

Physical Activity & Sun Safety

Goal Statement:

Create a physical environment that provides opportunities for safe daily physical activity for all.

Rationale: Community design has a significant impact on an individual's ability to be physically active.²⁷ Recent patterns of land use and development have increased our dependence on vehicular travel which has impacted the amount of time people spend being physically active. Where we put our buildings, how we separate them from streets by vast areas of parking and how we link them with street networks dedicated primarily to vehicular movement all affect the ability of residents to use their own human powered energy to move around their community without the aid of a vehicle. Communities should be built with fewer barriers to non-motorized transportation so that it is practical and safe and therefore chosen more frequently. Tangible elements of the urban environment such as the built form, open space, and public areas and their relationship to one another, should be organized and designed to support daily physical activity for people of all ages and socioeconomic status.

Objectives

- PA 1** Ensure a built environment that supports and promotes safe active transportation as a priority travel option.
- PA 2** Provide greenspaces, places to play and gather, and recreational facilities and opportunities for all.
- PA 3** Ensure natural and built shade features are available at outdoor public spaces.

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Objective 1

PA 1 - Ensure a built environment that supports and promotes safe active transportation as a priority travel option.

Rationale: Physical inactivity, sedentary lifestyles, overweight and obesity increase the risk of chronic diseases (e.g. heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers). Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Simcoe Muskoka.²⁸ However, moderately intense physical activity (e.g. walking and cycling) performed on most days of the week reduces the risk for heart disease and can improve health in many ways.²⁹ People living in moderate-to-high density neighborhoods with a mix of services within walking distance are 2.4 times more likely to get 30 minutes of daily physical activity.³⁰ Increased landuse mix, street connectivity and residential density are effective strategies to facilitate active transportation.^{30;31} Compact community design minimizes the length and number of vehicle trips and supports use of active transportation and transit.³² Affordable and integrated transportation systems can facilitate linkages within and between urban and rural settings and reduce barriers such as infrastructure deficits, social equity issues, and access to employment.^{33;34}

Healthy, active communities should be promoted by:
a) *planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;*

(Provincial Policy Statement 2014 1.5.1)

Transportation systems should be provided which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, and are appropriate to address projected needs.

(Provincial Policy Statement 2014 1.6.7.1)

/// Planning Policies

- PA 1.1** Land use and development shall be planned using a complete streets approach considering the needs of all users - pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, and shall give priority to street connectivity and active transportation infrastructure.
- PA 1.2** Land use designations of the zoning bylaw shall support a vibrant downtown centre (or local business development district) with a combination of mutually supportive land uses that facilitate active transportation.
- PA 1.3** Areas that are zoned for mixed use shall provide for a synergistic mix of complementary uses that expand the diversity of experiences and options available to residents. (e.g. easy access between retail, employment, residential, public, social and health services, education and recreation uses). These uses shall be within a walkable site arrangement.
- PA 1.4** Development standards shall be created so that new projects develop aesthetic, cultural and safety features to support the pedestrian environment, especially in the downtown centre.

/// Implementation Activities

Short term

- i) Establish an Active Transportation Advisory Committee consisting of municipal and public stakeholders whose purpose is to provide input and make recommendations to council related to active transportation infrastructure.
- ii) Incorporate active transportation users' needs into transportation planning and design by setting goals for pedestrian and bicycle levels of service and include pedestrian and bicycle access in-route analysis when planning transportation projects.

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Medium Term

- i) Develop a complete inventory of trails and pedestrian and cycling networks. Use this information to identify gaps and determine potential active transportation routes.
- ii) Review and amend the zoning bylaw for off-street parking to set both maximum and minimum limits to the size of parking areas to reduce the amount of parking and create a more compact physical form for the community.

Long Term

- i) Identify and plan formal pedestrian routes and cycling networks with direct connections between major origins and destinations (shops, schools, food destinations, offices, jobs and community services).
- ii) Create development standards focused on making places safer and more appealing to pedestrians, with design features such as links between parking and pedestrian walkways, adequate pedestrian-oriented lighting, street furniture and shade features to support active transportation, physical activity and sun safety.
- iii) Require active transportation infrastructure for all new developments (e.g. dedicated bike lanes, bicycle parking, sidewalks on both sides of the road, trails).



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Objective 2

PA 2 - Provide greenspaces, places to play and gather, and recreational facilities and opportunities for all.

Rationale: Physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development for children and youth, and for continued good health throughout the lifespan. Physical activity, even at moderate levels, reduces the risk of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers.³⁵

Access to nature, open spaces, recreation facilities and age appropriate recreational programming encourages physical activity and social networking and has been shown to have a positive effect on physical and mental health.³⁶

1.5.1 Healthy, active communities should be promoted by:

b) planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly-accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources;

(Provincial Policy Statement 2014 1.5.1)

/// Planning Policies

- PA 2.1** The municipality shall provide spaces for active and passive parks that enhance access to recreation and nature as an essential component for physical and mental health and well-being, and shall make this a priority in land use decisions.
- PA 2.2** The municipality shall develop (or revise) a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to ensure safe and accessible parks and recreation facilities, including natural areas and trails, are available to all residents regardless of age, physical ability and financial means.
- PA 2.3** Access to shade shall be provided at municipal facilities and buildings and within greenspaces (parks and play grounds), recreation areas and along trails.

/// Implementation Activities

Short Term

- i) Engage residents in a community needs assessment to gather input from people of all ages, abilities and socioeconomic status to update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- ii) Conduct an assessment of neighbourhood accessibility to recreational facilities, greenspaces (parks and play grounds), trails and natural areas by active transportation means.

Medium term

- i) Develop stakeholder partnerships to move forward with recreational projects identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- ii) Develop partnership agreements between the municipality, schools, private sector and the community for the shared use of school grounds, municipal facilities and private and public spaces for low and no cost recreational use.
- iii) Implement a community-wide signage and wayfinding program for improved access to recreation facilities, recreational areas, parks, greenspaces and trails.
- iv) Select sites for parks and recreation facilities so as to increase access to natural areas.

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Long Term

- i) Develop a Level of Service (LOS) measurement and operational policies for managing and developing the community's recreational assets as described by the Official Plan.
- ii) Use findings from community needs and accessibility assessments to inform the development of active transportation and transit infrastructure as part of the Transportation and Active Transportation / Cycling Master Plans. Ensure this includes connector routes (dedicated paths, sidewalks, trails) to recreational facilities, greenspace, natural areas and trails from residential areas, schools, workplaces and shopping districts to allow greater access by a wider cross section of the population.



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Objective 3

PA 3 - Ensure natural and built shade features are available at outdoor public spaces.

Rationale: The ultraviolet portion of solar radiation is a human carcinogen for skin cancer.³⁷ Melanoma skin cancer rates have increased in Ontario.³⁷ The provision of shade (either natural or constructed) can be an effective means of reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and its associated health risks, such as skin cancer, and should be an essential element when planning for and developing city facilities, parks and public spaces.³⁸

Healthy, liveable and safe communities are sustained by:

c) avoiding development and land use patterns which may cause environmental or public health and safety concerns;

(Provincial Policy Statement 2014, 1.1.1)

/// Planning Policies

- PA 3.1** UVR/sun protection development standards shall be created that require new developments to integrate UVR/sun protection features and landscapes.
- PA 3.2** Municipal outdoor spaces shall be designed to include natural and/or constructed shade features to protect residents from UVR/sun exposure.

/// Implementation Activities

Short Term

- i) Implement UVR/sun protection development standards in new development areas and new municipal outdoor spaces.

Medium Term

- i) Seek community input to assist with implementing the UVR/sun protection development standards in existing municipal parks, recreation sites and outdoor public spaces.

Long Term

- i) Develop an urban forestry strategy that addresses natural shade considerations throughout the community.

