

# TOWN OF AMHERST

## Physical Activity Strategy 2017



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## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

Over the years the Town of Amherst has been progressive in moving towards building a community where making healthy lifestyle choices is second nature throughout Town events, programs and partnerships.

In 2010 the Town took action and created a Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program. Since then, the Municipal Physical Activity Leadership Program developed a Physical Activity Strategic Plan and an outline of the direction the Town of Amherst would like to take in increasing physical activity for the residents of Amherst in the future.

Understanding the need for more people to become physically active in the Town of Amherst has allowed the town to bring in a Physical Activity Coordinator. The Coordinator ensures there are plenty of opportunities for residents of all ages to be physically active as well as works to make the community as healthy and active as possible. By updating parks, creating events, and promoting local organizations Amherst is working to create a sense of community pride in the Town of Amherst.

In Fall 2016, the Town of Amherst committed to a community-wide goal in becoming the most healthy, active community in Nova Scotia. All organized recreation programs and activities consider both activity and nutritional choices when planning for success, which has become a welcomed and positive initiative within the community. With the help of major community partner SOAR Community Health Board, the Town of Amherst is progressively achieving its generous goal in being the most active, healthy community in the province!

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 community is important for economic, cultural and social sustainability among its residents.

## **ACTIVE LIVING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Active Living is a combination of physical activity and recreation activities aimed at the general public to encourage a healthier lifestyle.

Physical activity and recreation are two separate entities.

Recreation is defined as an experience that results from freely-chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015). 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. Recreation also incorporates arts and culture activities including hobbies, games, crafts, sports and play.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscle that results in energy expenditure, and increases heart rate and breathing. Physical activity includes all forms of exercise, fitness, sports, active leisure activities, active transportation, play and active work.

Physical activity provides many health, social, economic, environmental and community benefits. According to Health Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines (1998), physical activity is one of the most effective and safe ways to prevent and treat chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, anxiety disorders, depression, osteoporosis and dementia. Other benefits include increased energy, mood, better sleep patterns, and increased performances in activities of daily living. Being physically active has proven to significantly decrease the risk of premature death and other related diseases.

Physical activity can also have a significant positive impact on social health and wellbeing. Social health involves the ability to form satisfying interpersonal relationships with others. Physical activity can have a positive effect on self esteem and confidence, which when coupled with group activities such as walking clubs, team sports, and community events, can form the basis for lasting social health.

It is generally accepted that a physically active population benefits the economy. A physically active workforce tends to be more productive, with less absenteeism and staff turnover. Conversely, ill health imposes significant economic costs to the Canadian health care system, and lost economic output. In addition, physically active people tend to directly benefit the economy through memberships, fitness equipment, and program registrations.

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.

## **Active Transportation**

Active transportation (AT) can play a significant role in the physical activity levels of individuals and communities. AT is any form of self-propelled transport including walking, jogging, cycling, in-line skating, and skateboarding. The purpose for AT falls under two categories: utilitarian, and recreational. Utilitarian AT tends to have a destination such as work, school, or the grocery store; whereas, recreational AT is done

for leisure and enjoyment. Regardless of the purpose, using AT comes with many benefits to individuals, communities, and the environment.

Increasing the modal share of AT translates into increased physical activity of individuals, the benefits of which are discussed throughout this plan. More use of AT decreases dependence on the automobile, allowing households to reduce vehicle-related expenses or even reduce the number of vehicles required. On a community level, AT means a focus on making neighbourhoods safer through better non-motorized transportation infrastructure (ex. Sidewalks, trails, and bike routes). AT friendly communities are less spread out, require less parking, and cost less on a per-household basis to maintain services. An AT-friendly community tends to be more attractive to visitors and new residents.

In addition to the positive impacts noted above, Active Transportation is environmentally friendly. The motorized transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, and almost one fifth of those emissions are from personal vehicle trips. Obviously, increased levels of AT decrease emissions that contribute to climate change, while improving local air quality and community health overall.

As a small town that established prior to the automobile, Amherst's downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods are inherently AT friendly in terms of how close things are together. Indeed, the majority of residential areas are less than one kilometre from a commercial area. Local street traffic levels, along with an extensive sidewalk network lend themselves to Active Transportation. In addition to the street network, Amherst also has the beginnings of a trail network, with intentions to further enhance and increase connections.

The Amherst and Area Trail Society was created in partnership with the Town of Amherst in 2015 and has a vision to build a community with an excellent trail system that promotes tourism, economic development and recreation for physical activity. Becoming a member of the group gives the opportunity to make recommendations, participate in trail maintenance and development, and take part on trail walks, runs and other recreational activities.

The recreation department has reconstructed the Summer Program to focus on all activities that involve movement. The Summer Program uses community parks, facilities and trails. The Active Living Coordinator, along with summer staff prepare a full summer schedule of free, Family-First activities and events for all ages. All Town of Amherst recreational parks and facilities are designated tobacco and alcohol-free spaces. In 2016 the recreation department partnered with Maltby Sports, a local business, who provided the department with 2 bicycles for summer staff to use during their shifts. Staff use the bicycles for alternative transportation and also provide group rides and tours using the trail system.

Amherst is currently updating its draft Active Transportation plan. A main objective of the plan is to develop a connected and continuous town-wide cycling and pedestrian network with safe and direct routes. By creating a trails system and working towards implementing bike lanes throughout the town, Amherst is well on its way to becoming a very walkable community.

## **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

### **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 further information from the *Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia* have been taken into account.

#### **Demographics:**

Amherst is one of the largest towns in Nova Scotia, with a static population of 9,413 as of the 2016 Census. Within the Northern area of Cumberland County and southern Westmorland County in New Brunswick, Amherst acts as a regional service centre for approximately 30,000 people. While Amherst’s population is relatively stable, it experienced a decrease of 3.4% between 2011 and 2016, after steady gains between 2001 and 2011, as shown in Table 1. The other important aspect of Amherst’s population is that it is aging.

**Table 1: Population by Selected Age Groups:**

<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>0 to 14</b>	1,415	1,497	1,540	1,640	-14 %	15 %
<b>15 to 64</b>	5,760	6,170	6,070	6,015	-4 %	61 %
<b>65 and over</b>	2,245	2,050	1,900	1,840	22 %	24 %
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>9,413</b>	<b>9,717</b>	<b>9,505</b>	<b>9,470</b>	<b>-0.6 %</b>	

The demographic profile of western developed countries in general, and Canada in particular, are showing significant increases in people 65 and older. Amherst’s population is ahead of this trend by about 5% over the national average, with the percentage of people 65 years and older making up 24% percent of the population in

2016. The percentage of the working age population (15 to 64) is 61% and the percentage of children (0 to 14) is 15%.

In addition to age, income level can have a significant impact on overall health. Low income households face many barriers to recreation participation due to user fee, equipment, and transportation costs, immobility, isolation and exclusion, and/or a lack of facilities that meet their needs. However, if these barriers can be addressed in the community, better access to recreational opportunities can significantly improve health outcomes and actually reduce incidences of low income. (Canadian Parks and Recreation 2001)

Throughout the Amherst region low income is a significant issue, with median household incomes trailing the province by approximately 19% in 2011. This gap can be partly explained by the substantial number of single parent households combined with a large and growing senior population. In fact, 22% of the senior population was considered low income in 2010 after tax. (Community Foundation, 2016)

The Goals and Objectives of this Plan address the common barriers faced by low income individuals and families in various ways. In particular, the Town of Amherst offers no cost equipment lending, free ice rental for youth, and free activities throughout the year. These efforts are keys factors for 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” as outlined in the PACY (Physical Activity and Dietary Intake of Children and Youth)(Campagna et al., 2005)

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

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

According to the Stantec’s community telephone survey that was completed in November 2015, the most popular recreation activity in Amherst is walking. Respondent’s indicated that most household members walk for recreation. Swimming proved to be the second most popular recreation activity overall but top activity over walking among youth. Skating, Bicycling, Hockey, Basketball, and Soccer all ranked high among youth up to 19 years of age. When household members were asked for reasons for non-participations, main barriers stated were cost and time. More results from this survey can be found in the Town of Amherst Recreation Master Plan.

### Recreation Activities by Participation- Town of Amherst 2015

Top 10 Activities	0-19 years	20-64 years	65+ years	Totals
Walking	11	158	144	313
Swimming	37	34	17	86
Gardening	0	36	29	65
Reading	7	21	32	60
Home Exercise	1	19	17	37
Exercise Class/Aerobics	2	25	9	36
Weight Training	8	23	4	35
Skating	11	18	5	34
Bicycling	10	14	9	33
Golfing	1	15	13	29
<i>Selected Activities:</i>				
Hockey	10	12	1	23
Basketball	13	3	0	16
Baseball/Softball	7	5	3	15
Curling	3	4	7	14
Soccer	11	2	0	13
Football	4	2	0	6
Tennis	1	0	0	1

### Facilities in the Town of Amherst:

The Town of Amherst has many outdoor and indoor facilities to offer to promote active living and physical activity. Here is a list of facilities used for recreation 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. Amherst Lions Park
7. Winston Avenue Field
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. West Highlands Gym
15. Atlantic Dance Academy
16. Outdoor basketball court (Robb Complex)
17. Outdoor tennis court (Lions and Church)

**Organizations:**

The following is a list of stakeholders that will work closely together to achieve our activity goals including recreation, culture, professional and volunteer organizations within the community. Most of these organizations promote active living by focusing on building stronger communities through engagement and provide opportunities for citizens to enjoy a healthier lifestyle.

1. Cumberland YMCA
2. Cumberland Health Authority
3. District Health Authority
4. Cumberland County Minor Hockey Association
5. Amherst Skating Club
6. Maggie's Place
7. Amherst Minor Basketball
8. Amherst Baseball
9. Amherst Softball
10. JC's Tae Kwon-Do
11. Aerials Gymnastics Club
12. Amherst Curling Club
13. Fundy Youth Soccer
14. Spring Street Academy
15. Amherst Regional High School
16. West Highlands School
17. EB Chandler
18. Lions Club
19. Four Fathers Library
20. Amherst Nursing Homes

21. Amherst Special Olympics
22. Amherst Youth Town Council
23. King Pin Bowling Alley
24. Arts, Culture and Heritage for the Town of Amherst
25. Health and Wellness Clubs
26. Heart and Stroke Foundation
27. Amherst 50+ Clubs
28. Business Community
29. Baptist Church
30. Trinity St. Stephen's Church
31. Cumberland Cheer

Many Stakeholders in the community provide opportunities for families of all income levels to participate in activities in Amherst. 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 provides the YMCA with \$50,000 each year to subsidise a learn to swim summer program which offers low registration costs for families. In addition to the financial help, the YMCA and the Town of Amherst partner for many physical activity events. These events included Summer Programs, Swim Programs, Youth Drop Ins, Friday Night Activity Fun special events, 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. The Town of Amherst have partnered with the Cumberland Health Authority with our Winter Carnival which promotes activities for all ages, indoor walking challenges, and activities to keep people active throughout the cold winter months.

**Maggie's Place:**

Maggie's Place offers free programs for adults and children strengthening and enhancing the health and social development of families. The Town of Amherst subsidises the Maggie's Place Youth Drop In every Thursday held at the YMCA for Grades 4-10.

**Amherst Little League Baseball:**

Since 1955, Amherst Little League has provided FREE baseball to children ages 4-12. This provides a chance for any children interested in learning the sport of baseball to compete and stay active for no cost. The Town of Amherst contributes funding and

partners with the Little League promoters to get the word out about this no cost organization.

**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.

**SUCCESS IN AMHERST**

Working together with other departments within the Town of Amherst and community organizations is a unique way to achieve success. Listed below are a couple of recent success stories in the Town of Amherst.

**Media:**

Amherst promotes physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices at every opportunity we are given. As one of our key messages, all recreation staff promote physical activity and healthy nutritional choices and offer those options during planned events, activities, partnering community events and more. A list of key messages, including the benefits of physical activity, is relayed to those attending Amherst events among other methods of message delivery. Local radio stations and community papers have partnered with the Town as well to enhance the participation level towards becoming the most active, healthy community in Nova Scotia. The Town of Amherst website ([amherst.ca](http://amherst.ca)) also hosts a community calendar as well as parks, stadium and baseball schedules for public use and daily promotion of community events and activities. We've also developed a strong social media presence through our popular Facebook and Twitter accounts, which are successful in promoting physical activity awareness to the younger demographic. These accounts promote activities organized through the Town's Recreation Department and local community-wide activities.

**Outdoor skating surface:**

During the winter of 2016/17, the Town of Amherst announced the opening of "A" Place to Play Outdoor Skating Surface located downtown between Victoria St and Electric St. The outdoor ice surface added to the number of outdoor activities offered in the heart of Amherst and everyone was encouraged to take advantage of the new ice surface, which was open until 10pm daily weather permitting. Skaters of all ages and skills levels were welcomed, with close to 1,000 skaters taking advantage of the skating surface in the first month.

**Free Ice Pilot Project:**

In efforts to increase the use of the Amherst Stadium and to support the Town of Amherst's Physical Activity Strategy, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the Town of Amherst announced a pilot initiative to eliminate the ice-time fees for youth and youth serving organizations who wish to use the Amherst stadium. The aims of this project were to encourage an increase in physical activity among young people and to help create economic spin-offs for the town. With registration and usage numbers declining and low income rates, cost proved to be a major barrier. The target groups for this initiative were youth and youth serving organizations wishing to use the Amherst Stadium. The Amherst Skating Club and Amherst Minor Hockey Association were the two main organizations that benefited from this project. The first year of the Ice Pilot initiative proved to be a success with Minor Hockey and Figure Skating registration numbers increasing. The Amherst Stadium also received bookings based on the free ice to host Ringette camps/tournaments, a Skate Canada Leadership Training and Prep School hockey games. Having these teams/ organizations visit Amherst benefited the economy increasing business for restaurants, hotels and gas stations.

**Big Block Walk:**

The Big Block Walk was formed jointly by the Town of Amherst and the Amherst and Area Trails Society (an organization formed to promote active living, walking trails and a regular downtown walk) in 2016. Walking is the #1 activity in the community. The purpose of the Big Block walk was to provide a safe outdoor alternative to the indoor walking track at the Amherst Stadium and encourage more foot traffic downtown. The Town's goal is to try and have the sidewalks along the route a priority and cleared as quickly as possible in bad weather to ensure it is a clear, safe walking area. Local merchants surrounding the block supported and committed to help keep the route clear. One loop of the block measures 0.7km, while 3 loops covers 2.1km. The Big Block Walk's daily conditions are promoted through social media targeting the whole community and all ages are encouraged. The Town as well as other organizations like the Cumberland Health Board, LA Animal Shelter and the Amherst Police Department have hosted Big Block Walk special events throughout the year. A popular walk is the Big Block Dog Walk where participants bring their dogs to walk in the event, in support of the LA Animal Shelter. The Big Block Walk is a popular option for activity of those who work, live, and play in the downtown area.

**Winter Carnival:**

The theme of the Amherst Winter Carnival, celebrating heart, culture and play, supports the Town's goal to be the most active, healthy community in Nova Scotia offering activities for all ages. The Community wide Carnival's 5 days of winter fun is growing each year with more businesses and volunteer organizations taking part including SOAR Cumberland Health Board, Maggie's Place, YMCA, and the Amherst Jr. A Ramblers. Carnival Activities include daily free skates, big block walks, indoor walking challenge, snow shoeing, community breakfasts, Valentine's Run, horse and wagon rides, street hockey, rec swims and outdoor free play.

**Bike Rodeo:**

Partnering with the Amherst Town Police, YMCA, and the Municipality of Cumberland, the Town of Amherst supports Bike Week to educate and promote safe bike riding in our community. Bike week is designed for all ages to get active, have some fun and celebrate safe cycling while being physically active. Bike week events included Cyclefit at the Cumberland YMCA, group bike rides, bike to work selfie contest, and a Trail Flow portable park event.

**“Walk across Canada” Indoor Walking Challenge:**

The Amherst Stadium’s indoor track is open daily to the public, offered free as part of Amherst’s Physical Activity Strategy and provides users flexible hours and an alternative method of activity, especially in the winter when weather conditions are poor. The Stadium sees a mix of track users and ages daily, from regular and weekly drop-ins to unique visitors and new unfamiliar faces.

The Amherst Stadium challenged walkers to “Walk across Canada”. In just over three short weeks, Stadium indoor track walkers collectively recorded and tracked their laps coast to coast, from Amherst, Nova Scotia to Vancouver, British Columbia. To reach the challenge’s walking goal, participants were tasked to walk 5900 kilometres, equivalent to 29,500 laps around the track. The walking challenge received very positive feedback, with over 100 walkers participating. On average, the challenge recorded 75 walkers and approximately 650 laps each day.

**Amherst Youth Town Council:**

In 2009 the Town of Amherst established a youth advisory body resulting from council’s strategic priority of youth initiatives. Amherst Youth Town Council (AYTC) is a community youth-driven committee representing the voice for Amherst youth. The group was formed to support Amherst Town Council and address the matters within the influence of the Town of Amherst which have an impact on the youth of Amherst. AYTC consists of up to 12 members in grade 7-12 from the Town of Amherst and County of Cumberland in E B Chandler and Amherst Regional High Schools. The committee meets on a monthly basis typically throughout the school year to discuss plans and topics of youth interest. The group partners with community organizations to execute youth-focused events and helps share relevant news and information. At each regular council meeting, at least one AYTC member attends to present the youth council’s monthly report and answer questions from members of Amherst Town Council

**Amherst Lions Park:**

The Town of Amherst is currently in the process of a 5 year plan to create a large recreation space where the West Highlands Elementary School used to be. The first year of the 5 year plan has already been completed by adding a play structure. The second year of the plan is under construction with the addition of a walking track around the whole complex and paths through the middle, and two tennis courts being added in

summer 2017. In the following years of the plan, they town will be adding basketball courts, a splash pad, washrooms and change rooms.

**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, well-lit, walking track and splash pad for youth. The splash pad is a main attraction for the youth during the summer months. 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, as well as barbeques that can be used for a family picnic. Amherst has also recently added play equipment to Dickey Park, and has future plans to add a turf soccer/football field to the facility.

**Amherst Lions Skate Park:**

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

**MISSION AND VISION**

The **MISSION** is 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.

Our **VISION** is to plan and implement a comprehensive Physical Activity and Active Living Strategy to target all ages in the community of Amherst. The Town of Amherst, will continue partnerships with the Amherst community to improve the quality of life through physical activity for all citizens in low risk environment. Amherst residents will be encouraged to lead active lifestyles and will be made aware of the importance of

physical activity and the benefits of leading an active and healthy lifestyle. The Town of Amherst strives to be the most active, healthy community in Nova Scotia.

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Goal #1 - Increase active living through physical activity for all ages**

Amherst is making a commitment to keeping the town active, by promoting physical activity through free, family-first events and activities. The goal is to promote recreation and active transportation as essential to healthy human development which helps to create a happy, active community.

#### ***Areas of Focus:***

1.1 Strengthen relationships and collaboration efforts with local community groups to promote active living.

- Increase local school involvement to further promote, coordinate and communicate youth active living opportunities
- Consistently promote and distribute active living information and updates through community vehicles (i.e. school announcements & homerooms, YMCA bulletins)

1.2 Increase activity in community facilities and parks.

- Promote Town of Amherst Family First activity and programming mandate
- Develop programs with a focus on physical activity
- Further encourage, communicate and prioritize active transportation initiatives such as biking, walking, community trails and community-owned facilities and parks for public use.

### **Goal #2 - Reduce Barriers to Increase Physical Activity**

By reducing cost, social and accessibility barriers when it comes to physical activity, it would have a long term effect on participation and activity levels. By providing free ice time, no cost summer events, as well as designated walking trails and blocks, the town has included all ages in the plan to eliminate barriers that are preventing people from getting out and being active.

#### ***Areas of Focus:***

2.1 Reduce financial barriers to participating in recreation.

- Develop and expand equipment lending program
- Provide free or low cost programming

- Partner with local organizations to increase accessibility

#### 2.2 Reduce social barriers to participating in physical activity

- Increase accessibility, communication & coordination of programming and services
- Create walking club with Heart and Stroke for 55+ (Walk with a doc program)
- Further encourage and promote family first events and activities for all ages

#### 2.3 Encourage equitable participation for females.

- Develop opportunities led by women.
- Increase opportunities for women and girls.

#### 2.4 Enhance a walkability environment

- Make improvements to our physical environment
- Improve infrastructure in high traffic areas

### **Goal #3 - Support a Physically Active Environment**

Amherst has adopted an active transportation strategy that encourages people to use more active ways to get around the town, which will help create a sense of an active community.

#### ***Areas of Focus:***

##### 3.1 Adopt and implement the active transportation strategy

- Develop a connected and continuous town wide cycling and pedestrian network with safe, comfortable, accessible and direct routes
- Educate and promote active transportation with supporting partners (ie. Bike to work/school campaigns, maps highlighting recommended routes, media attention, cycling skills courses)
- Implement a “safe routes” walking guide for the Town of Amherst
- Develop a strategic placement plan and cost analysis for signage and equipment (ie. trail identification markers, mapping, Bike racks, gateway signage)



## **Goal #4. Increase knowledge and awareness of active living benefits through communication**

The Town of Amherst recognizes the importance of knowledge and awareness when it comes to encouraging people to get out and be active. By creating branding opportunities and many social media platforms, the town is reaching out to a whole new demographic.

### ***Areas of Focus:***

#### **4.1 Dedicate a space on Town of Amherst website for active living initiatives**

- Develop an active living website page introducing programs, facilities, trails, parks, activities, and festivals offered
- Use Town website as a tool for promoting awareness to the active transportation initiatives

#### **4.2 Maintain and increase a strong social media relationship with the community**

- Keep social media followers up to date on new and timely active living initiatives

#### **4.3 Build branding awareness**

- Develop branding opportunities through community events & festivals (cultural, social, agricultural, health, industrial, sports and leisure)

## **Goal #5: Connect people to nature through recreation**

By creating a bond between community members and nature, it has been shown to increase mental health, as well as an improved ability to think and focus. The town plans to encourage this by promoting our trails, renting out camping equipment, creating a community garden, as well as many other activities that promote nature and a healthy lifestyle.

### ***Areas of Focus:***

#### **5.1 Increase outdoor recreation participation**

- Promote awareness of trails in the area
- Improve access to our all season outdoor recreation equipment
- Offer outdoor programs & activities

#### **5.2 Establish a link between Horticulturist and community in maintaining a community garden**

- Promote awareness of the community garden
- Provide educational materials to committee
- Encourage youth involvement

## **Goal #6: Ensure continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field**

The recreation sector is constantly changing and growing, with the ongoing development of communities. The recreation department are seen as leaders in the recreation community and evolve with the community and its needs. They work to maintain and enhance involvement in community sports and activities by promoting and volunteering a numerous local events.

### ***Areas of Focus***

#### **6.1 Enhance community leadership & volunteer recruitment**

- Professional development for sport & recreation leaders
- Professional development and workshops to support volunteers
- Revitalize strategies to strengthen volunteer recruitment and development

#### **6.2 Strengthen the alignment of priorities, sharing of resources, and deepen partnerships within the community**

- Build capacity within our local groups including schools, health board, YMCA, Maggie's Place, Four Fathers Library, Senior Facilities, and youth sport organizations.

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