

TOWNSHIP OF BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM

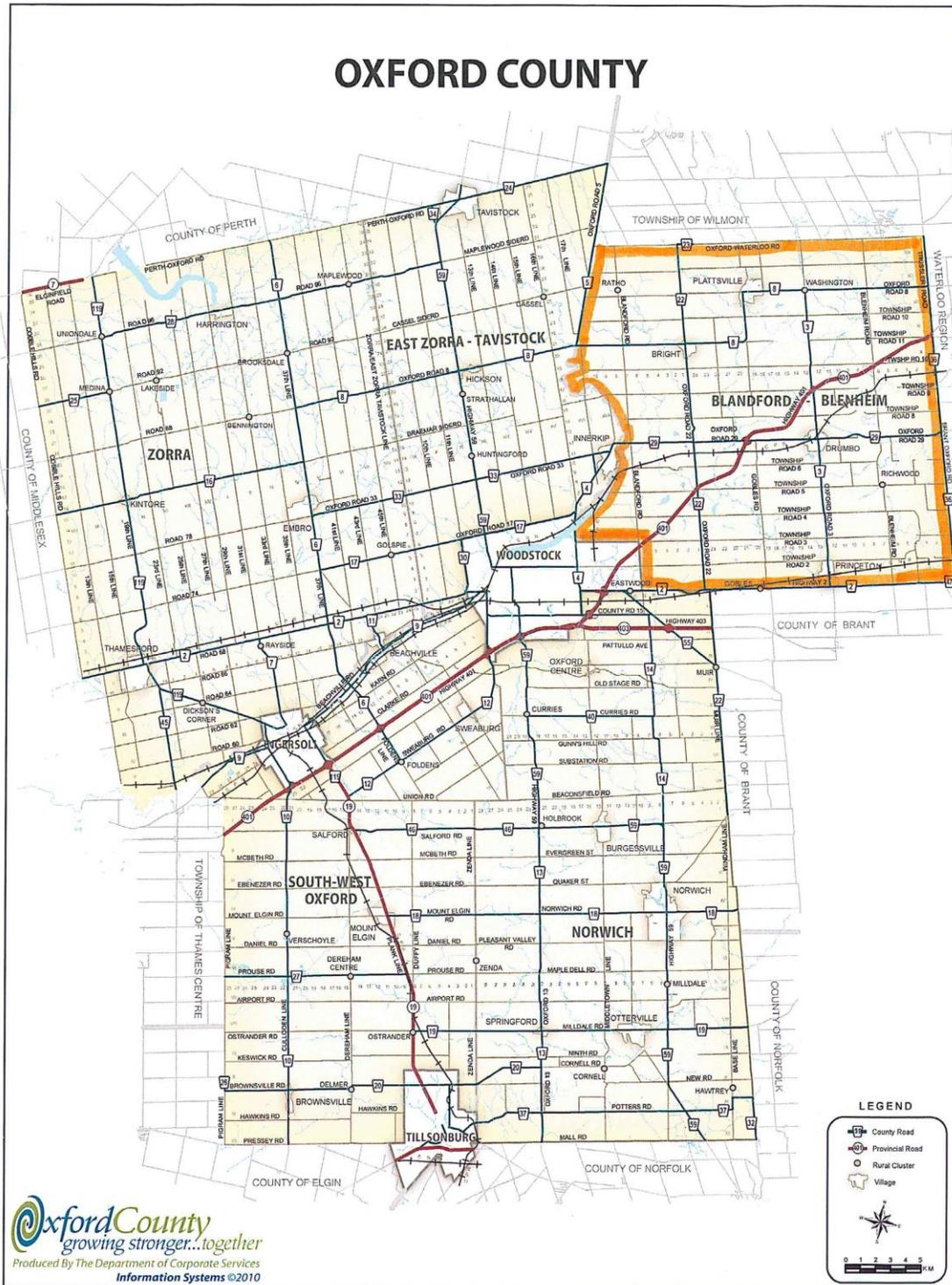
COMMUNITY SERVICES

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN



APRIL 2014

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Township of Blandford-Blenheim

The Township of Blandford-Blenheim is located in Oxford County, and has in accordance with the 2011 census, a population of 7,359. The Township was amalgamated in 1975 from the historic County Townships of Blandford and Blenheim. Prominent communities within the Township include Bright, Drumbo, Plattsville and Princeton.

Between 2006 and 2011 the Township grew by 2.9%. This increase in population represents the largest growth achieved by any Township within Oxford County and suggests an annual rate of .58% or 42 persons per year.

As the Township is considered a “bedroom” community to the larger employment centres of nearby Kitchener/Waterloo, Cambridge, Brantford and Woodstock, the future population will largely be generated by people wishing to have a “small town” “country feel” to their lifestyle while also having supporting amenities for their recreation needs.

1.2 Purpose of Recreation Master Plan

Recreation, both in an organized and unstructured form, provides individuals, couples, families and groups with numerous physical health, psychological, economic and environmental benefits which contribute to the enjoyment of a high quality of life. As a community it is most important to strive to explore, develop and support the benefits of a high quality of life as this provides lasting benefits such as low crime rates, higher economic spending, and healthier residents. As well, participation in recreation facilitates social interaction, conservation, and greater self esteem and community development.

The Committee feels it is imperative for Municipal Council and Management to continually refer to the Vision and the 4 “Key Principles” of this plan when decisions have to be made regarding Parks and Recreation

Understanding these community benefits, recreation planning has emerged to effectively assist decision-makers and service providers to meet the current and future recreational needs of a community in a sustainable and thoughtful manner. Many municipalities frequently undertake assessments of their parks and recreation system to develop policy frameworks and quantify benefits and needs through performance measures.

2.0 PLANNING PROCESS

Beginning in November of 2011, Township Council approved a resolution that outlined a process to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

It is important to understand that Master Plans are like road maps. They chart a hopeful course between the present and some intended future destination, identifying milestones along the way. However, road conditions are unpredictable and detours common.

It is a process of compromise and cooperation in support of valued goals. Good plans are flexible, and adaptable to change.

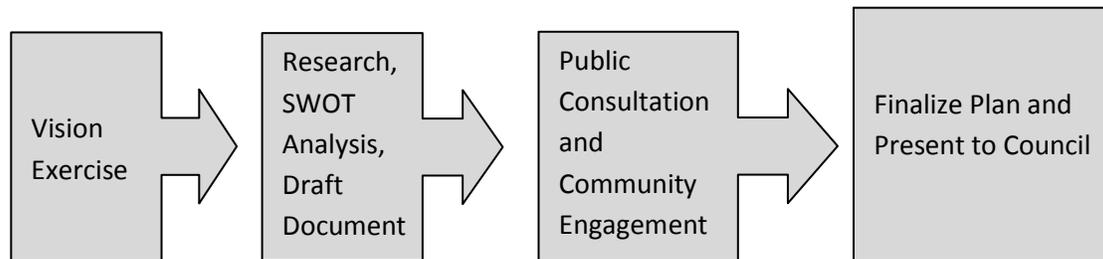
They must be a living document, wide in scope allowing the detailed blueprint to be extracted from the plan. The only thing more dangerous than planning is not planning; facing the future without preview or preparation.

2.1 Committee Formation

As per Council resolution, eight appointed community members and the Community Services Manager formed the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee. Today, the Manager along with the remaining five community members completed the plan. The Committee is as follows:

Mr. Martin Caldwell, Chair
Mr. Andrew Mills
Ms. Elizabeth Schuster
Mrs. Edna Williamson
Mr. Trevor Baer
Mr. Ken Wood, Community Services Manager

2.2 Planning Methodology – The Chosen Path



The Committee began the planning process by undertaking an introduction and visionary exercise which included:

- developing a community recreation inventory
- exploring demographics and community analysis
- undertaking a community SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)
- and, forming the initial Vision Statement and draft recommendations

Throughout 2012 and 2013, the Committee worked on the draft document; questioning, debating, reviewing and finally coming to a consensus on all the wording and meanings of each element of the draft document. At that point the Committee then went to the public for their comments on the draft document.

The Committee put the draft document on the Township web site requesting feedback. As well the Committee held a meeting with Social Agencies (Education, Protective Services, Health Care, County Tourism, and Conservation Authorities) to get their feedback of the process and the draft document. The turnout for this meeting was 23% of those invited and positive encouragement obtained by the group with feedback that assisted in creating the final document. The Committee then invited community sports groups to a special meeting in which no one attended.

Public meetings were then held in Princeton, Bright, Plattsville and Drumbo. Over twenty people attended the meeting in Princeton and no one attended the others. The Committee presented the draft and no additional information was formally gathered except for comments supporting the draft plan.

The Committee ended the public sessions with a meeting with Council in which support for the draft was received. The Committee then deliberated to update the recommendations, to use more simplified terms in describing the needed recommendations.

Upon completion of this, public meetings were held in Plattsville and Princeton. In both meetings residents **supported the draft plan**, understood its contents and suggested that **communications** between the Township and the residents was dramatically lacking.

It is important to note the six public meetings were held in order to get a true picture of the plan and to exhaust the information gathering opportunities which will assist in the "community ownership" of the final plan.

3.0 SWOT ANALYSIS - STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

The purpose of this analysis is to identify the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats** that exists today in Blandford-Blenheim.

3.1 STRENGTHS – The things that are identified as positive points about our community

- ✓ Diverse Geography – Our community has both urban centres and rural countryside. The township is generous with a variety of wetlands, forests, rich agricultural land and winding rivers and streams while having a sense of wide open spaces and an endless horizon
- ✓ Weather – The area enjoys all 4 seasons
- ✓ Trails – There are existing trails to explore the area
- ✓ Variety of Facilities – There exist a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure facilities throughout the community
- ✓ Sports Organizations – A variety of committed, dedicated, volunteer run sports groups
- ✓ Broad Demographics – A variety of demographics within the township
- ✓ Proximity to Large Urban Centres – The township borders on the city of Woodstock and is within a short distance to the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.
- ✓ Cost of Living – House prices are lower than similar housing in larger markets closer to the GTA. As well, subdivision lots are larger than average for urban settings.
- ✓ Low Rate of Violent Crime – There is a perception that there is a low rate of violent crime in the township
- ✓ Friendly people

- ✓ Self Reliant communities
- ✓ Elementary schools in urban areas

3.2 WEAKNESSES – The things that are identified as negative points about our community that exists now but can be changed.

- ✓ Lack of Leadership and Structure – The municipal recreation services are not centralized through the department. Facilities are operated by different people (for booking purposes) but maintained by the department in most cases. This situation leads to confusion on who runs what. Also the township seems to be re-active (doesn't move forward if no one is saying anything) and not encouraging participation through public announcements, debate and leadership.
- ✓ Lack of Facilitated Programming - The municipality offers no programming and does not try to accommodate facilitation with others on programming initiatives.
- ✓ Lack of Public Communication – There are no recreation brochures or advertising of events produced by the municipality. As well, the municipal web site and social networking tools are not adequate to get the message heard.
- ✓ Fragmented Community
- ✓ Restrictive Bylaws
- ✓ Lack of Collective Vision and Action
- ✓ Lack of Technology Access
- ✓ Finances

3.3 OPPORTUNITIES – The things that are identified as items that can have a positive impact on our community

- ✓ Inclusion and coordination of volunteers
- ✓ Recreation investment opportunities that impact economic development (i.e. Sport Tourism: Bicycle road races attract athletes while opening the opportunities for Bed and Breakfast businesses and restaurants)
- ✓ Multi Purpose Facilities – Closing schools present an opportunity to create multi-purpose community centres.

3.4 THREATS – The things that may affect our community, that we are aware of but have little impact to change them.

- ✓ Council (elections are every 4 years and could impact any type of planning in recreation)
- ✓ Planning by the County or Province
- ✓ Neighbouring Community Services

4.0 KEY ELEMENTS – A Broader HEALTHY Picture

In reviewing our community services the committee utilized the Oxford County Healthy Communities Report 2011. Through the reports Community Engagement Process surveying Oxford County residents, the two major health behaviours that bring negative impact to the community are Tobacco Use and Substance and Alcohol Misuse. ***The two major health behaviours that are most important to families in the community are Healthy Eating and Active Living.***

Physical Activity was pointed out as a Major Theme in the Community Engagement Process stating that it is important for communities to:

- “facilitate physical activity”
- “have opportunities for fitness and fun”
- “provide opportunities for its citizens to engage in an active lifestyle”
- “have a safe environment that provides opportunity for activity, growing and learning”
- “be a community that is conscious of daily physical activity and healthy behaviours”

The same report suggests alarming numbers with regards to diabetes in Oxford County.

- Over 50% of its population overall and by each age group are overweight and obese (12 years of age and over).
- **Oxford County residents are more obese or overweight than Ontario residents.**
- Oxford County residents aged between 45-64 years old have the highest proportion of obesity than any other age group.
- Except in the 20-34 years age group, Oxford County men have a higher rate of obesity than Oxford County women.

Among young people, the engagement of physical activity is also disturbing.

- 43.1% of students are physically active 7 days a week, while 41.2% are active 3.5 times a week
- 46.5% and 50.9% of grade 9 and 10 students, respectively, are physically active 7 days a week
- 42.0% and 50.0% of grade 11 and 12 students, respectively, are physically active 3 to 5 times a week.
- 43.9% of female students are physically active 3 to 5 times a week
- 48.1% of male students are physically active 7 days a week
- Oxford County men are more active than women (52.2% vs. 44.4%)
- Oxford County Residents are **LESS** active than Ontario Residents (51.8% vs. 49.3%).

Lastly Statistics Canada also reports that the aging population in Canada suggests that we will double the population of our senior citizens in the next 20 years.

5.0 COMMUNITY SERVICES VISION STATEMENT

In developing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Vision Statement the committee considered at great length the general purpose and desired outcomes of parks and recreation within any community. After lengthy debate and discussion the resultant vision statement below succinctly embodies the important components the committee feels are of paramount importance in any discussion regarding parks and recreation not only in Blandford-Blenheim Township but in any municipality. These components include:

- An acceptance that there is always room for improvement on behalf of the municipal government as relates to both providing opportunities for activity and involvement in the community as well as delivering programs and access to facilities;
- The spirit of document development including maintaining a dynamic and "living" mindset when considering recreation including approaching all matters with an open mind and an appreciation for new perspectives;
- There are definable and measurable principles that can guide a decision making body toward consistent and responsible choices in the development and maintenance of parks and recreation.
- It is the responsibility of the municipal government to serve as a central point of discussion and communication both with and on behalf of its residents and that through this communication, it may facilitate improvements in general health and lifestyle for all residents;

The distillation of these components and the general sentiments contained therein resulted in the following vision statement:

We, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee envision the purpose of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim Community Services Department to be:

The ongoing creation and preservation of a **Healthy, Enthusiastic and Engaged Community**, ever guided in all endeavors by the principles of...

- **Sustainability**
- **Inclusivity**
- **Diversity**
- **Quality**

It is recommended that these 4 principles, (sustainability, inclusivity, diversity, and quality) become the directing values and criteria to meet when making decisions.

By understanding sustainability as the development and the long term maintenance of all resources, relationships, and facets to any program, project and undertaking, then the stakeholders (municipal departments, councils, partners, citizens) will be able to fully understand the consequences of any decision for generations to come, not just for the moment at hand.

Enable the **Sustainability** of services by:

- promoting long term solutions;
- providing adaptable facilities that meet changing trends and needs;
- ensuring financial viability;
- considering our resources: human, financial and environmental;
- building capacity through partnerships, training and education.

By identifying the goal of **Inclusivity** as providing the opportunity for all members of a community to become active, involved or otherwise engaged, and then the stakeholders will be able to champion a balanced and calculated approach to recreation development that encourages all to share the benefits.

Quantify the **Inclusivity** of services by:

- appreciating the different needs for accessible programs and facilities for all persons;
- developing collaborative opportunities for the community to participate;
- recognizing the impact of socio-economic limitations within our community;
- encouraging and identifying partnerships.

By understanding **Diversity** as the appreciation of personal and communal differences, and the desire to be collaborative with varied opinions and experiences to realize the potential synergy of working together for a common benefit, then by embracing the broadened perspective the stakeholders can approach any challenge or opportunity with understanding and engage a variety of choices aimed collectively toward a relevant solution.

Promote the **Diversity** of services by:

- celebrating the opportunity to provide choices and benefits across the spectrum of our community's population;
- engaging in a wide range of activities;
- identifying the unique cultural aspects of the community;
- understanding the different urban and rural requirements;
- considering and respecting key elements of our population such as age, gender, mobility, financial capability and geographic location.

By recognizing quality as a measure of ongoing improvement that achieves a higher degree of safety, excellence, endurance and improvement, then the stakeholders involved can surpass the simple restriction of cost analysis and look to more inclusive, diverse and sustainable methods and practices when delivering services, facilities and programs.

Assess the **Quality** of services by:

- establishing standards of performance;
- implementing ongoing reviews of processes;
- encouraging feedback;
- promoting safe practices;
- continually searching for improvement;
- striving for opportunities of enrichment in our offerings;
- supporting qualified staff and volunteers.

5.1 TOWNSHIP OF BLANDFORD-BLENHEIM STRATEGIC PLAN VISION 2012

“To excel in providing a safe, healthy and vibrant place to live with inclusive and sustainable services”

Interestingly the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee created its vision statement before Council and Senior Staff met to create a Township Vision Statement. The importance of Departmental Vision Statements fitting within the Corporate Vision Statement cannot be understated. It is very comforting to see that the previously drafted Parks and Recreation Master Plan Vision Statement fit nicely into the Vision of the Township even though the Township had no knowledge of the Committee’s draft vision.

Township Council and Senior Management Team worked together on the Township Vision and identified four Strategic Directions that would be keys for the corporate success.

1. Develop a plan for ongoing financial sustainability
2. Enhance resident communication
3. Streamline internal services
4. Actively work towards reducing restrictions to growth

6.0 RECOMMENATIONS

6.1 Administration and Structure

Historically, the importance of administration and structure of the Department was undervalued. The result has been a perceived disconnect between the community and the Department with a misunderstanding of the Department's role, services provided and the ability to expand services. The following are simple improvements that can enhance the administration and structure:

- Make Community Services Department the central point for all community recreation programs, events and facilities information and services;
- Annually review the Department for strengths and weaknesses;
- Continually research trends and new ways to improve the provision of recreation for the future;
- Create a Recreation Advisory Committee to receive community feedback, and advise Council with regards to the relevance and sustainability of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan;
- Make the Community Service Department the community link to other cultural, heritage, tourism, sport and recreation opportunities;
- Encourage extensive Township wide Strategic Plan with broad ongoing public consultation.

6.2 Communications

For a facilitated engagement of the community, the desired level of communication requires regular frequency, a variety of mediums and a mechanism to encourage and receive feedback. The level of communication currently implemented between the municipal government, both departmental and political is void of these features. Therefore, steps are necessary to ensure that communication improves, becomes stronger, and ultimately encourages the declared outcomes.

It is the responsibility of the municipal government to serve as a central point of discussion and communication both with, and on behalf of, its residents and that through this communication, it may facilitate improvements in general health and lifestyle for all residents;

The above can be facilitated in part or in whole by achieving the following:

- Promote facilities and programs through websites and brochures;
- List and promote all recreation facilities, programs and their contacts within the Township;
- Make high-speed public access to the internet widely available within government facilities;
- Increase community awareness regarding recreation;
- Encourage better feedback about what the community wants.

6.3 Facilities

Existing recreation facilities within the Township have been the lifeblood of coordinated activity and will continue to be into the foreseeable future. The geographical reality of the township is that there is not a single centralized urban centre but rather a collection historically separated communities. The idea of optimizing efficiency by centralizing facilities as is exercised in other communities has not yet been exercised in Blandford-Blenheim.

Given this reality, it becomes even more important to organize facilities, prioritize facilities according to both current use and potential, and explore new and improved operational structures to ensure the most efficient use of existing or proposed facilities within the Township.

The components listed below are those considered to be of the utmost importance to allow physical facilities to enable and assist in community growth.

- Recognize the fundamental difference between those facilities that have potential for revenue and those that don't;
- Explore new or modified methods for operating and developing facilities with the private sector;
- Promote multi-use facilities over single use facilities;
- Diversify facilities / do not compete with our own facilities (evaluate the efficiency of having similar facilities in multiple centres).

6.4 Programs and Events

Inclusivity and Diversity are two of the main principles by which any recreation initiative could be determined to be successful or not. When a circumstance arises where an identifiable deficiency (such as a lack of recreation opportunity for a group due to age, gender or socio-economic level) presents itself, it would be consistent to address the deficiency through a mechanism such as programming.

According to the SWOT analysis undertaken as part of this project, it has been determined that there are in fact, deficiencies, for a variety of age, gender and socio-economic groups.

Therefore, as an initial step toward countering these deficiencies and exemplifying a diverse and inclusive community, the following items are recommended:

- Investigate operating programs that address an identified deficiency;
- Encourage events that enable partnerships to reinforce widespread community engagement;
- Explore new or modified methods for operating and developing programs with the private sector;
- Promote Municipal Government involvement with Township community events;
- Assist in coordinating community volunteers and volunteer opportunities;
- Develop a promotional program to celebrate the diverse businesses and opportunities within the township;
- Encourage the development of a brand for our community.

7.0 COMMUNITY RECREATION INVENTORY

7.1 Municipal Recreation Facilities – owned and/or operated by

Sports Facilities include:

- Plattsville Memorial Community Arena
- Plattsville Soccer Fields
- Plattsville Tennis Courts
- Plattsville Softball Field
- Drumbo Soccer Fields
- Drumbo Softball Complex
- Princeton Softball Complex
- Bright Softball Field

Indoor Recreation Spaces include:

- Plattsville Memorial Community Arena including Hall
- Princeton Centennial Hall
- Bright Community Hall
- East Townline Community Hall (NOT Operated by the Municipality)
- Richwood Community Hall (NOT Operated by the Municipality)

Outdoor Parks, Green Spaces and Recreation Areas include:

- Plattsville Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen, tennis courts
- Drumbo Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen
- Princeton Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen
- Bright Park including sport field, children’s playground equipment, skate board park, canteen
- Vink Estates Park
- Wolverton Park
- Bright Roadside Park

7.2 Non Municipal Government Recreation Facilities

Outdoor Areas Presently Used

- Innerkip Highlands Golf Course
- Chesney Conservation Area
- Shegardaynou Scout Camp
- Parkhaven Lake Campgrounds
- Camp Impeesa – Scout Camp on 8th Concession
- Education Field Study Centre – Board of Education
- Lockart Pond Conservation Area
- Motorcross on 2nd concession west of Oxford Rd 22
- Elementary schools facilities
- Snyder Family Farm

Indoor Areas Presently Used

- Plattsville Missonary Church Gymnasium
- Plattsville Elementary School
- Blenheim District Public School
- County Libraries
- Plattsville Curling Club
- All Churches
- Countryside Manor
- Drumbo Agricultural Society Hall
- Museums
- Maple Grove Apartments

7.3 Community Recreation Inventory with Future Potential

Outdoor Areas with Potential

- Nith River – canoe route
- Trails – both urban and rural, abandoned rail lines
- Urban walking trails through neighbourhoods
- Road System – provides grid system for cycling
- River Access Points – along municipal or county roads allow for canoe input and take out areas
- Former St. Francis Elementary School

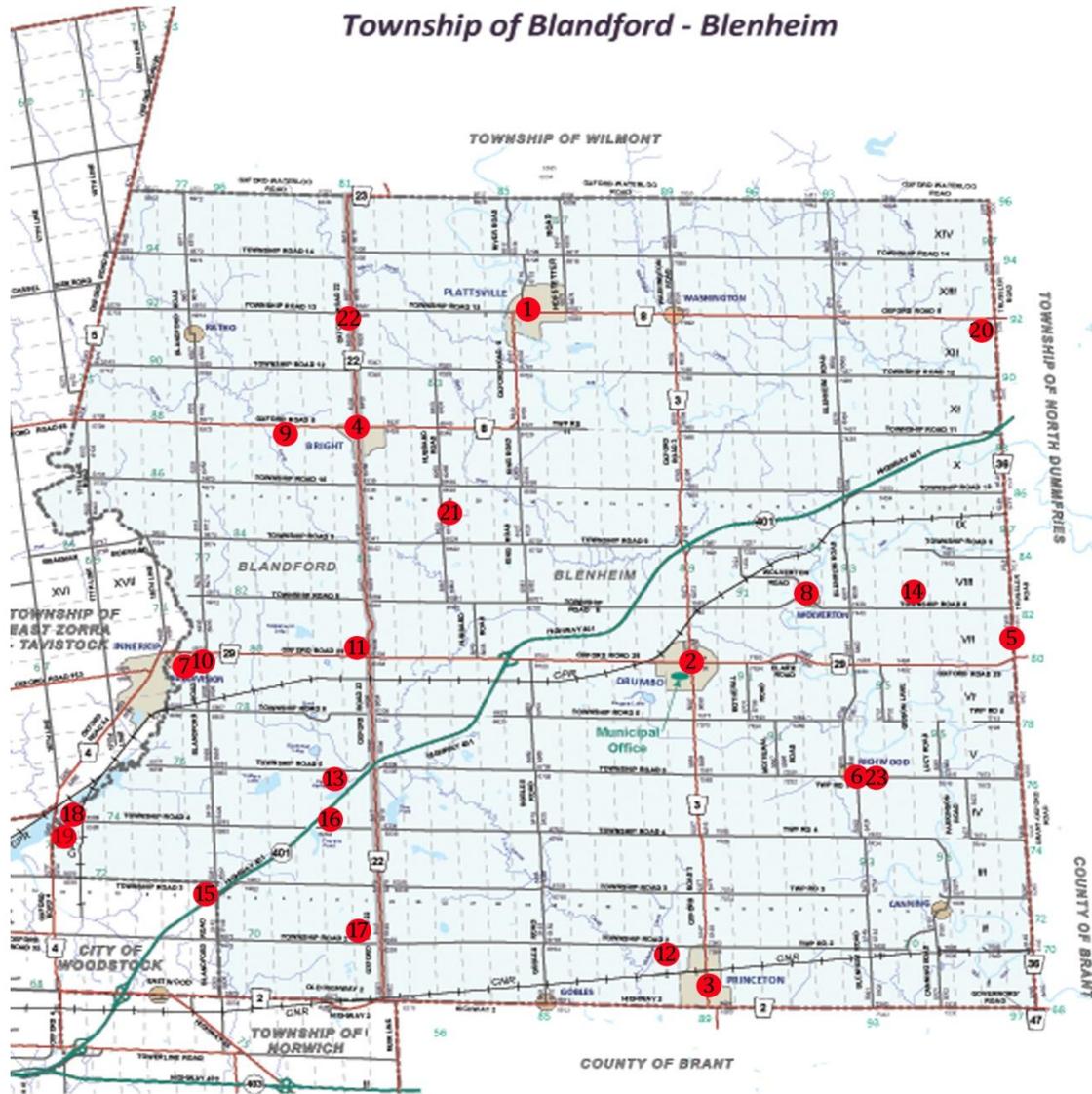
Indoor Areas with Potential

- Princeton Public School
- Maplegrove Apartments
- Existing Elementary Schools
- Former St. Francis Elementary School
- Former Drumbo Opportunity Centre Building

7.4 Culture and Heritage Interests

- Various Heritage Homes – eg: Wolverton House
- Various Cenotaphs, Monuments and Plaques honouring people and places of the past
- Princeton Museum
- Drumbo Museum
- Walters Family Theatre
- Oxford County
- Agriculture

8.0 COMMUNITY ASSET LOCATION MAP



8.1 COMMUNITY ASSET LOCATION LEGEND

1. Plattsville

- Plattsville Memorial Community Arena
- Plattsville Soccer Fields
- Plattsville Tennis Courts
- Plattsville Softball Field
- Lions Hall
- Plattsville Missionary Church Gymnasium
- Plattsville & District Elementary School
- County Library – Located at the School
- Plattsville Curling Club
- Plattsville United Church
- Plattsville Evangelical Missionary Church
- Plattsville Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen, tennis courts

2. Drumbo

- Drumbo Softball Complex
- Drumbo Soccer Fields
- Blenheim District Public School
- Drumbo Agricultural Society Hall
- Maple Grove Apartments
- Drumbo and District Heritage Society Museum
- Willis United Church
- Drumbo Baptist Church
- Drumbo Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen

3. Princeton

- Princeton Softball Complex
- Princeton Centennial Hall
- Elementary school facilities
- County Library – Located with the Museum
- Countryside Manor
- Princeton District Museum
- Princeton United Church

- Sacred Heart Church
 - Princeton Park including sports fields, children’s playground equipment, picnic shelter, canteen
4. Bright
- Bright Softball Field
 - Bright Community Hall
 - Bright Outdoor Skate Park
 - Bright Park including sport field, children’s playground equipment, skate board park, canteen
5. East Townline Community Hall (NOT Operated by the Municipality)
6. Richwood Community Hall (NOT Operated by the Municipality)
7. Vink Estates Park
8. Wolverton Park
9. Bright Roadside Park
10. Innerkip Highlands Golf Course
11. Chesney Conservation Area
12. Shegardaynou Scout Camp
13. Parkhaven Lake Campgrounds
14. Camp Impeesa – Scout Camp on 8th Concession
15. Education Field Study Centre – Board of Education
16. Lockart Pond Conservation Area
17. Motorcross on 2nd concession west of Oxford Rd 22
18. Woodstock Bike Trails
19. Woodstock Radio Control Flying Club
20. Snyder’s Family Farm
21. Walter’s Family Theatre
22. Plattsville and District Heritage Society Museum
23. Richwood United Church

9.0 STATISTICS CANADA –POPULATION, AGE, & GENDER,

Total Population by Age Groups

	Blandford-Blenheim			Oxford County		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	7,355	3,785	3,575	105,720	52,065	53,655
0 to 4 years	385	205	185	6140	3150	2990
5 to 9 years	465	265	200	6345	3305	3040
10 to 14 years	540	265	275	6805	3490	3315
15 to 19 years	540	280	265	7240	3700	3540
20 to 24 years	405	230	170	6190	3120	3065
25 to 29 years	340	170	165	5990	3015	2970
30 to 34 years	410	205	205	6045	3010	3035
35 to 39 years	500	260	240	6420	3205	3210
40 to 44 years	545	265	280	6820	3430	3390
45 to 49 years	670	350	325	8465	4180	4285
50 to 54 years	615	310	305	8160	4020	4140
55 to 59 years	560	280	275	7145	3560	3590
60 to 64 years	455	220	235	6415	3125	3295
65 to 69 years	355	185	170	4960	2405	2550
70 to 74 years	235	130	105	4170	1935	2235
75 to 79 years	165	90	75	3410	1515	1900
80 to 84 years	110	40	70	2605	1110	1495
85 years + over	60	30	30	2385	780	1605
Median Age of the Population	40.8	40.2	41.3	41.2	40.0	82.6
% of Population added 15 + over	81.0	80.5	81.6	81.8	80.9	82.6

Population and Dwelling Counts

	Blandford-Blenheim	Oxford County
Population in 2011	7,359	105,719
Population in 2006	7,149	102,756
2006 to 2011 Population Change (%)	2.9	2.9
Total Private Dwellings	2,716	43,367
Private Dwellings Occupied by Usual Residents	2,616	41,554
Population Density Per Square Kilometer	19.3	51.8
Land Area (square km)	382.28	2039.56

10.0 REFERENCES

- Oxford County – Healthy Communities Report 2011
- Statistics Canada – Community Profiles 2011
- Township of Blandford-Blenheim – Strategic Plan 2012

How to cite: Statistics Canada. 2012. Blandford-Blenheim, Ontario (Code 3532045) and Oxford, Ontario (Code 3532) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 16, 2014).