

Public Consultation to Guide Recreation and Cultural Services in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills

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Executive Summary

About this Study

This study supports a planned initiative to establish a strategic document to guide the future planning and development of parks, facilities, recreation services, cultural assets, museums, festivals and events, libraries, and childcare services for the next 10 years in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills.

The study involved a public consultation through the delivery of a multi-channel resident survey to understand residents' perceptions and participation in recreation and cultural services and programming. The goal of the study is to determine immediate and long-term options for the municipality through the analysis of trends in residents' priorities and preferences.

Overview of Survey Results

Mississippi Mills residents like their communities for the vibrancy, openness and welcoming environment they experience. The perceived safety of communities, along with naturalized green spaces, proximity to the Mississippi river, rural environment and small-town feel are the most appealing things about living in the communities of Mississippi Mills. Residents are proud to call Mississippi Mills home. However, residents are not as confident that Mississippi Mills is as diverse as it could be, and there is sentiment that it may be a little slow to embrace and adapt to change that will keep communities dynamic.

Community residents are highly satisfied with outdoor spaces and festivals and events that are held within the communities of Mississippi Mills. Parks, playgrounds and trails, along with festivals and events, receive high satisfaction ratings from residents. Nearly all survey respondents use various outdoor spaces for different activities, with walking trails being the most popular. The entertainment value, convenience of location, and youth and child friendliness of festivals and events has residents wanting to participate, and attendance has re-bounded since the COVID-19 pandemic to the point that attendance is similar to participation rates more than two years ago. These areas are important to residents and they indicate a high likelihood to continue to use outdoor spaces and attend festivals and events in the future.

Daycare services in the municipality have very high satisfaction levels with quality of service and a healthy, safe environment influencing the strength of services. Demand for services is high with a large number of residents on a waiting list for care. The backlog is expected to continue to grow in the future, and an additional location should be explored upon review of demographic projections.

Cultural, heritage and recreation facilities provide quality of life benefits and are viewed by residents as important elements of the communities in the municipality. Overall satisfaction levels are fair but vary among communities; some being more satisfied than others. Residents are looking for entertainment, and health and fitness benefits from these spaces at a location that is convenient

for them. The main reasons for not visiting cultural, heritage, or recreation facilities is that residents do not find the sites appealing, or they didn't know about them leading them to visit these types of sites outside of Mississippi Mills.

Similarly, recreational and cultural services and programs have some degree of satisfaction, but levels are moderate overall, and there are lower levels of satisfaction at the community level than other areas. There is a lower level of awareness of the types of programs and services being offered and many residents are going outside of Mississippi Mills as programs are either not available (e.g., full registration), or not offered. Resident views also suggest that programs and services offered are less appealing than other recreation and cultural services investigated by this study.

Mississippi Mills residents are highly interested in fitness and health, find the available services and programs affordable and accessible, but suggest these elements are not meeting needs from a resident's perspective. A consistent theme arising from suggestions for the provision of both facilities and programs is a desire for aquatic related activities and a facility. Other common suggestions include the need for more locations to support outdoor activities, such as softball, soccer, tennis, pickleball and dog parks. Drawbacks influencing satisfaction levels with recreational programs and services include the lack of ease when registering, the cleanliness and maintenance of facilities, and the difficulty finding information.

Key Takeaways

Mississippi Mills residents are highly satisfied with many elements of the recreation and cultural programs, services, and facilities offered by the municipality. In some cases, there are narrow opportunities to improve from an already good position, but efforts to maintain high levels of satisfaction should be continued. Opportunities in the areas of parks, playgrounds and trails, along with festivals and events, should be balanced in relation to overall priorities identified through the Growth Management Planning Project and available resources as these areas are performing well.

Increasing awareness has surfaced in three areas related to recreation and cultural services in the municipality. There are opportunities to share or promote more information related to festivals and events directed to all communities in the municipality, promote cultural and recreational facilities, and make it easier to access information about recreation services and programs available throughout Mississippi Mills.

Cleanliness and maintenance of facilities and sites in the community is also important to residents, and was raised in two areas: parks, playgrounds and trails, as well as facilities. With the distributed delivery model employed by the municipality, there are opportunities to work more closely with partners or funded organizations to standardize maintenance and upkeep requirements, particularly when the municipality is providing funding, to support a consistent resident experience.

Pivoting to meet residents' needs in the area of recreational programming may be the most challenging area for improvement. Recognizing that the Municipality provides some recreation

programs, but also relies on several community organizations and volunteers to plan and provide recreation, indicates there is a need for additional consultations. Businesses and community organizations, employees, advocacy groups, partners, and other internal and/or external stakeholder groups, that focus on experiences with recreation programs and services, can assist in determining priorities. Additional research and consultations will ultimately advance the most important elements to be included in the Recreation and Cultural Plan.

1. Introduction

Mississippi Mills Council recently led a process to develop a Strategic Plan for the organization that is guiding the efforts of the Municipality from 2020-2023. One of the Actions resulting from the Strategic Plan is the development of a Community Services Master Plan; a planned initiative to establish a strategic document to guide the future planning and development of parks, facilities, recreation services, cultural assets, museums, festivals and events, libraries, and childcare services for the next 10 years.

A public consultation exercise was required in order to develop input to the strategic direction of the services being addressed that will feed into the Municipality's Community Services Master Plan.

This study has three main study objectives:

- Undertake a public consultation to understand Mississippi Mills resident perception of and participation in recreation and cultural services and programming;
- Determine immediate and long-term options for the municipality through trends in resident's priorities and preferences; and,
- Contribute information to guide strategic planning, budgeting decisions and knowledge of residents' priorities.

Library Services were excluded from the scope of this study as the Mississippi Mills Public Library was undertaking its own research, consultation and strategic planning activities.

2. Methodology

The research was undertaken in order to assess residents' experiences, perceptions and satisfaction with recreational programs and services; cultural and recreational facilities; festivals and events; parks, playgrounds and trails; and childcare services. This methodology section will summarize the research design, sampling strategy, response rates, survey validity, analysis methods, out of scope consultations, and the strengths and limitations of the research.

Research Design

The Mississippi Mills Resident Survey was designed in close collaboration with the Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprised of the CAO, recreation and childcare managers, representatives of Mississippi Mill's Council, and the consulting team.

The survey tool included questions related to general perceptions and experiences with living in Mississippi Mills, satisfaction with recreation programs and services, cultural and recreational facilities, festivals and events, parks, playgrounds and trails, and childcare services. The survey also included demographic questions such as age, gender, education, income, number of people in household, type of household (family, couple, single), whether households included children and/or seniors, and ethnic identity. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix A.

The survey utilized a cross-sectional approach, representing the perceptions and experiences of residents at one point in time. The survey was distributed via online links to residents through client-supplied lists, for example, to parents utilizing childcare services, and Municipality Partners and members of recreational associations and clubs; through social media sites (e.g., Facebook); and on the Municipality's website. The survey was also distributed by paper at two Municipality events: Municipal Open House "At A Glance" on September 14th, and Childcare Services Open House on September 24th. It was also available at the Municipality's main office location for residents who wished to complete the survey by paper.

The survey was conducted between September 14 and October 31, 2022. The online survey was in field between October 3 and 31, 2022. A total of 325 surveys were completed.

Sampling Strategy

The sampling plan utilized multiple non-probability sampling approaches, including:

- Self-selection methods, for example, downloading a link from a social media site, or the Municipality's website;
- Convenience sampling, for example, completing a survey at an event or at the Municipality's main office;

- Snowball sampling whereby managers distributed the survey link using client lists and clients further distributed it to other clients; and,
- Purposive sampling, for example, distributing the survey to parents of childcare centres for feedback on childcare services.

The Resident Survey did not utilize a random sampling approach whereby every member of the population would have had an equal chance of being selected. As a result, not every household in Mississippi Mills was reached, and subsequently, the findings are not representative of all Mississippi Mills residents.

Participation Rate

There were 325 surveys completed in total. A response rate is difficult to ascertain given that the number of residents eligible to respond to the survey are unknown. For example, we do not know, with any degree of certainty, the number of residents that were aware of the survey and manner in which they could access the survey link or paper copy, and thereby be in a position to complete the survey.

Notwithstanding, it is worth noting that the survey was not meant to be a scientific study seeking to determine the views of all residents of Mississippi Mills. Hence, the participation rate is sufficiently large enough to allow for higher levels of credibility, further assuring that the findings and conclusions are grounded in research methods that are reliable and valid.

Reliability and Validity of Survey Findings

In order for a survey to provide sufficiently sound, consistent, and relevant evidence, the information it provides must be both reliable and valid.

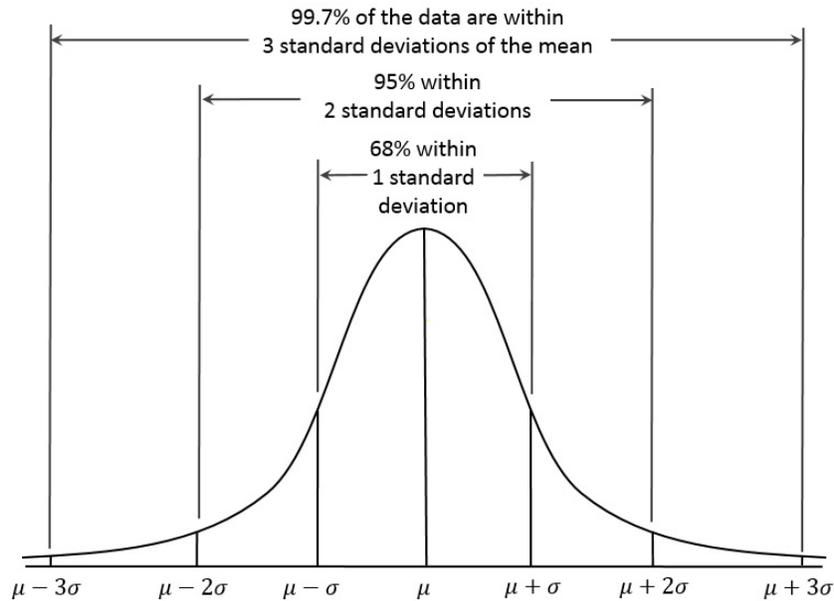
Reliability

A survey is reliable when measurement is consistent across settings and at different times. In order for a survey to be reliable it must have a standardized and consistent questionnaire and survey procedures that are administered in a consistent fashion each time. In other words, if the Resident Survey is administered cross-sectionally, at different points in time, in the same manner as it was for the current study (online and paper via several venues), it will yield similar results.

As a proxy for reliability, we examine the average satisfaction ratings and their outliers. In general, a high standard deviation shows that the data is widely spread (less reliable) and a low standard deviation shows that the data are clustered closely around the mean (more reliable).

The chart below provides an overview of a normal distribution of scores and how standard deviations can provide evidence that ratings with lower standard deviations are more reliable.¹

Figure 1: Standard Deviations in a Normal Distribution



In reviewing the means and standard deviations of the survey satisfaction ratings in the Mississippi Mills Resident Survey, it is interesting to note that all of the ratings have standard deviations of 2 or less, indicating that the majority of findings are clustered around the mean with very few outliers. This is also indicative of ratings that have a margin of error of plus/minus 5% (at 95% level).

Moreover, the findings indicate that the satisfaction findings are very reliable.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Satisfaction Scores

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall satisfaction with living in Mississippi Mills	6.4	1.99
Overall satisfaction with festivals and events	7.9	1.52
Overall satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities	7.4	1.75
Overall satisfaction with recreation programs and services	7.0	1.80
Overall satisfaction with childcare services	8.3	2.01

¹ Standard deviations of 2 mean that 95% of the scores (the satisfaction ratings) are centred around the mean.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which the survey information is relevant to the conclusion being drawn and is sufficiently accurate and complete to support the conclusion. Validity is commonly thought of as the answer to the question "Are you measuring what you want to measure?"

In the case of the Mississippi Mills Resident Survey, the questionnaire items were carefully constructed to ensure that they were aligned to the research questions posed by the Project Steering Committee, hence measuring what they were intended to measure. Additionally, many of the main satisfaction questions were designed to be comparable to those of other municipalities to ensure that a standardized approach was taken. For example, residents were asked to rate the most appealing thing about living in Mississippi Mills. The top responses were found to be quality of life, safety, cleanliness, and parks/open spaces. This standardized question was strategically taken from other municipalities for benchmarking purposes. Indeed, comparable findings were found in a recent study by the City of Mississauga² who reported that the most appealing elements associated with living in Mississauga are being close to amenities, parks/open spaces, cleanliness and safety. All things considered, it is concluded that the Mississippi Mills Resident Survey is a valid questionnaire that is sufficiently accurate and complete to support the conclusions of the research.

Margin of Error

The sampling error is the discrepancy between sampled values and population values. This type of error can be larger or smaller depending upon sample size and sampling procedures.

Given that a non-probability sampling approach was undertaken for the current study, the margin of error, or sampling error, is calculated using the **Bayesian Credibility Interval**,³ versus the confidence interval which is traditionally used in research studies that employ a randomized sampling approach. Bayesian models allow us to generalize from a sample to a population, since they correct for unbalanced samples due to non-response, coverage, or other biases.

Using the Bayesian Credibility Interval to calculate the margin of error for the overall sample size of 325, at the 95% credibility level, the Mississippi Mills Resident Survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 6%. In simple terms, this means that the research findings for items where all 325 residents responded (e.g., the overall satisfaction questions) come within 6% of the results for the population, had the entire population been surveyed. Moreover, we can also infer that the survey has high credibility levels, both at the overall level as well as more specifically for questions with sample sizes of 325.

² Forum Research, City of Mississauga Citizen Satisfaction Survey Final Research Results, August 2, 2019.

³ Bayesian Data Analysis, Second Edition, Andrew Gelman, John B. Carlin, Hal S. Stern, Donald B. Rubin, Chapman & Hall/CRC | ISBN: 158488388X | 2003

Profile of Survey Respondents

This section provides an overview of respondents by community, ethnic identity, education, household income, length of time living in Mississippi Mills, and types of households. Where possible the survey respondents are compared with those of the population of Mississippi Mills^{4,5} to assess the degree to which the sample is representative of the general population of Mississippi Mills.

In general, it was found that the majority of survey respondents reside in Almonte. There were higher proportions of survey respondents that identified as female in the survey group, and likewise, survey respondents were found to have higher levels of education and higher household incomes than the population of residents. However, the survey group is representative of residents in the population on ethnic identification (most indicate they are white) which is comparable to the population using two proxy variables: mother tongue (speak English) and country of birth (born in Canada). Additionally, respondents practically mirror the proportions of middle age residents in the 35-59 age category.

Respondents by Community

By community, two-thirds of respondents (66%) were found to be from the Town of Almonte, with the next highest proportion being from Ramsay. The remaining respondents are dispersed amongst the remaining communities.

Table 2: Response Rates by Community

Community	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Almonte**	215	66.2%
Appleton	7	2.2%
Blakeney	4	1.2%
Clayton	13	4.0%
Ramsay	45	13.8%
Pakenham	23	7.1%
Cedar Hill	7	2.2%
Scotch Corners	1	0.3%
Other	7	2.2%
Prefer not to answer	3	0.9%
TOTAL	325	100.0%

⁴ 2021 estimate from

https://www.citypopulation.de/en/canada/ontario/admin/lanark/3509030_mississippi_mills

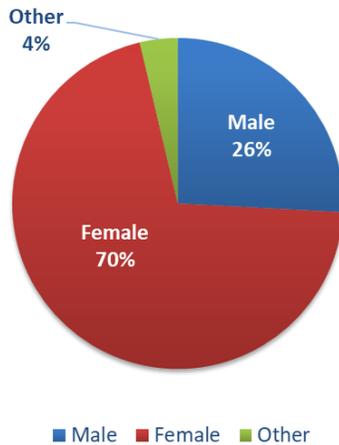
⁵ <https://townfolio.co/on/mississippi-mills/demographics>

Gender Identity of Survey Respondents and Population Residents

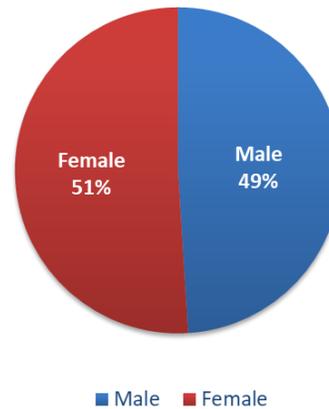
Respondents are not representative of the population by gender. There are significantly more females in the survey sample than in the population (70% and 51%, respectively).

Figure 2: Comparison of Gender Identity of Survey Respondents and Population

Gender Identity - Survey



Gender Identity - Population



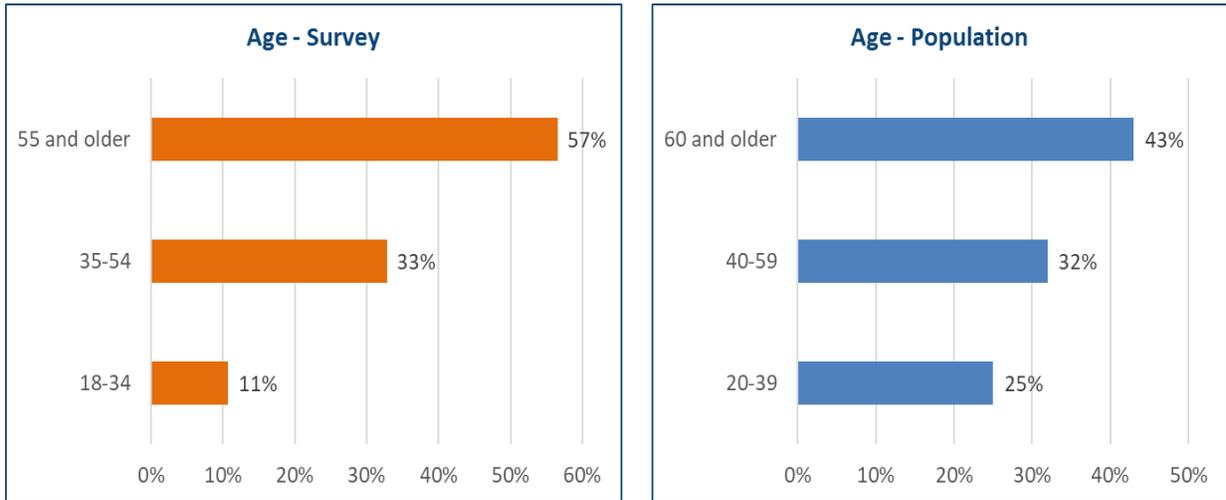
Age of Survey Respondents and Population Residents⁶

Survey respondents are relatively comparable to those of the population with respect to age, especially so for those in the middle groupings, which are nearly identical.

The findings indicate that nearly six-in-ten (57%) survey respondents are in the 55+ age group. In comparison, population residents are somewhat younger, with greater than four-in-ten (43%) being in the 60 and older age category. Those in the middle age groups are comparatively similar (33% survey and 32% population).

⁶ While the age ranges between the survey and population groups are not identical, the groupings are sufficiently comparable for assessing representativeness.

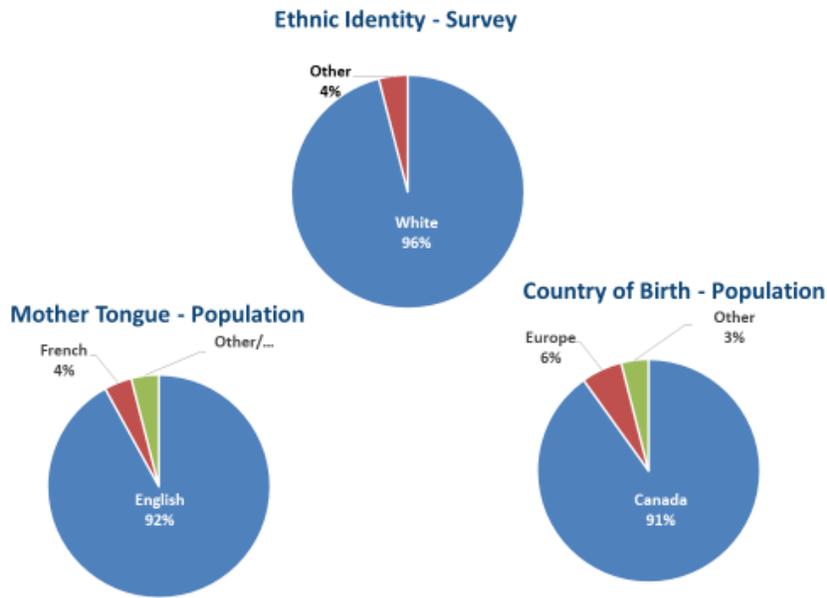
Figure 3: Age of Survey Respondents and Population



Ethnic Identity

The ethnic identity of survey respondents is compared with those of the population on two comparable levels: mother tongue and country of birth. The findings indicate that the survey sample is very representative of the population in this respect. Moreover, it was found that nearly all (96%) survey respondents identify as white, in comparison to population statistics that report that residents in Mississippi Mills are primarily born in Canada (91%), and are English-speaking (92%).

Figure 4: Ethnicity, Country of Birth and Mother Tongue – Survey versus Population



Education

Generally, survey respondents report being highly educated with 89% having either a university degree, or post-graduate certificate, diploma or degree (60%), while another 29% reported having a college or other diploma. In comparison, only 53.5% of population residents⁷ have a university degree or below, or college diploma.

Figure 5: Education Levels of Survey Respondents

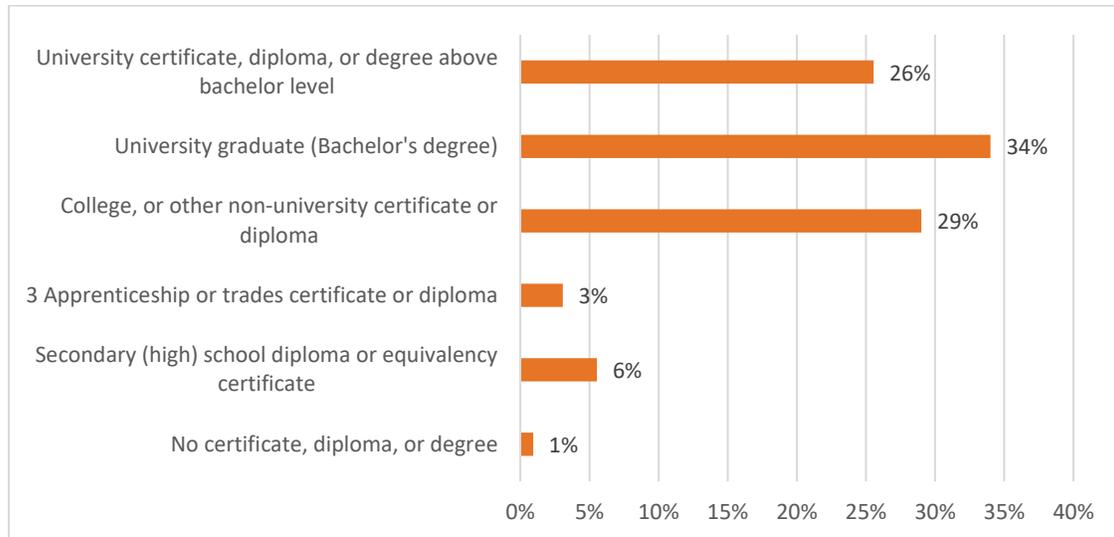
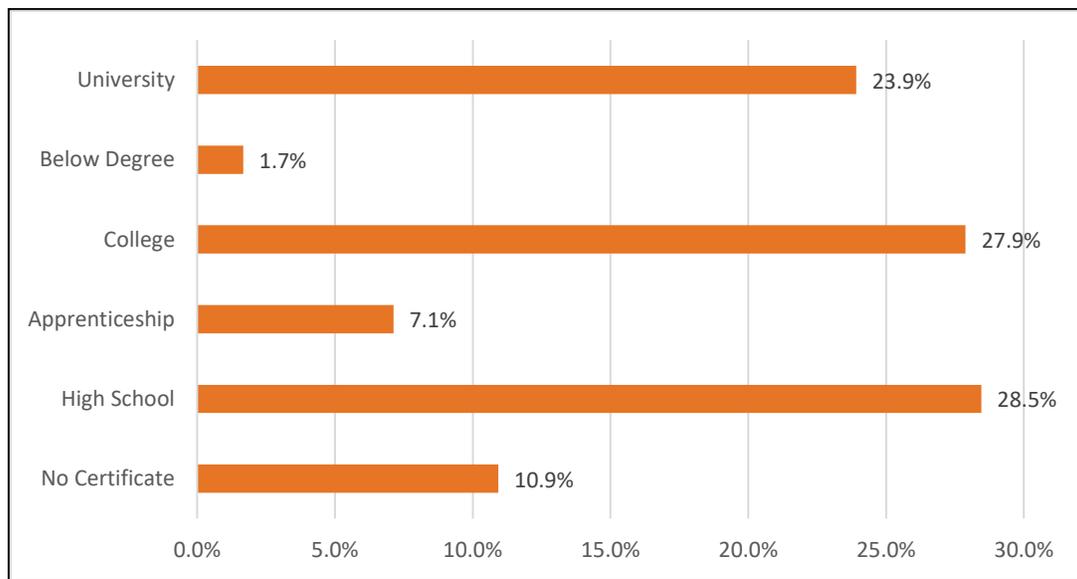


Figure 6: Education Levels of Mississippi Mills Population



⁷ <https://townfolio.co/on/mississippi-mills/demographics>

Household Income

Survey respondents are in slightly higher income brackets than population residents,⁸ with nearly two-thirds (60%) reporting household incomes of greater than \$100,000 per year. In comparison, one-half (50%) of population residents earn greater than \$100,000 per year.

Figure 7: Household Income Survey Respondents

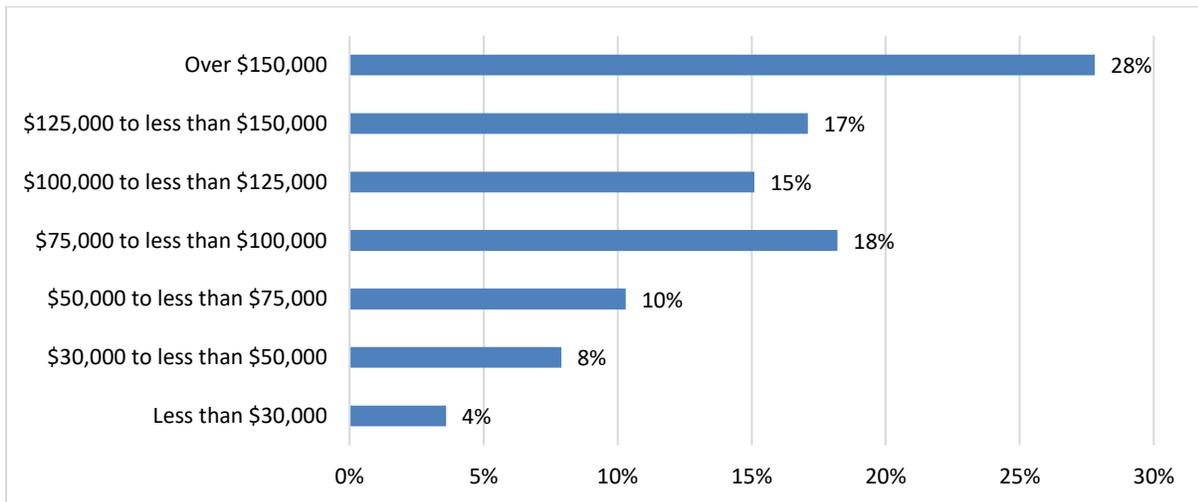
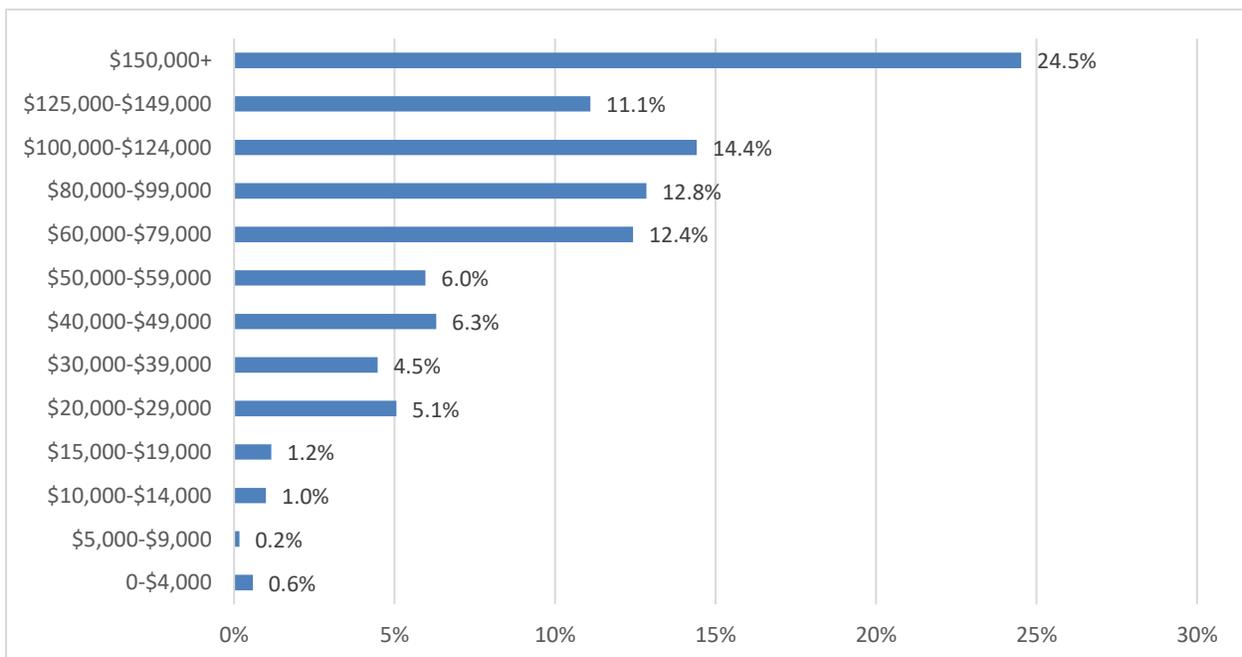


Figure 8: Household Income – Mississippi Mills Population

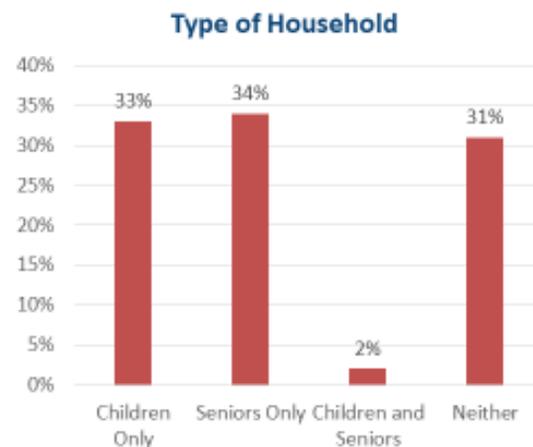
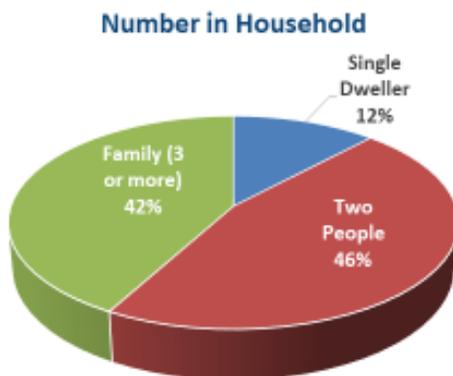
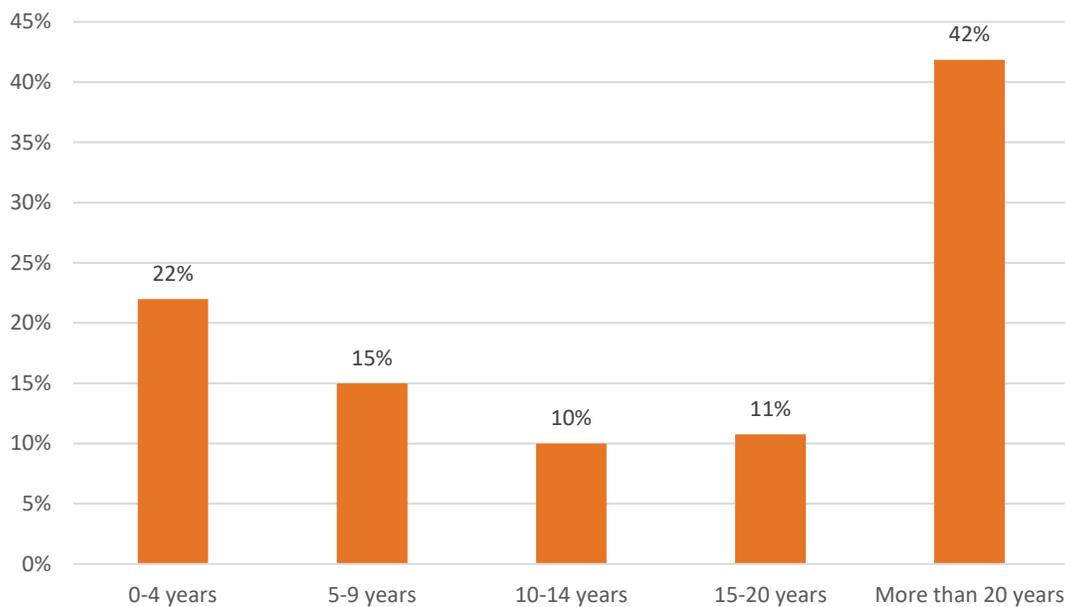


⁸ <https://townfolio.co/on/mississippi-mills/demographics>

Length of Time Residing in Mississippi Mills and Types of Households

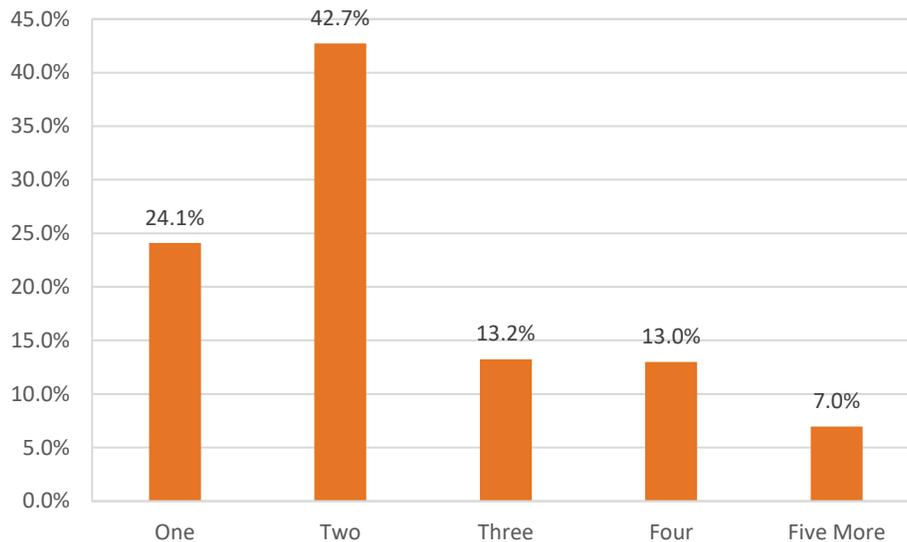
The highest proportion (42%) of survey respondents reported living in Mississippi Mills for greater than 20 years and households of survey respondents in Mississippi Mills are predominantly comprised of 2 or more people. The types of households are split relatively evenly between children only, seniors only, and neither children nor seniors (approximately one-third each). This is somewhat different than number of people in households in the population.

Figure 9: Reported Length of Time Living in Mississippi Mills, Number of Households and Type of Households (Survey Respondents)



In comparison, the population of residents in Mississippi Mills have more single dwellers than those in the survey (24% and 12%, respectively), and is mostly comprised of families of two people (43%), with only one-third being families of 3 or more (33%).

Figure 10: Number in Household (Mississippi Mills Population)⁹



Approach to Analysis and Methods Used

The analysis began with a thorough reasonability check to ensure that survey item responses fell within the given parameters of the study. Once data was reviewed and cleansed, the data was analyzed using both descriptive and advanced analytics.

First, the descriptive statistics of item responses from survey responses were tabulated as frequencies of each response (number and percentage of respondents for each survey question).

Second, to understand whether residents from the Mississippi Mills communities had different experiences and satisfaction levels with respect to the services, programs, events, facilities and childcare centres, cross-tabulations were run on each of the survey responses by the three grouped communities: Almonte, Blakeney/Cedar Hill/Pakenham/Other, and Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners.

Third, to understand the key drivers of satisfaction with programs and services, key driver analyses and gap analyses were undertaken to analyze the primary strengths, primary weaknesses, and the

⁹ <https://townfolio.co/on/mississippi-mills/demographics>

difference between derived importance (from the regression models) and stated importance (from the survey findings).

Many questions were open-ended and gave respondents the opportunity to answer in their own words. These were read by at least one experienced analyst, who extracted themes from the respondents' answers or identified potentially useful suggestions for improvements, depending on the question. The report includes verbatim responses where applicable.

In all aspects of the analyses, decisions about which results to present, and the analytical techniques to be employed were guided by the understanding that it is most meaningful to answering the questions initiated by the analysis.

The sections below describe the key driver analysis and gap analysis methodologies in greater detail.

Key Driver and Gap Identification

Key Driver regression models were run using Shapley Value (SV) regression. SV regression is an analytical tool that establishes which aspects of a program/service offering are most important to residents. SV regression indicates the contribution each independent variable (e.g., ease of accessibility) has on the dependent variable (e.g., overall satisfaction with recreation and cultural programs and services), thus allowing one to rank them from most to least important in terms of "driving" satisfaction.

The model gives each independent variable a value which represents that particular variable's share of importance in determining the outcome of the dependent variable (Based on Game Model).

Five key driver models were run for:

- Overall Satisfaction with Recreation and Cultural Programs and Services (Overall Satisfaction Model);
- Satisfaction with Recreational Programs and Services;
- Satisfaction with Cultural and Recreational Facilities;
- Satisfaction with Festivals and Events; and
- Childcare Services.

Applying the Shapley Values regression technique helped identify the strongest drivers of satisfaction for the programs and services of interest. To build on this analysis, analysts used the findings to determine whether the identified drivers are strengths or weaknesses. This was undertaken by plotting derived importance results from the Shapley Values regression (for each independent variable or driver) against the current performance on each variable (from the survey responses).

The data is plotted around the average value of the variables (not at 50%) using log scales within their respective quadrants, relative to the average. The averages are noted in the gap analysis graphics.

The resulting plot can be broken down into four quadrants:

- **Primary Weaknesses** (low performance and high importance scores) are very important areas where residents' perceptions about the programs and services are less positive. Mississippi Mills should make a concerted effort to continually improve in these areas. The objective is to ultimately shift these weaknesses to primary strengths.
- **Primary Strengths** (high performance and high importance scores) are very important areas where residents perceive the municipality as performing very well. Mississippi Mills should plan to maintain their strong performance in these important areas.
- **Secondary Weaknesses** (low performance and low importance scores) are less important areas where residents perceive the municipality as performing poorly. Mississippi Mills may or may not wish to make a concerted effort to improve in these less important areas, depending on priorities and available resources.
- **Secondary Strengths** (high performance and low importance scores) are less important areas where residents perceive the municipality as performing well. Mississippi Mills should strive to maintain the status quo in these areas because any declines in performance could result in a shift from strength to weakness.

Plots for each of the recreation and cultural areas explored are provided in Appendix B.

The key driver models focus on primary weaknesses and primary strengths. While primary weaknesses align to those programs or services where satisfaction ratings are lower, they are still based on ratings that are quite positive. Any improvements made to these programs or services may only result in moving the needle from satisfied to extremely satisfied (on the scales from 7 to 8-10). Administrators should approach the findings with the Disney model¹⁰ in mind.

Below are the 5 principles associated with providing unique and detailed experiences aimed at improving residents' satisfaction, as per the Disney Model.

1. **Create Immersive Experiences** – put thoughtful detail and plan out every program and service so that they allow for interactions that are intentional and immersive;
2. **Take out the Trash** – care about every experience and ensure that facilities are clean and highly maintained;
3. **Involve Every Employee** – ensuring employees go out of their way to make clients/residents happy. Ensure leadership is accountable for the manner in which employees interact with

¹⁰ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2020/01/23/5-lessons-from-disneys-magical-customer-experience/?sh=3e0f16537555>

client. Every employee should know their role and the impact that they can have on clients during their interactions.

- **Take Personalization to the Next Level** – treat guests like they’re VIPs by personalizing their experiences. Value each customer and ensure each of their visits to facilities, events and programs are memorable.
- **Leverage Unobtrusive Technology** – seamlessly integrate technology into the customer experience through apps and mobile experiences, including providing free WIFI at all facilities. Provide apps aligned to municipality programs and services. Include information in the apps about wait times, events times and dates, park events, ordering food ahead of time at events, etc.

With this model in mind, and in reviewing the findings aligned to the key driver analysis, Mississippi Mills may wish to embark on those business decisions that yield high return on investments for program, event and facility improvements. Quick fixes and long-term planning are essential to ensuring that resident experiences are optimized.

Out of scope

The current research falls under the Recreation Services arm of Mississippi Mills’ overarching Growth Management Planning Project umbrella. It does not include other programs and services in Mississippi Mills such as libraries, road services, transit, shopping malls, taxes, police, stormwater, regulatory services, and the environment (although to a certain extent, parks, trails and backgrounds touch upon the environment).

Additionally, the current study only includes consultations of residents via the online and paper surveys. It does not include consultations with businesses and community organizations, employees, advocacy groups, partners, or other internal and/or external stakeholder groups.

Strengths and Limitations

Overall, the Mississippi Mills Resident Survey presents a strong methodology. The multiple modes of dissemination, as well as the timeframe in which the survey was in field, compensates, to a certain extent, for any non-response bias. The final number of completed surveys is also very acceptable for a survey of residents, and even exceeds the number of surveys previously completed for the 2013 Mississippi Mills Resident Survey (n=220) and is similar to the response rate obtain during the 2018 Recreation and Cultural Services Service Delivery Review (n=340). Lastly, as previously discussed, the questionnaire was found to be reliable and valid, with overall credibility and margin of error levels that align with survey research standards.

While every effort was made to minimize limitations, a few limitations and/or caveats are presented below.

First, the non-probability sampling methods, such as utilizing client and subscription lists, may have led to higher satisfaction ratings for some services. Additionally, while the survey respondents are representative of the population on a number of characteristics, such as age (for the middle-age category) and ethnic diversity, they do differ on many other aspects such as gender, education and income, with survey respondents being predominantly female, more affluent, and with higher levels of education. This may also have implications on the identification of programs and services that were used/attended, as well as satisfaction ratings.

Indeed, a 2015 study on life satisfaction¹¹ which pooled a sample of almost 340,000 survey respondents aged 15 or older who reside in one of the 10 Canadian provinces, found that women, and older respondents were generally more satisfied with life.

*“Life satisfaction is slightly higher among women than men, and slightly lower among immigrants than persons born in Canada. The well-documented ‘u-shape’ correlation between age and life satisfaction—with levels lower among individuals in their forties and early fifties than among those in younger and older age groups—is reflected in the age and age-squared variables. Married individuals report higher levels of life satisfaction than those who are divorced or separated, widowed or never married”.*¹²

Lastly, the satisfaction findings for childcare services, and the model presented in this report, reflect the opinions of a small sample of highly satisfied clients who have used the childcare services, and may have formed relationships with employees in the centres. The caveat is that the findings may not be representative of the general population of childcare clients in Mississippi Mills.

¹¹ Lu, Chaohui, Schellenberg, Grant, and Hou, Feng. “How’s Life in the City? Life Satisfaction Across Census Metropolitan Areas and Economic Regions in Canada”. Social Analysis and Modelling Division, and John F. Helliwell, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia, 2015.

¹² IBID

3. Overall Resident Perceptions

According to Mississippi Mills residents, there are a number of appealing things about living in the communities that make up the Municipality. Most highly rated is quality of life with 96% of residents indicating they have a good to excellent overall quality of life in the Municipality for themselves and their family. Additionally, survey results¹³ indicate that:

- 87% of residents are proud to say they are from Mississippi Mills.
- 83% of residents agree Mississippi Mills is a vibrant community.
- 78% of residents agree Mississippi Mills is an open and welcoming community.



“My impression is that Mississippi Mills is a very vibrant community and already offers a lot of services that I’m happy with. I’m looking forward to seeing what comes next.”
Survey Respondent

Where there is somewhat less agreement among residents is towards the community structure where:

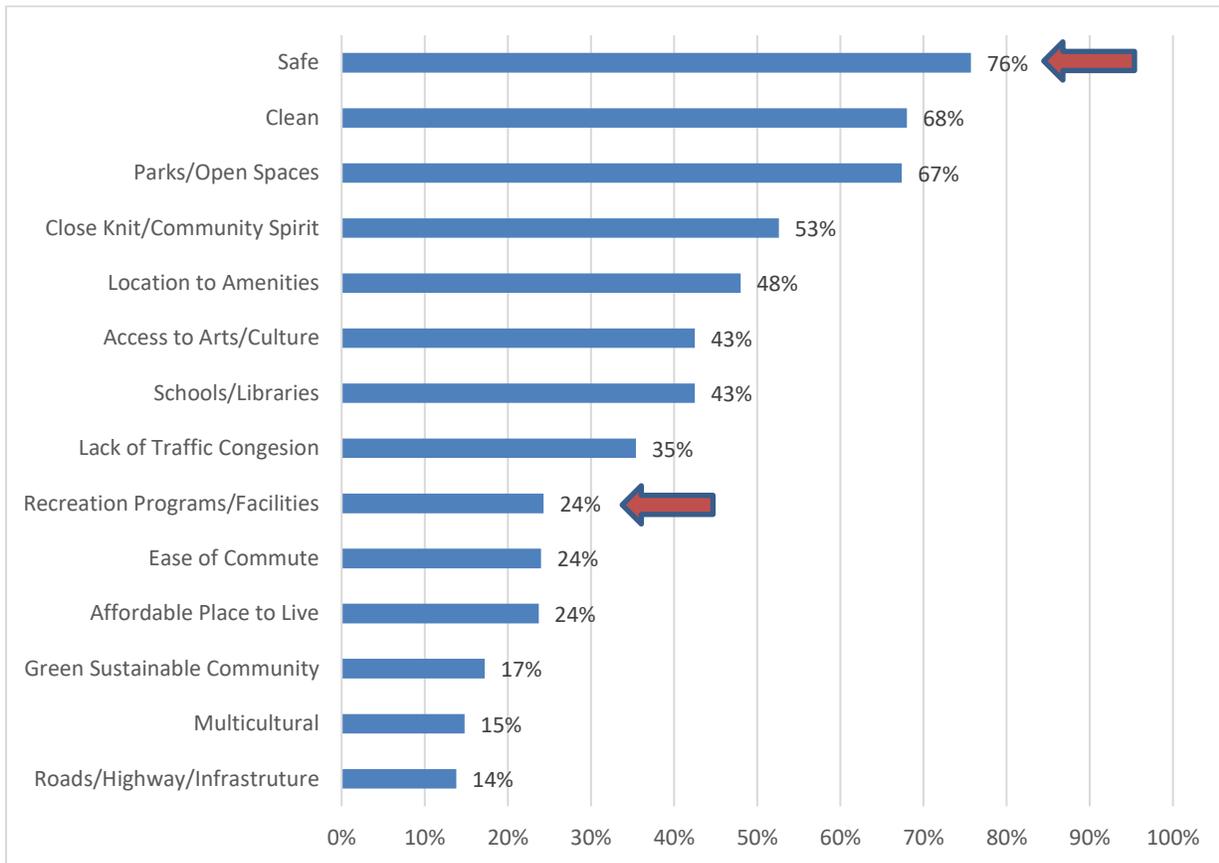
- 56% agree that Mississippi Mills is moving in the right direction to ensure communities are dynamic; and,
- 44% agree that diversity is one of its strengths.

The lower perceptions of community structure are supported by resident views of the extent of appeal for environmental sustainability in communities and multiculturalism being two of the least appealing things about living in the Municipality (see Figure 11).

Residents most frequently provided positive open-ended comments on the naturalized green spaces, proximity to the river, rural environment and small town feel as a draw to living in the communities of Mississippi Mills. Figure 11 provides a ranking of the most appealing things about living in Mississippi Mills according to residents with the top reason being that communities are perceived to be safe.

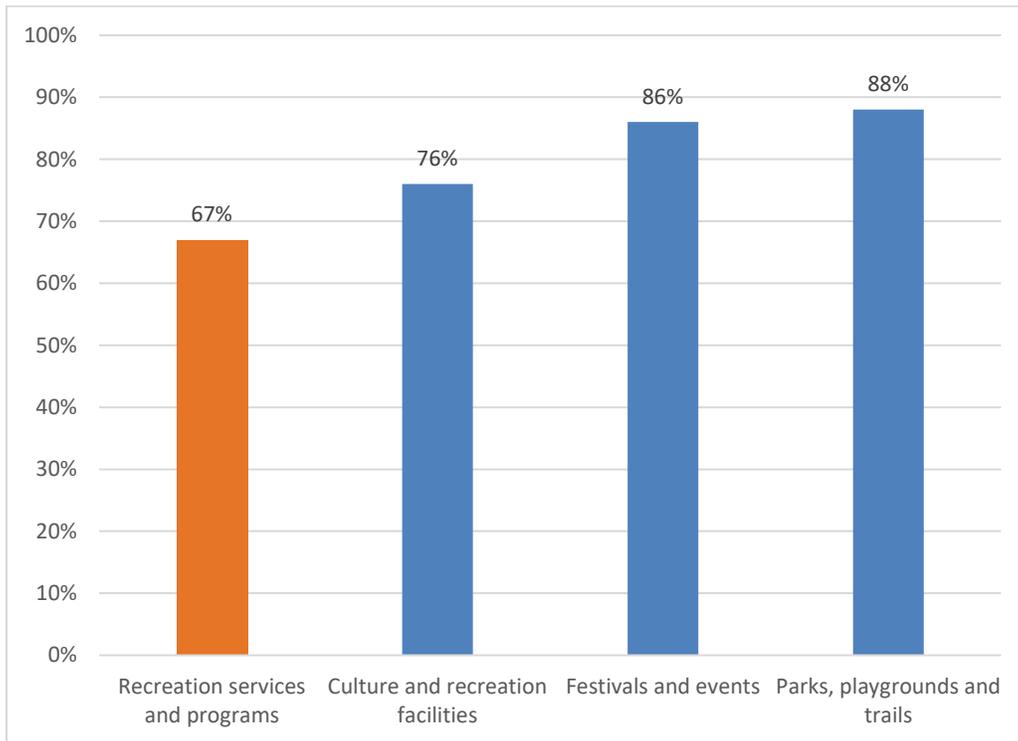
¹³ Level of agreement findings based on respondent selections of 7-10 on 10-point scale

Figure 11: Most appealing things about living in Mississippi Mills



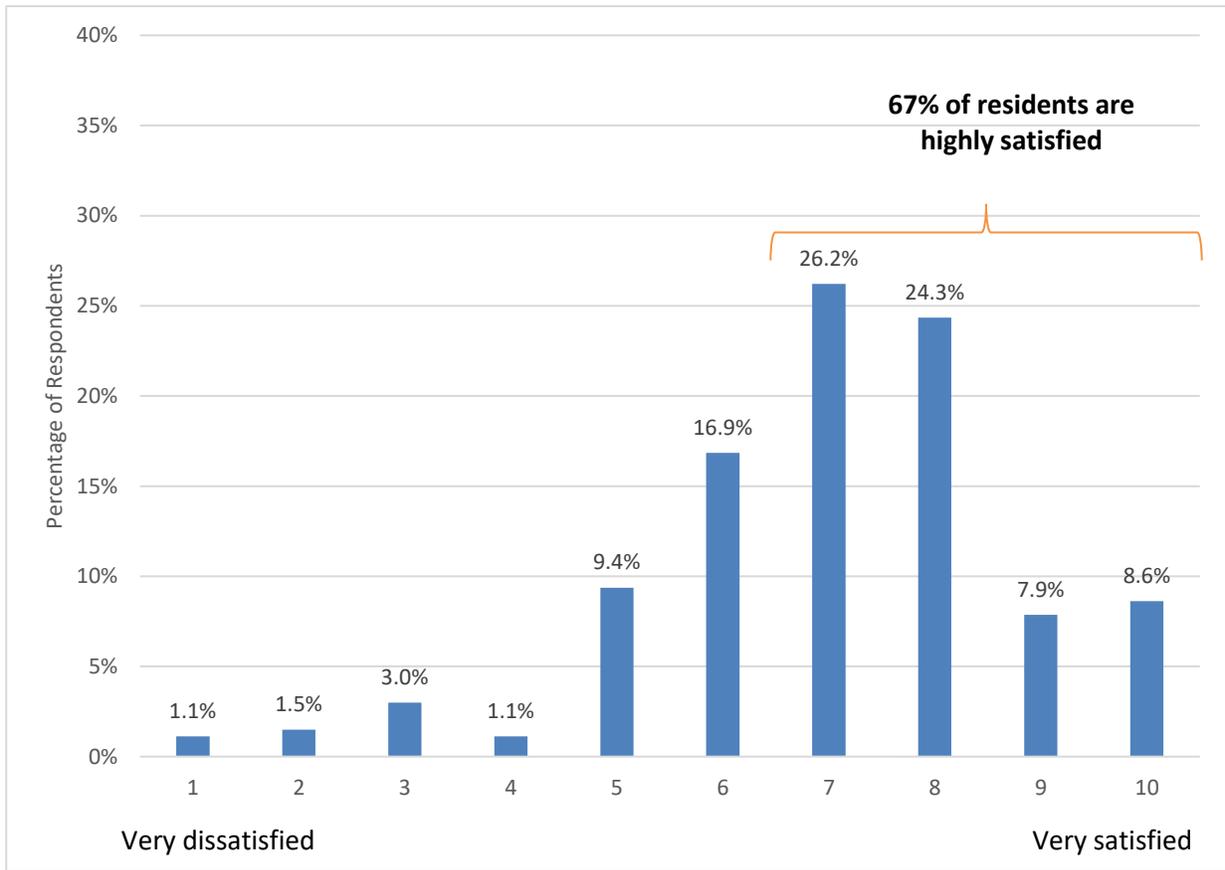
When the survey results are compiled for all areas explored with residents (Figure 12), residents are mostly satisfied with Recreation and Cultural services overall. The residents of the Municipality are most satisfied with parks, playgrounds and trails (88%). The satisfaction results related to parks, playgrounds and trails align with the open-ended comments provided by residents who find naturalized spaces and the rural environment to be most appealing. Services and programs have the lowest satisfaction levels versus other elements of recreation and cultural activities.

Figure 12: Overall satisfaction with recreation and cultural activities, by area



As identified in Figure 11, less than one-quarter (24%) of residents cited recreation programs and facilities as being one of the least appealing things about living in the Municipality. This lower result aligns to the overall satisfaction levels reported by residents with Mississippi Mills recreation and cultural services and programs. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of residents are highly satisfied with recreation and cultural services and programs with the other one-third being either moderately satisfied or not satisfied as shown in the figure below. These lower scores suggest that Mississippi Mills residents view the recreation and cultural services and programs to have moderate quality and value and there is more room to improve resident experiences in this area.

Figure 13: Overall satisfaction with recreation and cultural services and programs provided by the Municipality



Note: Overall satisfaction with recreation, and cultural services and programs (based on response ratings of 7-10 on 10-point scale). The results from Q16 were used as they were determined to be more reliable.

The following sections of this report deal with the various aspects of recreation and cultural activities that residents were asked to comment on, including:

- Festivals and events;
- Recreation Facilities;
- Recreation services and programs;
- Parks, playgrounds and trails; and,
- Childcare services.

4. Festivals and Events

Mississippi Mills holds several festivals and events throughout the year including concerts, cultural and historical events, activities aimed at children and youth, celebrations, and many others. For this current study, Mississippi Mills residents were queried about their opinions and experiences with festivals and events in the municipality. Specifically, the survey focused on opinions of the role of Mississippi Mills with respect to festivals and special events; whether residents attended specific events and festivals, and if so, in what capacity; for those who didn't attend, reasons for not attending; for those that did attend, reasons for attending; likelihood to attend festivals and events in the future; whether residents attended outside of their municipality, why and where; and overall satisfaction with the festival and events in Mississippi Mills.

This section of the report outlines the findings for each of these items, discusses the factors most important in driving overall satisfaction with festivals and events, and provides an analysis of the gaps that either require attention (primary weaknesses), or areas that Mississippi Mills should continue to maintain in order to ensure satisfaction with festivals and events (primary strengths).

4.1 Current State

Festivals and events are important programs within Mississippi Mill's Arts, Culture and Heritage programs and services. The special events and festivals held by Mississippi Mills enhance economic development in the municipality, and provide quality of life benefits to both local residents, and visitors.

The following is a list of special events and festivals that have been included in this research.

Santa Claus Parade – Almonte	Naismith 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament
Santa Claus Parade – Pakenham	Almonte Agricultural Fair
Light up the Night	Celtfest
Canada Day	North Lanark Highland Games
Canada Day Eve	Fibrefest
Pitch in/Arbour Week	Pakenham Frostfest
Wednesdays in July	Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month
Movies in the Park	Christmas in the Valley Craft Show
St. Patty's Day Pakenham	Downtown Almonte Car Show
Puppets Up! International Festival	Busfusion

The role of Mississippi Mills varies according to the special events and festivals offered with most events run by volunteers and the Municipality plays a supporting role.

For events that were found to be primary strengths and weaknesses, the Municipality's role is to deliver and/or completely fund the event (e.g., the Santa Claus Parade in Almonte, and Canada Day Eve festivities); facilitate the event and/or sponsor parts of the event (e.g., Celtfest, and Puppets Up!); and sponsor parts of the event (e.g., Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month). In contrast, survey respondents reported they understood the Municipality's role should be to either facilitate (72%) or sponsor (64%) events and festivals, in general.

With respect to festivals and events, much of the work in initiating and organizing the event is carried out by the Recreation and Culture staff, who also work on creating and arranging advertising; monitoring in-person to ensure that the event is a success and issues are dealt with quickly as they arise; and organizing the cleanup. In most cases, the Municipality's promotional plans include activities related to advertisements on social media sites, as well as advertisements through traditional media (radio, print, etc.).

Historical Observations¹⁴

In the planning study conducted in 2013 for Recreation & Culture, it was found that the Municipality allocated extensive amounts of time for special events on an annual basis, prompting several recommendations, including:

- Exploring the feasibility of increasing the responsibilities of volunteers in delivering festivals and special events;
- Searching for organizations and businesses in Mississippi Mills that are willing to either take on the responsibility for organizing and carrying out a special event currently being done by the Municipality or for partnering with the Municipality in support of the event;
- Holding an annual volunteer open house in which the Municipality and other organizations come together at a single event to promote and explain their organization and opportunities available for volunteers to support their activities; and,
- Holding the Pakenham Santa Claus Parade and the Almonte Santa Clause Parade on a rotating basis on alternate years.

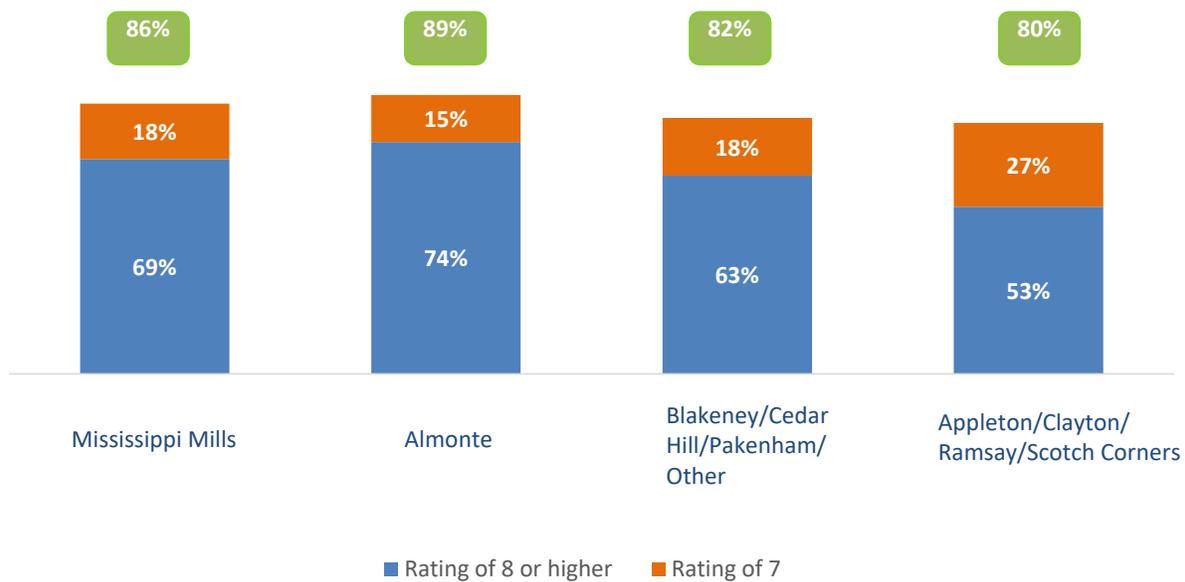
The Municipality indicated that these recommendations were not based on a fulsome understanding of the processes, roles or responsibilities related to organizing and running events. As such, it did not approve these recommendations coming out of the 2013 report. The only exception is the implementation of a volunteer fair which was completed.

¹⁴Mississippi Mills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, November 2013

4.2 Survey Results

Overall satisfaction with festivals and events is high at the overall municipality level (86%), as well as by each of the communities in Mississippi Mills. The highest satisfaction ratings were found in residents living in Almonte (89%), with a slightly lower level of satisfaction from residents in Appleton/Clayton/ Ramsay/Scotch Corners (80%).

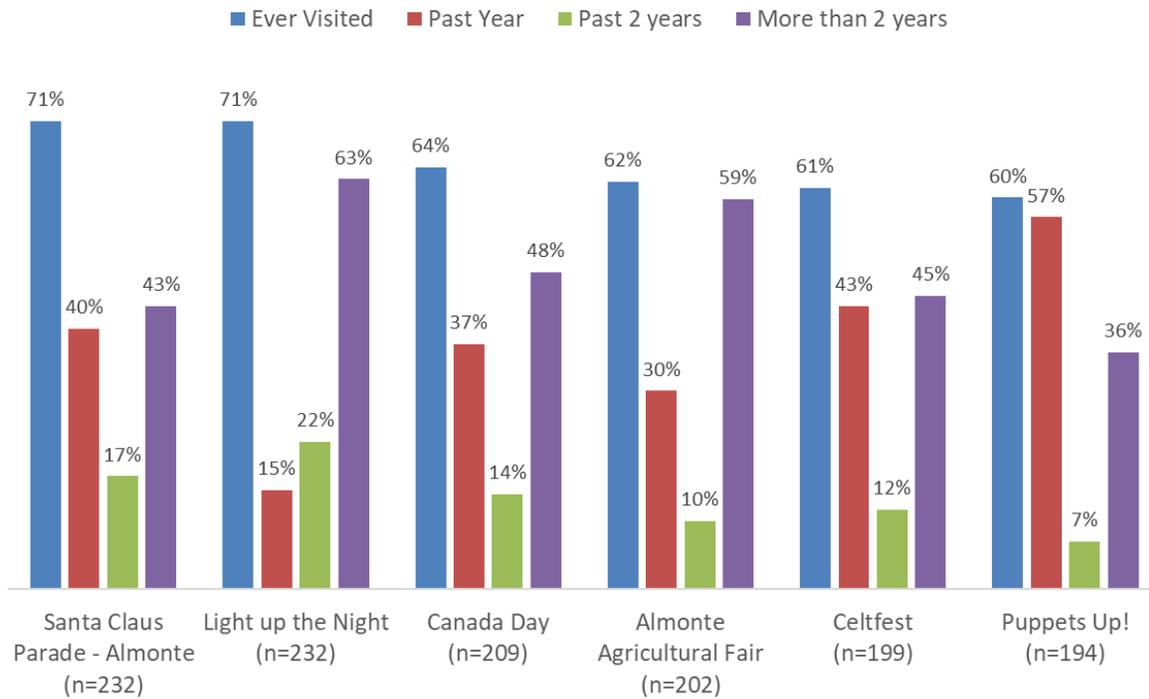
Figure 14: Overall Satisfaction with Festivals and Events by Community



The most attended festivals and events in Mississippi Mills are the Santa Claus Parade – Almonte, and Light up the Night (both 71%). The least attended events or festivals were Puppets Up, and Celtfest. As will be discussed later in the key driver analysis summary ([Section 4.3](#)), the Santa Claus Parade, Puppets Up and Celtfest are deemed to be primary strengths for Mississippi Mills, even though Puppets Up and Celtfest are not as highly attended as the others. In other words, while not as popular as some of the other events, residents were highly satisfied with these events with the key driver model indicating that these events are important to residents. In contrast, the Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month, and Canada Day Eve were found to be primary weaknesses (both have lower attendance at 22% and 33%, respectively).

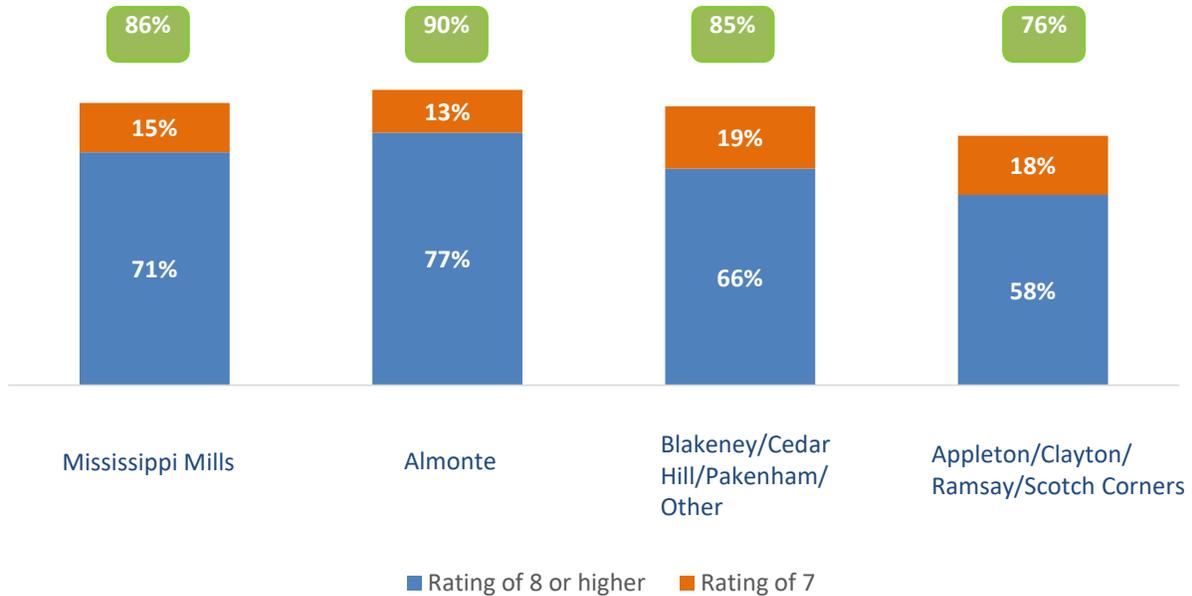
In assessing the recency of attendance, it is interesting to note that both the Santa Claus Parade and Light up the Night event have rebounded in the past year, and they were also highly attended greater than two years ago. Attendance has rebounded in past year from the pre-pandemic years for Puppets Up, although other events are still somewhat behind in attendance (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Festivals and Special Events Attended



The survey findings indicate that at the municipality level, greater than four-in-five (86%) of residents reported that they were likely to attend a special event or festival in the future, with the highest proportion indicating this was the case in Almonte (90%). Fewer respondents in Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners reported they would be attending events/festivals in the future (76%).

Figure 16: Likelihood to Attend Festivals and Special Events in the Future by Community



Reasons for Attending/Not Attending the Festivals and Events

Most survey respondents (91%) reported they attended events and festivals because of their entertainment qualities. Moreover, about one-half indicated they attended because the locations were convenient, or because of the youth and children friendliness of the events (50% and 45%, respectively). The lowest proportions of respondents indicated they attended because of the cleanliness and maintenance of the events, and because of ease of registering (13% and 14%, respectively).

Outside of pandemic restrictions, the most highly rated reason for not attending the festivals or events is that the events did not appeal to residents. Additionally, more than one-quarter also indicated that they did not know about the events or festivals, and/or had no time to attend (28% and 27%, respectively).

Table 3: Reasons for Attending/Not Attending Events and Festivals

Reasons for Attending	Reasons for not Attending
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entertainment (91%) Convenience of Location (50%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events don't appeal to me (65%) Pandemic restrictions (37%) Didn't know about them (28%)

Reasons for Attending	Reasons for not Attending
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth/children friendliness of events (45%) Variety of programs/events offered (33%) Education (21%) Ease of finding information on event (21%) Older adult friendliness of event (17%) Ease of registering to visit the events (14%) Cleanliness and maintenance (13%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No time (27%) Too costly (12%) I'm new to municipality (12%) Accessibility barriers (2%)

Of those that did not attend, more than one-half (56%) reported that they attended festivals/events outside of the municipality, with about two-thirds of these (63%) reporting they visited Ottawa for events or festivals.

Respondents' Suggestions for Improvement

The types of events and festivals residents suggested they would be interested in attending include:

- Arts and music festivals (small music festivals with local musicians; live music events, etc.);
- Winter festivals, ice skating events, races;
- Events geared towards children and families;
- Educational/cultural events (lecture series, skills training workshops, historic visits to old homes and buildings, etc.);
- Food related events/festivals (food trucks, beer/cider/spirit/wine festival; Oktoberfest);
- Activities focusing on keeping people active (yoga in the park); and,
- Multicultural events (Truth and Reconciliation Events and Collaborations).

4.3 Key Satisfaction Drivers and Gaps

Importance to Residents versus Performance (Satisfaction)

The key driver analysis was run on several events/festivals, and factors related to attendance at the events. The findings of the key driver analysis indicate that Mississippi Mills has five primary strengths and four primary weaknesses, as follows:

Primary Strengths

Mississippi Mills has five primary strengths (high importance and high satisfaction):

- Convenience of location;
- Attending for entertainment purposes;
- Celfest;
- Puppets Up International Festival; and,
- Santa Claus Parade – Almonte.

The model underlines the importance of maintaining a strong performance in these key areas, or with these key events, given that they are deemed to be of high importance to residents and residents believe the municipality is performing well in these areas. Mississippi Mills should plan to maintain their strong performance in these important areas.

Primary Weaknesses

Mississippi Mills has four primary weaknesses (high importance and low satisfaction):

- Variety of events and programs offered;
- Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month; and,
- Older adult friendliness of events.

The model suggests that residents believe Mississippi Mills is not performing well in these areas, or with these events, and yet these are deemed to be important (low performance and high importance scores). Mississippi Mills may wish to improve in these areas. A slight improvement in Mississippi Mill's performance in these areas can shift these to primary strengths.

4.4 Discussion and Next Steps

Key Findings

The survey findings indicate that attendance at special events and festivals has mostly rebounded since the pandemic. Most residents attended festivals and special events for entertainment purposes, for convenience of location, and because the events were children and youth friendly.

Residents are generally very satisfied (86%) with the festivals and special events in Mississippi Mills, with residents in Almonte being most satisfied.

The demographics of those that attend special events and festivals is older, female, high-income earner, living in home with either seniors, or as a couple.

There is a disconnect with respect to the perceived versus actual role of Mississippi Mills with respect to special events and festivals in the municipality. Most see the role of the municipality as being a sponsor or facilitator, when in actuality, the municipality mainly sponsors, facilitates and/or delivers the events.

Most residents that attended were spectators, while others were volunteers.

Aside from the pandemic, those that did not attend indicated this was due to the event not appealing to them, or because they were not aware. More than one-half of residents attended events outside of Mississippi Mills, primarily in Ottawa. The likelihood to attend events is quite high, both for those that did attend events in the past, as well as those that did not.

Suggestions for future events include music and food festivals, events geared towards families and children/youth, and education, cultural and multicultural events.

The key driver analysis model indicates that Mississippi Mills should focus on improving the variety of events offered, as well specific events focusing on fitness (Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month), and family-oriented events (Canada Day Eve), and also ensure that events are older-adult friendly. Moreover, Mississippi Mills should continue to ensure that events and festivals are held in convenient locations and provide entertainment to residents. For the events where Mississippi Mills is performing well, continued efforts should be made to maintain high levels of satisfaction, particularly with respect to Celfest, Puppets Up and the Santa Claus Parade in Almonte.

Lastly, given that residents would like to see these events continue or be improved, and given that a large percentage are anticipated to attend in the future, addressing the gaps in service for festivals and events is an opportunity.



“Mississippi mills is a great place to live. We have great facilities however we need our programs to be better run, coordinated, advertised, and developed.”

Survey Respondent

Recommendations for Next Steps

For next steps related to events and festivals, it is important to remember that satisfaction rates in the communities is high, ranging from 80% to 89% depending on where residents live. There may only be a small opportunity to move the level of satisfaction from high to slightly more high. Opportunities in this area should be considered in relation to overall priorities identified through the Growth Management Planning Project and available resources.

As with the 2013 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the current 2023 study has identified an opportunity for Mississippi Mills to continue to explore the role of volunteers to assist with supporting events and festivals in the Municipality. While it may wish to maintain the status quo on the roles it is currently assuming, for example as sponsors, deliverers, and/or facilitators of events, the assistance of volunteers may open up opportunities to provide a greater variety of events that meet the needs of residents (convenience of location, entertainment, family oriented, older-adult friendly, etc.). Additionally, the convenience and accessibility of events and festivals via pedestrian pathways can be reinforced by training volunteers to assist with road closures and security at the events.

Likewise, given that awareness of events and festivals is a weakness (more than a quarter of respondents were not aware of events), Mississippi Mills may wish to review their advertising strategy and potentially develop a more rigorous approach for advertising and promoting events locally, regionally, and provincially. This may include utilizing various platforms such as social media, the municipality's website, posters/flyers, radio and television broadcasts, announcements via regular mail-outs to residents, signage at intersections; as well as providing access to a digital schedule of events for employees and the public.

Additional consultations with businesses and community organizations, employees, advocacy groups, partners, and other internal and/or external stakeholder groups, that focus on experiences with festivals and events, will be instrumental in prioritizing and ultimately advancing the most important elements to be included in the Recreation and Cultural Plan.

5. Cultural and Recreation Facilities

Mississippi Mills maintains several recreation facilities that serve residents across all of the communities in the municipality. For this current study, Mississippi Mills residents were queried about their opinions of the role of Mississippi Mills with respect to cultural and recreation facilities; whether residents visit facilities; for those who did not visit facilities, reasons for not visiting; for those that did visit, reasons for visiting; likelihood to visit cultural and recreation facilities in the future; whether residents visited facilities outside of their municipality, why and where; and overall satisfaction with the cultural and recreation facilities in Mississippi Mills.

This section of the report outlines the findings for each of these items, discusses the factors most important in driving overall satisfaction with cultural and recreation facilities, and provides an analysis of the gaps that either require attention (primary weaknesses), or areas that Mississippi Mills should continue to maintain in order to ensure satisfaction with cultural and recreation facilities (primary strengths).

5.1 Current State

Cultural and recreation facilities are important elements of Mississippi Mill’s Arts, Culture and Heritage programs and services. The Vision for the municipality is to have “A healthy, age friendly and welcoming community with programs and facilities that promote active lifestyles for all ages, enrich the community, and sustain the environment.”¹⁵ Facilities and their accompanying recreation programs provide quality of life benefits to residents.

The following is a list of cultural, heritage, and recreation facilities in Mississippi Mills that have been included in this research.

John Levi Community Centre (previously Almonte Community Centre)	Mississippi Valley Textile Museum
Old Town Hall for performances	5 Arches Bridge
Stewart Hall (Stewart Community Centre Upper Hall)	Mississippi Mills Iron Works (Little Bridge Street)
Pakenham Arena (Stewart Community Centre Ice Arena)	Clayton Mill Monument
Cedar Hill School House	Almonte Tennis Courts
Clayton Community Centre	Almonte Lawn Bowling Facilities
Union Hall	Basketball Courts

¹⁵ Mississippi Mills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, November 2013

The Mill of Kintail Conservation area's museum, art gallery, open chapel, gatehouse or conference centre	Splash Pad
North Lanark Regional Museum	Almonte Curling Facility

The role of Mississippi Mills varies by facility. Overall, the municipality's role is to maintain, partially fund, or completely fund facilities (e.g., John Levi Centre and splash pads). In contrast, survey respondents reported they understood the municipality's role should be to either maintain (75%), develop (44%), or partially fund (36%) facilities.

Historical Observations¹⁶

In 2013, the Municipality had a total of six facilities that could be used for multi-purpose community and program purposes; Almonte and District Community Centre (now the John Levi Community Centre); Stewart Community Centre; Almonte Old Town Hall; Clayton Community Centre; Cedar Hill School House and Union Hall. The Clayton Community Centre and Union Hall were privately owned.

There were 4 recommendations related to facilities in 2013:

- That a building condition survey be completed for each of the Municipality-owned multi-purpose community facilities, so that unforeseen costly maintenance expenses do not arise. *This work was completed.*
- That consideration be given to funding in the 10-year capital budget for upgrading the Cedar Hill School House to a facility that can be used on a year-round basis. *This recommendation was reviewed but not implemented due to limited cost-benefit.*
- That consideration be given to providing an annual grant to the owners of the Clayton Community Centre and the Union Hall for maintenance and upkeep of the buildings provided they continued to be accessible for use by the public. *The Municipality continues to work on this opportunity.*
- That the use of schools be increased by community groups and by the Municipality. *This recommendation was implemented.*

The 2013 plan also recommended that Municipal staff work with soccer clubs to address the demand for additional soccer fields in the term of that Master Plan, including the use of school board facilities as allowed in the reciprocal agreement, in the design of parks in new residential subdivisions, in Gemmill Park and in the development of Municipality owned parkland on Martin Street North. *The Municipality has addressed this opportunity and increased access to fields.*

¹⁶ Mississippi Mills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, November 2013

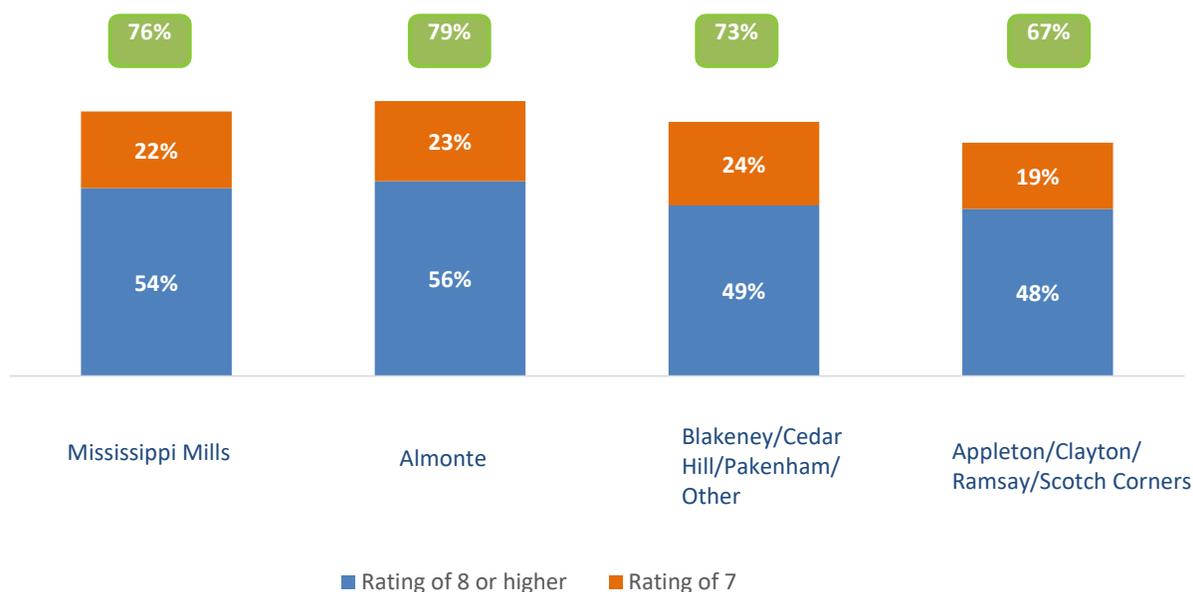
Maintenance to the tennis courts, maintained by the Almonte Tennis club were also recommended with consideration for additional capital expenditures on a club house building and washrooms in Gemmill Park as part of the Municipalities master plan. *This recommendation has been addressed with the exception of completing the infrastructure additions to the club house.*

Additionally, support for an off-leash dog park was expressed through the public survey in 2013 where 57% expressed support, 21% were opposed and the remainder had no opinion. The preferred location for a dog park would have been in part of Gemmill Park where access to parking is nearby and, due to its large size, dogs would not likely come into conflict with other park users. It was recommended that the Municipality proceed with the implementation of an off-leash dog park within a designated area of an existing municipal park and the designated area be enclosed by fencing. *There was no forward movement on this opportunity in 2013, however, the Municipality is aware of the gap, and is re-visiting the recommendation.*

5.2 Survey Results

Overall satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities is high at the overall municipality level (76%), with Almonte residents being most satisfied (79%), and residents in Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners being least satisfied (67%) (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Overall Satisfaction with Cultural and Recreational Facilities by Community

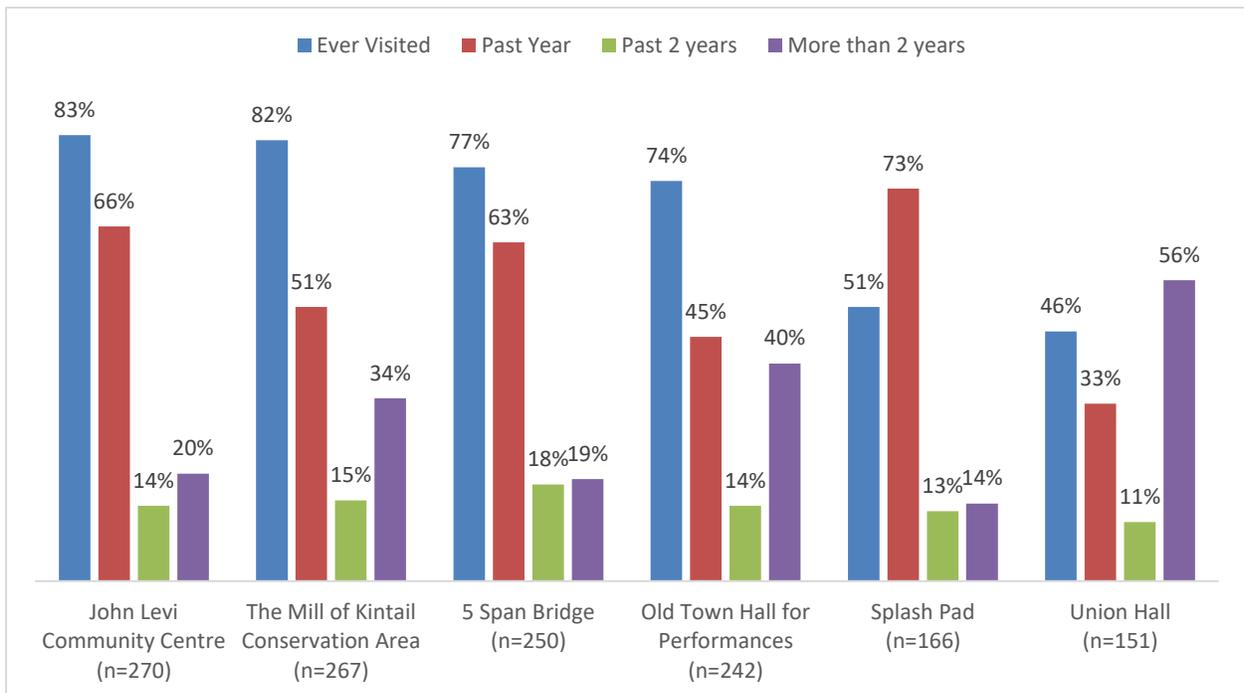


The most visited facilities in Mississippi Mills are the John Levi Community Centre, and the Mill of Kintail Conservation Area (83% and 82%, respectively). The least visited facilities were Union Hall and splash pads (46% and 51%, respectively). As will be discussed in the key driver analysis

summary (Section 5.3), the John Levi Centre and the splash pads are deemed to be primary strengths, while the North Lanark Regional Museum (which is not noted below as it was only visited by 26% of residents) was found to be a primary weakness.

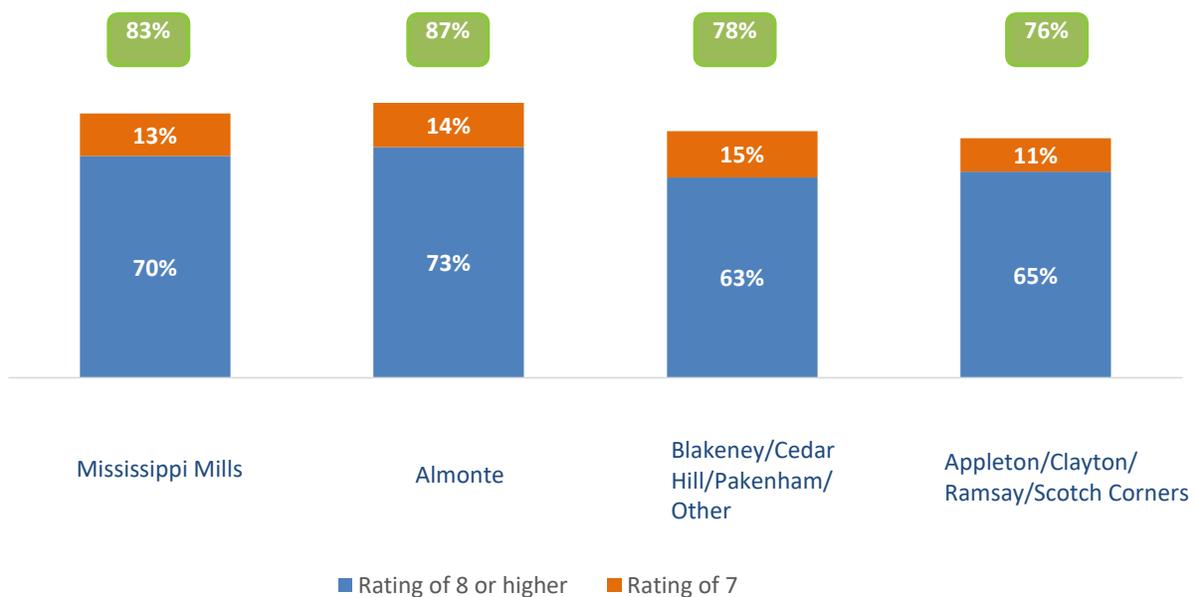
In assessing the recency of attendance, it is interesting to note that the splash pads, John Levi Centre, and 5 Span Bridge have greatly rebounded in the past year. Attendance at Union Hall still remains below pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 18: Cultural, Heritage and Recreation Facilities Visited



The survey findings indicate that at the municipality level, greater than four-in-five (83%) of residents reported that they were likely to visit a cultural or recreation facility in the future, with the highest proportion indicating this was the case in Almonte (87%). Fewer respondents in Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners reported they would visit cultural or recreation facilities in the future (76%).

Figure 19: Likelihood to Visit Facilities in the Future by Community



Reasons for Visiting and Not Visiting Cultural and Recreation Facilities

A large proportion (88%) of residents reported visiting cultural and recreation facilities for entertainment purposes. Additionally, more than one-half indicated they visited facilities for health and fitness (56%), convenience of location (49%), and educational (32%) purposes. The lowest proportion of respondents stated that they visited because of the cleanliness and maintenance of facilities (21%).

Outside of pandemic restrictions, the most highly rated reason for not visiting the facilities is because the sites did not appeal to residents (48%). The remaining didn't visit because they didn't know about them, or because they had no time (39% and 24%, respectively).

Figure 20: Reasons for Visiting/Not Visiting Facilities

Reasons for Visiting	Reasons for not Visiting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment (88%) • Health and Fitness (56%) • Convenience of Location (49%) • Education (32%) • The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities (21%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites don't appeal to me (48%) • I didn't know about them (39%) • Pandemic restrictions (33%) • No time (24%) • I'm new to municipality (14%) • Too costly (6%) • Accessibility barriers (2%)

Of those that did not attend, more than three-quarters (77%) reported that they visited cultural and recreation facilities outside the municipality, with more than two-thirds of these (68%) indicating it was in Ottawa.

Respondents' Suggestions for Improvement

The types of cultural and recreation facilities that residents indicated they are interested in visiting include:

- A swimming pool complex (most frequently mentioned);
- Pickleball facility (frequently mentioned);
- Dog parks;
- More art galleries, theatres, music hall;
- Dedicated location for seniors to exercise (e.g., seniors centres);
- More fitness facilities (e.g., yoga);
- More options for children/youth (e.g., museums);
- Outdoor skating rinks;
- More softball diamonds/soccer fields/tennis courts/basketball courts;

“Upgrade the Community centre from just an arena/curling rink to a full-service recreational building. (Arena, Curling, Bowling, Pool, Gym, Indoor Track, Meeting room/hall). We can have multiple organizations operate programming from the centre including figure skating, curling, bowling, swimming, aerobics, hockey and broomball. As the hub for recreation activity in the community, the Sports Centre can offer something for everyone”.

Survey Respondent

5.3 Key Satisfaction Drivers and Gaps

Importance to Residents versus Performance (Satisfaction)

The key driver analysis was run on several cultural and recreation facilities, and factors related to visiting the facilities. The findings of the key driver analysis indicate that Mississippi Mills has four primary strengths and five primary strengths, as follows:

When applied to the satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities key driver model, this analysis reveals that Mississippi Mills has four primary strengths and three primary weaknesses.

Primary Strengths

Mississippi Mills has four primary strengths when it comes to satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities (high importance and high satisfaction):

- Attending for entertainment purposes
- John Levi Community Centre (previously Almonte Community Centre)
- Splash Pad
- Convenience of location

The model underlines the importance of maintaining strong performance in these key areas, given that they are deemed to be of high importance to residents, and residents believe the municipality is performing well in these areas or at these facilities. Mississippi Mills should plan to maintain the strong performance here.

To note, Mississippi Mills is performing only moderately well with respect to convenience of location (close to border of the primary weakness quadrant). Mississippi Mills should continue to ensure that the location of facilities is convenient to residents.

Primary Weaknesses

Mississippi Mills has three primary weaknesses influencing satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities (high importance and low satisfaction):

- The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities; and,
- Visiting for education purposes.

The model suggests that residents believe Mississippi Mills is not performing well in these two areas, and yet these are deemed to be important (low performance and high importance scores). Mississippi Mills may wish to improve in these areas. A slight improvement in Mississippi Mill's performance in these areas can shift these to primary strengths.

5.4 Discussion and Next Steps

Key findings

Residents are satisfied with the cultural and recreation facilities in Mississippi Mills, with residents being most satisfied in Almonte.

The findings indicate that use of cultural and recreation facilities has mostly rebounded in the last year, and in some cases, has exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Most residents visited cultural and recreation facilities for entertainment purposes, but also for health and fitness and, to a lesser degree, for convenience of location.

The demographics of those that visited facilities are adults and seniors (mostly for the museum and John Levi Centre), females, greater than 55 years of age, higher income earners, and mostly couples. Some of the visitors reside in homes with seniors, while others live with children.

There are differences noted with respect to the perceived versus actual role of Mississippi Mills with respect to cultural and recreation facilities in the municipality. Most see the role of the municipality as maintaining, partially funding, or developing new facilities. In actuality, the Municipality maintains and partially funds facilities, and in the case of the John Levi Centre and splash pads, they completely fund the facilities.

Aside from the pandemic, those that did not visit the facilities indicated this was due to the sites not appealing to them, or they did not know about them. More than three-in-four visited cultural/recreational facilities outside the municipality in past year with about two-thirds indicating this was in Ottawa. Most rated the likelihood to visit facilities in the future as very high.

Suggestions made by residents for what they'd like the municipality to provide residents are more fitness facilities including indoor swimming pools and pickleball courts; more outdoor sports facilities such as softball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis courts; more cultural facilities such as museums and music halls; and more dog parks.

The key driver analysis model indicates that Mississippi Mills should focus on improving the cleanliness and maintenance of facilities; rebrand some cultural facilities so that they focus on educational programs; and improve the North Lanark Regional Museum facility.

For the facilities where Mississippi Mills is performing well, continued efforts should be made to maintain high levels of satisfaction, particularly with respect to the John Levi Centre and splash pads, but also in continuing to promote the entertainment component of available facilities, as well as ensuring that facilities are located in areas that are convenient to residents.

Lastly, given that the likelihood that residents will visit facilities in the future is quite high, increasing awareness of the facilities as well as making improvements in maintenance and cleanliness of facilities, will go a long way in increasing satisfaction among residents.

Next Steps

As with the 2013 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the current study also indicates the need for increased attention to the maintenance and cleanliness of facilities, as a top priority.

Where Mississippi Mills does not own a facility, but provides funding support, it may wish to ensure formal agreements are in place between the Municipality and the tenant organization, such as those in museums and halls, so that one single maintenance standard is in place for municipally owned and municipally funded facilities in addition to potentially creating a policy on minimum public accessibility for facilities that are funded (but not owned). Likewise, some facilities may require capital investments, so a prioritization is required before moving forward with those requiring the most attention. All maintenance should be aligned to industry best practices, such as the Ontario Recreation Standards, and with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Ministry of Health.

Cultural and recreation facilities may also require rebranding to shift residents' perceptions and experiences and increase attendance. Cultural and recreation facilities that are perceived as educational and entertaining should be promoted, with communications strategies put into place that increase awareness of the available resources.

As with other program and services, additional consultations with businesses and community organizations, employees, advocacy groups, partners, and other internal and/or external stakeholder groups will be instrumental in prioritizing and ultimately advancing the most important elements to be included in the Recreation and Cultural Plan.

6. Recreation Services and Programs

Mississippi Mills offers several types of recreational and cultural services programs to residents in its various communities. Those explored through this research can be positioned under two main areas: programs for youth and children, and programs for older adults.

Residents were asked about their participation in 24 specific programs that are provided in the Municipality. Programming included sports, exercise, and recreational activities where the Municipality and/or volunteers were delivering the programming.

6.1 Current State

The Municipality provides some recreation programs but also relies on several community organizations and volunteers to plan and provide recreation. The service delivery review conducted in 2018 indicated that there has been an increase in the number of non-municipal run recreation programs in addition to an increase in population, with the fastest growing category being the 65 and older age group.

The following is a list of recreation programs in the Municipality that have been included in this research:

Adult recreation badminton	Adult Yoga in Pakenham
Adult recreation volleyball	Mississippi Mills Youth Centre programming
Pick up hockey at municipal arenas	Seniors Shuffleboard in municipal facilities
Recreational hockey program (Pakenham)	Almonte and/or Pakenham beaches
Pakenham recreational soccer program	Broomball
Babysitting course	Ball hockey
Line Dancing	Little league
Public skating in municipal ice rinks	Softball/lob ball
Almonte Tennis Club	Almonte soccer program
Lawn Bowling Club	Judo
Curling Club	Almonte Skating Club
Pickleball in Pakenham	Basketball

Historical Observations¹⁷

Through public consultation completed in 2013, support was greatest for increasing the recreation programs for children and youth between the age of 6 and 19 years.

However, it was noted that there was a growing population of those 65 years and older with a notable increase of 63.4% between 2006 and 2016. Historically it was found that the Municipality has done well in providing recreation facilities for seniors – shuffleboard, lawn bowling, tennis courts and a curling rink.

The survey of the public in 2013 asked for their degree of satisfaction with Mississippi Mills' recreation programs with a score of 1 being low, a score of 3 being satisfactory and a score of 5 being very satisfied. The median score of 185 responses was 3, meaning that there was a degree of satisfaction with the Municipality's programs being offered but there was room for improvement as well. Results from the resident survey undertaken in 2018 in support of the Recreational Services service delivery review suggested that residents were fairly neutral in their satisfaction with the quality of adult, senior and youth programs rating them of neither high nor low quality.

In 2013, about 76% of survey respondents suggested the Municipality should have the primary role in recreation program delivery and 71% noted that volunteer committees should share the responsibility of delivering programs.

In 2013, when asked what recreation programs or activities should be developed, the strongest support was in the area of active transportation – walking, running, hiking, biking, cycling and outdoor skating. Water related activities were also supported including swimming and splash pads.

The recommendations made in the 2013 plan included:

- That the Municipality expand its recreation programming for all age groups in order to achieve its overall goal of a healthy community with focus primarily on children and youth aged 6 years to 20 years and for persons 50 years of age and over.
- That the Municipality support initiatives for new recreation programs and activities brought forward by volunteers to expand recreation programs available in the community.
- That the Municipality expand its programming for children and youth to include activities such as skateboard lessons, canoeing and kayaking, volleyball and leadership training.
- That the Municipality consider the creation of summer day camps during the summer vacation period to assist in providing recreation activities for children and in providing employment opportunities for high school aged youth in Mississippi Mills.
- That partial funding is available to hire students aged 15 years and older under the Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC) Canada Summer Jobs program.

¹⁷ Mississippi Mills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, November 2013

- That the Municipality expand its programming for adults over 50 years to include activities such as walking programs, snowshoeing, hiking, age-appropriate fitness and exercise programs.
- That the Municipality have discussion with the Town of Carleton Place regarding new or expanded water related exercise and fitness programs offered at the indoor pool in Carleton Place.
- That the Municipality develop a participant feedback form to determine participant satisfaction once a program is completed for all of its recreation programs. The survey would be completed annually.

However, the 2013 plan also noted that the Municipality offered a significant number of recreation and cultural programs – more than its benchmarking comparators; North Grenville and Greater Napanee.

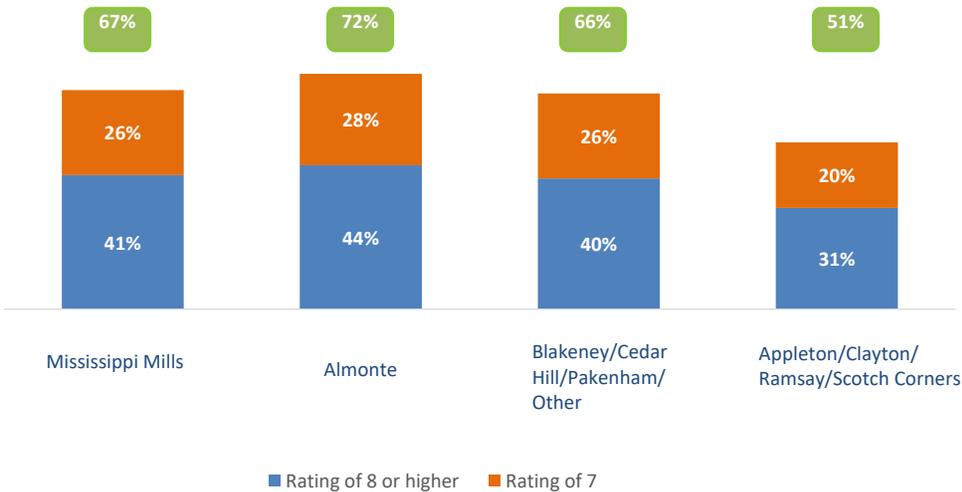
At the time, the Municipality was encouraged to maintain contact with other potential partnership organizations and to enter into arrangements with them to provide parks and recreation-oriented services where it was mutually beneficial to do so.

The Municipality has expanded its programming and the Mississippi Mills Youth Centre does much of the programming for Youth. The Summer Day camp is being run out of the schools by the Municipality currently under the Municipalities reciprocal use agreement.

6.2 Current Survey Results

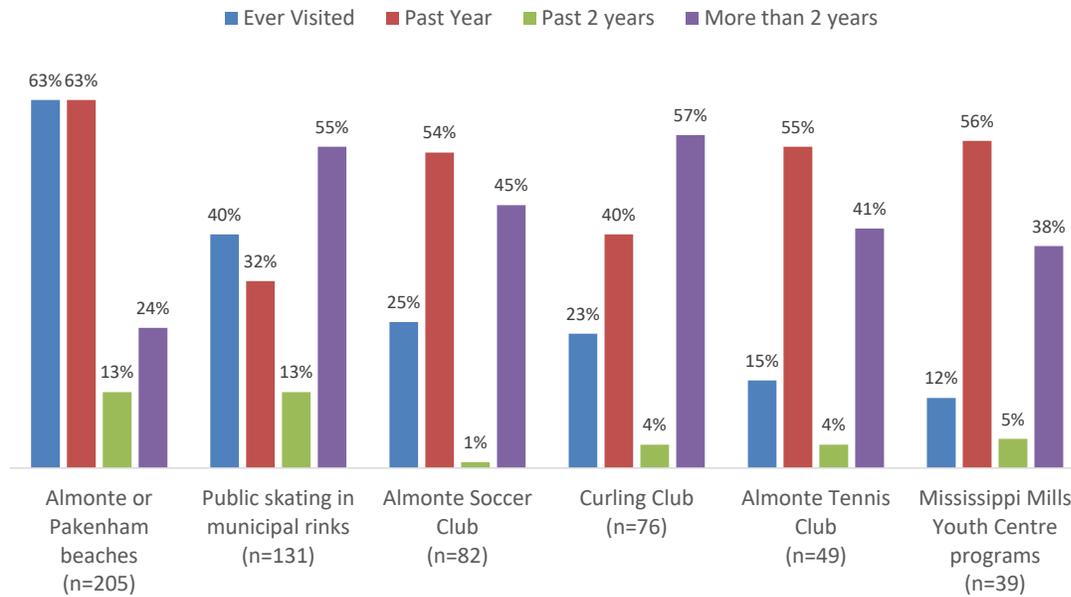
Overall satisfaction with recreational services and programs is moderate, with residents living in Almonte ahead of the other communities in satisfaction.

Figure 21: Satisfaction with recreational services, by community



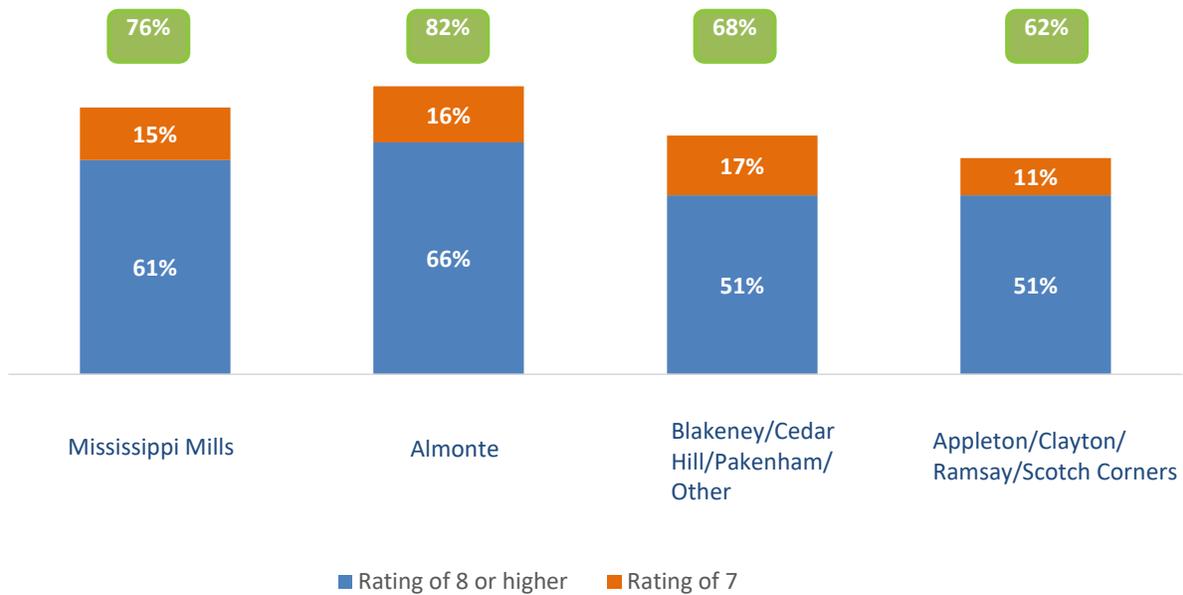
Services and programs with the most participation are the Almonte and Pakenham beaches and municipal skating rinks, although participation at skating rinks appear to have diminished from levels of participation more than 2 years ago. Participation at the Almonte Tennis Club and the Mississippi Youth Centre have significantly increased in the past year, along with participation with the Almonte Soccer Club.

Figure 22: Recreation Services and Programs with the Most Participation



The survey findings (Figure 23 below) indicate that at the community level, residents are highly likely to participate in recreation and cultural services and programs in the future (76%), with the highest proportion indicating this are those residing in Almonte (82%). Fewer residents of Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners reported they would likely participate in future (62%).

Figure 23: Likelihood to Attend Recreation Programs in the Future



Reasons for Participating or Not Participating in Recreation and Cultural Services and Programs

A large proportion (88%) of residents indicated that they participate in recreation and cultural services and programs for health and fitness reasons. Other key reasons for participation included the friendliness of programming for both youth and children (38%) and older adult (22%). Affordability of programs and activities was also selected frequently (35%).

The survey results also revealed areas that, although marked as reasons for participating, did not influence many residents to take part in recreation and cultural services and programming. Low numbers of responses were provided for:

- Ease of registration (18%)
- Cleanliness and maintenance (17%)
- Variety of programs/activities offered (17%)
- Education (16%)
- Variety of programs/activities offered through flexible drop-in programs (13%)
- Ease of finding information on program (9%)

Outside of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the most highly rated reason for not participating in recreation and cultural programs was that the programs being offered don't appeal to residents (67%), followed by residents now knowing about what is offered (36%).

6.3 Key Satisfaction Drivers and Gaps

Importance to residents versus performance satisfaction

When applied to the satisfaction with recreation and cultural programs and services key driver model, the analysis reveals that Mississippi Mills has three primary weaknesses and four primary strengths.

Primary Strengths

Mississippi Mills has five primary strengths when it comes to satisfaction with recreation programs and services:

- The friendliness of activities for youth and children;
- The friendliness of activities for older adults;
- The focus on health and fitness;
- The affordability of programs and activities offered; and,
- The programming at the Curling Club.

Residents believe these areas are performing very well and that they are deemed to be important. Mississippi Mills should plan to maintain its strong performance in these important areas.

Primary Weaknesses

Mississippi Mills has nine primary weaknesses with satisfaction with recreation programs and services:

- Ease of registration;
- The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities;
- Ease of finding information on recreation programs and services;
- Mississippi Mills Youth Centre programming;
- Seniors shuffleboard in municipal facilities;
- Little league;
- Judo;
- Lawn Bowling Club; and,
- Pick up hockey at municipal arenas.

Residents believe these areas and programs are not performing, but yet are deemed to be relatively important (low performance and high importance scores). It is noted that many of these are on the border of other quadrants. Mississippi Mills may wish to improve in these areas, especially around

the processes surrounding registration and promotion. An improvement in performance in these areas can shift these to primary strengths.

6.4 Discussion and Next Steps

Key findings

While 67% of residents are satisfied with Mississippi Mills recreation and cultural services and programs, this is the area that residents are least satisfied compared to other recreational opportunities provided by the Municipality (e.g., festivals and events, facilities, parks and playgrounds).

Resident perceptions of the role for the Municipality in regards to recreation and cultural programming is that it plays a facilitating role (56%) followed by a sponsorship role (48%), and then to actually deliver programs (40%).¹⁸ These perceptions are in line with the current model the municipality employs.

With residents highly likely to want to participate in recreation and cultural services and programs in the future (76%), particularly in Almonte (82%), consideration should be made for the key areas noted for improvement, namely the ease of registration, the maintenance of facilities and ease in location recreational and cultural program information along with further determination of reduced satisfaction levels with the specific programs identified (regardless if delivered by the Municipality or by volunteers). Regular follow-up on client satisfaction was also recommended in 2013.

Key areas that residents are looking for more variety of programming are similar to that discovered in 2013 including the desire of residents to have access to swimming and water related activities and an expansion of programs focused health and fitness.

Next Steps

In the short-term (i.e., not dependent on the 10-year plan):

- Consider early activities in messaging and increasing awareness of how services are opening post-pandemic.
- Create a strategic communications plan to assist with increasing awareness of programs and services being offered, whether directly from the Municipality or via volunteer organizations.
 - Within a communications plan, consider the effectiveness and efficiency of channels being leveraged to communicate information. E.g., consider advantages of including materials in

¹⁸ Note that survey respondents could select more than one answer so results do not add to 100%.

annual tax bills and the extent of print material versus dissemination via other social media platforms.

- Positioning of tools and information on the Municipality's website (location of information) so recreation programming information is more easily accessed.
- Consider the importance of enabling online access to registration and payment capabilities. This will include a policy review to implement the use of credit cards for payment.

For the long-term and development of the 10-year Master Plan:

- Leverage the understanding of changes and growth of the Municipality being researched through the Growth Management Planning study, including considerations for potential recreational space limitations.
- Conduct focus groups (or interviews) to narrow resident needs with local groups who provide services to the community such as the Pakenham Curling Club, Mississippi Mills Youth Centre, all Mississippi Mills Museums, and local organizations who organize and run events throughout the Municipality to determine the most critical gaps in programming, factoring in potential for competition with private business in the identification of new or expanded programming.
- Consider a hybrid model of delivery and facilitation, or strategic relationships/partner models with a strategy to outreach to community organizations or others where it makes most sense to meet needs in an efficient and effective way.
- Review additional opportunities for and increasing awareness of volunteer designed and delivered programs.
- In order to prioritize efforts and resources committed to recreation and cultural services conduct a review of practices in other municipalities so Mississippi Mills can align itself with known or innovative practices.
- Review options, capacities and role of the Municipality to support residents that must access services outside of the Municipality due to major/large programs not being available within Mississippi Mills.
- To support ongoing insight to resident satisfaction, consider policy development around undertaking regular client satisfaction and needs determination activities for program delivered by the Municipality but also by volunteers.

7. Parks, Playgrounds and Trails

This section presents findings and commentary on parks, playgrounds and trails.

Nearly all respondents (94%) who provided their opinion on parks, playgrounds and trails had visited these outdoor spaces. 84% enjoyed using trails and around half of that number stated they used the splashpads. The survey shows that overall satisfaction with parks, playgrounds or trails is quite high, with Blakeney / Cedar Hill / Pakenham reporting the highest satisfaction levels at 94%. The residents of Appleton / Clayton / Ramsay / Scotch Corners are somewhat less satisfied, with an overall rating of 78%.

7.1 Current State

Ranging from Appleton Bay Park to the Riverwalk in Almonte, Mississippi Mills has 18 parks and playgrounds and five trails for residents and visitors to enjoy and explore. Some locations have waterside boat launches for aquatic pursuits, while others, such as Augusta Street and Gemmill Park have facilities that rival larger towns and cities: Gemmill has a 400m track and a disc golf course, while Augusta boasts an NBA-sponsored basketball court.

Mississippi Mills owns and maintains some of the park and playground facilities, while others have been adopted by groups of volunteers under the Adopt a Park Program, Don Maynard Park being an example. Similarly, Mississippi River Power Corporation has an MOU with the Municipality for the maintenance and other specified duties in relation to care taking at Metcalfe Geoheritage Park.

In terms of trails, only one (Riverwalk Almonte) is maintained by Mississippi Mills. The other two trails are cared for by Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (Almonte Lagoon Birding Complex) and the County of Lanark (Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail). The County of Lanark is responsible for the management and the construction of the trails through Mississippi Mills.

Historical Observations¹⁹

Surveys conducted as part of the preparation of the 2013 Plan indicated the strongest support by Mississippi Mills residents was for new and improved programs and facilities in the area of active transportation – walking, running, hiking, cycling and biking, cross country skiing and mountain biking.

There were six recommendations in this area as follows:

¹⁹ Mississippi Mills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, November 2013

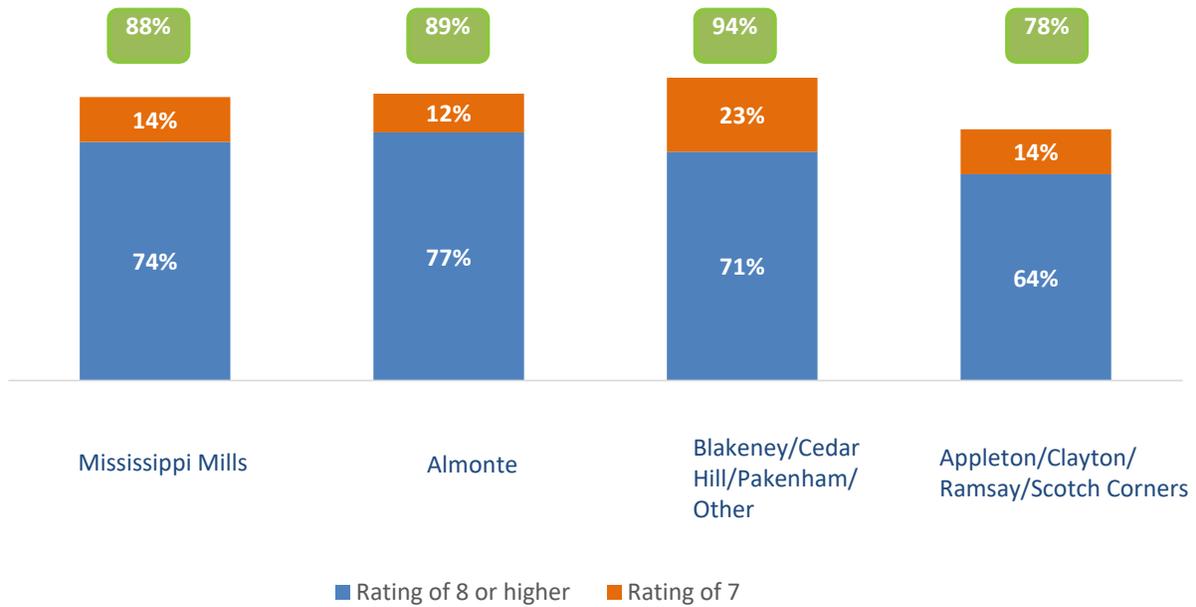
1. That the Municipality complete an Active Transportation Master Plan to establish a Municipality-wide walking, hiking, biking, cycling network complete with development priorities and policies.
2. That the Municipality design trails to be multi-seasonal facilities which can provide a range of opportunities during all seasons. It is recommended that the Municipality ensure that future plans of subdivision take into consideration their integration into the Active Transportation Master Plan.
3. That the Municipality invest on an annual basis for the development of new pathways, bikeways and trails to implement the Active Transportation Master Plan to create a long-term sustainable transportation system for Mississippi Mills.
4. That the Municipality support public acquisition of the abandoned CP railway line between Smiths Falls and Mattawa for public trail purposes.
5. That the Municipality give priority to the provision of open space and trails along the Mississippi River and as a second priority, the provision of open space and trails using unopened road allowances.
6. That the Municipality acquire lands along the Mississippi River for open space and trails through the Planning Act development approval process as lands come forward through parkland dedication, road widening or using off-road infrastructure corridors. In the absence of a development approval process, negotiation for acquisition or expropriation may be considered.

Mississippi Mills has responded to the 2013 recommendations and an Active Transportation Master Plan is in place. The design of multi-seasonal trails has been completed where relevant, and the requirement for planning for subdivision to be integrated in the Active Transportation Master Plan is documented. The Municipality has also created some new pathways and bike lanes on roadways and supported the public trail acquisition between Smiths Falls and Mattawa.

7.2 Survey Results

Nearly all (94%) of respondents reported visiting a park, playground, or trail in Mississippi Mills. Overall satisfaction with parks, playgrounds or trails is quite high, at 88% for the Municipality level. Blakeney/Cedar Hill/Pakenham/Other reported the highest satisfaction level at 94%, followed by Almonte residents at 89% and then Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners at 78% (Figure 25). Overall, 86% of residents responding to the survey indicated a high likelihood of visiting parks, playgrounds and trails in the future.

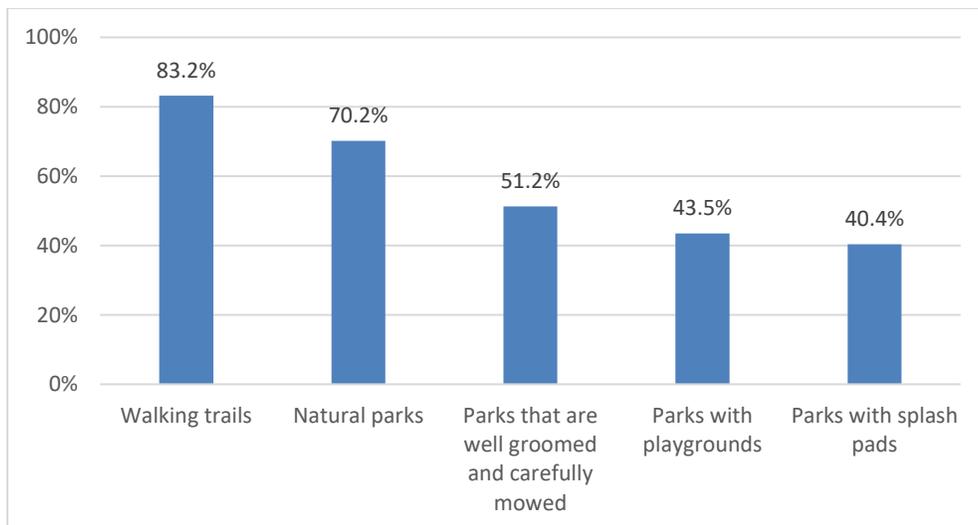
Figure 25: Overall Satisfaction with Parks, Playgrounds, and Trails in Mississippi Mills



For the minority of resident respondents who did not visit parks or trails, the main reason provided (aside from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) was that the parks and trails do not appeal to them (33%), or they have no time to visit (20%). Some respondents indicated they are new to the municipality (13%) so are likely not aware of all outdoor space options.

When residents were asked what types of parks they would be interested in visiting in the future, the most popular response was walking trails (83%).

Figure 26: Types of Parks for Future Interest in Mississippi Mills



7.3 Key Satisfaction Drivers and Gaps

In order to keep the survey at a reasonable length, the Project Steering Committee decided to narrow the scope of questions asked relating to Parks, Playgrounds and Trails in the survey, hence there is no regression analysis available for this area.

7.4 Discussion and Next Steps

Key findings

Parks, playgrounds and trails received the highest satisfaction ratings from residents out of all recreational areas explored (e.g., festivals and events, programs, etc.), with 88% of respondents indicating high satisfaction levels. This area is another area that Mississippi Mills will likely have only a small opportunity to move the level of satisfaction from high to slightly more high (the Disney model). Opportunities in this area should be considered in relation to overall priorities identified through the Growth Management Planning Project and available resources.

Regarding the Active Transportation Master Plan, Dillon Consulting provided the community with a report in 2016, with growth scenarios to 2035 and beyond, that set out a flexible and dynamic multi-modal transportation strategy. The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan committed to a Transportation Master Plan Update, but is silent on the active part of the Plan and if future plans of subdivisions take into consideration their integration into the Active Transportation Master Plan.

A recommendation was made to design trails to be multi-seasonal facilities which can provide a range of opportunities during all seasons. We note that the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail is a multi-use corridor which allows for motorized vehicles, bikes and pedestrians year-round. The OVRT is a 296km trail that stretches from near Smiths Falls to just shy of Mattawa.

Six of the parks in Mississippi Mills have access to the waterfront, including two with beach facilities, and 12 have open spaces. Mill Run Park, Riverfront Estates Central Park and Riverfront Estates Waterfront Park are newly constructed facilities.

The satisfaction levels suggest that if Mississippi Mills continues its current investment in parks, playgrounds and trails, then residents will remain pleased with the offerings and amenities.

Next Steps

Parks, playgrounds and trails produced healthy satisfaction scores from the residents of Mississippi Mills. 94% of respondents had visited such facilities and they garnered an overall 84% satisfaction rating. Given the focus on families with children, maintaining standards at parks and playgrounds is important. Staff are proud of these locations and will want to see similar satisfaction scores in any future survey.

Walking trails scored highly in terms of where residents would be interested in visiting in the future at 83%. Of the three trails, only one is maintained by Mississippi Mills (Riverwalk Almonte) with the others cared for by Lanark County (OVRT) and Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (Almonte Lagoon Birding Complex). The Municipality may wish to work with these two bodies to erect signage which shows that these trails are maintained by organizations other than Mississippi Mills. Unkempt or damaged trails may cause unwarranted reputational harm to the community. This will also allow members of the public to direct enquiries, compliments or criticisms to the appropriate owner.

8. Childcare Services

This section presents findings and commentary on childcare services.

The survey shows that overall satisfaction with childcare services is very high with only one area requiring attention, that being the quality and/or quantity of information provided to parents on their child / children.

8.1 Current State

The current childcare services are offered only in Almonte at two locations (State Street and Paterson Street) and before and after programs are provided at three other locations within local catholic (1) and public (2) schools.

Demand for childcare services in Mississippi Mills is very high, with over 300 children on the waitlist for a spot and a ten percent increase in waitlist requests in January 2023 alone (33 families requested care). These families are seeking care now and will likely do so in the future. The waitlist consists of:

- Infants: 123
- Toddlers: 90
- Preschool: 56
- Kinders: 24
- School age:10

These totals alone can fill a new centre in the younger age groups.

8.2 Survey Results

Overall satisfaction with childcare services is high at the overall municipality level (84%). Parents that use childcare service are very satisfied, particularly in Almonte (86%) and Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners (83%).

Figure 27: Overall Satisfaction with Childcare



Note: The number of respondents completing the rating questions was 75. Numbers of respondents for Blakeney/Cedar Hill/Pakenham, and Appleton/Clayton/Ramsay/Scotch Corners are very small (10, and 12 respectively).

Parents are satisfied with most aspects of childcare services, with satisfaction being highest for convenience of location, helpfulness of staff, and cleanliness of facilities (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Satisfaction with Various Aspects of Childcare Services in Mississippi Mills



When asked why childcare services were not used, the majority of survey respondents did not have children or grandchildren or their children were too old for daycare (86%). For those that did have children and were not using childcare services, the survey saw responses as follows:

- Parents use alternative services such as home or private daycare (5%)
- Formal childcare is too expensive (3%)
- They are on the waitlist at the childcare centre (3%)

A few respondents also noted that working from home (triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) enabled them to not need childcare services.

Suggestions from residents on how Mississippi Mills could encourage the use of childcare services are set out in Figure 29 below, although very few noted suggestions. Variable hours and different programming were the most common responses, with just a single person looking for an improved teacher/child ratio.

Figure 29: Options Identified by Residents that Would Encourage the Use of Childcare Services

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Offer variable hours for childcare (e.g., part-time, full-time, before/after school)	4	50%
Include programming that I'm interested in, for example, Nature Programs	4	50%
\$10 a day childcare once it's available in my municipality	3	38%
More affordable childcare	3	38%
Open a facility near my home that makes drop off easy	3	38%
Include programming for children with special needs	3	38%
More ECE teachers per child (decrease ratio)	1	12.5%
Total	8*	100%

*Multiple responses allowed

8.3 Key Satisfaction Drivers and Gaps

When applied to the satisfaction with childcare services key driver model, this analysis reveals that Mississippi Mills has one primary weakness and twelve primary strengths

Primary Strengths

Mississippi Mills has twelve primary strengths when it comes to satisfaction with childcare services:

- Ease of registering in programs;

- Quality of care provided by staff;
- Childcare services provide an environment that is healthy and safe;
- Childcare staff provide a positive learning environment;
- The helpfulness of staff;
- Childcare environment is open, supportive and engaging to children;
- The elements of childcare programs meet residents' needs;
- Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate, interactive and plentiful;
- Childcare staff are sensitive and responsive to children;
- There is good classroom interaction at the childcare facility;
- Convenience of location; and,
- Childcare centres provide children with good nutritional snacks and meals.

Primary Weaknesses

Mississippi Mills has one primary weakness with satisfaction with childcare services:

- Staff are consistently sending updates electronically or verbally about my child's program and/or participation.

Residents believe Mississippi Mills is not performing well in this area, and yet this is deemed to be important (low performance and high importance scores). While on the border for importance, Mississippi Mills may wish to improve in this area. Given its proximity to the primary strength quadrant, a slight improvement in Mississippi Mill's performance in this area can shift this to a primary strength.

8.4 Discussion and Next Steps

Key findings

Childcare services are in high demand. Current offerings do not meet the needs of the community, but those who are able to enroll a child / children perceive the service very well, with only a single weakness noted.

Next Steps

Childcare services utilize the "Hi Mama" service to communicate with parents. This is a paid for offering from a Canadian firm that specialize in childcare communication and services. To make this platform more meaningful for parents, childcare services may wish to consult with parents and guardians as to what information would be of most benefit to them and their child. This consultation could also include gathering information on the type of programming desired by

parents, such as programs that go beyond typical daycare offerings, and might include learning about nature by utilizing the existing parks and trails within Mississippi Mills.

Mississippi Mills childcare services may also want to consider increasing the transparency of the waitlist. There may be valid reasons for keeping the waitlist opaque, but there are equally valid reasons to let parents know where they stand on the list and when they might be offered a spot.

Another immediate opportunity for increasing satisfaction with childcare services is enabling a timelier process for the distribution of invoices. Currently, this process is centralized within the administration offices of the Municipality and invoices are not always distributed on a timely basis due to other pressing needs experienced by the finance group that is responsible for billing childcare services. The municipality should look into the possible efficiency gains that may be generated by transferring the responsibility for billing to the daycare centre.

Childcare services are currently only available at two locations in Almonte. Mississippi Mills may wish to explore the option of opening additional locations, perhaps in other communities, to meet existing and future demand. The community may be able to piggyback on existing or to-be-built facilities where they can share resources, such as a kitchen and parking lot spaces, to help lower costs. Should an additional facility be made available, staff would also be needed to operate the centre.

Before undertaking any costly expansion, childcare services should examine the data being collected by Mississippi Mills on demographic projections through the Growth Management Planning project to help ensure that there will be actual future demand rather than best-guess beliefs.

Appendix A – Resident Survey

Welcome to the Mississippi Mills Residents Survey!

This is an opportunity for you to tell us what recreation and cultural services we are providing well, and the areas you think we should target for improvement. Your input will help set budget priorities, evaluate existing programs, and enhance programs/services to improve your quality of life.

The municipality has engaged the independent consulting firm, Goss Gilroy Inc., to administer this survey. If you have any questions about the survey, please call Calvin Murphy, Recreation Manager, Municipality of Mississippi Mills, at (613) 256-2064, extension 601.

Your participation is encouraged and very much appreciated.

Please return the completed survey to the drop box at the Almonte Old Town Hall (14 Bridge Street). The drop box is located at the front door, outside of the main entrance.

Please ensure you submit your completed survey prior to October 14, 2022.

Before you start the survey, there are some important things you should know:

- The survey is voluntary.
- The survey is confidential.
- The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.
- If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, skip the question.
- There are no right or wrong answers.

Thank you for your participation!

As a reminder, all of the information you provide will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will not be shared with anyone other than the evaluation team at Goss Gilroy Inc (GGI). Your responses will not be linked with your name but rather will be reported in an aggregate format. The GGI evaluation team strictly abides by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Additionally, this information is collected in accordance with Section 29 (2) of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

For quality control purposes only, please enter your name and email address below.

Name: _____

E-mail address: _____

II. Arts, Culture & Heritage – Festivals and Events

#5. In your opinion, what is the role of Mississippi Mills with respect to festivals and special events?

(Select your top **two** responses)

- Deliver the events
 Maintain the events
 Sponsor parts of the events
 Don't know
 Facilitate the events
 Completely fund the events
 Other (please specify) _____

#6. Outside of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, did you attend the following festivals or special events in Mississippi Mills? (Select one response for each event listed).

	In the past year	In the past two years	More than two years ago	I am not aware of the event	I am aware of the event, but never attended
Santa Claus Parade – Almonte					
Santa Claus Parade – Pakenham					
Light up the Night					
Canada Day					
Canada Day Eve					
Pitch in/Arbour Week					
5 Wednesdays in July					
Movies in the Park					
St. Patty's Day Pakenham					
Puppets Up! International Festival					
Naismith 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament					
Almonte Agricultural Fair					
Celtfest					
North Lanark Highland Games					
Fibrefest					
Pakenham Frostfest					
Mississippi Mills Bicycle Month					
Christmas in the Valley Craft Show					
Downtown Almonte Car Show					
Busfusion					
Other events or festivals (please specify) _____					



If you have not attended any of the events listed in #6, skip to question

#6 (a). In what capacity did you attend the special event(s)? (Select all that apply)

- As a spectator
 As a facilitator
 As a sponsor
 Don't know/Not applicable
 As an organizer
 As a volunteer
 Other (please specify) _____

#6 (b). What were your reasons for attending the special event(s)? (Select all that apply)

- Entertainment
 Ease of finding information on the special events
 Education
 Older adult friendliness of the events
 Convenience of location
 Variety of events and programs offered
 The cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities
 Ease of registering to visit the programs
 Don't know/Not applicable
 Youth/children friendliness of activities
 Other (please specify) _____



#6 (c). Overall, how satisfied are you with festival and special events in Mississippi Mills, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied"?

1 Very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied



If you attended at least one event listed in #6, skip over #6 (d) to #7.

#6 (d). Why did you not attend the festival(s) or special event(s) in your municipality?

(Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The events don't appeal to me | <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't know about them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The pandemic restrictions created barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm new to the municipality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No time | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too costly | |

#7. What types of festivals or special events would you attend in your municipality, in the future, if available? (Please specify).

#8. How likely are you to attend festivals and special events in the future? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "very unlikely" and 10 means "very likely".

1 Very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very likely

#9. Did you attend a festival or special event outside of your municipality within the past year?

- Yes [Continue to Question 9(a)]
- No [Skip to Question 10]

#9 (a). Where did you attend a festival or special event outside of your municipality?

(Select all that apply)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arnprior | <input type="checkbox"/> Carleton Place | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanark Highlands | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perth | <input type="checkbox"/> Beckwith | <input type="checkbox"/> City of Ottawa | _____ |

#9 (b). Why did you attend an event outside of your municipality?

II. Arts, Culture & Heritage – Cultural and Recreational Facilities

#10. In your opinion, what is the main role of Mississippi Mills with respect to cultural and recreational facilities?

(Select your top **two** responses)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain the facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop new facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completely fund the facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partially fund the facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |

#11. Outside of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, did you visit the following cultural and recreational facilities in Mississippi Mills? (Select one response for each facility listed).

	In the past year	In the past two years	More than two years ago	I am not aware of the facility	I am aware of the facility, but never visited
John Levi Community Centre (previously Almonte Community Centre)					
Old Town Hall for performances					
Stewart Hall (Stewart Community Centre Upper Hall)					
Pakenham Arena (Stewart Community Centre Ice Arena)					
Cedar Hill School House					
Clayton Community Centre					
Union Hall					
The Mill of Kintail Conservation area's museum, art gallery, open chapel, gatehouse or conference centre					
North Lanark Regional Museum					
Mississippi Valley Textile Museum					
5 Arches Bridge					
Mississippi Mills Iron Works (Little Bridge Street)					
Clayton Mill Monument					
Almonte Tennis Courts					
Almonte Lawn Bowling Facilities					
Basketball Courts					
Splash Pad					
Almonte Curling Facility					
Other (please specify)					



If you did not visit any facilities listed in #11, skip to #11(c).

#11 (a). What were your **reasons** for visiting the cultural or recreational facilities in your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and fitness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenience of location | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities | _____ |

#11 (b). Overall, how satisfied are you with the cultural and recreational facilities in Mississippi Mills, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied"?

1 Very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied



If you visited at least one facility listed in #11, skip over #11(c) to #12

#11 (c). Why did you not visit any of the cultural or recreational facilities in your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The sites don't appeal to me | <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't know about them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The pandemic restrictions created barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm new to the municipality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility barriers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No time | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too costly | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/Not applicable |

#12. How likely are you to visit cultural and recreational facilities in the future? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "very unlikely" and 10 means "very likely".

1 Very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very likely

#13. What types of cultural or recreational facilities would you be interested in visiting in your municipality, in the future, if available? (Please specify)

#14. Did you visit cultural or recreational facilities outside of your municipality within the past year?

- Yes [Continue to Question 14 (a)]
- No [Skip to Question #15]
- N/A [Skip to Question #15]

#14 (a). Where did you visit cultural or recreational facilities outside of your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arnprior | <input type="checkbox"/> Carleton Place | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanark Highlands | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perth | <input type="checkbox"/> Beckwith | <input type="checkbox"/> City of Ottawa | |

#14 (b). Why did you visit cultural or recreational facilities outside of your municipality? (Please specify)

III. Recreation Services and Programs

#15. In your opinion, what is the role of Mississippi Mills with respect to recreation services and programs?

(Select your top **two** responses)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver the programs
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate the programs
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain the programs
<input type="checkbox"/> Completely fund the programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor parts of the programs
<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
_____ |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#16. Outside of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, did you participate in the following recreation services and programs in Mississippi Mills? (Select one response for each program listed).

	In the past year	In the past two years	More than two years ago	I am not aware of the program	I am aware of the program, but never participated
Adult recreation badminton					
Adult recreation volleyball					
Pick up hockey at municipal arenas					
Recreational hockey program (Pakenham)					
Pakenham recreational soccer program					
Babysitting course					
Line Dancing					
Public skating in municipal ice rinks					
Almonte Tennis Club					
Lawn Bowling Club					
Curling Club					
Pickleball in Pakenham					
Adult Yoga in Pakenham					
Mississippi Mills Youth Centre programming					
Seniors Shuffleboard in municipal facilities					
Almonte and/or Pakenham beaches					
Broomball					
Ball hockey					
Little league					
Softball/lob ball					
Almonte soccer program					
Judo					
Almonte Skating Club					
Basketball					
Other (please specify) _____					



If you did not participate any of the recreational services or programs listed in #16, skip to #16 (c).

#22. What types of parks would you be interested in visiting in the future, in your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- Parks that are well groomed and carefully mowed Parks with playgrounds
 Natural parks Parks with splash pads

V. Childcare Services

#23. In your opinion, what is the role of Mississippi Mills with respect to childcare services? (Select your top **two** responses)

- Deliver the programs Develop new programs
 Maintain the programs Don't know
 Completely fund the programs Other (please specify) _____
 Sponsor parts of the programs

#24. Outside of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has your child been registered in any of the following child care programs, in Mississippi Mills?

	In the past year	In the past two years	More than two years ago	I am not aware of the program	I am aware of the program, but my child does not attend	Not applicable to me
Infant						
Toddler						
Preschool						
Kindergarten with childcare						
School age with childcare						
Other (please specify) _____						

#24 (a). Using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied" overall, how satisfied are you with **the quality** of the following elements of Mississippi Mills Childcare services?

	1 Very Dissatisfied	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very Satisfied
The helpfulness of staff										
The quality of care provided by staff										
Convenience of location										
The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities										
Variety of programs and activities offered in the day care programs										
Ease of registering in programs										



If your child was not registered in any child care program, or child care programs are not applicable to you, please



#24 (b). Using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 10 means 'strongly agree', please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Strongly Agree
Childcare services provide an environment that is healthy and safe										
The staff at the childcare center practice good hygiene										
The childcare centres provide my child(ren) with good nutritional snacks and meals (for younger children)										
There are adequate number of staff caring for my child(ren)										
Childcare staff are sensitive and responsive to children										
There is good classroom interaction at the childcare facility										
The childcare environment is open, supportive and engaging to my child(ren)										
Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate, interactive and plentiful										
Childcare staff provide a positive learning environment for my child(ren)										
The elements of the childcare programs meet my needs, for example, free play, lunch, circle activity, rest time										
Childcare services are affordable										
The County provides adequate financial fee subsidies										
Staff are consistently sending updates electronically or verbally about my child's program and/or participation										

#24 (c). Overall, how satisfied are you with childcare services in Mississippi Mills, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied."

1 Very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very satisfied



***If you registered for at least one child care program or service listed in #24, skip over #24 (d) and go to 25.**

#24 (d). Why have you **not** considered childcare services in Mississippi Mills? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have children or grandchildren | <input type="checkbox"/> I use alternative childcare services, such as home or private daycare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My children are too young for childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like the ECE teachers at the childcare facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My children are too old for childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like the methods of teaching at the childcare facilities I'm interested in |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a stay-at-home parent/am not working right now | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a child with special needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Formal childcare is too expensive | <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't know about them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There's a waitlist at the childcare centre I'm interested in | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm new to the municipality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The location of the facilities is not convenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The childcare facilities don't meet my needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |

#25. How **likely** are you to send your child(ren) to childcare facilities in Mississippi Mills in the future? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means "very unlikely" and 10 means "very likely".

1 Very unlikely	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Very likely



If you have provided a likelihood rating between 5 and 10 in question 25, please complete

#25 (a). What types of childcare services are you looking for? (please specify)

#26. Do you send your child(ren) to childcare facilities outside of your municipality?

- Yes [Continue to Question 26 (a)]
- No [Skip to Question 27]

#26 (a). Where do you send your child(ren) to childcare facilities outside of Mississippi Mills?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arnprior | <input type="checkbox"/> Carleton Place | <input type="checkbox"/> Lanark Highlands | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakenham |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perth | <input type="checkbox"/> Beckwith | <input type="checkbox"/> City of Ottawa | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |



#26 (b). What would encourage you to send your child to a childcare facility in your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 a day childcare once it's available in my municipality | <input type="checkbox"/> Offer variable hours for childcare (e.g., part-time, full-time, before/after school) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More affordable childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Include programming for children with special needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More ECE teachers per child (decrease the ratio of teacher to child) | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/Not applicable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Include programming that I'm interested in, for example, Nature Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open a facility near my home or work that makes it easy to drop off my child | _____ |

VI. Demographics

#27. In which community do you live?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almonte | <input type="checkbox"/> Ramsay | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appleton | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakenham | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blakeney | <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clayton | <input type="checkbox"/> Scotch Corners | |

#28. How many years have you lived in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills? (Select one best answer)

- 0-4 years 5-9 years 10-14 years 15-20 years More than 20 years

#29. Which term best describes your current gender identity?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male/Man | <input type="checkbox"/> Trans Woman/ Trans Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female/Woman | <input type="checkbox"/> Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trans Male/ Trans man | <input type="checkbox"/> Different identity (Please Specify) _____ | |

#30. How old are you?

- 18-34 years old 35-54 years old 55 and older Prefer not to answer

#31. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No certificate, diploma, or degree | <input type="checkbox"/> University graduate (Bachelor's degree) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> University certificate, diploma, or degree above bachelor level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College, or other non-university certificate or diploma | |

#32. What is your 2021 total household income, before taxes? Your best estimate is fine (Select one best answer)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to less than \$125,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 to less than \$50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$125,000 to less than \$150,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 to less than \$75,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$150,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,000 to less than \$100,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |

#33. Do you own or rent your home? (Select one best answer)

- Own home (with or without mortgage)
- Rent
- Live in parent's/relative's home
- Other (group home/retirement facility/university residence)
- Prefer not to answer

#34. Number of people in household?

- 1 person
- 2 people
- 3 people
- 4 people
- 5 people
- 6 or more people

#35. Are there children (under the age of 18) or seniors (age 65+, including yourself) living in your household?

(Please select all that apply)

- Children
- Seniors
- Neither

#36. What is your ethnic identity?

- White
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Shri Lankan)
- Chinese
- Black (African Canadian)
- Filipino
- Latin America
- Arab
- Southwest Asian (e.g., Vietnamese Cambodia, Laotian, Thai, etc.)
- West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- Korean
- Japanese
- First Nations (North American Indian; includes Status and Non-Status Indians)
- Metis
- Inuk (Inuit)
- Other (please specify) _____
- Prefer not to answer

VII. Comments or

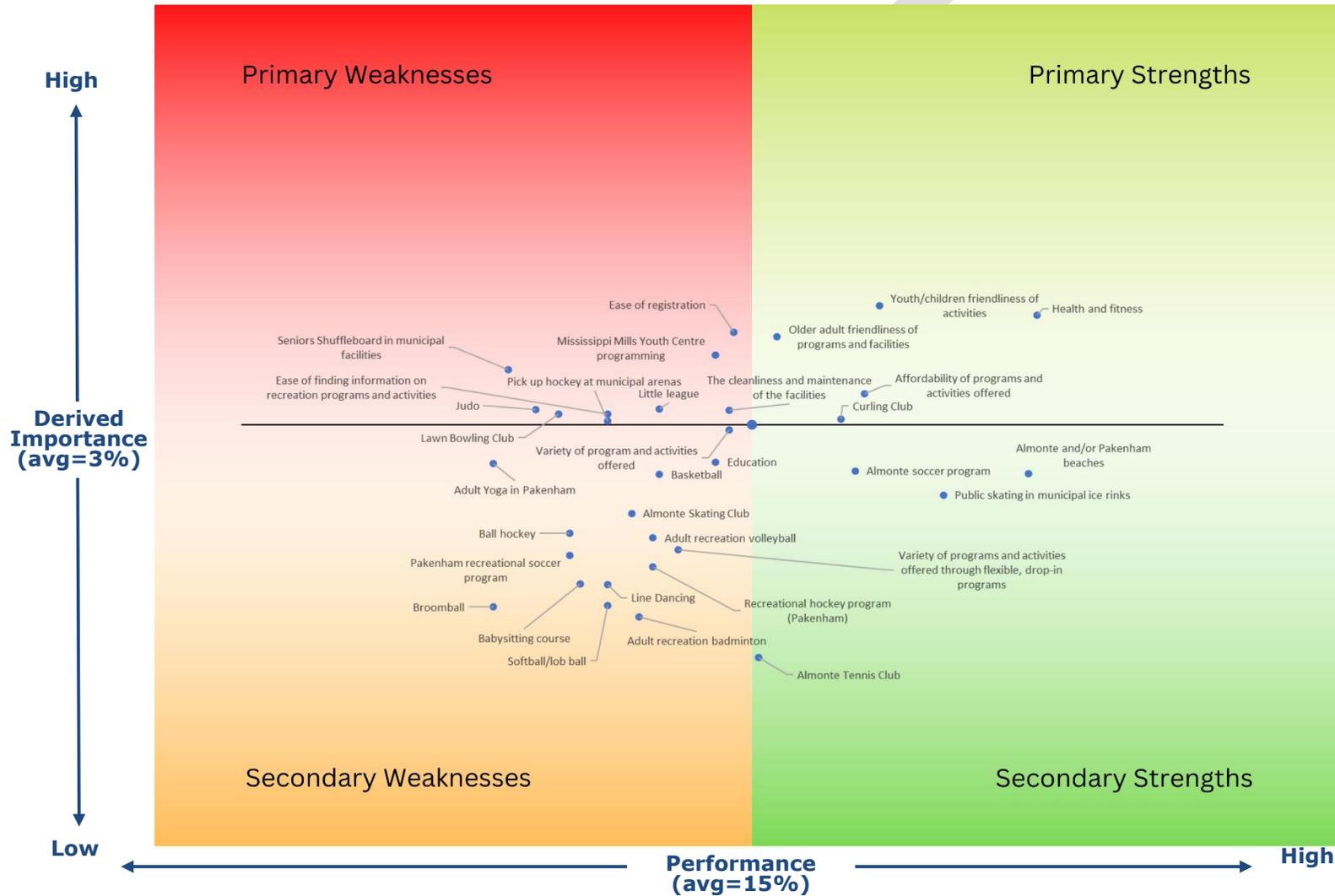
#37. Do you have any final comments about recreational and cultural services in Mississippi Mills?

thank you!

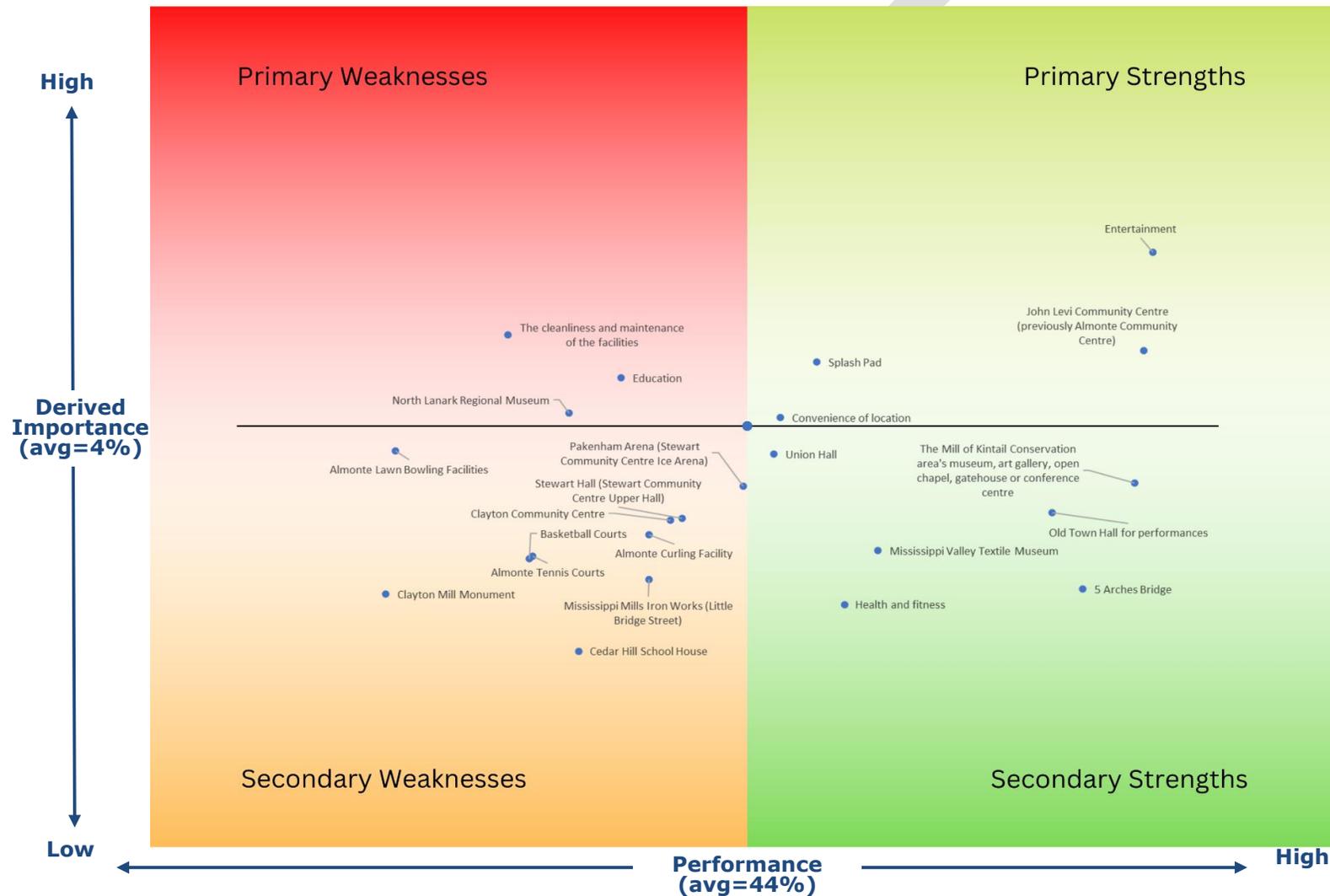
Appendix B – Key Driver Analysis Quadrant Results

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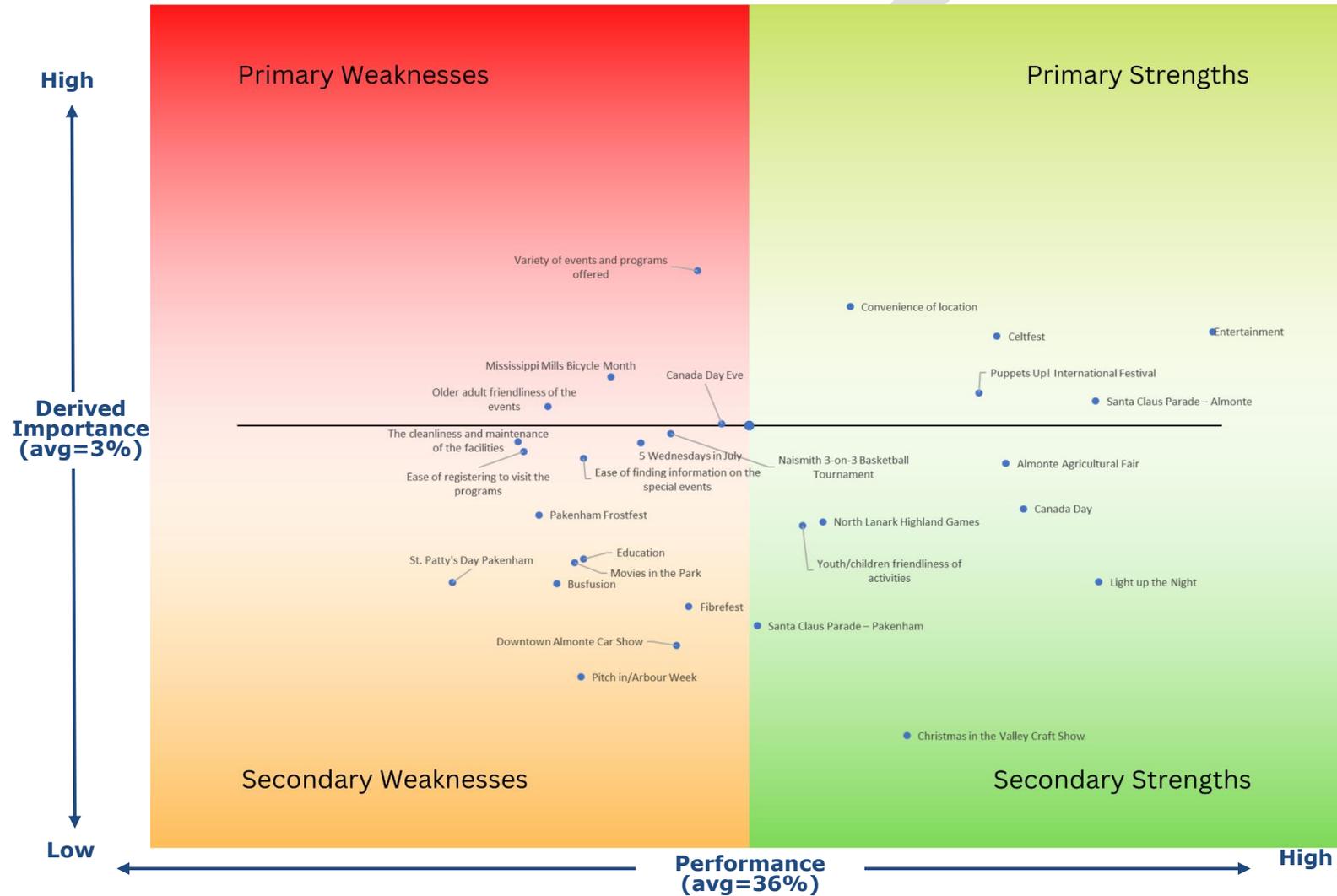
Derived Importance versus Performance: Satisfaction with Recreation Programs and Services



Derived Importance versus Performance: Satisfaction with Cultural and Recreational Facilities



Derived Importance versus Performance: Satisfaction with Festivals and Special Events



Derived Importance versus Performance: Satisfaction with Childcare Services

