

TOWN OF AMHERST

Physical Activity Strategy



Corey Crocker
Physical Active Living Coordinator

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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In 2010 the Town of Amherst moved forward with the creation of a Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program. The Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program will develop a Physical Activity Strategic Plan and outline the direction for the Town of Amherst would like to take in increasing physical activity for the residents of Amherst.

Understanding the need for more people to become physically active in the Town of Amherst partnered with the Nova Scotia Department of Health Wellness and Protection to obtain funding for a Physical Active Living Coordinator under the Municipal Physical Activity Leadership program. The Active Living Coordinator will be responsible for the development of a Long Term Physical Activity Strategy and the implementation of physical activity actions and items.

The importance of a strategic plan in the Town of Amherst is well over-due. The municipality recognizes that increasing physical activity and raising awareness of the positive benefits of physical activity will have long lasting effect on the health of the entire community. A healthy town is important for economic, cultural and social sustainability among its residents.

WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

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Physical activity and recreation are two separate entities.

Recreation is defined as an activity of leisure, leisure being discretionary time. Recreational activities are often done for enjoyment, amusement or pleasure and are considered to be fun. The term recreation implies participating to be healthy refreshing mind and body. Examples of recreation includes: hobbies, games, crafts, sports and play.

The term physical activity in Canada recognizes physical activity as any bodily movement produced by the body's muscles that cause the expenditure of energy. Physical activity includes all forms of exercise, fitness, sports, active leisure activities, active transportation, play and active work.

Physical activity is very important, as it provides many health, social, economic, environmental and community benefits. It is reported through Health Canada that physical inactivity may lead to many of the chronic diseases that currently swarm our communities including death, chronic disease and disability. Physical inactivity is a major cause of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and many forms of cancer. Being physical active has proven to decrease the risk of premature death and other related diseases.

Physical activity in many circumstances allows an individual to improve their **social health** and as a result people have the opportunity to be active and interact with other people. Individuals can improve their health through social interactions via walking clubs, workplace fitness, community physical activity fairs, and educational seminars. Physical activity also has a positive effect of an individuals self esteem and self confidence which would improve one's social relations.

It is very obvious that becoming physically active will have an **economically** positive impact on the community. Not only does it mean less work time taken off due to sickness, it's also proven that physically active workers are more productive. It cost the Canadian Health Care System millions of dollars each year to assist people who have chronic disease but being physically active you can prevent this and the Health Care can benefit by saving money. Not only will they Health Care benefit but so will other

businesses in the community. The effect of physically active people in the community will raise the membership fee's at fitness clubs, program registrations will increase, and people will eat healthy therefore supermarkets will also increase sales.

Throughout Canada and particularly Nova Scotia and the movement of active transportation is steadily a hot topic when the term "physical activity" is brought up. The **environmental** benefits of physical activity may result from land use to support physical activities. If a percentage of the community used the opportunity to travel from place to place while engaging in physical activity there would be a decrease in carbon emissions and less damage to the physical environment. Furthermore, exposure to poor air quality and contaminated water, food and soil has health risks including but not limited to birth defects, respiratory illnesses, and cancer. Active transportation is another method of activity that will make our community a safer and cleaner place to live.

Being physical activity has a long lasting effect on the **community**. A happier, healthier community allows everyone to enjoy the basic necessities of life and the challenges that arise in our society.

There are five dimensions individuals should consider when being physical active;

- A) **OBJECTIVE** – What category of activity will be chosen and why?
- B) **FREQUENCY** – How often is the activity performed? (How many days per week)
- C) **INTENSITY** – Level of exertion needed to perform the activity.
- D) **TYPE** – Mode of activity.
- E) **TIME** – How long the activity is performed.

	Light	Moderate	Vigorous
Time	20 to 25 minutes	30 minutes	60 minutes
Frequency	3 days per week	4 or more days per week	7 days per week
Examples	Light walking and gardening	Cycling, swimming and dancing	Jogging, fast swimming, and fast dancing

For health benefits, children aged 5-11 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity daily. This should include:

- Vigorous intensity at least 3 days per week
- Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week

For health benefits, youth aged 12-17 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity daily. This should include:

- Vigorous intensity at least 3 days per week
- Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week

For health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity weekly. This should include:

- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least 2 days per week.

For health benefits, adults aged 65 years and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week. This should be done in repetitions of 10 minutes or more. This will enhance balance and coordination and strengthen the bone and muscle capacity.

It is proven that daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

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Demographics and Physical Activity Statistics

Background Analysis:

This section examines various aspects of the community and identifies characteristics that impact the needs, type, and method of service delivery for Physical Activity, Parks and Recreation for the Town of Amherst. Demographic highlights, trends, and preferences and opinions of those who participated in the **IPSOS REED SURVEY** have all been considered.

Demographics:

The Town’s population increased from 9,470 (2001 Census) to 9,505 (2006 Census). Table 1 is a detailed look at the population statistic for the Town of Amherst.

Table 1 is a detailed look at the demographics of Amherst.

Statistics will show that in the Town of Amherst our +55 population is at 33%. There is a need for activity for seniors but it is proven that seniors in our community are active. The focus on seniors is critical in our “Building a Physical Environment” goal # 3. Seniors are a large part of the Active Transportation section of where they will be considered for our safe route walking guide and consideration under our walk-ability audit. The 55+ club are a very active group in the town of Amherst and will be very instrumental in the execution of the plan.

Table 1: Population by Selected Age Groups:

	1996	% of Total	2001	% of Total	2006	% of Total	1996-2006
Total Reporting	9,670		9,470		9,717		-1.7%
Pre-School Age (less than 5 years)	565	5.8%	510	5.4%	500	5.2%	-11.5%
School Age (5-19 years)	1820	18.8%	1745	18.4%	1645	17%	-9.6%
Labour Force Ages							
20-34 years	2010	21%	1660	18%	1625	17%	-19.2%
35-54 years	2585	26.7%	2790	29.5%	2715	29%	5%
55-64 years	890	9.2%	935	9.9%	1130	12%	27%
Seniors							
65-74 years	855	8.8%	810	8.6%	895	9.4%	4.7%
75+	955	9.9%	1015	10.7%	1005	11%	5.2%

In Amherst, those aged 35 to 54 years (i.e. the youngest baby boomers) represent the largest portion of the population with 29%. Senior age cohorts are the fastest growing demographic. The continued growth of this group will have significant implications for community and regional services, in particular health services, housing, recreational facilities, physical activity and accessibility. Cohorts below the age of 40 represent the portion of the population born after the baby boom (1947-1966) and make up the smallest population-age percentage. The median age of the population is 42.8 with 84% of the population aged 15 and over. Amherst is one of only nine communities in Nova Scotia that had a positive growth rate of 0.4% from 2001 to 2006. The slight increase in population may be the result of the in-migration of seniors from the county in search of better access to health care and social capital.

A review of the Census data shows that Amherst continues to struggle with out-migration and an aging population in addition to large numbers of the population living on low income.

Table 2: Income Status Census 2005 – Town of Amherst

	Amherst	Nova Scotia
Persons 15 years and over with income	7490	718340
Median income	\$20,282	\$29,592
Median income after tax	\$18,916	\$25,955
Earnings - As a % of total income	64%	73%
Government transfers - As a % of total income	21%	12%
Other money - As a % of total income	15%	15%
Income status of all persons in private households	9245	429725
low income before tax - All persons	19%	12%
low income after tax - All persons	11%	9%
low income before tax - Persons less than 18 years	26%	17%
low income after tax - Persons less than 18 years	13%	12%

Incidence of Low Income:

The Town of Amherst has a significantly higher percentage of low income individuals at 19%, compared to the Province with 12%. This can be interpreted to mean that the atmosphere for employment is not as favourable as in other areas of the province and may also lead to out-migration, people seeking better jobs elsewhere. It may also reflect the fact that many people are working in low paying jobs in the sales and service sector. This would be in line with the national trend that sees more Canadians selling products than producing them. According to Statistics Canada, a national trend sees more people employed in retail sales than in manufacturing, reflecting an economy that is much more service and retail oriented. Unfortunately, retail jobs tend to be lower paying, less stable and less productive. There are also more part-time workers in retail than in other sectors, which further contribute to lower than average wages.

There is a strong association between income level and health and well-being. The more income one has, the healthier that person is likely to be. More income may allow one to eat better, afford better housing and have more control over personal and work life, which is also linked to health and well being. Statistics Canada calculates low income as a percentage of economic families or unattached individuals who spend 55% or more of their income on food shelter and clothing. According to Statistics Canada, between 1980 and 2005, median earnings among Canada’s top earners rose more than 16% while those in the bottom fifth saw their wages dip by 20%. So, now more than ever, Canada’s rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer and the middle class stagnates. Amherst appears to be no exception with most residents stuck in neutral when it comes to income levels.

If you reference the Goals and Objectives section of the Physical Activity Strategic Plan it is documented that because of the low income families in the Town of Amherst, equipment lending, free town activities, and a discount card are all important keys factors to increasing the physical activity level of our residents.

Before identifying the physical activity statistics for the Town of Amherst it is very important to recognize some “perceived barriers” in the PACY Report (Physical Activity and Dietary Intake of Children and Youth)

Barriers for Physical Activity in Children and Youth According to PACY Research

Barriers	Grade 3	Grade 7	Grade 11
Its too expensive	22%	21%	21%
There is no one to go with	12%	26%	30%
School works take too much time	11%	31%	46%
I do not have any equipment	14%	18%	22%
The weather is too bad	11%	23%	25%

Benefits for Physical Activity in Children and Youth According to PACY Research

Benefits	Grade 7	Grade 11
Help me feel good about myself	96%	95%
Be fun	97%	95%
Make me better in sports	95%	90%
Give me energy	88%	90%
Get or keep me in shape	98%	99%

Physical Activity Stats in Amherst According to the IPSOS-REED SURVEY:

Fitness Levels

- Very Good (11%), Good (29%), Average (43%), Poor (13%), Very Poor (4%)
- Total good 40%, below the norm in Canada and Nova Scotia
- Highest percentage is average at 43%

Intensity of Effort When Participating

- Intense (18%), Moderate (64%), Light (16%), Don't Know (2%)
- Intense and moderate combined equal 82% of intensity level.
- Acceptable intensity of effort when participating in physical activity

Number of Times Participate in Physical activity (Per Week)

- None to 3 days per week – 58% (this total percentage needs to decrease)
- 4 days per week to 7 days per week – 42% (low)
- Long term health benefits participants must be active 5 days a week

Common Physical Activities

- Walking, jogging, and running equal 75% of activity in Amherst
- Interesting stats show swimming, weightlifting, biking and yoga are in top 5 percentile

- Correlation between walking and high percentage (track at the Amherst Stadium, Dickey park, easy access to walk on sidewalks, Rotary Park, Robert Angus Drive)
- Organized activity at a low percentile.
- Surprisingly, 8% higher than the norm of Nova Scotia and 17% higher than the norm of Canada

Duration of Activity

- 40% engage in 30 minutes or less of activity each time they participate (HIGH)
- 37% engage in 31 to 60 minutes of activity each time they participate (LOW)
- 23% engage in 60 minutes or more of activity each time they participate (LOW)
- More people need to more active for longer than 30 minutes each time they are active.

Frequency of using Specific Facilities

- Outside facilities are being used thus explains the comparison that walking, running, and jogging are highest on activities perform for our town.
- Indoor facilities needs to be used more (programs, etc....)

Attitudes towards Physical Activity:

Reason for Participating in Physical Activity

- Health tops the charts at 46%, To be fit 22%, Its fun 18%, Lose weight 12%
- Need more education on benefits of physically activity

Barriers to Participating in Physical Activities

- Three main barriers are: don't have enough time, weather, and health issues
- Interesting stats show not motivated, cost and lack of places to exercise make up 19% of survey.
- Create strategy to subside negatives.
- Create strategy to incorporate physical activity in daily routine

Factors Influencing Participation in Physical Education

- Participants want access to trails, paths, and green spaces
- Participant wants affordable program and facilities
- Participants want information on physical activity, health, and well-being
- Items listed above are on HIGH importance to participants

Satisfaction with Municipal Recreation Offerings:

Overall satisfaction with Recreation Facilities

- 72% satisfied
- 27% not satisfied
- Participants are satisfied with facilities but activity is down
- Strategic plan to get participants in facilities

Satisfaction with specific Aspects of Service Delivery

- Participants are not happy with the program and services offered by the Town.
- Higher than the norm in Nova Scotia

Perception of Local Walking Opportunities

- Participants are satisfied with walking opportunities in Amherst

User Fees:

Support for User Fees

- 73% support that user fees must be in place for recreational programs and services. On par with Nova Scotia and Canada stats

Children's Physical Activity:

- 73% of children are active for 30 minutes or more 4 or more times per week
- 37% stated that swimming is the activity children participate in on a regular basis, 27% hockey, 23% walking
- 50% of children are active in arenas and community centers (LOW)
- 91% of children watch TV every day or almost every day

Key Findings from the IPSOS REED SURVEY:

A random survey of 300 Amherst residents was conducted between January 29 and February 10, 2010. The primary objective of the survey was to assess citizens' physical activity levels and recreation behaviours and needs. Overall results are deemed to be accurate within ± 5.7 percent, 19 times out of 20. Final data was weighted to ensure the age and gender distribution reflects that of the actual population in Amherst according to the 2006 Census data. The following are some of the key findings:

- 67% stated they walk on a regular basis
- 40% of residents spend 30 minutes or less each time they participate in an activity
- 46% stated they participate in physical activity for health reasons
- 35% reported a lack of time as a barrier to participating in physical activity. 5% stated cost
- 85% agreed that access to paths, trails and green spaces was important to help them become physically active, 83% reported affordable recreational services, facilities, and programs would assist them
- 54% of respondents reported being satisfied with the Town of Amherst recreation facilities, 18% stated they are very satisfied
- 74% stated they are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the quality of recreation programs available
- 73% agreed that the Town of Amherst should charge user fees for recreation programs and services
- 73% of children are active for 30 minutes or more 4 or more times per week
- 37% stated that swimming is the activity children participate in on a regular basis, 27% hockey

From the findings in the IPSOS REID SURVEY the disturbing figure is that 68% of the residents in Amherst are active none to four days a week. The goal is to move the people who are not active at all into the three or four days a week bracket.

Facilities in the Town of Amherst:

Here is a list of facilities used for physical activity in the Town of Amherst:

1. Amherst Stadium
2. Amherst Lion's Skate Park
3. Amherst Splash Pad
4. Dickey Park
5. Rotary Park
6. Winston Avenue Field
7. Lions Park
8. Little League Field
9. Robb's Centennial Ball Park Complex
10. Beacon Street Playground
11. School sports fields
12. Cumberland YMCA
13. Spring Street Academy Gym
14. Atlantic Dance Academy
15. Outdoor basketball court (Robb's)
16. Outdoor tennis court (Lions and Church)

Key facilities in the Town of Amherst and what they offer include:

Amherst Stadium:

- Walking track open 7am to 9pm daily
- Seniors skating Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 8:30am to 9:30am
- Parents and Tots skating Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9:30am to 10:30am
- Activity Noon skating Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:00pm to 1:00pm
- Family Activity skating Saturday 4:00pm to 5:30pm
- Amherst Figure Skating Club
- Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association
- Amherst Jr. Ramblers Hockey Club
- Dance classes in heated room
- 14 recreation hockey groups
- Organization skating sessions
- Amherst School skating programs
- Summer Program Activities
- Ball hockey

Future opportunities at the Amherst Stadium:

- Ringette
- School curriculum to include skating and skateboarding as a part of physical education.
- Lacrosse
- Indoor soccer
- Roller blading
- Zumba classes in heated room

Dickey Park:

- Lighted walking track or running track
- Splash Pad
- Checker tables
- Playing field
- Unorganized Activity

Future opportunities at Dickey Park

- Ultimate Frisbee
- Disc Golf
- Soccer
- Planned activity
- Playground equipment
- Neighbourhood activity events
- School curriculum to include Ultimate Frisbee and disc golf as a part of physical education.

Cumberland YMCA:

- Recreational swimming
- Swimming lessons
- Water aerobics
- Workout facility, Cycling room
- Dance / zumba / activity room
- Step class
- Friday Night Activity Program for Youth

Future opportunities at the YMCA

- After school activity events
- Open activity times
- Water Polo

Organizations:

Working with different organizations will be crucial with the execution of this Physical activity Strategic Plan. Some of the organizations that will work closely to achieve our activity goals are:

1. Cumberland YMCA
2. Cumberland Health Authority
3. District Health Authority
4. Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association
5. Maggie's Place
6. Tumble Bugs
7. Amherst Minor Basketball
8. Amherst Baseball
9. Amherst Softball
10. Spring Street Academy
11. Amherst Regional High School
12. West Highlands School
13. EB Chandler
14. Lions Club
15. Amherst Nursing Homes
16. Amherst Special Olympics
17. Youth Advisory Council
18. Arts, Culture and Heritage for the Town of Amherst
19. Health and Wellness Clubs
20. Heart and Stroke Foundation
21. Amherst 50+ Clubs
22. Business Community

Over the years the Town of Amherst has established relationships with various organizations. Listed below are the most popular where physical activity has had a reflection.

YMCA: The Town of Amherst and the YMCA have been and will continue to be strong partners in our community. Financially, the Town of Amherst has provided the YMCA with funding to help operate their facility. As a part of the Capital Campaign the Town of Amherst has guaranteed the YMCA \$50,000 for the next three years. In addition to the financial help the YMCA and the Town of Amherst partner for many physical activity events. These events included Summer Programs, Friday Night Activity Fun and After School Programs.

Cumberland Health Authority: The Cumberland Health Authority is a vital agency in the Town of Amherst. They provide the public with resources a community needs to live a healthy lifestyle from statistics, studies and health care. Most recently the Town of Amherst have partnered with the Cumberland Health Authority with our 24 hour Physical Activity Day in Amherst and a Walk Ability Audit which is a key piece of the Active Transportation section of the strategic plan.

Amherst Schools: Schools in Nova Scotia are the focal points for many research studies and evaluations on children and youth. Sometimes it is very hard to enter a school and have access to the students but all four schools in the Town of Amherst are willing to work with the Town of Amherst to promote physical activity and to be a lead agency in the future goals of increasing the physical activity levels of children and youth.

Media:

In Amherst there are various ways to promote physical activity awareness. Our main source of promotion is through our local radio station CKDH and our daily Newspaper through the Amherst Daily News. Another area where we can promote physical activity is on our town website at www.amherst.ca

Physical Activity Team:

To communicate with the entire community a “physical activity team” will be created. This group will be made up of individuals who have an invested interest in making our community a more active and happy place to live. This group will meet on a quarterly basis to talk about needs and action plans for physical activity in the Town of Amherst. This group will strictly be a discussion group who will lend ideas for the purpose as a resource for the Town of Amherst.

Communication Public Forum:

September 2010 during parent teacher interviews a school in Amherst participated in a questionnaire type project. This project was to simply ask parents how could the Town of Amherst of Amherst communicate more efficiently to make sure all residents received information of community activities / events in our town. From the results 386 comments were received.

- 204 requested we have a website dedicated to physical activity and recreation
- 385 requested using the Amherst Daily News
- 74 requested using our local radio station CKDH
- 30 requested we put information in our Town of Amherst Newsletter.
- 362 requested we send information home with children from school

It is evident that sending information home with children from schools is the easiest way to ensure all children and youth receive the proper information. It is with great interest that a website is solely dedicated to physical activity and wellness for the Town of Amherst.

SUCCESS IN AMHERST

Listed below are a couple of recent success stories in the Town of Amherst.

24 Hour Physical Activity Day:

On February 26, 2011 the Town of Amherst hosted the first annual 24 Hour Activity Day in Amherst. During the 24 hours we had over 2226 people participate from ages 3 to 92. See below for the participation report.

Activity	Duration	Number of Participants
Walking (Track)	24 hrs	486
Seniors Skating	1 hr	68
Parents and Tots Skating	1 hr	38
Public Skate	1 hr	192
Treadmill	24 hrs	48
Hockey	3.5 hr	37
Cumberland Health Skate	1 hr	22
4-H Skate	1 hr	24
Zumba	2 hrs	51
Survivor's Walk	45 minutes	516
Basketball	8 hrs	132
Snow Shoeing	7 hrs	60
Mini Sticks Hockey	1.5 hrs	30
YAC Outdoor Challenge	2 hrs	8
Road Hockey	2 hrs	16
Football	2 hrs	18
Flash Mob Dance	8 minutes	40
Art Walk	3 hrs	20

Tae Kwon Do	2 hrs	14
Dance Class	4 hrs	125
Yoga	3 hrs	62
Cyclefit	4 hrs	96
Tai Chi	2 hrs	24
Cumberland Health Run	1 hr	3
CS Training / BOSU	1 hr	8
Walking around town	1 hr	88

Interesting facts from the 24 Hour Activity Day in Amherst:

- During our skating session 65 pairs of skates were on loan through an equipment lending program.
- During our snow showing hours 60 pairs of snow shoes were on loan.
- We placed a treadmill at the Amherst Stadium where there was high population of people all day and 48 people used it for 30 minutes or more.
- Stats were compiled by a grade 11 physical education class from Amherst Regional High School

It was proven throughout the 24 hours that a “Lending Equipment Program” in the Town of Amherst would increase physical activity. Also, interesting to note that all activities were FREE of charges which definitely increase the number of participants.

Bike Rodeo:

Partnering with the Amherst Town Police / Community & Economic Development we hosted three Bike rodeos this past summer to educate and promote bike riding in our community. Our bike rodeos allow children and youth to feel safer on the road while being physical active.

Art Walk:

Working together with other departments within the Town of Amherst is a unique way to achieve success. The Town of Amherst hosted an Art Walk during the 24 Hour Activity Day in Amherst. This is one of the many ways how interlocking people's views of what art is can be classified with physical activity.

Rotary Park:

In 2009 the Town of Amherst and the Rotary Club of Amherst partnered to increase the physical activity levels of seniors. The Town of Amherst is made up of 33% seniors which is a very high percentage of our population. To enhance this park outdoor fitness equipment structures were placed around the park. At rotary Park seniors can enjoy a walk around the track and also enjoy being physical active on the outdoor fitness equipment.

Dickey Park:

In 2008 the Town of Amherst re-vitalized a landmark in our community. The Council agreed that Dickey Park should be re-designed for members of the community. This is a major success story for Amherst because we have a safe and well lite walking track and a splash pad for children and youth. The splash pad was a main attraction for the children and youth this past summer and with more hot sunny days next summer we are anticipating a high volume of people at Dickey Park. Dickey Park has adequate parking as well as a field where families can enjoy unorganized activity or just have a family picnic. Recently, checker boards were installed at Dickey Park as a recreation leisure service to those who use the park. The final development is not complete at Dickey Park but in the future there will be more opportunities to be active.

Amherst Lions Skate Park:

In May 2011 the Town of Amherst opened a skateboarding park for the entire community. The park is primarily used by children and youth and it is clear that since its opening it has been the most active site in Amherst where children and youth have been physically active.

MISSION AND VISION

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Although the Mission and Vision will not be concrete it is important to have some kind of guidance leading into a new chapter of physical activity in the Town of Amherst. It is important to re-visit the Vision and Mission to ensure we are accomplishing what we set out to do.

It is the **MISSION** to create physical and recreational opportunities for growth and enhancement by developing diverse services and programs that promote citizen involvement and a strong sense of community while striving to increase the social, cultural, and physical well-being of its residents regardless of income, background, and ability.

It is the **VISION** to plan and implement a comprehensive Physical Activity Strategy to target youth, adults and seniors in the community of Amherst. I will strive to improve existing facilities while seeking opportunities for future development. In doing so, I will create a partnership with the Amherst community to improve the quality of life through physical activity for all citizens in a risk-free environment. Residents of the community of Amherst will be encouraged to lead active lifestyles and will be made aware of the importance of physical activity and the benefits of leading a healthy, active life. Residents will be given a variety of physical activities (Both individual and group) to choose from in which they will develop physical fitness knowledge, skills and intrinsic motivation to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle in an increasingly changing society.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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Goal # 1 – Increase physical activity in children, youth and seniors

FACT: 69% of the children in Amherst participate in moderate physical activity 30 minutes or more, including physical education class 4 days or less throughout the week.

Over the next five years these objectives will increase physical activity in children and youth;

- **Strengthen relationships with schools and YMCA to promote physical activity during and after school.**
- **More school ACTIVITY in community facilities and parks**
- **Increase promotion and distribution of physical activity information throughout schools**
- **More community use of schools for physical activity with different organizations such as Tumble Bugs and Maggie’s Place**
- **Encourage walking to school and other active transportation initiatives**

Goal # 2 – Reduce barriers to increase physical activity

FACT: Programs in the Town of Amherst are highly attended given the population. Unorganized activities in facilities and parks have low levels of participation.

Over the next five years these objectives will reduce barriers to increase physical activity;

- **Create a policy for equipment lending**
- **Create a relationship with service clubs and businesses to volunteer lending equipment, maintenance and promotion.**
- **Create a registered organization system to award discounted rates for youth and less fortunate**
- **Re-development of Summer Program to be activity based**

Goal # 3 - Building a Physical Active Environment

FACT: The Town of Amherst is undergoing a project that includes the downtown area reconstructing, sidewalks being rebuilt, and new signage for community members. Creating an Active Transportation plan has been recommended by Council to be completed.

Over the next five years these objectives of building a physical environment will increase physical activity;

- **Create an Active transportation Strategy**
- **Educate and promote Active Transportation**
- **Implement a “safe routes” walking guide for the Town of Amherst**
- **Implement signage and equipment for Active Transportation**
- **Create walking club with Hearts and Stroke for 55+**

Goal # 4 - Increase Awareness through Communication

FACT: 48% of the residents of Amherst are ‘somewhat satisfied’ with what the Town of Amherst are doing to encourage people to become physical active. Through public forums it was determined that communication is a major barrier.

Over the next five years these objectives of building a physical environment will increase physical activity;

- **Build a “Healthy Amherst” website**
- **Establish four main sub-titles of interest**
- **Design a website**
- **Establish a Physical Activity team**
- **Provide regular opportunities for organizations to provide feedback on physical activity opportunities**

For a list of [ACRONYMS](#) please see page 39.

ACTION PLAN

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Goal # 1 – Increase physical activity in children, youth and seniors							
1.1 Strengthen relationships with schools and YMCA to promote physical activity during and after school							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Work with person responsible for facility usage	MPAL, SSA		^	^	^	^	
Identify ‘Champion’ of Amherst school’s	MPAL, PAT		^	^	^	^	
Identify opportunities for activity and events in schools	MAPL, SSA		^	^	^	^	
Host a meet ‘n’ greet with principle’s and teachers	MPAL, CED		^	^	^	^	
1.2 More school ACTIVITY in community facilities and parks							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify pilot school	MPAL, SSA, PAT	^	^	^	^	^	
Increase opportunity for swimming, skating, skateboarding and walking as a part of school PE	YMCA, CED	^	^	^	^	^	
Expand existing after school programs	YMCA, SSA	^	^	^	^	^	
Create a schedule for non varsity athletes	MPAL, YMCA, SSA		^	^	^	^	
Identify opportunities for activity in parks and trails	YMCA, MPAL, PAT		^	^	^	^	
Re-structure summer program to activity based	MPAL, YMCA, PAT	^					
1.3 Increase promotion and distribution of physical activity information through schools							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify promotional requirements	MPAL, PAT	^	^	^	^	^	
Identify promotional opportunities	MPAL, SSA		^	^	^	^	
Create a quarterly activity information bulletin	MPAL		^	^	^	^	
Event information one page drop off	MPAL		^	^	^	^	
Promote community programs in school	MPAL, SSA		^	^	^	^	
1.4 More community use of schools for physical activity							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify opportunities	MPAL		^	^			
Identify community partners who want to use facilities	MPAL, CHA		^	^	^	^	
Establish after school and evening programming in schools through	MPAL, YMCA, CHA		^	^	^	^	

community programming							
1.5 Encourage walking to school and other active transportation initiatives							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Work with schools to identify opportunities	PLN, MPAL, YMCA	^	^	^	^	^	
Offer promotional material and support	PLN, MPAL, CED	^	^	^	^	^	
Work with town departments to raise importance of “walk-ability”	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	

Goal # 2 – Reducing Barriers To Increase Physical Activity							
2.1 Create a policy for equipment lending							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Create a policy for equipment lending program	CED, MPAL		^	^	^	^	
2.2 Create a relationship with service clubs and business							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify who the partners are in lending program	CED, CHA	^	^	^	^	^	
Identify what equipment people want to be active	MPAL, CED, CHA, YMCA	^	^	^	^	^	
2.3 Attracting equipment							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify what grants are available for equipment purchase	HW, CHA, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
Partner with business to donate equipment	AACC, MPAL		^	^	^	^	
Partner with sports organizations to donate equipment	MPAL, YMCA		^	^	^	^	
“Drop off” equipment dates	MPAL		^	^	^	^	
Volunteer equipment pick up	YAC, YMCA		^	^	^	^	
2.4 Promoting equipment lending							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Newsletter to all households on tax bill	MPAL, CED		^	^	^	^	
Article in ADN	ADN		^	^	^	^	
News feeds on CKDH	CKDH		^	^	^	^	
Information at schools	SSA						
Information sheet to senior homes	MPAL						
2.5 Equipment maintenance							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Create a return policy for equipment lending	MPAL, YMCA		^	^	^	^	

Establish a schedule for equipment to be available	MPAL, YMCA		^	^	^	^	
Set up volunteer group to attend rental area	MPAL, CHA, YMCA		^	^	^	^	
2.6 Create a registered organization system to award discounted rates for youth and less fortunate							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Develop application forms and data submission requirements for organizations	MPAL, CED, CHA	^	^	^	^		
Collect information on participation throughout organizations	MPAL, YMCA, YAC	^	^	^	^	^	
Collect fee's from service clubs and organizations	MPAL, YMCA	^	^	^	^	^	

Goal # 3 – Building A Physical Active Environment							
3.1 Create an active transportation strategy							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Draft a terms of reference							
Create a Goal for AT	PLN	^					
Create an objective for AT	PLN, MPAL	^					
Deliverables (Background report and the Plan)	PLN, MPAL	^					
Project Development	PLN, MPAL, PW	^					
Analysis Report	PLN, MPAL, CAO	^					
3.1.1 Educate and promote Active Transportation							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Community Forum's	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
Host educational information sessions on AT in all schools	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
AT Newsletter sent home with students	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
Create an AT pamphlet	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
AT updates on radio station (CKDH)	PLN, MPAL, CKDH	^	^	^	^	^	
AT article in Amherst Daily News	PLN, MPAL, ADN	^	^	^	^	^	
Promote existing and future trails	PLN, MPAL, AC	^	^	^	^	^	
Continue to attend AT conferences and related meetings	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	
3.1.2 Implement a "safe routes" walking guide for the Town of Amherst							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Analysis "walk-ability" audit to create a safe route walking guide	PLN, MPAL, MTA, AC	^					
Analysis mobility patterns to create safer walking routes	PLN, MPAL, APD	^	^	^			

Analysis of frequently traveled routes to school	PLN, MPAL	^	^	^			
Improve high traffic intersections	PLN, MPAL, APD	^	^	^			
Improve sidewalk conditions for safe walking	PLN, MPAL, PW	^	^	^	^	^	
Walking program partnered with Heart and Stroke	MPAL, 55+	^	^	^			
Delivery of "safe routes" walking guide	PLN, MPAL			^			
3.1.3 Implement signage for Active Transportation							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Place bike racks through town	PLN, MPAL, PW	^	^				
Brand existing trails with signage	PLN, MPAL, PW	^	^	^	^	^	
Bike rack signage	PLN, MPAL, PW	^	^				

Goal # 4 – Increase Awareness Through Communication							
4.1 Build a "Healthy Amherst" website							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Form a website team of experts	MPAL, DHA, CHA, CAO						
Create a Healthy Amherst website policy	MPAL	^					
Identify a criteria for setting up a website	MPAL, CED	^	^	^			
Identify who the experts are	MPAL, CED, DHA	^	^	^			
Identify goal of website	MPAL, CED,	^	^	^			
Identify roles and responsibilities of experts	MPAL, CED, DHA	^	^	^			
Identify who the main partners are	MPAL, CED, DHA	^	^	^			
4.2 Establish four main sub-titles of interest							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify four main sub-titles to host website	MPAL, DHA	^	^	^	^		
Identify tabs of sub-titles with allotted information	MPAL, CED	^	^	^	^		
Gather information of tabs and sub-titles	MPAL, DHA, CHA						
Layout information	MPAL, CED						
4.3 Design of website							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Website layout	CED					^	
Colour scheme	CED					^	
Artwork	CED					^	

4.4 Establish a Physical Activity team							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Identify roles and responsibilities of physical activity council	MPAL	^	^	^			
Identify community leader to spear-head the set up	MPAL, PAC	^	^	^			
Create a database of organizations and service clubs	MPAL, PAC	^	^	^			
Develop a terms of reference	MPAL, PAC	^	^	^			
Coordinate physical activity between organizations	MPAL, PAC	^	^	^			
Create a feedback form for activity council to address	MPAL	^	^	^			
Host monthly meetings to discuss physical activity	MPAL	^	^	^			
4.5 Provide regular opportunities for organizations to provide feedback on physical activity opportunities							
Actions	Lead Agencies	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Capital
Host annual meeting with user groups, school's and service clubs	MPAL	^	^	^	^	^	

ADDENDUMS

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Summer Activity for Youth:

For the 2011 summer the daily schedule of the program has been restructured so all activities focus on movement. Our Park Program used three popular parks in the Town of Amherst Beacon Street Park, Lions Park, and the newly Developed Dickey Park. Before school ended our summer staff visited each school and handed out a full summer schedule of activity that children could participate in. Every day was mapped out with activity, park and times. In 2010 we had 771 participants in our summer program which included our swimming program. This summer 2011 we had 1243 participate in the activity based summer parks program; this also included the swimming program at the YMCA.

Monday: 9:00am to 4:00pm – Hourly body movements. During this day children and youth would perform various games using all body parts started with the head and finish at their feet.

Tuesday: 9:00am to 12:00pm – Playground activities. Participants would have to be creative and come up with unorganized games. 1:00pm to 4:00pm – Organized games

Wednesday: 9:00am to 4:00pm – Day trips. For these we choose water parks, zoos, and amusements parks where children and youth could be active.

Thursday: 9:00am to 12:00pm – Park leaders would lead participants in a number of games and activities. 1:00pm to 4:00pm – Theme Day Activities. Each Thursday a different theme would be identified (Example: Super Hero Day). Children would come dressed as there favourite Super Hero and games would be organized so they could act out in different activities like their hero.

Friday: 9:00am to 12:00pm – Water Day. All participants would meet at Dickey Park and all activities were based around water. Activities included playing in the Splash Pad, water balloon races, sliding activities. 1:00pm to 4:00pm – All participants met at the YMCA for an afternoon in the pool. While in the pool children played various organized games and they also had the opportunity to just play in the water.

Overall, our summer Parks Programs was a great success and we had a great response from the changes we made to our daily schedule.

Active Transportation Terms of Reference:

A Terms of Reference has been completed by a member of our Planning and Development Services

Project: Town of Amherst Project Action Plan – Active Transportation Plan

Subject: Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION:

This document is a terms of reference for development of an Active Transportation (AT) Plan, an identified Town Project Action Plan. Included is a brief overview of AT and a general plan outline.

Active Transportation is any form of self-propelled (non-motorized) mode of transportation such as walking, cycling, and jogging. These modes take place on sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails, which may be combined to form routes to and from work, shopping and entertainment areas, school and recreation facilities. AT is both a recreation and a commuter activity.

Pursuing AT will require a financial and resource commitment by the Town; however, there are many worthwhile benefits. The benefits of AT for the general public and the Town include:

- Promotes physical activity and healthy lifestyles - physical health and wellbeing.
- Social and community interaction.
- Efficient use of transportation network (lower road costs due to less maintenance)
- Supports compact mixed use development, conducive to pedestrian friendly, vibrant, and active communities.
- Parking Space Reduction, reducing environmental and construction costs.
- Air pollution reduction.
- Enhanced water quality.
- Reduce fuel, repair, and maintenance cost to the user.
- Increased community pride and sense of place.
- Reputation for progressive planning.

BACKGROUND:

Interest regarding alternative transportation in general, is being driven by initiatives to reduce green house gas emissions, and by a general shift towards more healthy living by movement away from automobile dependency. Municipalities in Nova Scotia actively pursuing AT include: Bridgewater, HRM, Pictou County, and Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

In order to promote AT, the appropriate infrastructure is required including an interconnected network of sidewalks, pathways, trails, and bike right-of-ways, as well as, benches, lighting, waste receptacles, bike stands, signage, and park upgrades.

Currently, the Town does have a network of sidewalks, and a limited trail system, and substantial upgrades to streets, sidewalks, trails and pathways, within the town, would be required to support AT.

Capital improvement costs for additions and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure will be outlined in a budget program to be determined following development of the AT Plan. Town resources for project completion include work from Planning and Development Services, Community and Economic Development, and Transportation and Public Works.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN FRAMEWORK:

In order to move forward with development of an AT Plan, the following has been devised as a framework for plan development.

Purpose:

Ensure a healthy and active community by increasing the demand for Active Transportation by improving opportunities for Active Transportation through infrastructure implementation over the next several years, a process that will be guided by the plan.

Project Scope:

Planning and Development is responsible for developing, documenting, communicating, recommending, and implementing an AT Plan. The plan will be limited to an AT design plan for infrastructure additions and improvements.

A community can have excellent AT facilities but the residents need to be educated on the use and benefits of these facilities. Promotion of AT, a significant component of the success of an AT Plan, is outside the project's scope. This is an area of work to be covered by Community and Economic Development through their Physical Activity Plan.

This sector, however, will coordinate with Planning and Development to ensure issues addressed in AT Plan development include topics that fall under Physical Activity Plan goals, and to assist in research of those topics. For example, *routes to school* are a topic required to achieve the

Physical Activity Plan's goal of implementing a "safe routes" walking guide. *Routes to school*, therefore, should be an issue addressed, and a topic to coordinate research efforts on. This approach will ensure the final AT Plan is linked to Physical Activity Plan goals.

Approach:

This plan is based on a practical approach of using existing Town initiatives (the *Centre First Strategy recommendations*), and on a principled approach of AT best practice principles.

Goal:

To develop an Active Transportation Plan that connects people, neighbourhoods, and major destinations within the Town, and to adjacent communities, and which supports living, working, and playing.

Objectives:

1. Make use of existing Town Strategy's which address Active Transportation.
2. Improve upon and make use of existing road, trail, and sidewalk network.
3. Develop connections for a variety of existing and potential users.

Deliverables:

- **Background Report:** (stand alone document) – this document will address relevant issues. An analysis section and implications will also be included. Two AT concept plans will be created, and issues and opportunities of each addressed.
- **The Plan:** a final report of the AT design plan and implementation. Design guidelines (a set of standards for capital improvements), policy recommendations, and a budget program with priority setting will be included in the report.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Connection to the MPS and Other Initiatives:

In consideration of the plans practical approach of using existing Town initiatives to guide AT Plan development, the *Centre First Strategy - Parking and Circulation Strategy*, an initiative which shares similar goals of Active Transportation, the Strategy's Marsh Trail initiative, which is recommended for inclusion in an AT plan, along with any other community plans will be used.

Project: Town of Amherst Project Action Plan – Active Transportation Plan

Subject: Best Practice Case Studies

INTRODUCTION:

The following is a summary of individual Active Transportation (AT) Plans, which are meant to provide guidance and incentive for development of the Town's AT plan. As well, the case studies provide a general sense of other municipal approaches to AT, particularly within the Nova Scotia.

HRM:

The Active Transportation Plan is based on a hierarchy of routes within an overall network system. The network links trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes, connecting communities, neighbourhoods, and destinations, and major transit hubs, such as the International Airport. The network builds upon existing and previously proposed initiatives.

The AT plan seeks to provide an effective alternative to the private automobile for trips to and from school, recreation sites, shopping areas, and transit hubs.

It's based on the principal of providing neighbourhood connectivity within a network of routes that connect commuters and neighbouring municipalities. The plan also considers existing HRM policy and plans for public Transit and new residential areas.

The AT Plan is supported by supplement Design Guidelines to be used as a design feature reference for development and construction of the AT network. The design solution is considered facility and operational design elements, which influence use and performance of the AT facility.

Bridgewater:

The AT Plan reconnects the existing grid through a hierarchy of routs. The Hierarchy of routs are categorized based the facility (ability of infrastructure to support AT) of a rout (bike lane, sidewalks and trails or a combination of these). The overall network includes 23 links connecting the periphery to the core of the community, and sidewalks provide the main component of the network.

The AT design solution is in the form of Design Guidelines, which provide direction for development of the network, and is based on principles of safety, connectivity, accessibility, and aesthetics. These design standards are individual concept plans for various rout scenarios, for example sites along the proposed network with 10 meter right-of-ways, or various sizes of intersections. Guidelines for sidewalks and trails are also provided.

Pictou County:

The AT initiative is a 61 km intra community bikeway, connecting the communities within the Pictou County. Key objectives of the County's Plan are to encourage individual municipalities to incorporate AT planning in related municipal activities, and to establish an implementation committee. Each community is also encouraged to take initiative to complete their portion of the rout. Based on assessments of each communities section, the plan recommends specific infrastructure improvements.

Moncton:

The plan calls for a network of recreation and commuter connections from all the cities communities to community defined destinations. The plan is based on the various levels within a community (neighbourhood, community and citywide), their relation to one another, and the relation to major community destinations.

Education is also key to their AT plan - to the degree that education is to be undertaken before infrastructure placement in individual community areas. This approach is part of a design process of gradually implementing AT infrastructure based on community input for a specific area. In other words, the concept plan leaves design details, at the neighbourhood level, to be determined by individual neighbourhoods.

The plan recognizes that residents should have access to AT, from the foot of their door step for both commuting and recreation.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMHERST:

Physical constraints to AT include: lack of through streets, large lot or strip development, lack of crosswalks, long blocks, unappealing environments, dead wall space, wide streets, shopping malls or large commercial developments, isolated schools and recreation areas, isolated shopping and employment areas, geography, and lack of connectivity.

Active Transportation design solutions and key to success demonstrated by case studies include:

- Focus on facility (capability of infrastructure) and operational design features.
- Need to establish Design Guidelines.
- Build upon existing plans which address AT.
- An education and promotion program.
- Public consultation.

ACRONYMS OF PARTNERS

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MPAL	Municipal Physical Activity Leader
CED	Community and Economic Development – Town of Amherst
APD	Amherst Police Department
PLN	Planning Department
YAC	Youth Advisor Council – Town of Amherst
CHA	Cumberland Health Authority
AC	Active Cumberland
HW	Department of Health and Wellness
PW	Public Works – Town of Amherst
YMCA	YMCA of Amherst
DHA	District Health Authority
AACC	Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce
ADN	Amherst Daily News
CKDH	Amherst Radio Station
SSA	Spring Street Academy
PAT	Physical Activity Team
55+	Seniors Club