

# What Gets Plans off the Shelf?

A multi-site case study of the factors that  
influence municipal recreation plan  
implementation

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# Planning in Municipal Recreation

- The intent of municipal recreation services is to support the creation of strong and viable communities while contributing to the quality of life of citizens (Community Recreation Policy Statement, 1987).
- Planning can help gain resident support of services, provide rationale for departmental funding, identify and address leisure trends and provide a framework for evaluation.
- Yet a criticism of the planning field is that local plans are lengthy documents that lack usage (Laurian et al., 2004).

# 4 Factors Impacting Implementation

## 1) Plan quality

- A “good plan” identifies issues and includes evaluation methods.

## 2) Capacity of the planning agency

- Ability and readiness of the organization to implement the plan.
- Human and financial resources.

## 3) Public support

- A dialogue regarding community issues and the plans solutions.

## 4) Political context

- Government policies and private business interests.

(Berke et al., 2006; Dalton and Burby, 1994; Laurian et al., 2004)

# Purpose of Study

**The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influenced municipal recreation plan implementation.**

1. What was the planning process for the municipalities?
2. What role did each of the factors of implementation (plan quality, capacity of the planning agency, public support and the political context) play in each of the municipalities?

# Methods

- Criteria of cases
  - Three municipalities in Southern Ontario.
  - Completed a plan in last 3 years.
  - Involved support of outside planning consultant.
- Data
  - Document analysis of final plans.
  - Interviews with key informants (n=10).
    - Director of parks and recreation, planning consultant, steering committee member and city councillor.

# The Three Sites

- Placeville – 50 000 residents
  - Implementation stalled with change in directors and lack of implementation committee.
  - Large scale leisure complex proposal dominating implementation discussions.
- Metropolis - 165 000 residents
  - On track with recommendations facilitated by access to funding and a cooperative relationship with partners and among municipal departments.
  - Leisure complex with skate park, arena, community rooms under construction.
- Parkerville - 78 000 residents
  - Focused on organizational change, restructuring and policy development.
  - Park re-development underway.

# Getting Plans off the Shelf #1

- Uniqueness of the plan to the community
  - Recognition of neighbourhood assets
- Cooperation with other municipal departments
  - Finance department
- Realistic plan for the department
  - Number of recommendations

# Getting Plans off the Shelf #2

- Access to resources
  - Human, financial.
- Creating departmental atmosphere open to change
  - Staff commitment to plan objectives.
- Aligning and adapting to change
  - New job titles and responsibilities.

# Getting Plans off the Shelf #3

- Staff's ability to negotiate council and resident support
- Need for champions from all sectors
  - Repositioning
- Achieving support through formal connections
  - Liaison between council, citizens and department

# Discussion and Recommendations

- Raising the status of recreation in municipalities.
- Implementation is a process of change
- Align departmental goals (the plan) with council and resident priorities
  - Economic development, healthy living, sustainability.
- Resources directed towards helping transition into new roles in the community.



# Thank-you

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