

OROMOCTO NEW BRUNSWICK REVITALIZES THE COMMUNITY WITH

Creative Infrastructure Improvements



**THE FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION
IN CANADA GOALS AND PRIORITIES:**



**SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENTS**



**INCLUSION
AND ACCESS**

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The town's recreation facilities had become unsafe, to the point where they could not and were not being used. Community-based groups, including the school district who had been calling for repairs for three years, were particularly concerned about the surfaces on the track and tennis courts. Therefore, a combination of considerations, including risk management, aesthetics, and the demand from user groups (traditional and emerging), provided the impetus for action.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project included resurfacing the track and repainting track lines on the six-lane track, re-surfacing the tennis courts, and adding pickle ball courts as well as converting the courts to outdoor ice rinks in winter. The tennis and pickle ball courts are outside and located in a central location that is within walking distance of nine schools, and several day cares and seniors' homes. The track is open all day while the tennis and pickle ball courts are lit until 10:00 p.m. Users do not need to pre-book and it's all free.

Recreation New Brunswick, along with the provincial Minister of Sport, Recreation, and Culture had challenged municipal leaders and councils to adopt the Framework through a resolution. The Oromocto Town Council had readily endorsed it and passed a resolution to align it with the town's long-term strategic plan. Because the Town Council of Oromocto is committed to "the public good" (one of the values in the Recreation Framework), they wanted to ensure that recreation facilities were open and accessible. The combination of Council's will to improve and upgrade overall infrastructure, the urging of community partners and Council's endorsement of the Framework all contributed to ensuring the upgrades could take place.

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When Canada 150 announced funding for infrastructure improvements, the town determined that both strategies lined up and a 50/50 partnership between the municipality and federal government (\$120,000 project) was borne. Working with community partners and the Conference Board of Canada's software, the Recreation Department prepared an economic impact analysis. They were able to show economic spin-off estimates up to \$215,000, for example, by being able to host regional track meets.

Demographic data also influenced Council. Oromocto has a uniquely young population with a median age 10 years younger than the rest of the province and country. This is due to the large military population (ages 25-40) and their young families. At the same time, the Town is striving to become an age-friendly community with an aging population. This initiative benefits both youth and older adults.

OUTCOMES

A number of positive outcomes were realized through the revitalization and repurposing of some of the Town's recreation facilities.

- Schools returned to using the facilities which has, in turn, strengthened the safety and quality of their physical education programs.
- Community use of the tennis courts has increased significantly. People also believe that the re-energized facilities have contributed to the economics of the community.
- Incorporating pickle ball has allowed for a diversity of programming and increased use by both the old and the young. It is now a prominent activity in the recreation schedule. A group, primarily comprised of retired residents, established a pickle ball club. This has enhanced the well-being of older adults who play and the community's volunteer capacity. Pickle ball has even captured the hearts of the schools. Students practice inside with portable sets in the gym during winter months.

- The use of the courts has been extended to all seasons. In winter, the courts are used as an ice rink and lit up for night-time skating. Families who cannot afford skating lessons or hockey can use the outdoor rink for free at any time.
- There is more equitable use of the facilities. Older adults, those with lower incomes, and people with mobility challenges can all use the refurbished track, which has an all-weather and even surface.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Sell the Recreation Framework to Town Council. Ultimately, this was essential in getting high level, political involvement. The values and vision in the Framework mirrored the town's strategic planning. Combined with the Recreation Department's stakeholder/community engagement that helped create the long-term plan, it was easy to ask Council to both endorse and enact the Framework. This, in turn, made it easier to move ahead with priorities and projects.
- Think about hidden costs, especially when applying for third party funding. This could include items such as changes to fencing around the facility and other environmental assessments. Once funding is approved, it is difficult to ask for more to cover costs you have not considered in the original proposal.
- Think beyond the immediate need and single-use of a facility (e.g. refinishing some tennis courts to play tennis). In Oromocto, the tennis courts became much more for many more people. Look at the trends, then enhance your scope. Involve partners in the discussion about current and future uses and challenges with existing infrastructure. It's not just about renewing; ask how do we revitalize the community as a whole?

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Framework Goal and Priority	Goal 4: Supportive Environments (Renew infrastructure) Goal #2: Equitable participation for all (inclusive for older adults)
Population Addressed	Blending of civilians, military (5th Canadian Division Support Base) and First Nations community. All ages, abilities and incomes.
Community	Town of Oromocto, 15 minutes east of Fredericton, New Brunswick. Small community of approximately 9,800 people, but the recreation department serves a broader community of 25,000.
Setting	Rural
Lead Implementer and Organization	Bill Jarratt, Director Recreation, Town of Oromocto
Key Partners	Canada 150, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
Activity Focus	Track and tennis court resurfacing and repurposing leading to increased accessibility and overall participation in recreation as well as enhanced community connections.
Stage of Development	Complete