

Active Middlesex Website

BACKGROUND:

Middlesex Active Communities (MAC) Partnership

The Middlesex Active Communities (MAC) Partnership is a spin-off of the Healthy Communities Partnership Middlesex-London (HCP-ML) whose purpose is “to foster a healthy community in London-Middlesex by influencing policy to support enhanced opportunities for active living across the lifespan”; whereas, the goal of MAC is to focus on initiatives and policies specific to Middlesex County. The HCP-ML was a result of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care’s Healthy Communities strategy, with the Middlesex-London Health Unit providing leadership.

The International Toronto Charter for Physical Activity

The international Toronto Charter for Physical Activity articulates the case for physical activity and provides international consensus on the common actions needed to gain increased political priority and investment in policy and programs aimed at increasing and supporting active living across the life course. Since 2013, 7 of 8 Middlesex County municipalities have endorsed the Charter, demonstrating their commitment toward making healthy active living a reality for all.

The MAC partnership responds to the Framework for Action where it states “developing partnerships for action,” and has chosen to make the Guiding Principles for MAC consistent with those of the Charter:

- use of evidence based strategies;
- embrace an equity approach;
- address the environmental, social and individual determinants of physical inactivity;
- implement sustainable actions in partnership;
- build capacity in research, practice, policy, evaluation and surveillance;
- use a life course approach, addressing the needs of children, families, adults and older adults;
- advocate to decision-makers to increase political commitment;
- ensure cultural sensitivity and;
- make physical activity the easy choice.

ACTIVE MIDDLESEX:

As a result of identified gaps and needs by partners in Middlesex County, the MAC Partnership has initiated a project with the goal of improving access to structured and non-structured physical activity opportunities and information within Middlesex County through the development of a website: “Active Middlesex” - activemiddlesex.ca.

Project Objectives:

1. House all known County structured and/or non-structured opportunities for active living in a single location.
2. Increase knowledge and awareness of structured and non-structured opportunities for active living among Middlesex County residents.
3. Increase knowledge and awareness of the importance and benefits of active living among Middlesex County residents.
4. Improve planning/coordination between municipal Parks & Recreation departments and other public and private recreation and leisure providers to optimize opportunities for active living and programs within Middlesex County.
5. Identify barriers to Middlesex County residents having active lifestyles (through survey on website).

Partners:

MAC working groups are formed for project development. Current Active Middlesex working group members include representation from the municipal recreation departments of Middlesex Centre, Strathroy-Caradoc, Lucan Biddulph, Southwest Middlesex, and Thames Centre; County I.T. and Planning; and are exploring potential partnerships with Middlesex County Library and the Y.M.C.A. of Western Ontario.

NEXT STEPS:

MAC would like to seek support for Active Middlesex from County council and each of the municipalities through information reports and/or presentations. The Active Middlesex working group is exploring funding through grant opportunities but may require support for project sustainability through local government human and/or fiscal resources.