Outdoor Sports Facility Allocation Policy

Policy No.:	PR-02-2026
Department:	Parks and Recreation
Approved by:	City Council
Effective Date:	March 19, 2026
Next Review Date:	Every 3 years

1. Policy Statement

The City of St. Thomas is committed to the fair, transparent, and effective allocation of outdoor sports facilities to maximize community access, encourage participation, and maintain the long-term sustainability of municipal assets. This policy establishes consistent guidelines for booking and managing outdoor sports facilities that require advanced scheduling through the Parks and Recreation Department.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define and communicate how outdoor sports facilities in the City of St. Thomas will be allocated and distributed in a consistent and equitable manner. The Parks and Recreation Department will allocate outdoor sports facilities guided by the following principles:

- Maximize field utilization for community benefit.
- Prioritize youth participation and equitable access.
- Provide age-appropriate scheduling where possible.
- Maintain flexibility to accommodate tournaments, special events, and emerging sports.
- Support safe, well-maintained facilities through scheduled rest and maintenance periods.
- Promote participation in recreation and sport as vital to community wellness.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all City-owned and maintained bookable outdoor sports facilities, including but not limited to:

- Grass soccer fields
- Ball diamonds (baseball/softball)
- Outdoor turf field
- Multi-use facilities

- Hard-surface courts, including tennis and pickleball courts
- Sand-based courts, including beach volleyball courts
- Other outdoor sport facilities developed or designated by the City for organized sport use

Tennis and pickleball courts are included only when booked for organized or instructional use. Casual public play operates on a first-come, first-served basis and is not governed by this policy.

This policy applies to all organized users: community groups, leagues, schools, private organizations, tournaments, and occasional users. Casual public use is permitted when facilities are not booked, under maintenance, or closed due to weather or safety conditions.

The City reserves the right to incorporate newly developed outdoor sport facilities into this policy without requiring amendment where the allocation principles remain consistent.

4. Definitions

City Programs and Events: Recreation programs, drop-in activities, or special events organized directly by the City of St. Thomas.

Minor Sport Organization: A non-profit, community-based sport organization serving primarily St. Thomas youth under 19 years of age, with at least 50% of participants residing in St. Thomas or the surrounding area.

Adult Sport Organization: Community or regional groups composed primarily of participants aged 19 and older.

Occasional User: Individuals or groups booking facilities on a one-time or infrequent basis.

Prime Time:

Defined as 5:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 7:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, unless otherwise designated by the Director of Parks and Recreation or designate.

Good Standing: A user group that has:

- no outstanding fees or penalties;
- complied with all previous permit conditions;
- adhered to all City policies, codes of conduct, and field closure notices;
- submitted all required insurance and documentation on time.

Historical User: A community sport organization with an established record of field use in the City of St. Thomas. Historical Users are categorized as:

- Tier 1 Historical User: Organizations with 20 or more consecutive years of documented use and demonstrated service to the St. Thomas community (e.g., St. Thomas Soccer Club).
- Tier 2 Historical User: Organizations with 3–19 consecutive years of use.
- Tier 3 Historical User: Organizations with 1–2 years of documented use.

Tier 1 Historical Users are recognized for their multi-generational impact, program stability, and long-standing partnership with the City.

Tournament: A scheduled competition involving multiple teams and coordinated play over one or more days.

5. Allocation Priorities

The following order of priority shall guide field assignments for each season:

- City of St. Thomas programs and special events.
- Youth community sport organizations based in St. Thomas.
- Adult community sport organizations based in St. Thomas.
- Local schools (as per partnership agreements).
- Regional or non-resident sport organizations.
- Private rentals, tournaments, and special events.

Returning users in good standing are provided first right of refusal for historically allocated times; however, historical use does not guarantee identical schedules or quantities of field time each year.

Long-standing Tier 1 Historical Users may be prioritized ahead of newer organizations within the same category (youth or adult), in recognition of their sustained contribution to local sport development, volunteer infrastructure, and multi-generational community impact.

Notwithstanding the above allocation priorities, the City may reassign or temporarily adjust field allocations to accommodate tournaments, special events, or community activities that provide significant recreational, economic, or community benefit.

5.1 Historical User Considerations

When multiple organizations within the same allocation category request similar field times, Tier 1 Historical Users may receive preferential scheduling consideration based on:

- multi-generational community impact;
- established participant base and volunteer structure;
- long-term partnership with the City;
- demonstrated history of responsible field stewardship;
- alignment with the City’s community wellness goals.

This consideration does not guarantee identical allocation year-to-year but ensures that legacy organizations maintain reasonable access consistent with their long-standing role in the community.

6. Application and Allocation Process

- Applications must be submitted by December 1 for spring/summer use and January 31 for fall use.
- Late submissions will be considered after on-time applications have been processed.
- Groups with outstanding accounts from prior seasons will not receive allocations until balances are cleared.
- New user groups may be accommodated when they provide opportunities to unserved segments of the community or introduce new programming, provided existing users are not adversely affected.
- A valid Certificate of Insurance naming the City of St. Thomas as additional insured, with a minimum of $5 million in commercial general liability coverage, must be submitted prior to the issuance of any permit. Higher limits may be required for tournaments or special events at the discretion of the Director of Parks and Recreation.
- Permits will be issued once allocations are finalized and all required documentation and payments are received.
- User groups failing to submit required insurance, documentation, or payments by established deadlines may have allocations revoked or reassigned.
- Adjustments to field use may be required to accommodate tournaments, low-usage facilities, or maintenance requirements. Staff will provide reasonable notice and work collaboratively with user groups to minimize disruption.
- The City may request supporting documentation from user groups to verify eligibility for allocation categories outlined in this policy. Documentation may include participant registration summaries, residency distribution, proof of non-profit status, or other information necessary to confirm organizational status. Failure to provide requested documentation may affect allocation priority or eligibility.

7. Tournaments and Special Events

The City of St. Thomas recognizes the community and economic benefits of hosting tournaments and special events. Weekend field use (Friday through Sunday) may be prioritized for these activities when they provide significant benefit to the community. The following priority order will be used to evaluate tournament requests:

- Historical minor sport tournaments or competitions.
- Historical adult tournaments or competitions.
- Events of provincial, national, or international significance.
- New minor sport events.

- New community sport events.

Tournament dates should be submitted at least two weeks in advance to allow for staffing and operational coordination. The City may make temporary field layout adjustments to accommodate such events, provided user groups receive reasonable notice and alternate arrangements when feasible.

8. Field Layout Adjustments and Reassignments

The Director of Parks and Recreation, or designate, may alter field layouts, reassign bookings, or adjust schedules to address:

- underutilization
- maintenance requirements
- major community events
- sports season variability
- safety considerations

Where changes affect existing permits, the City will notify affected groups and provide alternatives where feasible.

9. Field Maintenance and Closures

The City may close facilities at any time due to weather, safety, or maintenance as per the Outdoor Sports Facility Closure Policy.

Seasonal closure periods and weather-related closures are governed by the Outdoor Sports Facility Closure Policy.

Users must not access closed facilities. Unauthorized use may result in:

- financial charges for damages,
- suspension of booking privileges,
- revocation of future allocation eligibility.

10. Code of Conduct

All users must comply with all applicable laws, bylaws, and municipal policies and uphold conduct that ensures a positive and inclusive recreational environment. Failure to comply may result in suspension or loss of facility access.

11. Insurance Requirements

All organized users, leagues, schools, and event organizers must carry appropriate insurance as outlined below:

1. Minimum Coverage:
   All permit holders must provide proof of a minimum of $5 million Commercial General Liability (CGL) insurance per occurrence.
2. City as Additional Insured:
   The City of St. Thomas must be listed as an Additional Insured on the policy for the duration of the permitted activity.
3. Submission Requirements:
   A valid Certificate of Insurance must be submitted prior to the start of field use. Permits will not be issued or considered active until insurance is received and approved.
4. Higher Risk Activities:
   The City reserves the right to require higher coverage limits for tournaments, special events, or activities involving elevated risk.
5. Failure to Provide Insurance:
   Groups that fail to provide insurance on time may have allocations suspended, cancelled, or reassigned to other users.

12. Cancellations, Refunds, and No-Show Policy

City-Initiated Cancellations:

- The City may cancel facility use at any time due to weather, safety conditions, maintenance, or operational requirements.
- Where possible, the City will offer an alternative booking or provide a credit to the user's account.

User-Initiated Cancellations:

- Cancellations made 14 days or more before the scheduled date will be eligible for a refund or credit.
- Cancellations made fewer than 14 days in advance are not eligible for refunds or credits unless approved by the Director.

No-Shows:

- Users who fail to attend their scheduled field time without notification may be charged the full permit fee.
- Repeated no-shows may result in loss of priority status or denial of future allocations.

13. Enforcement and Compliance

To ensure fair and consistent access for all users, the City may take enforcement actions in the following circumstances:

- Unauthorized field use
- Failure to comply with field closure notices
- Repeated late cancellations or no-shows
- Breach of permit conditions

- Misrepresentation of participant numbers, residency, or age categories
- Damage to City property

Enforcement measures may include:

- Written warnings
- Charges for damages or additional maintenance
- Suspension of permits
- Loss of priority status
- Revocation of field access for future seasons

14. Appeals and Dispute Resolution

Users may appeal allocation decisions or enforcement actions as follows:

1. Appeal Submission:
   Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Director of Parks and Recreation within five (5) business days of the decision.
2. Review Process:
   The Director will review the appeal, consider available scheduling options, and may consult with staff or affected user groups.
3. Final Decision:
   The decision of the Director of Parks and Recreation is final.

The Director of Parks and Recreation, or designate, shall be responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy, and for making allocation decisions consistent with Council direction, the User Fee By-law, and related municipal policies.

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Approved by: City Council

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