



RECREATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

December 2018



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Municipality of the County of Cumberland's recent mergers with the former Town of Springhill (2015), and the former Town of Parrsboro (2016) have created the need to merge our three Recreation & Physical Activity Strategies. The intent of this comprehensive Strategy remains the same: to enhance the overall health of Cumberland County residents.

Our new Strategy's areas of focus reflect the "Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia", which is the first provincial plan to reflect the "Pathways to Wellbeing – A Framework for Recreation (FRC)" which is a national plan endorsed by Federal, Provincial, and Territorial ministers in February of 2015.

The areas of focus will be:

- 1) **Active Living**
- 2) **Inclusion & Access**
- 3) **Connecting People & Nature**
- 4) **Supportive Environments**
- 5) **Recreation Capacity**
- 6) **Celebration**

Research for the strategy included many reviews of our three former strategies, Citizen Surveys done in Cumberland County (2015) and Parrsboro (2014), Vital Signs report for Cumberland County (2016), the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2016), and the Community Health Plan (2016).

To evaluate the progress of our Strategy we will take part in the periodic Citizen Surveys offered through the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage. As well, we will take part in any open houses held throughout the county so that we can get as much feedback as possible to ensure that the strategy stays on course.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF CUMBERLAND'S MPAL PROGRAM/PARTNERSHIP

The Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion & Protection (now known as the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage) started their MPAL (Municipal Physical Activity Leadership) program as a cost-sharing incentive for municipalities to hire physical activity staff. Since 2008, this program was put to use in our area through the hiring of MPALs in Cumberland, Parrsboro, and Springhill.

The agreement with the province included the development of a Strategy based on improving physical activity in Cumberland County. The Municipality's current Recreation & Physical Activity Strategic Plan was completed and adopted by Council in 2009.

In April 2015, Springhill merged with the County of Cumberland, and Parrsboro joined a year and a half later. With each MPAL having a completed Strategic Plan of their own, it was time to merge all three documents into one.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY

**The following are excerpts from the Cumberland County Vital Signs Report, 2016*

Economy and Work

The employment rate in Cumberland County is 49%, lower than the provincial average of 57%.

Shared Prosperity

Hourly wages in Cumberland County were among the lowest in the country in 2015.

44% of workers in Cumberland County earn a salary below \$20,000. This was considerably higher than provincial and national averages.

Getting Around

As a predominantly rural county, walkability is a challenge for most Cumberland County communities, leaving most residents heavily dependent on cars. Only 7% of Cumberland residents walk to work, while 91% drive. There are no publicly funded transportation services in Cumberland County.

Health & Mental Health

Youth and young adults from the Northern Zone (Cumberland, Colchester, East Hants, Pictou Counties) reported the highest levels of elevated depressive symptoms in the province, and the Cumberland region had the second highest rate of suicidal thoughts and behaviour among young people, after Colchester-East Hants.

The prevalence of breast cancer, colorectal cancer, high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, heavy drinking, obesity and disability are all higher in Cumberland than the provincial and national averages.

Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Youth participation in recreation was higher than provincial and national averages in 2014, but an aging population has meant that the overall recreation participation rate is low, highlighting the need for age-appropriate recreation opportunities.

WHY DO WE NEED A RECREATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY?

The health and well-being of the residents of Cumberland County is one of six strategic priorities for the Municipality, and we would like to show that we recognize the importance of physical activity by providing a plan for how we hope to improve awareness, participation and opportunities in the future.

According to the Municipality's mission statement, we aim to ***promote strong, vibrant communities through support and leadership***. It is our belief that we need to act as role models in the community and show that we do believe strongly in the importance of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle.

We want to focus on reducing barriers to participation throughout the county, whether those barriers are transportation-related, financial, accessibility, or anything that impedes people from taking part.

The rationale for this strategy is based on the Seven Best Investments for Physical Activity (GAPA, 2012). These investments are supported by evidence of effectiveness and have helped to shape our strategy:

1. Whole of school programs;
2. Transport policies and systems that prioritize walking, cycling, and public transport;
3. Urban and rural design regulations and infrastructure that provide for equitable and safe access for recreational and transport-related walking and cycling across the life course;
4. Physical activity and chronic disease prevention integrated into primary health care systems;
5. Public education, including mass media to raise awareness and change social norms on physical activity;
6. Community-wide programs involving multiple settings and sectors and that mobilize and integrate community engagement and resources;
7. Sport and recreation systems and programs that promote 'sport and recreation for all' and encourage participation across the lifespan.

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is important for people of all ages. For children, physical activity is essential for growth, development and effective education. For seniors, a physically active lifestyle maintains strength, flexibility, balance and coordination therefore reducing the risk of falls and prolonging independent living. Physical activity also reduces the rate of bone loss associated with osteoporosis in seniors.

Physical Activity also provides emotional, social, and physical health benefits that can help people of all ages in improving the quality of their lives and increasing their overall well-being. These benefits all have a positive impact on the individual, but are far-reaching, in that they extend to the family, workplace, and community.

It is widely recognized that a physically active lifestyle has significant health benefits, but even when self-reporting, only 38% of Cumberland County residents, and 29% in Parrsboro report being active for the recommended five days per week. (Citizen Surveys, 2014 & 15)

Additionally, we are aware that "the prevalence of disability in Cumberland County is 27%, considerably higher than the provincial rate (19%) and the national rate (14%)." (Cumberland County's Vital Signs report, 2016) For this reason, we feel that inclusion and access in the recreation and physical activity sector are of very high importance.

According to ParticipACTION’s Report Card in 2016, the recommendation that children aged 3 to 4 get 180 minutes of daily activity at any intensity is being met by 70% of children in that age group. However, as the guidelines become a bit more intense, and change to a recommended 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day for those aged 5 to 17, **only 9% are meeting the guidelines.**

On the other end of the age spectrum, the number of seniors (residents 65+) has steadily been increasing in Cumberland County. The senior population went from 18% in 2001 to 25% in 2015. This percentage is significantly higher than the provincial average (19%) and the national average (16%). (Cumberland County’s Vital Signs, 2016) We are very aware of the growing number of seniors in the Municipality and we have kept that in focus while creating the Strategy.

According to the Parrsboro and Cumberland County Citizen Surveys (2014 & 2015), household tasks and walking top the list of the most common physical activities that Cumberland County and Parrsboro residents participate in by a very large margin.

Activity (at least once/week)	Cumberland County	Parrsboro
Physically active household tasks	83%	77%
Walking	80%	66%
Home exercise	46%	34%

Awareness of our area and our residents has helped to shape our Strategy. We know that participation in physical activity is low. We understand that people have a distinct activity focus on walking. We are also aware that we have a growing number of seniors and a high prevalence of disability. Putting this knowledge together will help us take steps to increase physical activity in Cumberland County.

FOCUS AREA #1: ACTIVE LIVING

To foster active, healthy living through recreation.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES/ PARTNERS*	TIME FRAME
1.1	Increase Physical Activity opportunities	Maintain Community Bike Program	Parrsboro ALC	Ongoing
		Expand Community Bike Program	All	2020
		Explore Swimming Program	Parrsboro ALC & YMCA	2019
		Focus on non-traditional programming (e.g. disc golf, geocaching)	All	Ongoing
1.2	Keep residents informed of physical activity opportunities	Continue newsletter / calendars	All	Ongoing
		Maintain and increase social media presence		
		Maintain accurate information on the website		
		Continue to promote and update Fundy Connect		
		Advertise events & activities on multiple platforms		
1.3	Expand on numbers of people who participate in walking as a preferred activity	Promote existing walking opportunities	All	2018 and ongoing
		Maintain Walking Club	Parrsboro ALC	Ongoing
		Regular sidewalk cleaning & maintenance	Public Works	2019
		Improved street lighting	Public Works	2019-20
1.4	Promote Physical Activity benefits	Use existing events to promote Physical Activity	All	Ongoing
		Collaborate with other sectors for innovative ways of reaching residents		
		Investigate links to new provincial physical activity social marketing campaign		2019
1.5	Conduct regular programs/ workshops	Continue to collaborate with partners	CHB, Maggie's Place, YMCA, RCMP, and additional partners	Ongoing

* All = Parrsboro, Springhill & Cumberland Physical Activity staff
 CHB = Community Health Boards
 Parrsboro ALC = Parrsboro Active Living Coordinator

Springhill ALC = Springhill Active Living Coordinator
 YMCA = Cumberland YMCA

1.6	Promote Active Transportation	Encourage residents to engage in AT by providing a consistent message through promotion	All	2019
		Develop an Active transportation plan		2019
		Implement Active transportation plan		2020
1.7	Maintain and increase partnerships on Physical Activity projects	Partner with schools to increase program opportunities	All, CCRCE	Ongoing
		Maintain partnerships to continue providing quality programming	YMCA, CCRCE, NSHA, Oxford, Amherst, and additional partners	
		Work with schools to increase access for community groups after school hours.	All	
1.8	Increase use and promotion of walking track	Collaborate with physiotherapy program and the Recreation Therapist	Springhill ALC NSHA NSCC	2019
		Collaborate with health professionals to introduce intro walking programs		
		Collaborate with health sector to provide program to increase traffic		
1.9	Explore/ Expand use of recreation facilities	Implement the Outdoor Recreation and Multi Sport Complex Master Plan for Springhill	All	Ongoing
		Remove barriers to participation		
1.10	Increase physical literacy	Host "try it" days for different sports	All	2019 and ongoing
		Offer Tumblebugs training and sessions		As needed
		Offer Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) Training		
1.11	Increase opportunities for home-based fitness programs for seniors	Research opportunities and follow up	All	2019-20
1.12	Maintain and increase opportunities for multisport programs in the County	Continue to fund and collaborate with partners to provide a multisport program	Town of Amherst, Sport Nova Scotia	Ongoing
		Investigate opportunities to expand the program to other areas	All	2019 and ongoing

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CCRCE = Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education
NSHA = Nova Scotia Health Authority

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FOCUS AREA #2: INCLUSION & ACCESS

To increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES / PARTNERS*	TIME FRAME
2.1	Age specific programs	Develop family-oriented programs	Parrsboro ALC Springhill ALC	2019 and ongoing
		Provide opportunities for residents across the lifespan.	All	Ongoing
2.2	Determine the recreational needs/ interests of those with special needs	Maintain presence on the regional Inclusion & Access committee	Cumberland MPAL	Ongoing
		Collaborate with local partners	CHB, NSHA, CCRCE, CSSP, YMCA, CCTS, and additional partners	Ongoing
2.3	Develop an inclusion policy	Collaborate with province to create policy	All, CCH	2019
		Research current statistics		
		Utilize local information gathered by Inclusion & Access committee		
2.4	Maintain equipment lending program, including Adapted Equipment Loan program	Create an inventory	All	2018-19
		Create awareness of opportunities to residents		2019 and ongoing
		Expand current inventory		Ongoing
2.5	Increase/maintain the number of youth reached by the Jumpstart & KidSport funding programs	Support and promote these funding programs	All	Ongoing

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 CCH = NS Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage
 CCRCE = Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education
 CCTS = Cumberland County Transportation Services
 CHB = Community Health Boards
 CSSP = Cumberland S.M.I.L.E. and Shine Program (formerly Early Intervention)

Cumberland MPAL = Cumberland Municipal Physical Activity Leader
 NSHA = Nova Scotia Health Authority
 Parrsboro ALC = Parrsboro Active Living Coordinator
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2.6	Reduce cost barriers to participation	Research municipal subsidization program	All	2019
2.7	Decrease financial barriers where possible	Provide monetary assistance to groups in need	Cumberland MPAL	Ongoing
		Keeping people informed of grant opportunities	All	
2.8	Increase the number of people from marginalized groups participating in recreation & physical activity	Research training options for staff and residents to increase physical activity opportunities for those with physical and cognitive disabilities	CCTS, YMCA, NSHA, Town of Amherst, Town of Oxford, NSCC, CSSP	2018 and ongoing
		Support groups like the YMCA who offer subsidized memberships or other financial options		Ongoing
		Support programs / activities that are inclusive by nature		
		Support activities hosted by other municipalities that welcome Cumberland County residents		
2.9	Keep people informed of outside grant opportunities	Continue to populate / distribute newsletters	All	Ongoing
		Keep website updated		
		Keep social media updated		
		Keep event calendar updated		
		Maintain & promote Fundy Connect		
2.10	Improve/Increase physical accessibility	Support all recreation and physical activity facilities to become accessible (i.e. ramps, bathrooms, etc)	All	Ongoing
		Keeping an “inclusion lens” when planning future recreation and physical activity-related infrastructure		
2.11	Maintain & Improve transportation options	Maintain funding of CCTS bus system	Cumberland MPAL	Ongoing
		Consider proposals for additional public transportation		
2.12	Advocate for fair access and equal opportunities for women and girls in physical activity, sport, and recreation	Maintain a presence on the Fundy Female Leadership Network (FFLN) and/or the Women Active NS Board (WANSA)	Cumberland County representation on at least one committee	Ongoing
2.13	Maintain and expand programming during afterschool time period	Focus on girl-specific after school programming	All	Ongoing

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Cumberland MPAL = Cumberland Municipal Physical Activity Leader
CSSP = Cumberland S.M.I.L.E. and Shine Program (formerly Early Intervention)

NSCC = Nova Scotia Community College
NSHA = Nova Scotia Health Authority
YMCA = Cumberland YMCA

FOCUS AREA #3: CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE

To help people connect to nature through recreation.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES / PARTNERS*	TIME FRAME
3.1	Support development and maintenance of trails	Provide support and financial assistance to trail groups	All	Ongoing
		Attend trail group meetings, if requested		
		Promote trails		
		Provide wayfinding signage		
		Develop a plan to develop a trail strategy		2019
3.2	Decrease financial barriers to trail groups	Research trail funding policy	Cumberland MPAL	2019
3.3	Increase the number of natural playgrounds / parks	Be pro-active in new developments	Cumberland Planning & Development	2019 and ongoing
		Review subdivision by-law		
		Partner with community organizations	All	Ongoing
		Inventory and assess existing playgrounds	Cumberland GIS	2019
		Map current playgrounds		
3.4	Enhance visibility of recreation and physical activity infrastructure	Improve signage promoting recreation & physical activity opportunities (i.e. boat launches, parks, picnic areas, etc.)	All	2019 and ongoing
3.5	Develop and maintain a geographic database	Provide local geographic information related to recreation & physical activity to residents	All, Cumberland GIS	2019 and ongoing
3.6	Increase public access to shore / water ways	Improve visibility	Parrsboro ALC, Cumberland MPAL	2019 and ongoing
		Increase awareness		
		Increase accessibility and usability		
3.7	Acquire public access areas for shores	Actively pursue the acquisition of appropriate public access areas	Cumberland MPAL	Ongoing
3.8	Provide opportunities for residents to connect with nature	Create a playground program that offers a mobile "Loose Parts" workshop	All, Play Cumberland	2018 and ongoing
		Continue presence on Play Cumberland Committee	All	ongoing

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 Cumberland MPAL = Cumberland Municipal Physical Activity Leader

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 Springhill ALC = Springhill Active Living Coordinator

FOCUS AREA #4: SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

To ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES/ PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
4.1	Develop a trail strategy	Collaborate with stakeholders Promotion	Provincial trail groups, local trail groups, internal departments	2020
4.2	Develop a streetscape improvement plan to support walking and Active Transportation (refer to 1.6)	Collaborate with internal departments	Planning & Development, CED	2020
		Include plan for lights, sidewalks, signage		
		Improve overall safety at high traffic intersections	All, Public Works, TIR	2019 and ongoing
		Improve sidewalk conditions for improved safety		
4.3	Sidewalk safety	Create priority snow clearing policy	Springhill ALC, Parrsboro ALC, Facility manager, Public Works	2019 and ongoing
4.4	Maintenance of Facilities and recreational spaces	Ensure safety inspections are completed on a routine basis	Public Works, Community Centre Maintenance	Ongoing
		Ball fields	Springhill & Parrsboro Public Works	
		Playgrounds	Cumberland MPAL	
		Joggins Fossil Cliffs	Engineering & Operations, Facility operator	
		Campground	Parks & Facilities	
		Parks & green spaces	Community Centre Maintenance, Parrsboro Public Works	
		Recreation Centres	Parks & Facilities	

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CED = Community Economic Development
Cumberland MPAL = Cumberland Municipal Physical Activity Leader

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Springhill ALC = Springhill Active Living Coordinator
TIR = Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

4.5	Increase opportunities for movement in our recreation spaces	Create and promote opportunities for caregivers to be active during youth/ children programming	Parrsboro ALC Springhill ALC	2019 and ongoing
		Create and promote opportunities for youth/ children to be active during adult programming		
4.6	Improve and/or add public spaces	Update/modernize playgrounds	All	Ongoing
		Ensure that playgrounds meet most recent safety guidelines (2014)	Cumberland MPAL	
		Prioritize accessibility and inclusion	All	
		Education & Advocacy around the subject of natural playgrounds	All, Play Cumberland	
		Add Interpretive signage at the Springhill Natural Playground	Springhill ALC	2019
		Add playgrounds in communities where they are lacking	All	Ongoing
		Investigate the County's vested properties list	Cumberland MPAL	2018
4.7	Implement the Outdoor Recreation and Multi Sport Complex Master Plan	Investigate funding opportunities	All, Parks & Facilities, Community Centre maintenance, Springhill Public Works	2019 and ongoing
4.8	Maximize use of Facilities	Reduce barriers to physical access	All, Parks & Facilities	Ongoing
		Improve promotion & communication	Springhill ALC, Parrsboro ALC	
		Improve esthetics of facility	Springhill ALC, Parks & Facilities	
		Collaborate with partners to increase the use of recreation facilities		
4.9	Strengthen partnership with schools	Increase ease of facility access	All	2019 and ongoing
		Address current Community Use of School Agreements	Cumberland MPAL	
		Investigate additional Community Use of School Agreements	All	

4.10	Collaborate with all three health boards to “increase healthy lifestyle and supportive environments”	Continue existing partnerships	All	Ongoing
4.11	Create an Active Transportation friendly community	Form an Active Transportation Committee	All, Public Works, TIR, Planning & Development, Community Development	2019 and ongoing
		Create and implement an AT plan		
		Increase Accessibility for Bike Traffic		
4.12	Develop and promote healthy eating policies and initiatives	Collaborate internally with municipal wellness committee to develop a healthy eating policy	Municipal Wellness Committee, FNSM Wellness	2018-19
4.13	Continue to align grants program with the goals of this strategy	Prioritize applications that are family-friendly and allow parents an opportunity for physical activity while babysitting is offered	Cumberland MPAL, Grants Committee	2018-19
4.14	Increase presence for Recreation / Physical Activity in other departments	Active transportation	Planning & Development	2019 and ongoing
		Streetscape development		
		New developments		
		Sidewalk snow removal	Engineering & Operations	
		Organize fire hydrant clearing groups		
		Crosswalk visibility improvement		
4.15	Enhance wellness committee	Provide ongoing support	All	Ongoing
		Continue Physical Activity presence on the committee	Minimum one Recreation/ Physical Activity representative on committee	
4.16	Tobacco, Vape, and Cannabis Free Sport and Rec Facilities	Promotion of Municipal By-law through signage	CHB, facility managers	2019
4.17	Support Teen Centre in regards to physical activity	Support the development of their strategic plan	CHB, facility managers	2019 and ongoing
		Leverage plan to identify more opportunities to increase physical activity	Springhill ALC	

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 FNSM Wellness = Federation of Nova Scotia Municipalities Wellness

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FOCUS AREA #5: RECREATION CAPACITY

To ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES/ PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
5.1	Maintain and improve summer programs and sport camps	Evaluate midway through program and at the end	Parrsboro ALC, Springhill ALC	Annually
		Debrief program staff at the end of summer		
		Continue offering surveys to participating families		
5.2	Support and increase volunteerism	Continue to provide volunteer training through the Learn 2 Lead program	All	2018 and ongoing
		Facilitate coaching & officiating development opportunities		
		Facilitate Leadership development in selected activities		
		Offer leadership development workshops for youth		
5.3	Support community groups	Continue to provide grant opportunities	Cumberland MPAL	Ongoing
		Continue to be available for consultation	All	
		Continue to provide training		
5.4	Participate in regional physical activity initiatives (Take the Roof off Winter, Walking School Bus, etc.)	Promote regional physical activity initiatives at a local level	All	Ongoing
5.5	Provide summer staff training	Provide relevant and timely training each year	All	Annually
		All staff will be trained in First Aid & CPR		
		All staff will be trained in High Five Principles of Healthy Child Development		
		All staff will be trained and held accountable to the "Procedure Manual"		
		All staff will have training from Child Protective Services		
5.6	Develop a plan to revive the Cumberland County Wellness Network	Offer educational opportunities for local employers	All	2019
		Work with employers to develop wellness policies		2019 and ongoing
		Support Physical Activity Social Networks		

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FOCUS AREA #6: CELEBRATION

To celebrate the successes of our residents.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION PLAN	LEAD AGENCIES/ PARTNERS	TIME FRAME
6.1	Keep council informed on the progress of the Physical Activity Strategy	Provide occasional updates to council	All	Ongoing
6.2	Celebrate Volunteers	Improve & expand on the Annual recognition banquet	Community Development Department	Ongoing
		Continue to celebrate volunteers through various media streams	All	
6.3	Raise awareness of municipal assets throughout the county	Host periodic community stakeholder sessions	All	Ongoing
6.4	Celebrate wellness-related achievements on behalf of staff members	Continue to recognize 6 month and one year wellness milestones at our annual staff recognition banquet	Wellness Committee	Ongoing
6.5	Celebrate local first and second place winners in provincial athletic events	Barry Wood Memorial Outstanding Achievement Award	Parrsboro ALC	Ongoing
6.6	Celebrate residents achievements	Nominate residents for outside awards	All	Ongoing

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EVALUATION

We believe strongly in the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of this strategy, but we also understand the limitations of actual evaluation.

We have several methods that we feel will work to keep the strategy on track to achieve what it has set out to do.

1. We will measure participation numbers, when possible.
2. The physical activity staff will sit down every year to review the strategy and see if anything needs to be added, changed, or is obsolete. We will also set new target dates for actions, as necessary.
3. We will be able to measure some success according to our completed actions in the strategy.
4. We will continue to participate in the Citizen Surveys as they are made available.
5. The physical activity staff will provide updates to Council on the strategy, and how our work is achieving what we set out to do.

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