use.	29.0	27.0	15.0	17.0	12.0
Unstructured/informal play (i.e., pick-up games) should be encouraged on sport fields when they are not scheduled for organized sport.	71.0	23.0	5.0	1.0	0.1
Sport fields should be used for other multi- purpose activities when not scheduled for organized sport.	54.0	29.0	8.0	7.0	2.0
Sport fields should be the proper size, dimensions, and standards for their intended sport and level of play.	68.0	24.0	6.0	1.0	0.3
The municipality should provide sport field sites that can host tournaments (multiple games played at one time near to one another).	59.0	28.0	11.0	2.0	0.3
The municipality should focus on providing a few large modern sport field sites (complexes with many fields together in one location) that provide updated amenities such as washrooms, parking seating, field lighting, fencing, and player dugouts.	47.0	24.0	13.0	11.0	4.0
The municipality should focus on providing smaller sport field sites (areas with one or two fields) distributed throughout the municipality so that they are closer to more communities.	45.0	33.0	15.0	5.0	1.0
Some sport fields should restrict open public access (locked/gated) when they are not scheduled in order to maintain a higher level of field quality.	25.0	27.0	15.0	20.0	14.0
The number of scheduled hours over a season should be limited in order to conduct maintenance tasks and maintain field quality.	16.0	42.0	25.0	12.0	4.0

Table B13 - Respondent Level of Agreement with Sport Field Statements by Percentage

Statements	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree nor Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Some sport fields should not be able to host practices (only games) in order to lessen damage and maintain field quality.	9.0	18.0	22.0	32.0	19.0
The length of the booking season should be reduced in order to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality on grass sport fields.	4.0	16.0	30.0	33.0	17.0
The municipality should provide more all-weather (synthetic/artificial turf) sport fields to accommodate more hours of play, extend seasons, and improve accessibility.	56.0	27.0	12.0	4.0	1.0
More open field time for recreational use should be provided to the general public on all-weather (synthetic/artificial turf) sport fields.	30.0	28.0	24.0	15.0	5.0
The municipality should have fewer, lesser used (not scheduled/programmed) sport fields and ensure that more utilized fields are updated and well maintained.	13.0	25.0	28.0	22.0	11.0
Some lesser used (not scheduled or programmed) grass sport fields should be classified as open public green space.	30.0	37.0	18.0	10.0	5.0
Available field time on sport fields should be better promoted to the general public to increase usage.	51.0	31.0	15.0	5.0	0.4
The public should be able to view available field time of municipal sport fields online anytime.	73.0	20.0	6.0	1.0	1.0
Scheduled field time on sport fields should be allocated fairly amongst user groups, age categories and levels of play.	46.0	34.0	13.0	6.0	1.0
More access to recreational sport programs (such as learn to play programs) should be provided on municipal sport fields.	46.0	36.0	16.0	2.0	0.4
More sport field sites should have lighting to extend playing time in the evenings	70.0	21.0	6.0	2.0	0.4

### Respondent Top Rated Priorities - Sport Fields

The highest priority for sport fields was “the maintenance and condition of the field” followed by “the ability to have extended play” (Table B14).

Table B14 - Respondent Priorities for Sport Fields	
Priority	Percentage
1. The maintenance and condition of the field	50
2. The ability to have extended play (longer season, later evening play etc.)	42
3. The availability of field time	38
3. Having a sport field site close to my neighbourhood/community	38
4. New and updated features and amenities (i.e., fencing, lighting, washrooms, dugouts, parking etc.)	34
5. Ensuring that sport fields can be used in a variety of different ways for recreational purposes	26
6. Having sport fields that are the proper size and specifications for the type of sport and level of play	25
7. Access, physical accessibility and affordability of usage	22
8. The ability to host tournaments or multiple games at the same time in one location	14
9. *Other	7

Multiple answers permitted

\* Other, identified by respondents, included: More off leash areas for dogs, more all-weather turf sport fields, more public washrooms, better equity of field bookings, more areas for cricket and disc golf, stewardship of fields.

### Level of Agreement/Disagreement with Statements - Ball Diamonds

Respondents were asked about their levels of agreement with a variety of statements/questions for sport fields. Statements with strongest agreement are highlighted in green while those with the least agreement are highlighted in red (Table B15).

- “More ball diamond sites should have lighting to extend playing time in the evenings” and “ball diamonds should be the proper size, dimensions, and standards for their intended sport and level of play” were the most strongly agreed statements (74% and 73% completely agree respectively).
- “The length of the booking season should be reduced in order to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality” was the least supported statement (3% completely agreed).

Table B15 - Respondent Level of Agreement with Ball Diamond Statements by Percentage

Statements	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree nor Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Everyone should have reasonable access to a ball diamond.	59.0	30.0	7.0	3.0	1.0
Some ball diamonds should be dedicated only for structured organized sport use.	40.0	28.0	15.0	10.0	7.0
Unstructured/informal play (i.e., pick-up games) should be encouraged on ball diamonds when they are not scheduled for organized sport.	57.0	31.0	8.0	3.0	1.0
Ball Diamonds should be used for other multi- purpose activities when not scheduled for organized sport.	24.0	26.0	18.0	19.0	13.0
Ball Diamonds should be the proper size, dimensions, and standards for their intended sport and level of play.	73.0	21.0	5.0	1.0	0.3
The municipality should provide ball diamond sites that can host tournaments (multiple games played at one time near to one another).	68.0	19.0	10.0	2.0	1.0
The municipality should focus on providing a few large modern ball diamond sites (complexes with many diamonds together in one location) that provide updated amenities such as washrooms, parking seating, field lighting, fencing, and player dugouts.	59.0	18.0	14.0	6.0	3.0
The municipality should focus on providing smaller ball diamond sites (areas with one or two diamonds) distributed throughout the municipality so that they are closer to more communities.	31.0	32.0	23.0	10.0	4.0
Some ball diamonds should restrict open public access (locked/gated) when they are not scheduled in order to maintain a higher level of field quality.	35.0	29.0	15.0	13.0	8.0
The number of scheduled hours over a season should be limited in order to conduct maintenance tasks and maintain field quality.	14.0	34.0	27.0	18.0	7.0
Some ball diamonds should not be able to host practices (only games) in order to lessen damage and maintain field quality.	9.0	16.0	24.0	31.0	21.0
The length of the booking season should be reduced in order to conduct maintenance and maintain field quality.	3.0	10.0	23.0	39.0	25.0

Table B15 - Respondent Level of Agreement with Ball Diamond Statements by Percentage					
The municipality should provide more all-weather (synthetic/artificial turf) ball diamonds to accommodate more hours of play, extend seasons, and improve accessibility.	51.0	24.0	16.0	7.0	3.0
The municipality should have fewer, lesser used (not scheduled/programmed) ball diamonds and ensure that more utilized fields are updated and well maintained.	15.0	27.0	28.0	19.0	11.0
Some lesser used (not scheduled or programmed) grass ball diamonds should be classified as open public green space.	24.0	29.0	21.0	15.0	11.0
Available field time on ball diamonds should be better promoted to the general public to increase usage.	45.0	28.0	18.0	7.0	2.0
The public should be able to view available field time of municipal ball diamonds online anytime.	69.0	21.0	6.0	2.0	1.0
Scheduled field time on ball diamonds should be allocated fairly amongst user groups, age categories and levels of play.	45.0	35.0	13.0	6.0	1.0
More access to recreational sport programs (such as learn to play programs) should be provided on municipal ball diamonds.	45.0	45.0	17.0	2.0	0.5
More ball diamond sites should have lighting to extend playing time in the evenings	74.0	17.0	6.0	2.0	1.0

#### Respondent Top Rated Priorities - Ball Diamonds

Like sport fields, the highest priority for ball diamonds was “the maintenance and condition of the field” but with a higher percentage than sport fields (67%). This was followed by “new and updated features and amenities” (Table B16).

Table B16 - Respondent Priorities for Ball Diamonds	
Priority	Percentage
1. The maintenance and condition of the field	67
2. New and updated features and amenities (i.e., fencing, lighting, washrooms, dugouts, parking etc.)	51
3. The ability to have extended play (longer season, later evening play etc.)	39
4. Having ball diamonds that are the proper size and specifications for the type of sport and level of play	33
5. The ability to host tournaments or multiple games at the same time in one location	30
6. The availability of field time	26

**Table B16 - Respondent Priorities for Ball Diamonds**

7. Having a sport field site close to my neighbourhood/community	21
8. Access, physical accessibility, and affordability of usage	14
9. Ensuring that sport fields can be used in a variety of different ways for recreational purposes	12
10. *Other	4

Multiple answered permitted

\*Other, identified by respondents, included: keeping dogs off ball diamonds, having areas for off leash dogs, having more all-weather ball diamond facilities, reducing conflicts with other ball diamonds (overlapping) and conflicts with pedestrians, more lighting, less light pollution, accessible field, more female fastball fields, washrooms, better experience for fans, having community maintain fields, areas for disc golf.

## Other Comments

Other comments, organized by themes, are summarized below.

### *Sport Fields*

- implement more field lights
- provide more public access to fields
- enable more unstructured use
- provide more dedicated areas for dog parks; do not allow dogs on fields
- improve field maintenance
- provide more all-weather sport fields (Tantallon, Fall River, Spryfield and Peninsula Halifax were mentioned frequently)
- provide more public access to existing all weather fields (should not be locked)
- provide all-weather fields close to high schools
- improve fairness in the booking system (i.e., change legacy bookings)
- allow more facilities for year round use
- consider new and emerging sports (i.e., cricket, disc golf)
- ensure multi uses of fields
- develop field complexes
- provide fields closer to communities
- provide more washroom facilities
- provide more walking tracks
- ensure proper sized fields
- allow local stewardship of fields

### *Ball Diamonds*

- improve the condition and maintenance of ball diamonds
- provide ball diamond complexes for hosting tournaments
- keep dogs off diamonds
- provide all-weather diamonds
- ensure diamonds are accessible and barrier free
- reduce the number of ball diamonds on the Halifax Common
- recognize the importance of the Common being a central location

- provide fields of the proper size, with amenities, and fencing
- allow for local stewardship (maintenance) of fields
- allow for viewing bookings online
- provide fields and programs for children
- recognize that many diamonds are old
- provide more cricket grounds
- remove ball diamonds for more greenspace
- provide better grooming of infields
- provide a better distribution of diamonds
- pay attention to rural diamonds
- make sure diamonds are available to the majority of recreational users not just elite competition address drainage
- provide more seating, washrooms, year round garbage cans, and fencing to prevent people walking through the field
- improve affordability
- recognize that there are many diamonds, but maintenance is an issue

### *Other General Comments*

The most common themes for “other comments” for ball diamonds and sport fields, include:

- better overall maintenance with the negative impact of dogs cited most often
- better access and more unstructured play
- more field lighting for extended play
- improved booking process/booking availability

## Stakeholder Feedback Summary

The following stakeholder engagement was undertaken in 2020 to receive a representative sample of feedback from various sport, and recreation organizations. For most sports, provincial sport bodies who represent local member clubs were engaged which is similar to approach undertaken for other strategies such as the Long-term Arena Strategy and the Long-Term Aquatic Strategy.

### Baseball Nova Scotia

Baseball Nova Scotia (Baseball NS) represents local member clubs consisting of about 3,900 participants in 2019.

Baseball NS expressed two primary priorities: the availability of field time and the condition of ball diamonds. In terms of availability, demand is high for certain popular diamonds on weeknights while other diamonds may not be used as much. Ongoing conversation with associations at the club level should occur to better understand why certain diamonds are not being used as much. A key issue is finding time on certain diamonds that can host training, practices, and games along with what seems to be a shortage of “full size” diamonds.

In terms of field conditions, infield drainage and the condition of pitching mounds are often cited as issues. They suggest the need for the region to introduce artificial (all-weather) turf ball diamonds which require less maintenance; allow for longer seasons; have less weather-related cancellations; and provide greater accessibility and predictability. They indicated our top-level fields are behind when compared with others across the province.

Field sizes and dimensions should align with the intended ages and usage allocation. However, diamonds can be shared with other user categories where appropriate (i.e., some age groups can be accommodated together on certain diamonds). Pitching distances, the location/distance of bases, and the condition of the pitching mound were noted as important especially for older age categories. Ball diamonds should have outfield fences as they deter the public from wandering into the field of play creating safety concerns. Providing more lighting for

extended play should be considered for diamonds that can accommodate older user categories.

There is a need for accessible fields ensuring we have opportunity available for all levels of play. Baseball has a very successful Challenger program but is limited to growth due to access to accessible fields.

Having campus style multi diamond complexes with the proper amenities is strongly suggested and needed for hosting tournaments and events at the Provincial and Atlantic levels. It is currently difficult to host competitions, training, and tryouts at one location.

### Challenger Baseball Program (Accessible Facilities)

Challenger Baseball is a program that provides opportunities for children with cognitive and/or physical special needs to enjoy participating in baseball at a level structured to their abilities. Each child is partnered with a buddy who assists them in all aspects of the game. Buddies are often other baseball players within the minor baseball organization. Games are played in a fun, safe and non-competitive environment.

Locally, the Challenger program started 8 years ago with a minor ball associations in Hammonds Plains. This program is open to anyone within the region to join. Hammonds Plains and Bedford currently have the largest programs in HRM with about 140 participants. A program has been established in Dartmouth. There is not a program in the Halifax Area, but children from there travel to other areas to participate.

The noted associations have expressed a need for an accessible all-weather infield diamond which could either be a new site or a renovated existing site. The all-weather infield with adapted bases allows for those with mobility challenges to play. Suggested locations included Highland Park in Hammonds Plains or the Bedford Common. Any potential site should be able to accommodate U11/U13 specifications and include appropriate parking; accessible pathways, washrooms, and larger dugouts; and space which could be used for equipment storage. When the diamond is not used for the priority Challenger Program, other minor baseball games could also utilize the facility.



HRM currently does not have an accessible ball diamond. An accessible ball diamond like the one described was recently built in Antigonish N.S with shared funding assistance from the Blue Jays Care Foundation. The only other fully accessible ball diamond in Nova Scotia is in Cape Breton.

### Softball Nova Scotia

Softball Nova Scotia (Softball NS) represents member clubs within the sports of slo-pitch and fastpitch consisting of about 3,400 participants in 2019. However, Softball NS noted that there are many who participate in recreational slo-pitch, but they are not part of the numbers as they are not affiliated with the Provincial Sport Organization.

They noted that the number of diamonds and related facilities required for hosting tournaments are lacking and suggest a campus style facility is needed. Another issue is that often competitive players must use diamonds which are not designed for their specific purpose. Another priority is the maintenance of infield and outfield. Mentioned were the Maybank Park diamonds which is used for women's fastpitch. It would be preferred if this location had two properly sized diamonds instead of three diamonds which do not meet the proper field specifications. Currently the 3 diamonds cannot be used simultaneously. Having multiple pitching blocks for different age groups is suitable on recreational fields, but they are not seen as ideal on diamonds used for hosting higher levels competitive play.

### Football Nova Scotia

Football Nova Scotia (Football NS) represents member clubs within the sports of tackle, flag and touch football consisting of 1,618 participants within the region in 2019. Football Nova Scotia noted that youth flag football is its largest and fastest growing program. They also noted growth in female participants playing both tackle and flag football.

The main priority noted is the challenge with the historical (block) booking system which limits access to preferred field times. Flag football operates during the spring season and competes for access to fields with high school sports such as soccer and rugby. As grass sport fields do not open until June 1, the scheduling options are limited to all weather

sport fields only. Often, peak times are historically booked and held by larger soccer organizations. However, not all this booked time ends up being used thus limiting others from accessing the time. As a result, football often plays on other fields outside of the municipality or books other private sport fields. Access to current indoor facilities is unpredictable and costly. Nevertheless, one advantage of flag football is that it is flexible in terms of hosting multiple games on one field (5 v 5). This facilitates the ability to host tournaments efficiently when the field time is available.

For tackle football, the availability of officials is noted as a key issue. In addition to this, there are no field lighting options on grass sport field except for Wanderers Grounds which are less expensive to book. Typically, they book ball diamonds in the Fall to take advantage of the lights. This is more challenging for sports like tackle football due to the playing season being in the fall when there is less daylight. Field lighting, having the ability to view and book unused time online, and more predictable off-season access to indoor facilities would be positive developments for football.

### Soccer Nova Scotia

Soccer is the region's largest sport with just over 11,000 participants in 2018. However, participation has been gradually declining in recent years.

Soccer Nova Scotia (Soccer NS) notes that field maintenance and condition is the primary issue and that there is a need to examine partnership opportunities that would allow clubs to have more involvement in maintaining certain fields. They highlight that there are several full-service member clubs in HRM that have staffing and financial resources. Many clubs hire summer staff through grant programs. Such local clubs may have the capacity and would take pride in the stewardship of fields and could administer programing and storage needs.

Soccer NS notes that clubs often prefer playing on grass sport fields because they are more affordable keeping program costs down. However, they recognize the benefits of having all-weather fields for usage, extended play, and hosting soccer tournaments but the cost of these

facilities can be an issue. Soccer NS plans to focus on growing recreational levels of the sport and expressed the need that fields should be equipped with the proper size goals to help grow the sport. In addition, there are emerging trends including soccer tennis and futsal. They suggest that there is a need to examine the rules for non-provincial affiliated/private clubs renting field time. Finally, collaboration and coordination with HRM will help improve the effective use of field time.

#### Rugby Nova Scotia

Rugby has seen steady growth since 2015 and now have 740 participants in 2019. However, it is also popular among high school sports. Rugby Nova Scotia (Rugby NS) notes that it is an affordable sport for all backgrounds and has been growing among female participants. Modified games such as five a-side and non-contact rugby are also becoming increasingly popular.

They expressed the key priority being field conditions. Other priorities include having access to facilities such as washrooms and changerooms; “home game” fields with seating for spectators and having storage facilities for equipment. While they indicate that the preference is to play on grass sport fields, all-weather fields provide flexibility when considering the local weather conditions. They suggested that the lines for rugby should be included on existing or new all-weather sport fields. An issue highlighted is the cancelling of games on grass because of weather conditions. Other jurisdictions allow for rugby play in adverse weather and this limits local development when competing.

The spectator atmosphere and experience surrounding rugby is a very important part of the game. In this regard, they highlight the upgraded Graves Oakley sport field and the Wanderers Grounds facilities are positive developments for the sport of rugby.

Field availability and field time has improved over the last few years with the use of Gorsebrook (St. Francis) sport field to both train and practice. Having a few fields closer together is a positive for hosting local events, but not necessary for international games. Field lighting is important for training in the shoulder seasons. Rugby NS expressed a willingness and desire to collaboratively work with the municipality to

support improved field maintenance.

#### Lacrosse Nova Scotia

Lacrosse is a two-sector sport which includes box lacrosse, using indoor arenas or sport courts, and field lacrosse which uses outdoor sport fields. Box lacrosse is a larger sport in Canada with field lacrosse being popular in the United States. Overall, field lacrosse participation has been declining locally since 2015 but has seen recent growth in female participation. There were 112 participants in 2019.

The field lacrosse season is August through to mid-October using both all-weather and natural turf sport fields. The main priority is the availability of preferred field time. The women’s field lacrosse uses grass sport field as a cost saving measure, but the field is impacted by weather cancellations. The condition of the field along with the ability to store nets on site are also noted challenges. The St. Stephen’s School sport field, which is often used, is close to residential housing posing problems for errant balls.

The men’s program is larger in numbers but has not been growing. They typically use all-weather fields, but they note that availability is challenging in the fall season with the start-up of school sports. Generally, field lacrosse players will travel longer distances to access desired facilities. Typically, field lacrosse uses a football size sport field with cones to mark the field of play. Having crease lines painted on the sports field would be helpful for the game.

A few more available fields distributed between Halifax and Dartmouth would help with programming flexibility. Lacrosse NS is aiming to grow the sport further but need available field time for afterschool club programs and for attracting international level events.

For the first time in 2022 lacrosse was a sport at the Canada Games. With this and the success of a professional league and a local team, the Halifax Thunderbirds, the sport is expected to grow in numbers.

### Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation (NSSAF) Halifax Region

The NSSAF Halifax Region represents member school sporting events with the aim of promoting education through sport. Much of the time used occurs between 3pm and 6pm on weekdays. School sports primarily use grass playing fields but also use all-weather especially for soccer and rugby with soccer being the largest sport.

They noted that the quality and availability of playing fields are reasonably good, but grass fields deteriorate as the season progresses. The distribution and location of playing fields is important for hosting school sporting events. An additional track facility on the western side would assist with facility distribution as Beazley serves as the main complex for hosting school track and field.

Mount Edward Road Ball diamonds are often used for softball, but other locations would be booked if suitable facilities were available. Several high schools have expressed a desire for an all-weather sport field. Especially noted was the Bay View High School in Tantallon. Other high schools have also expressed similar requests such as J L Ilsley, Lockview, and Citadel High. The cost of utilizing sport fields is an issue for school participation as the costs are passed on to the students.

Finally, it was noted that there is a need for greater awareness of the terms of the Service Exchange Agreement between HRM and HRCE and that ongoing communication and collaboration is important.

### Halifax Ultimate

Halifax Ultimate is a registered not-for-profit with the goal of providing affordable and fun Ultimate for the residents of HRM. The organization offers multiple leagues all year-round at various playing fields throughout the municipality. There were 610 participants in 2019. Ultimate is an affordable sport with very little equipment required.

Halifax Ultimate noted that the provision of fields is generally good, but that maintenance and hosting tournaments are important. Other priorities are the lack amenities such as washrooms and field lighting. As an example, the washrooms on the Halifax Common are usually locked.

In the past, Halifax Ultimate used the Wanderers Grounds for play, but have had to use other locations without field lighting which limits play. More lights on fields such as the Central Common would allow for more usage. They noted that Graves Oakley could be a potential location that could host multiple games for Ultimate. Field dimensions for Ultimate is important for game play but can be adaptable within and large enough field with lines or cones. Dogs running on sport fields were mentioned as an area of concern.

Halifax Ultimate is an organization that has financial capacity to assist with improvements to facilities and feel there are partnership opportunities with the municipality. Like other organizations, they are open to collaborating with the municipality.

### Nova Scotia Cricket Association

Cricket is a growing sport but has limited participation due to a lack of facilities. As a result, there is a waitlist to join. Currently, the municipality has only one cricket ground located on the Halifax Common, but it is only available for a few days per week because it overlaps with existing ball diamonds and sport fields. They do not have access to practice cages for developing high performance. The Nova Scotia Cricket Association (NS Cricket) note that when compared to other Atlantic Provinces, the number of cricket facilities in HRM is lacking.

NS Cricket indicated that their primary issue is they cannot not meet growing demand due to the lack of facilities. As a result, they cannot offer a junior program or more recreational divisions. There also interest in starting a women's league. The priority is having access to additional facilities while also recognizing that the Halifax Common site is still an important location. They feel many players would travel within the municipality to play if a facility was available.

Cricket grounds generally require little in terms of maintenance, and they are relatively easy to construct. NS Cricket is interested in working closely in partnership with the municipality and have shared ideas for potential new locations.

### Fall River Turf Committee

The Fall River Turf committee is a group of community volunteers advocating for an all-weather field and track at Lockview High School. They note that the current grass sport field at the high school is in poor condition, often under water, and generally not well maintained. The group collected over 1700 signatures and 15 letters of support for an upgraded all-weather field on the site. They expressed that the provision of an all-weather sport field would increase usage and the importance of a new facility being open and accessible to the community. This facility would facilitate practices and games while reducing travel to other facilities promoting greener communities.

While they also recognize the value of providing larger facilities with multiple fields to host tournaments, local community fields are also necessary. They noted New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island as good examples of such facilities. In terms of ball diamonds, they indicated the need for the region to have a campus type facility with multiple ball diamonds to host tournaments. They also suggested the need for field lighting specifically at Macdonald Park ball diamond.

### Halifax Plays

Halifax Plays is a volunteer organization providing recreational sports to adults at an affordable cost. The organization's focus is on promoting access, fun and participation in recreation. They have been in operation for over 10 years and have over 2000 participants from all over the region.

The organization uses playing fields for sports such as recreational soccer, softball, and kickball. They often use facilities on the Halifax Common but also use other sites throughout in the municipality.

Key priorities include ensuring that playing fields are accessible for recreational use.

A lack of lit fields for extended play is an issue. These impact fall programs when there is less daylight. They indicate that the Merv. Sullivan site (North End of Halifax) is in high demand and difficult to access. The

Commons is also in heavy demand but has only one lit diamond which is locked most of the time. They feel that this Diamond (Canada Games Diamond) should be flexible and allow for greater access of use. The loss of the Wanderers Grounds sport field for recreational use has impacted access and demand on other sites. As an organization they often "settle for what they can get" when it comes to booking field time.

Another priority is improving the "rain out" cancellation procedure. This has been challenging at times with games being cancelled when the weather has changed, or the field is in good shape. They suggest that users have more involvement in cancellation decisions. There is also a need to provide more waste receptacles in some locations.

Finally, Halifax Play's expressed having a great working relationship with the municipality and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively in the future.

### Playing Field Partnership (Springfield Lake)

Springfield Lake Recreation Association has a partnership agreement with HRM to schedule, collect user fees and provide maintenance to two ball diamonds (Springfield Lake #1 and Springfield Lake #2) and a site in Upper Sackville on behalf of the municipality. They also maintain a field house with washrooms.

The association has part-time and seasonal summer staff. The organizations own some basic field equipment. The sites are well used for adult slo-pitch, some minor baseball, and tournaments which occur almost every weekend throughout the season. Bookings are done on a historical usage basis.

Positive aspects of the partnership include fostering local pride and care of community facilities. As an organization they can respond to issues quickly. They provide quality service such as more regular grass cutting and field grooming. Local staff can be on site during weekend ball tournaments to keep the diamonds groomed between games and take care of garbage collection. The association ensures that the whole site (grass areas surrounding the diamonds) is regularly maintained and that dogs are not on the diamonds. They note that the municipality would not

likely have the resources to provide the same level of immediate service without such a community partnership.

Areas for improvement of the partnership include the following:

- **Communication:** Timely notice of when the municipality can't provide services such as grooming so alternate arrangements can be made.
- **Recognition/support:** A need for the municipality to have a better understanding of what the partnership does.
- **Accessing specialized equipment:** While the association has its own equipment, it has limited resources to fund larger pieces of equipment and could use more support from the municipality in this area (i.e., equipment for dragging the fields). They also noted that they must purchase their own four stream garbage/recycling bins which are expensive for the organization.
- **Consideration for capital funding:** As fields are municipal assets, partnerships should be considered for municipal capital funding improvements. The association mostly relies on grant funding and revenue from tournaments to support capital improvements. They need more support when capital improvements of a larger scale are needed.

Overall, there are many benefits to having a partnership provide services or enhance municipal services. However, they could be further strengthened, recognized, and supported once they are established.

# Appendix C - Field Condition Assessment Tool

The template in Table C1 is an initial resource for rating playing fields using an evidence-based approach, to inform capital planning investment priorities. Subsequent iterations are to include weights and scoring systems.

Table C1 - Playing Field Assessment Tool	
Field Identification	General Description
Date of Assessment	Provide information about the identification of the site and ensure that is aligned with internal data bases.
Official Field Name	
Park Name	
Civic Address	
Playing Field Type	
Field Classification	
Site Photo	
Operations and Ownership	General Description
Land Ownership	Provide information on land ownership and management responsibility. Place an emphasis on playing fields that owned and maintained by the Municipality, or where there are agreements in place.
Municipally Maintained	
Municipally Scheduled	
Partnership Maintained	
Partnership Scheduled	
Other	
Age and Usage	General Description
Estimated Age of Field:	Estimate the age of the playing field, past recapitalization work and expected lifecycle. Determine amount of usage and confirm if the site is shared with other uses.
Past Recapitalization	
Estimated Lifecycle of Field:	
Hrs. Used - Past Season	
Field of Play Dimensions	General Description
Sport user category (adult, youth, child, shared) and Sport Uses	Identify the sport uses and age/user categories using the field. Provide field of play dimensions and compare with recommended standards.
Field Measurements	

Table C1 - Playing Field Assessment Tool	
Assessment - Examples of Direct Site Components	General Description
Condition of goals, fencing, back stop, protective fencing, benches, spectator seating, pitching mound, etc.	Identify, observe, and record direct facility site components. Rate the condition for each from poor to excellent.
Condition of turf, infield type, and subsurface material	
Field of Play lighting exists Y/N (operational, required, needing replacement)	
Irrigation system exists Y/N (operational, required, needing replacement)	
Drainage	
Accessibility (field of play and spectators)	
Other	
Immediate safety concerns	
Assessment - Examples of Other Site Components	General Description
Parking	Identify, observe, and record other site components surrounding the field of play. Rate the condition for each from poor to excellent.
Pathways	
Waste receptacles	
Accessibility (surrounding the field of play)	
Washrooms/portables	
Signage	
Other	
Immediate safety concerns	
Siting Issues	General Description
Overlapping fields	Identify any known/reported or observed siting issues related to the playing field.
Isolated/constrained site	
Potential for conflict with surrounding property owners	
No demarcation of the field of play	
Conflict with other park uses	
Overall Rating and Other Comments	
Overall rating and any other relevant observations	

# Appendix D - New Playing Field Classifications

## Purpose

A new Playing Field Classification system, that is to provide greater clarity around field and service standards is outlined in Table D1. The framework applies to the full range of the playing field inventory and rationalizes the number of current classification categories while providing consistent descriptions as a basis for the classifications.

## Framework

The framework in Table D1 can be applied to the full range of playing field types including sport fields, ball diamonds, all-weather facilities and specialized facilities such as cricket grounds and is divided between three broad categories:

- Dedicated Programmed Playing Fields, which are primarily for sport use;
- Shared Programmed and General Community Use, which may be programmed for sport/recreation and other community uses which may be non-sport related; and
- Unstructured Community Use, which are fields that do not meet the requirements for programmable sport, but can accommodate informal, unstructured, and passive recreation.

Table D1 - New Playing Field Classification System	
Classification	Description
	Dedicated Programmed Playing Fields
Premier	<b>Primary Level of Play:</b> Competitive Sport (higher level) Suitable for organized professional sport, amateur sport, and hosting larger sporting events. The facility may also accommodate minor sport use. Used for games only.
	<b>Level of Maintenance:</b> Enhanced
	<b>Level of Amenities:</b> Enhanced
All-Weather	<b>Primary Level of Play:</b> All Levels of Programmed Sport Use Meets the local requirements for all levels of organized sport use. Hosting and can range from small to medium size events including Local/Regional/Provincial Competitions and possibly national events. Open public times may be programmed.
	<b>Maintenance Level:</b> Specialized for All Weather
	<b>Level of Amenities:</b> Enhanced



Table D1 - New Playing Field Classification System

A	<p><b>Primary Level of Play:</b> Competitive and Organized Recreational Sport Meets the local requirements for organized amateur, minor sport, and recreational leagues. Site can host Local/Regional/Provincial Competitions Used for games and practices.</p>
	<p><b>Maintenance Level:</b> High</p>
	<p><b>Level of Amenities:</b> High</p>
Shared Programmed and General Community Use	
B	<p><b>Primary Level of Play:</b> Recreational Sport &amp; Community Use Meets the local requirements for organized recreational sport as well as shared general community uses. The playing field is open to the public when not scheduled and can host smaller local events. This class is used for games and practices. Flexibility with the field of play dimensions may be accepted.</p>
	<p><b>Maintenance Level:</b> Standard</p>
	<p><b>Level of Amenities:</b> Standard</p>
Unstructured Community Use	
Green Space	<p><b>Primary Level of Play:</b> Unstructured and Passive Recreation Suitable for unstructured play, and a wide range of informal recreation uses. Greenspaces are open to the public. They do not meet the program requirements for formalized organized sport.</p>
	<p><b>Maintenance Level:</b> Basic</p>
	<p><b>Level of Amenities:</b> No sport specific infrastructure/amenities</p>

Guidelines

- Level of Amenities: Specific amenities associated with each classification is determined by Parks and Recreation staff. Baseline/standard amenities for a programable playing fields may include goals, player benches/shelters, limited spectator seating, backstops, partial/full fencing, player safety fencing, and the inclusion of portable washrooms. Higher levels of amenities are those required for specialized and extended play; and those needed for specific hosting requirements.





