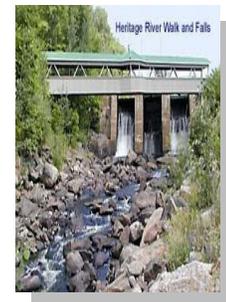


Almaguin Highlands Community Secondary School Committee

Feasibility Study



*Prepared By: Harriman & Associates
Prepared For: Village of Burk's Falls*

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Almaguin Highlands Feasibility Study

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, with financial assistance from FedNor and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, Harriman and Associates in partnership with Evans, Bertrand, Hill, Wheeler Architecture Inc. and Theatre Consulting Ltd. were engaged by the Village of Burks Falls to conduct a feasibility study related to the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School. It should be noted that although Burks Falls is the proponent of the Request for Proposal (RFP) it is acting on behalf of the **Almaguin District Municipal Representatives** and the **Almaguin Highlands Community Secondary School Committee (AHCSSC)**. Also worthy of mention is the fact that the Near North District School Board (NNDSB) is completely aware of the proposal and supports it in principle. In fact, representatives of the Board have provided guidance and support during the information and data collection phases of the report.

The **Almaguin Highlands Community Secondary School Committee** throughout the report will be identified using the abbreviated form **AHCSSC**. The committee was charged with the responsibility of working closely with and supporting Harriman and Associates during the study. This committee has been the main “cog” in providing the motivation, excitement, determination and commitment in trying to bring a sense of belonging and togetherness to the various organizations and communities in the region by focusing on what potential the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School could provide. Because of the commitment of this dedicated group, the members’ names appropriately should be mentioned front and center of this report as they played a key advisory role throughout the process. The membership includes:

- **Lois Cookman**.....Chair (AHCSSC)
- **Harry Braun**.....Chair of the Feasibility Study Group
- **Cliff Cookman**.....Chair of the Sportplex Committee
- **Bruce Campbell**.....Representative of the Municipalities
- **Hazel Sohm**.....Chair of the Theatre Arts Committee
- **Al Bottomley**.....NNDSB Representative

With this communication link in place, the process for involving the communities in the region to gather input began. The primary goal was to find out what interests the communities had regarding potential enhancements to the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School that could serve as a regional “hub” that would bring people together.

The guidelines for the report follow closely with the deliverables identified in the *RFP(January 2008)* to provide a detailed feasibility study related to the new school and supported by the *Almaguin Highlands secondary School and Ancillary Items Feasibility Study (February 2008)* by Harriman and

Associates. A number of areas were identified that will be dealt with in this report. They include:

- (1) An assessment of socio/economic development potential on the area should the project be successful.
- (2) A review of the literature relevant to the project.
- (3) (a) A demographic analysis looking at the current population, the impact of Hwy#11, retiree migration and student retention.

(b) Internal enhancements to the school that could include gymnasium size, technical studies/trades, home economics, child/day care, multi-purpose rooms, art-music facilities including visual arts and drama, theatre and the environmental impact (Green).

(c) External enhancements to the school that could include greenhouse usage, amphitheatre, outdoor recreation facility, multi-purpose trails, track and field options, skateboarding, a community swimming pool and others.

(d) An assessment of the potential involvement of various Ministries, key Community groups, Central Almaguin Economic Development Association and district Municipal government representatives.

e) An assessment of options that could include all or some enhancements. This includes a priority setting exercise along with school population options.
- (4) An assessment on overcoming barriers to community use of the school such as Hwy#11 driving, distances, transportation delivery and potential fees.
- (5) A financial analysis of each bare bones school enhancement cost estimates (initial / ongoing / maintenance).
- (6) Identification and analysis of potential funding sources.
- (7) Existing school disposal recommendations.
- (8) Recommendations.
- (9) Implementation (Business Plan).

Throughout the study the consulting team assembled data and information from a variety of sources, including one on one consultations, web-based research, published sources, personal interviews, public meetings, committee meetings, discussions with the NNDSB, and site visitations which are discussed under the data collection section.

The results, in part, are shared in the report. This is the first in a series of steps that the communities, through the various committee networks have to take that will result in the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary school becoming a “hub” or “gathering place” providing a wide range of activities/resources to draw people from the region to a central location.

BACKGROUND

Almaguin Highlands Secondary School (A.H.S.S.) is situated on approximately 20 acres of land between the villages of South River and Sundridge. The original building was constructed in 1959 with further renovations and additions in 1963 and 1966. In its final form the building has a floor area of approximately 134 400 square feet. The school draws its population for grades nine to twelve from 13 municipalities, mostly classified as rural. The student population has declined from a high of 1100 plus students in the mid nineties to approximately 750 students for the 2008-2009 school year. It was identified as a Comprehensive Composite High school because it demonstrated the following characteristics:

- Draws its population from mainly rural areas where students are bussed.
- Offers a variety of school programs and services in order to support student pathways for all students seeking public education in their community.
- It has alliances with Canadore College and local child and youth serving agencies.
- Delivers education in a variety of ways including e-learning and other distinct learning strategies.
- Is a center for students with special learning needs.

It is interesting to note the similarities in the direction that the **AHCSSC** identified and the report put out in 2006 by the Senior Administration of the Near North District School Board entitled "Strategic Renewal, Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, *"From Weary School to Exemplary School Facility"* which states:

"The Near North District School Board has an opportunity, as it considers facility renewal requirements for its schools, to pursue a new vision of education in the Almaguin Highlands part of the school district. Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, through a carefully planned strategic renewal plan, can be the home of secondary and post secondary education and training in the East Parry Sound region. It is an excellent comprehensive school that requires a new facility. A new facility in this area would serve as a home for alternative, continuing and adult education and training. State of the art facilities would lead to multiple uses and users. For example, high school technical facilities could be shared with adult education programs offered by Canadore College. It would be an education center for the Highlands acting as a catalyst for economic growth.

Beyond education uses, there would be an opportunity to provide space for agencies. With the advent of the Best Start initiative, a new facility could provide a hub for children and youth services that could become a model for the province.

Provincial and NNDSB research would suggest that the cost to repair Almaguin Highlands is significant if not, prohibitive. A strategic investment in the Highlands

would be a wise and prudent approach. At this time, there is an opportunity to “line up” needs and resources...a new school that would feature comprehensive programs favouring retention of students and programs tailored to the business development needs of the area. With community partners, adult learning can be addressed in all forms. With the support of agencies, a hub of social, health prevention and economic services could be achieved. There is even the opportunity to consider a novel approach for the utilization of the wide ranging school bus transportation in order that people in isolated locations gain equity with fellow citizens, working and studying in more populated parts of the province.

Most of the strategic renewal of AHSS would be a magnet to retain people in the various communities of East Parry Sound. Our Ministry of Education, among other ministries, has underscored the value of schools to communities. As well, our Premier has declared himself the “Education Premier” along with noting his strong interest in innovation and growth throughout our province. It would be our hope that everyone will embrace this new vision for AHSS...strategic renewal that would open the door to life long learning and support services.”

Because of the age of the school, renovations/upgrading of the existing school were studied and deemed too expensive to be practical, so in mid 2007, a replacement school was announced. Replacement implies a basic bare bones facility as opposed to “new” which could include so called extras. The committee that put out the request for proposal (RFP) used the terms “new” and “replacement” interchangeably in the hopes of getting the communities and the school board to develop a state of the art facility that could be a “gathering” place for people of all ages in the Almaguin Highlands region. Recently, the Ministry of Education announced that the size of the proposed “replacement” facility would be in the area of 100 000 square feet, a good starting point for all involved. The location of the new facility will be just north of the existing location, about five hundred meters towards South River on the West side of the highway.

PROCESS FOR DATA COLLECTION

A number of avenues were followed by the consulting team to gather information.

- (1) Formal and informal meetings were held with members of the **AHCSSC** to discuss direction, receive input and consolidate ideas.
- (2) Consultations were held with staff at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School.
- (3) A meeting was set up with a cross section of students from Almaguin Highlands Secondary School to listen to their ideas and solicit input on the proposed facility.
- (4) A meeting was set up with the Principal of Almaguin Highlands Secondary School to discuss ideas, direction and input around the new facility.
- (5) Discussions were held with a member of the Central Almaguin Economic Development Association to gather input around the potential role they might have in the new facility.
- (6) Meetings were held with members of the Near North District School Board administration to collect information and monitor the progress on the status of the new facility. In discussions with the Strategic Renewal Officer, it is our understanding that they have conducted a number of community input sessions twice in the history of the project. As well they have attended many organizational meetings with the *Feasibility Study Committee and the AHCSSC*. The area trustee of the NNDSB has devoted countless hours attending meetings throughout the communities in the region. Representatives of the NNDSB continue to meet with the staff at the High School concerning program related facilities in the new school.
- (7) E-mail exchanges were conducted between members of the communities and the consulting team to solicit ideas and input.
- (8) Information sessions were set up with area government representatives to share the overview and provide awareness of community interest in the proposal and the role of the consultants.
- (9) Previous reports and documents were reviewed to garner information that could be included in the project.
- (10) Another strategy used by the consulting team and the **AHCSSC** involved a series of public meetings to gather input regarding the “new” Almaguin

Highlands Secondary School. The **AHCSSC** emphasized the importance of a process that was citizen driven. During meetings with the **AHCSSC** issues and concerns were dealt with that resulted in the development of both a Vision and Mission statement that complimented the NNDSB Mission statement. As well, this exercise provided the consulting team with a better understanding of the issues and opportunities in the area related to the proposed new facility. A total of seven public meetings were held.

- (1) Restoule Community Center.....7:00pm.....Sept. 23rd.
- (2) Sundridge Community Center.....7:00pm..... Sept. 25th.
- (3) Magnetawan Community Center.....3:00pm.....Oct. 1st.
- (4) Burks Falls Land of Lakes School..... 7:00pm.....Oct. 1st.
- (5) South River Arena.....7:00pm.....Oct. 2nd.
- (6) Emsdale Evergreen Heights Ed. Center.....7:00pm.....Oct. 3rd.
- (7) Powassan Maple Ridge Elementary School.7:00pm.....Oct. 6th.

Committee members agreed that; “These meetings are critical in terms of hearing from the general public with regard to what they want to see as priorities in the development of this facility. Now is the time for the public to provide input into what they deem as important. This facility will have the potential to serve as a “hub” for many activities in the area and in order to determine what these priorities are; we need to hear from the public.”

The format for each meeting included:

- (a) Outlining the project and parameters under which the NNDSB is operating.
- (b) Briefly describing the five major enhancements (Theatre, Sportplex, Outdoor Education Center, Child/Day Care and Youth/Seniors Center). It should be noted here that many of the Internal Enhancements came under the umbrella of the Board while the External Enhancements seemed to fall under the five areas just identified.
- (c) Discussion around the “impact” of these enhancements and the advantages and disadvantages of each which included funding and sustainability.
- (d) Prioritizing the enhancements as to which ones they strongly supported.
- (e) Discussing the programs and services the public deems important in the new facility.

The information gathered was summarized and recorded by the consulting team members. Observations are discussed throughout the report and the notes from the meetings are included in the appendices.

DELIVERABLES

1. ***“Assessment of socio/economic development potential on the area if the project should be successful.”***

Should components of the proposed project be successful, there is little doubt the socio/economic spin-offs would be positive. When you look at the NNDSB mission statement, that says *“Our mission is to educate learners to their fullest potential in preparation for life long learning”*, one can interpret the statement quite broadly. It would include people of all ages as learners who view education as a life long activity supported by healthy lifestyles. The Steering Committee’s vision supports using the Almaguin Highlands Secondary school as a hub to educate and enrich the quality of life. Its mission looks at the school as a catalyst that brings communities together for the purpose of providing quality education, programs and services, creating a strong, physical, mental, social and cultural environment and creating and sustaining community partnerships that compliment the Board’s mission statement.

The success of the project could be defined in stages through different lenses. Looking at it from the school’s lens or “inside out” maintaining and increasing the school’s population is paramount in keeping the center vibrant and alive. As well, offering programs that interest the general public will enhance the school as an activity center that brings the community into the school. When you look through the lens of the community perspective or “outside in” there is a need to identify skills that could result in people offering a variety of enrichment programs that could benefit the community and the school, making the Almaguin Highlands Secondary School a safe, inviting “gathering” place.

When you view the socio/economic impact on the area in stages the following statements represent a sample of a successful project:

- The retention of students means keeping teachers and students in the school providing stability and quality education.
- Certain enhancements will have economic spin offs in terms of short term work such as in the building area and long term attractions that could include the theatre arts program, the outdoor education program and Sportplex/training facilities.
- A successful project with the marketing strategies in place will attract outside groups and activities from around the region and beyond.

- A successful center will attract people that are nearing or at retirement age, to the area, not only because of the pristine lakes and four seasons but, because the center could be a showcase for the arts and other events.
- The center will attract a gathering of local artisans on an annual basis to showcase the talent in the Highlands, bringing people together and providing economic spin offs.
- A successful project will provide a purpose for working together to enhance a healthy lifestyle in the region.
- A successful project will establish a high degree of trust.
- A successful project will build and develop partnerships that will ensure the long term success of the school as a community center.
- A successful project will result in the communities taking great pride and ownership in something that brings them together.

2. “Review of the literature relevant to the project.”

In this deliverable the consulting team was involved in a number of activities that could be interpreted as reviewing literature or information that is relevant.

- One activity involved visitations to the new high school in Stouffeville. The Stouffeville high school tour proved quite interesting. Lewis Morgulis, from the York Region Board of Education, was the tour guide and the following observations might be of interest not only to the Steering Committee but to the NNDSB group responsible for monitoring the planning and implementation of the “new” Almaguin Secondary School. In fact, Lewis has been to Almaguin and it is our understanding that he is going to be an ex officio with the NNDSB planning team for the project.
 - The Stouffeville high school with a population of 900 was built around the timetable and subject areas similar to the philosophy behind the “new” Almaguin Highlands Secondary School.
 - The cafetorium also serves as a lunch room for students during the day.

- It should be noted that most of the class rooms were located on the second floor while the large space areas such as the cafetorium, technical trades, gymnasium and library were on the main floor.
- The food service is under contract with Aramark Can. Ltd. and the food program is very successful. The culinary program prepares lunches for a variety of community groups in the “Bistro” style restaurant which is a converted classroom totally decorated by students and parents. It is also close to the cafetorium so it can be used when there are evening performances put on by the school.
- The gymnasium is exceptionally large (four gyms in one) with power folding bleachers that can seat several hundred people.
- The technical areas contain a number of facilities that could be utilized from a community perspective. There is an integrated modular computer lab for students to work in. The shops area includes a variety of sanders and saws among other pieces of equipment. The manufacturing technical room is where they build cabinetry and furniture. The car shops include hoists, paint shop and small engine repair shop where you can work on lawn mowers, snow machines and so on. A welding booth complements the shops. There is also a classroom right off the automobile repair area where you can wheel a complete car engine right into the classroom.
- The library is 6000 square feet and includes a reading area with an electric fireplace, seminar rooms, and numerous computer stations and is especially designed to receive light from the ceiling and window areas.
- The rooms upstairs all have windows facing the hallways as well as the outside.
- All areas of the school are built so that the power and water is central, easily accessible and interchangeable such as converting a lab to a traditional room and vice versa.
- The building is not ostentatious or fancy and it’s affordable, easy to clean and practical.
- The design is simple and easy to control. For example, you can segregate the gymnasium area for tournaments and the cafetorium for performances from the rest of the school.

- Another activity involved reviewing some of the literature including the following documents:
 - Near North District School Board Accommodation Reports.
 - Community Needs Assessment Document 1999.
 - Feasibility Study for the Development of the Powassan Public Observatory 2006.
 - The NNDSB Strategic Renewal/Almaguin Highlands Secondary School Report 2006.
 - Investment Readiness Profiles and Analysis Report 2007
 - Active Community School Forum Notes & Presentations

- The consultants also researched the region through the internet to find out about sustainability and area attractions. It became obvious early in our search that tourism and location were two factors that attracted people to the area. The many towns and villages in the region offered something under the umbrella of “outdoor education and recreation”, whether it was a leisurely paddle down part of the Magnetawan River from Burks Falls or South River known as the “Paddling Gateway” to Algonquin and Mikisew Provincial Parks or Sprucedale known for its recreational vehicle trails both in summer and winter. The area, because of its numerous lakes, four seasons and proximity to Muskoka and the Greater Toronto Area is certainly a potential tourist draw that would be enhanced by a new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School that is involved in outdoor education from a community perspective.

- Another area where information or literature is relevant to the potential of this project comes in part from the local residents who bring the history and the vision with them. It could be an email, a telephone conversation, a discussion over a cup of coffee, or a discussion with one of the local business people or politicians; they all have some idea for the potential of a community “hub” with the Almaguin Highlands Secondary School being at the center.

3. “Enhancements”

a) Demographic analysis of current population, impact on Highway 11, retiree migration and student retention.

Analysis of Current Population/Retiree Migration

The Ministry of Finance completed a population projection for the next thirty one years based on current and future trends. The effect of this projection allows regions to compare existing demographics gathered from sources like Statistics Canada.

Some of the 2008 highlights of the Ministry of Finance indicate the following trends;

- Birth rates and death rates are increasing at the same rate. In effect as the aging population of the baby boomers causes the death rate to grow faster than the birth rate, any population growth is due to in migration.
- The population aged over sixty five will more than double beginning in 2011 when the first baby boomer turns sixty five. This figure is greater in this region as the average age is already eight years older than the average in Ontario.
- The number of children under fifteen increases at a very low rate, while the working age population (15-64) increase at a greater rate.
- The population of Northern Ontario is expected to decrease over the next thirty one years. However due to net migration, this region is expected to maintain or show a minimal growth.

Almaguin High School has a catchment area that includes seventeen communities and unorganized areas. The following chart shows the population change as a percentage from 1996 to 2001 and from 2001 to 2006.

| Community | 1996 to 2001(percentage) | 2001 to 2006 (percentage) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Magnetawan | 1.4 | 20.0 |
| Sundridge | -3.5 | -4.2 |
| Burk's Falls | -4.7 | -5.0 |
| South River | -5.3 | -2.8 |
| Machar | 1.7 | -2.0 |
| Powassan | -1.8 | 1.8 |
| Township of Nipissing | 1.9 | 5.7 |
| Strong | -1.7 | -3.1 |
| Chisholm | 2.8 | 7.2 |
| Armour | -9.4 | -5.8 |
| Perry | 1.7 | -10.7 |
| Parry Sound Unorganized East Part | -2.1 | 27.6 |
| Parry Sound Unorganized Center Part | 5.6 | 10.3 |
| Joly | -6.8 | -3.4 |
| Kearney | -7.6 | 3.2 |
| Ryerson | -6.5 | 8.5 |
| McMurrich/Monteith | 5.9 | 3.3 |
| Average Total | -1.6 | +1.92 |

Source: Stats Canada Community Profiles 2001 and 2006

This data supports the findings that positive growth is happening in the region and is particularly strong in the communities to the West such as Magnetawan and the unorganized Township of Parry Sound.

Statistics Canada was our main source of population demographics and we did not include population and age charts of all the communities and townships. They were reviewed and the following generalizations were made:

An important change in the demographics is the noticeable decrease in the number of children under fifteen from the 2001 census to the 2006 census. In 2001 there were 3420 children under fifteen located within the catchments area compared to 2800 in 2006. The numbers indicate a change in younger families.

The other significant change is the increase in the age category over sixty five. In 2001 there were 4003 residents over sixty five compared to 4615 in 2006. The significance of this is that residents wish to remain in their communities as long as services are available. In addition these numbers suggests in-migration is a factor for retirees who have selected these communities as a place to retire.

The Almaguin Region participated in a regional “Investment Readiness Profiles and Analysis” report that was released in March 2007. Within this report community profiles were developed highlighting population trends, economic activity and labour force and employment trends. Findings from this study indicate the employment picture is “fair”. The strength of the economic community is within the retirement/health care, transportation, manufacturing and retail industry. These sectors are for the most part in response to the changing demographics. According to this study, the primary growth area is in tourism and agriculture. The secondary target area is for the supportive industry in the retail and service sectors. The study further identifies strategic alliances with regional partners as a potential initiative to enhance economic activity. Another strong factor is the economic impact of the housing industry. Building activity in 2007 for the region has proven to be an outstanding year. The ripple effect of this mini boom will have a positive impact on the overall economic profile.

Statistics Canada show the median age of the population is 47 and for the Province is 39. This higher median age indicates a higher level of out migration of younger people. The Investment Readiness Strategy identifies several target areas to explore that may promote youth retention. In identifying factors related to location the study suggests the area is economically attractive and has a strong business presence with a supportive labour market. The primary target area for labour markets is best defined as a fit within the growth sectors. According to the Investment Readiness Study, the growth sectors for the region have been in the tourism, retail and support services sectors.

Population change in a community is the result of two factors. The first factor is the birth and death rates. As mentioned earlier the birth rate and death rate are increasing generally at the same rate. The natural increase is defined as

the birth rate minus the death rate. During the latter period of the population projection, the natural increase declines at a much more rapid pace than the birth rate. This is due to the aging population with the baby boomers reaching a critical stage. The baby boom generation includes those who were born between 1947 and 1966.

Migration plays a very significant role in population growth and projection. As the birth and death rate remain similar with some small exceptions, the population increase is attributed to in migration. This finding is supported with the number of building permits for new homes during 2007.

Highway 11

The new highway is expected to have both a negative and positive impact on the region. It is expected that many businesses will need to rethink a marketing strategy to attract customers. Currently an economic strategic plan is underway for the Almaguin Highlands Region that will analyze strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations related to economic growth and sustainability. The full impact of the new highway will be realized when completed. In discussing this matter with the local businesses and the Provincial Government, the hope is that the new highway will provide better ease of access from north and south and thereby tapping into a new market. The general feeling of the residents is that they are committed to travel now to participate in activities and the new highway will only improve traveling conditions. Early indicators have shown that strong interest from southern Ontario in the real estate market bodes well for the economy.

Student Retention

When the NNDSB Administration looks at student retention they analyze numbers over a period of time to indicate what trends are occurring and then begin to address corrections if necessary. Almaguin Highlands Secondary School currently has a number of feeder schools that send students graduating from Grade 8 into the Grade 9 courses at the high school. The consulting team only reviewed last year's numbers.

The first chart identifies the elementary schools that feed students from Grade 8 to high school. The chart indicates that out of a possible 224 Grade 8 students that graduated last June, 63 did not attend Almaguin Secondary School. This represents almost 25%. There are a variety of reasons that could include:

- Proximity to other secondary schools;
- Program offerings and choices;
- Religious orientation;
- Parent/student choice; and/or
- Moved out of area

| | Mapleridge | M.T. Davidson | Argyle | South Shore | Land of Lakes | Evergreen |
|---|--|-------------------------|--------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| Number of grade 8 grads last year | 28 | 26 | 11 | 9 | 123 | 27 |
| Number that went to AHSS grade – 9 | 5 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 119 | 24 |
| Number that went to catholic system | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| Number that went elsewhere (our secondary, moved, etc. | 2 – out of board 8 – WSS 11 WFSS | 3 to WSS, 22 to WFSS | 1 WFSS | 6 WFSS | 2 | 3 |

2008 Grade 8 Graduation Numbers for Almaguin Secondary Feeder Schools

The graduation chart showing where students go after grade 8 provides the stimulus for good healthy discussion regarding school population involving those involved in education and those in the communities that have a vested interest. The discussion should include trying to increase the population to keep the school as the focal point in the region. A number of topics to deal with in the discussion include:

- (1) Enhancing the retention prospects of all grade 8 graduates to Almaguin.
- (2) Enhancing the retention of early school leavers.
- (3) Providing stimulating programs for post secondary school students.
- (4) Delivering enrichment and interest programs to adults and seniors.

- (1) Enhancing the retention prospects of all grade 8 graduates to Almaguin.

One of the first steps in this area is to develop a long term strategy that “Welcomes” students to the new facility. This involves a thorough analysis and review of feeder school populations including why students make alternate choices. For example, if program offerings are the issue, it requires “selling” the new facility with the focus on quality programs that could include outdoor education or an enhanced theatre arts program or a personal fitness program that would invite students to reconsider their grade 9 choices. Part of the strategy would include a detailed partnership with all elementary schools in the region where you link different programs in physical education or science or math so they become “seamless” from Kindergarten to grade 12.

Another component of the strategy has to include tracking mechanisms so you can follow the students' interests as well as their academic progress. Consideration should be given to tracking those students who have made Almaguin the school of choice and ensure that quality programming meets their needs from grade 9 to grade 12 and beyond.

(2) Enhancing the retention of early school leavers.

Part of this topic begins to receive some attention in the previous discussion where the new high school monitors and tracks new students throughout their four years at Almaguin. A long term strategy would include reviewing and analyzing the numbers of grade 9 students who have chosen Almaguin over the past number of years versus the number who have graduated during that same time period. Statistically, in most Ontario secondary schools, there is a dramatic reduction in those numbers as they move through the grades. For example, 161 students in 2008 chose Almaguin Highlands secondary school to further their education. The school goal would be to graduate as high a number of those 161 students as possible after four years. The plan should also include a review of the past several years identifying reasons why students leave and develop strategies on how to retain students that will bode well for the future. Information might surface that would allow the staff to develop ideas on how to get some of the early school leavers to return to complete their education.

(3) Providing stimulating programs for post secondary school students.

There might be ample opportunity in this area for discussion, especially for those who have recently graduated and have chosen to live in the region, or graduate students from other secondary schools who have moved into the area. A long term plan, as part of an overall strategy to build and grow the school population, has to be developed. It would include, among other things, a survey and inventory of young people living in the region, a list of their interests (wants and needs) and then identification of players that could deliver the programs identified. This might include articulation agreements with Canadore College, Nipissing University and/or a variety of business in the region that might result in apprenticeship programs and employment allowing young people to settle in the region.

(4) Delivering enrichment and interest programs to adults and seniors.

This discussion is critical in that it begins to provide a linkage between the communities and the new school, resulting in the "gathering place" concept where the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School becomes the focal point for the region. As suggested earlier, this becomes part of a long term strategy, combined with the other enhancements in this section that help to grow the school and build that bond. One of the differences for consideration

in this component would be identifying and building on the expertise of people that could involve offering a variety of classes and activities depending on interest. Again, a review and analysis of resources has to be completed in order to move forward in this area. While understanding that the number of people participating in after school or evening classes might not be included directly in school population numbers, it would be impressive in terms of identifying numbers that use the facility on a regular or annual basis.

Almaguin Highlands is populated through five feeder schools. The following chart describes where 2008-09 grade 9 students at Almaguin Secondary Schools attended grade 8 in 2007-08. Data sets used for this analysis include March 31, 2008 for grade 8 information and September 26, 2008 for grade 9 information.

| 2008-09 Almaguin Highlands Grade 9 Students by Feeder School | | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Schools | Number | Percent | Adjusted Percent |
| Land of Lakes | 95 | 55.9% | 61.3% |
| Evergreen Heights | 24 | 14.1% | 15.5% |
| Land of Lakes (French Immersion) | 16 | 9.4% | 10.3% |
| Argyle | 10 | 5.9% | 6.5% |
| Mapleridge | 5 | 2.9% | 3.2% |
| South Shore | 3 | 1.8% | 1.9% |
| W. J. Fricker | 1 | 0.6% | 0.6% |
| Centennial | 1 | 0.6% | 0.6% |
| Outside NNDSB | 15 | 8.8% | 0.0% |

Distribution of Grade 9 Students by Feeder School

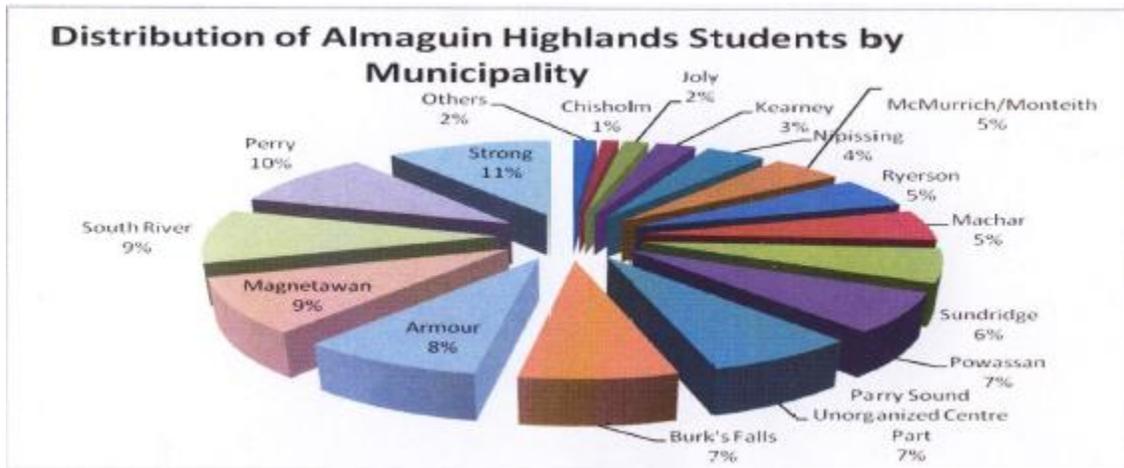
This chart is rather interesting. Even though there are fewer students from Land of Lakes school who said they would be attending Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, (119/111) the grade 9 enrolment for 2008 at the high school showed an increase as there were 170 grade 9 students enrolled in September. The feeder school number was 161 for a net gain of 9 students. This is good news in that a number of students were from outside the area and the school should be complimented on the increased grade 9 enrolment.

The following analysis displays how Almaguin students are located geographically within radius distances from the school. September 26, 2008 enrollment data was used for this exercise which included the plotting, geocoding of the 755 students enrolled. 726 of the 755 students were successfully geocoded representing a rate of 96%.

| Distribution of Almaguin Highland Students Based on Distance from School | | |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Distance | Number | Percent |
| Within 5 km | 142 | 18.8% |
| Within 10 km | 53 | 7.0% |
| Within 20 km | 102 | 13.5% |
| Within 30 km | 213 | 28.2% |
| Within 40 km | 161 | 21.3% |
| Over 40 km | 55 | 7.3% |
| Not Geocoded | 29 | 3.8% |

Analysis of Almaguin Students

The next chart demonstrates the distribution of students by municipality that attend Almaguin Highlands Secondary School.



Throughout all the public forum meetings, the implications by the public indicated if we had a strong, vibrant facility that offered people a healthier lifestyle people would stay in the region and join the “hub”.

From a school perspective, because of the diversity of students and the numbers, it is sometimes difficult to offer the kinds of programs communities want. Cosmetology, communication technology and forest management are areas that the school is developing “sections” or class room numbers around but small student numbers make it difficult to offer these classes from a financial perspective.

b) *Internal enhancements to the school such as gym size, technical studies, home economics, child/day care, multi purpose rooms, art-music facilities including visual arts and drama, theatre*

In this deliverable, given certain restrictions we will review the internal enhancements as identified on page 6 of the Request for Proposal.

1. Expanded gymnasium (triple gym with indoor track)
2. Enhanced technical trade hub (machine shop, auto mechanics, electrical, plumbing, etc.)
3. Expanded home economic services to include culinary arts/catering.
4. Fitness room
5. Child care center for students
6. Consideration of environmental impact throughout the school
7. Expanded Visual Arts Education – music/drama/visual arts
8. Creation of a health services hub
9. Multi-purpose activity room

A number of these areas were identified as discussion items during the public information sharing sessions. Before we review each briefly, a number of information items shared by representatives of the NNDSB were discussed with members of the consulting team to provided guidelines for community discussion. They include:

- a) Footage and space for students is done on a formula basis by the Ministry of Education and is a top priority;
- b) Curriculum/program requirements will dictate classroom design;
- c) The design will be built based on successful historical data involving popular and sustainable programs;
- d) The school will be designed for 750 students;
- e) The school will be smaller than the current structure;
- f) The school will be built to serve a wide range of student interests;
- g) The school will be specifically designed with the potential of additions if required;
- h) The Board has been working with staff and communities regarding school design;
- i) Any “internal” add on’s from a community perspective would require up Front funding and written agreements related to the enhancement;
- j) External enhancements would require Articulation Agreements between the school board and the client.

So, where do the committee and community groups fit into the proposed “internal enhancements” to the new facility?

1. Expanded Gymnasium (Triple gym with indoor track)

This was originally not included as part of a Sportplex, but was mentioned as a possible consideration if the gymnasium facility in the new school proposal did not meet the requirements of multiple program options. However, given the history at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School the Board is going to seriously consider a state of the art gymnasium facility with change rooms, in the design of the new school. Also given serious consideration after consultation with students and staff, is the possibility of some form of indoor track that would allow people to walk and jog indoors throughout the winter months. The inclusion of the gymnasium facility within the school will be part of the overall design approved by the Ministry and built into the school budget. A gymnasium component in a stand alone “Sportplex” concept will be dealt with later in the report.

2. Enhanced Technical Trade Hub (machine shop, auto mechanics, electrical, plumbing, etc.)

Public discussion wanted to ensure a strong balance between the composite or trades and academics. As well, they wanted to make sure the education facilities and job market are related. Discussion also centered on apprenticeship training programs and partnerships where facilities like this could be utilized and built into the concept of a “gathering” place for educational learning activities. The NNDSB indicated it was looking at a number of technical and trade spaces within the new facility that would complement and enhance programs that were offered in these areas. Welding, small engines, construction and machine shop are examples of programs under consideration. These programs have been popular at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School and should be involved in community linkages.

3. Expanded Home Economics to Include Culinary Arts/Catering

Historically, schools dealt with home economics space and more recently it has moved in the direction of culinary arts/catering. Public discussion centered on the idea of a food preparation area that could be utilized by the community where catering could be contracted to supply to different events. Students could have a strong role to play in this. As well, partnerships with related programs in this area such as the culinary program at Canadore College also received extensive support and discussion at the public forums. The idea of evening culinary classes for the members of the community at large as well as tapping into the expertise of the community was also mentioned. This is an area that has possibilities to generate revenue that could result in long term sustainability.

4. Fitness Room

In the public forum this was a major topic of discussion. As an internal enhancement, the NNDSB is looking at space, within the new school, connected with the overall physical education program that could first be tied into student credit programs and secondly, if it was to be used by the community, arrangements could be worked out. Nobody mentioned kinds of equipment, liability insurance and/or maintenance during the community forums. There was some mention of an opportunity for people of all ages to gather in a work out area to keep physically active. Since individual communities find it difficult to support and finance a workout training area of their own, the suggestion was made that a central area such as the school could be the catalyst that attracts people to train and remain physically fit. If the funding did not allow for space, the idea of some sort of fitness room in a Sportplex was mentioned as a possible alternative because of public interest in this area.

5. Child/Day Care Center for Students

As a potential internal enhancement to the new school, this idea did not receive a lot of discussion. It was mentioned that there are currently at least four centers in the region including South River, Powassan, Callander and Emsdale. One of the main discussion topics centered on transportation being a key issue that could result in difficulty for people, especially traveling to and from the new school. The other point mentioned in support of a child/day care facility involved young mothers who are currently attending high school, or have left to raise a family. Providing a day care space would be an incentive to have them stay in school or return to complete their high school education. Board representatives indicated that the idea would only be considered if a provider was able to present a contract upfront that was acceptable to the Board.

In discussions with representatives from the Parry Sound District Social Services Association Board (DSSAB), a number of observations were noted. First, DSSAB will provide start-up funding costs for equipment purchases only, such as play equipment. Secondly, they will subsidize parents to a certain degree and it's the parents that make the decision as to whether or not they want their children to attend. Finally, representatives from DSSAB indicated they supported the idea of a child/day care facility in the new school. There are studies, and one is currently being completed for our region, that indicate the benefits of having such a facility in a school over the long term and it could relate to retention over a period of time.

Because of space constraints related to costs, the NNDSB will not be including child/day care space in the new school design. Our recommendation later on in the report supports the Board, but it is worded in such a way that should space become available over the long term, then discussion could take place.

6. Consideration of Environmental Impact Throughout the School

In all the public forums, NNDSB representatives have been instrumental in listening to the communities, and indicated that the new school would be a “green school”. The environmental impact both inside and outside the school will be addressed so that there will be minimal impact on the environment and that it will be eco friendly.

7. Expanded Visual Arts Education – Music/Drama/Visual Arts

Public discussions indicated a strong voice for drama. The theatre portion of drama will be dealt with later on. Again, the design of the school will take into consideration music/drama and visual arts facilities that will be closely linked to a cafetorium concept which will also serve as a theatre. The idea of displaying student art was also mentioned along with potential space where it could be viewed by the public. These types of program spaces are being considered by the NNDSB. In the public forum there was talk about utilizing musical, drama and art talent from the community perspective and how this could fit into the concept of bringing community strength to the new school.

8. Creation of a Health Services Hub

The discussions here centered on first, health services being part of an external enhancement – a stand along Sportplex and secondly, providing space in the new school building where a variety of health services or community services would be available to the student population and the public. The suggestion was that providing health services involving preventative medicine might be more economical in a central location such as the new school both in the short term and long term. Again, the NNDSB, because of space requirements being at a premium, has not factored this into the design.

9. Multi-Purpose Activity Room

This enhancement was also considered in the context of the design of the new school. The Board is looking at space that could be used as a multi purpose room. Discussion at the public meetings centered around students, in particular, not having a place to meet or “gather” that they could more or less call their own or where different community groups might be able to meet. Again, if space cannot be included in the new school design, the idea of including a room might be considered in a Sportplex idea.

c) “External Enhancements to the School such as Greenhouse Usage, Amphitheatre, Outdoor Recreational Facility, Multi-Purpose Trails, Track and Field Options, Skateboarding, Community Swimming Pool and Others.”

The precise wording of these external enhancements is also identified on page 6 of the Request for Proposal. A number of the external enhancements became key discussion items in the public meetings. They include:

1. Horticulture/Greenhouses for school and community use;
2. Outdoor Amphitheatre;
3. Cross country trails-skiing, racing, motorized atv's, etc.;
4. Outdoor recreation center to house equipment and provide meeting space;
5. Enhanced outdoor track;
6. Skateboarding park;
7. Additional playing fields (soccer, lacrosse, tennis, etc.);
8. Open space.

1. “Horticulture/Greenhouses for School and Community Use”

During discussions this concept was tied into the overall idea of an environmental center as part of the school building. This would include a greenhouse concept where flowers and plants could be grown for sale in the community or developed for science classes as well as providing the potential for growing foods tied into the culinary arts program. There was good discussion on the idea of a “communities in bloom” approach that could connect the school and the communities in terms of beautification and pride in the area. As well, a forestry component that would include a number of things related to forestry management was discussed. In summary, the idea of a “greenhouse” concept tied in with the school science programs and the communities, received very favourable support from people at a number of the public forums.

2. “Outdoor Amphitheatre”(Bandshell)

The whole theatre concept received lengthy discussions at all of the public input sessions. On a number of occasions the discussion was a bit blurred as the “theatre” discussion was intertwined with a number of options. These options included:

- The idea of an outdoor amphitheatre, where there could be either a stand alone stage area or a stage component attached to the school that could open up to allow concert performances for audiences sitting on a large grassy knoll;

- A complete stand alone theatre that would be community driven located on school property but with connections for the students/staff in terms of usage, performances, displaying of student art work and so on;
- A theatre attached to the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School that could be segregated if used in the evenings or weekends;
- The cafetorium concept where a large room with its own stage, change rooms and sound room connected to the music and drama rooms could be used for theatre performances. It could also be used as a meeting room, a school assembly area, graduations, community events or as a lunch room for students.

However, the majority of the discussion centered on the theatre being either a stand alone or model attached to the school and the cafetorium idea which would be multi-functional. Again, further discussion on the theatre idea is addressed later in the report.

3. “Cross Country Trails, Skiing, Racing, Motorized ATV’s, Etc.”

This area received some discussion especially in the area of cross country trails for skiing and the possibility for making it an attraction to host special events such as district cross country ski races. As well, walking trails and snowmobile/atv trails were discussed that could connect the different communities within the region. Year round possibilities in this area could have a positive economic impact and the region is centrally located offering a natural environment that could support the development of these kinds of outdoor activities.

4. “Outdoor Recreation Center to House Equipment and Provide Meeting Space”

This area received quite a bit of discussion because of the natural environment that could provide numerous opportunities and a variety of venues. When researching the Almaguin Highlands on the internet, it was interesting to note that all the communities and villages in the region had information related to outdoor recreation activities and tourism. The most common thread that tied the communities together centered on water and/or the Cross Canada Trail System whether it was a canoe trip along the Magnetawan River in Burks Falls or a picnic at Brooks Falls in Emsdale or trails connecting Perry Township or the Kearney Regatta in the summer. The outdoor recreation concept is one the community and the school should review that could provide strong linkages throughout the region. More discussion on this idea is addressed later in the report.

5. “Enhanced Outdoor Track”

There was some discussion in this area. The NNDSB is looking at providing some sort of track for the new high school with a field area similar to the one at the current high school. If this cannot be accommodated in the preliminary budget, hopefully an area will be designated, cleared and prepared for the future development of an outdoor track if needed. Discussion also centered on what could happen to the track that currently exists at Almaguin. It could be severed from the old school and somehow linked to the new school if there is not going to be one at the new school when it first opens. This would involve discussions with the NNDSB because a number of things would have to be taken into consideration before a decision could be made. Also, because of the climate and student and staff input, an indoor track concept is being considered in the new facility.

6. “Skateboarding Park”

The idea of a skateboarding park was mentioned by a few members during the public forum but it did not receive a lot of discussion.

7. “Additional Playing Fields” (soccer, lacrosse, tennis, etc.)

This area is under consideration by the Board especially an area that could house touch football, frisbee, soccer or lacrosse. The discussion centered on when the school was being built and having the Board consider using the material and fill to prepare the area now so costs would be greatly reduced later on if the fields were needed..

Very little discussion centered on the word “extra” fields. The consensus seemed to indicate that people would wait until they saw the plans for the new school and what the budget could afford. Then they could look at the idea of whether extra fields were needed or whether they should look at the field at the current Almaguin site. Tennis was mentioned more in keeping with the idea of a Sportplex and will be discussed later in the report.

8. “Open Space”

The idea of “open spaces” was not discussed in the public forums as such. It was evident that the potential trails that could be developed, the fields that might be available and the approximate 60 acres of land that could be designated for the school was construed as part of the “open space” design.

d) "Assessment of involvement of various ministries, key groups in the community, Central Almaguin Economic Development Association and district municipal representatives."

1) Various Ministries

This deliverable implies collecting information related to the scope of the project from the various provincial ministries to see if any funding options are available. A number of the provincial ministries are identified under the deliverable entitled "Identification and Analysis of Potential Funding Sources" later on in the report. As well, the recommendation on funding outlined in the implementation strategy asks, "*that a fundraising strategy be developed that will formerly work toward generating the dollars necessary to grow, develop and expand both capital and operating projects and programs. Further key local champions will need to be included as part of this committee.*" Some suggestions and follow-up are made to support this recommendation later on in the report as well. Depending on what projects people identify as a priority, will go a long way in determining how much work will be involved and what kinds of funding initiatives will be required. Once a basic plan has been developed and the "groundwork" has been completed, the involvement of the particular ministries can be more clearly defined.

2) Key Groups in the Communities

There are quite a number of key groups and individuals in the communities that could play a vital role in the project. The following areas begin to provide a starting point to enhance awareness and understanding of potential linkages between the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School and the communities it serves.

Businesses

- *Marshall Well Drilling (Emsdale)
- *Lofthouse Brass (Burks Falls)
- *Mac Lang Chrysler (Sundridge)
- *Bray Motors GM (Sundridge)
- *Kent Trusses (Sundridge)
- *Kidds Home Hardware (Sundridge)
- *Coldwell Banker (South River)
- *Near North Real Estate
- *Magnetawan Bait and Tackle
- *Doe Lake Campground (Katrine)
- *Burks Falls Outward Bound
- *Depeuter Flooring
- *Lake Bernard Camp (Sundridge)

Clubs

- *Lions Clubs
- *Masonic Lodges
- *Seniors Groups
- *Almaguin Choral Society
- *Horticultural Society
- *Agricultural Society
- *Burks Falls Art Club
- *Retired Teachers of Ontario
- *Powassan Players
- *Kick Boxing Club
- *Legions

Community Groups

- *Church Organizations
- *Girl Guides/Scouts/Cadets
- *Community Recreation Councils
- *Cottage Associations
- *O.P.P.
- *Emergency Medical Services
- *School Parent Councils
- *District Social Services Advisory Board
- *Women's Resource Center
- *Association for Community Living
- *Library Associations
- *Senior Centers
- *Museums
- *Literacy Councils
- *Fire Fighter's Associations
- *Sports Groups

Others

- *Individuals who can play a key role in the development of the project.
- *The High School Reunion Committee
- *Lottery outlets.

3) Economic Development Council

The recent Regional Investment Readiness Strategy identified a number of critical economic factors that if acted upon will strengthen the local economy. One factor or recommendation was the development of a joint economic development committee with a mandate to represent the region in similar economic initiatives. The region shares many similarities and would benefit by cost sharing a joint venture. The Central Almaguin Economic Development Association is a new venture that is currently involved in the creation of an economic strategic plan. The proponents of the strategic plan should be in

communication with the Steering Committee for the new school project to align common goals.

4) Municipal Representatives

Earlier in the process the majority of Municipal Representatives from each of the different communities that could be serviced by the school provided a motion of support for the project. Communication around this support has to continue and they are key persons that have to be kept informed as this study moves into the next phase.

e) “Assessment of options that include all or some enhancements (priority setting exercise) and school population options”

This deliverable identifies two separate items that will be dealt with here. The first is a look at the options that include the key external enhancements from a priority setting exercise and the second is a look at the school population options. Most of the enhancements were dealt with earlier in this report but a few of them require more in depth coverage. They include: a) theatre, b) Sportplex, c) outdoor education center and d) cafetorium.

- **Theatre**

The community input sessions indicated very strongly support for a theatre component that could link the communities and the school together as a potential drawing card to the region. In this context we are referring to either a full stand alone theatre building or one attached to the outside of the proposed school facility that would be either a school or a community responsibility. Some of the key advantages identified during the public meetings included:

- The possibility of revenue that would have a positive economic spin off;
- A permanent home for displaying local art;
- A permanent home for a variety of clubs and activities in the region;
- A multi-use facility that could generate revenue (movie presentations, guest speakers, conferences and church groups);
- Programming for groups of all ages;
- Piggybacking on entertainment offered in areas like Huntsville and North Bay;
- Close linkage with a number of school programs from the culinary, to music, to drama;
- Hosting a number of district regional events;

While most of the input involved positive discussion where people were motivated, they also identified a number of areas of concern that included:

- Stand alone costs that would be challenging;
- Maintenance responsibilities that bring in a cost factor;
- Competition with other nearby centers not only for entertainment but for audiences;
- Long term sustainability and responsibility;
- Articulation agreements either with the school board or potential users.

Later on in the report some basic figures are provided related to costs. There is no doubt this project will have to be looked at long term and an implementation framework and plan would have to be developed if some interested group were to take the next step.

▪ **Sportplex**

A number of the enhancements identified in the proposal were connected to some sort of health or physical activity aimed at all segments of the population. It soon became apparent they could fall under the umbrella of a “Sportplex” with a pool being the central drawing card. The pool idea was mentioned as a possible enhancement to the new school that would have community involvement but was rejected by the Board representatives because of cost factors that included insurance and maintenance (Pool costs are identified elsewhere in the report). Other activity areas mentioned in the discussions included: indoor track facility, weigh/fitness room, indoor swimming pool, gymnasium facility, change rooms, multi-purpose rooms, a therapeutic pool, squash courts, tennis courts, a multi-purpose outdoor field, access to trail and hiking systems, climbing wall, physiotherapy center and possibly even a cafeteria.

A note should be made here on the tennis court idea. We did not get a clear picture of whether people were talking about indoor or outdoor tennis courts. As a result, the whole area of tennis was more or less thought of as something a community group could look at if a long term plan were developed on the Sportplex concept.

This external enhancement also received a lot of discussion and support during the public forums. Some of the major advantages identified include:

- A building like this could offer year round activities;
- It could result in the development of community and/or agency partnerships such as the YMCA;
- It would allow for social interaction for people of all ages;
- A facility such as this could attract people from the region for a variety of events;
- A quality facility could offer quality programs for people inside and outside the school;

- It would result in local dollars being spent locally.

The chief disadvantage mentioned was in the area of costs including capital, maintenance, operating and liability insurance. Also mentioned was whether or not the population of the Almaguin Highlands region could sustain such a facility over time and whether it would eventually have an impact on local taxes.

▪ **Outdoor Education Center**

During discussions, it became obvious very quickly that a number of the enhancements identified in this area could fall under the umbrella of “Outdoor Education”. They include multi-purpose rooms, open spaces, outdoor fields, hiking trails, horticulture/greenhouse, outdoor amphitheatre, cross country trails for hiking and skiing and so on. People identified a number of advantages that included:

- The natural environment is an asset;
- A number of trail systems are already in place and connect several communities;
- The educational possibilities are limitless;
- Partnerships could be developed with different schools, communities, the Hunters and Anglers Association, ANTE and different government ministries;
- It offers opportunities for all age groups to be actively involved;
- Human, technical and natural resources already exist;
- It is something that is affordable and doable;
- It has year round possibilities and will result in more respect for the environment.

On the downside, funding was mentioned as an issue along with the cost of maintenance, upkeep and competition that already exists.

These three areas received most of the discussion during the public forums and people were unanimous in their support as the information collected clearly indicated. As a result, more discussion later on in the report will identify how feasible these are as projects to link the communities to a new Almaguin High School facility.

▪ **Cafetorium**

This area also received a lot of discussion during the public information sessions. It is considered one of the “theatre options” that could be an integral part of the school design. When we visited Stouffville High School, one of the main reasons for the visitation was to look at their cafetorium, which is multi-functional. It can be used for a variety of events including that of a major lunch room and can also be turned into a very functional theatre. Some of our observations included:

- The cafetorium can be segretated from the rest of the school allowing weekend and evening use without worrying about the rest of the building.
- The specially designed curtains black out most of the light entering from the hallways.
- The cafetorium concept has a large stage and seating capacity for 500 while a smaller stage with seating capacity for 100 is set up off the back of the large stage. (the two stages back onto each other , are accessible to each other and are separated by a wall)
- Dressing rooms, lighting and sound booth are also built into the design.
- The music and drama rooms are connected to the stage area for easy access.

One of the biggest advantages of this concept is that the majority of this kind of multi-functional facility can be built into the school design and school budget. In talking with architects and theatre consultants, they have indicated that elevated floor sections to accommodate seating can be built into the design at little or no extra cost that would give a tiered effect for the audiences when attending performances.

A design such as this can accommodate small performances on the one hand that include local community or elementary schools and very large performances on the main stage that could include movie presentations, guest speakers, conferences and a variety of artists.

▪ **School Population Options**

The second part of the deliverable asked the consultants to look at possible school population options which are quite different than reviewing student retention. There are a variety of school models that currently exist in Ontario schools. The most common option has students housed in one complex that include grades 9 – 12. A second configuration includes students from grades 7 – 12 sometimes referred to as a middle or senior school. Other options for consideration might include kindergarten to grade 12 combinations which have advantages and disadvantages.

When discussing school populations with the NNDSB it is our understanding that next year (2009) an accommodation review process will take place in the east end of the school board to study six elementary schools in the Almaguin corridor, South River to Emsdale and Magnetawan including Magnetawan Public School (JK – 6), M.A. Wittick Public School (JK – 6), Land of Lakes Public School (6 – 8), Sundridge Elementary School (JK – 6), Evergreen Heights Elementary School (JK – 8) and South River Public School (JK – 6). Given that the Accommodation

Review Committee is a NNDSB responsibility, the consulting team will not go into any discussion or detail on school population options but knows the Board will analyze the data during the accommodation review and recommend what's in the best interests of the students.

4. “Assessment on overcoming barriers to community use of school that include Hwy 11 driving, distances, transportation delivery and potential fees”

Hwy#11 driving/distances

With the new four lane highway nearing completion, several positive changes will occur. First, access to the new school will improve. The exit off the new highway will be right next to the school making it much easier to access. Secondly, it will take less time to travel to the new facility on a four lane highway especially if you're coming from Burks Falls or the surrounding area. Thirdly, the safety component regarding the traffic flow and the new highway will be enhanced for people driving to the school and fourthly, any traffic from South River or Sundridge will not have to contend with heavy traffic flow if they are using the current highway to access the new school. This should partially alleviate the concern expressed at the public meetings about transportation being an obstacle in the region.

Distances in a way, are relative and a way of life for people living in the Almaguin highlands region. Transportation is accepted as a necessary part of living in the area. Regardless of where you live in the region, you have to drive, whether it's to drop children off, grocery shop, or visit and the road system is really a lifeline connecting the communities.

Transportation delivery

In the pursuit of making the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School a “hub” or “focus” or “magnet” that attracts people to the facility for a variety of reasons, transportation delivery provides an opportunity for a number of groups to work together. From a busing standpoint, possibly a review of busing services or policies might be considered when more information on potential new programs or after school activities have been identified. This would allow the NNDSB and the communities to work together to provide opportunities for students and people from the different towns and villages. It would also result in addressing the after school bussing to accommodate students involved in extra curricular activities. There might also be possibilities down the road to co-ordinate a pickup of seniors and adults in the different communities and drop them off at the new center to participate in activities and then bus drivers can start their regular run with students. Another point that might be considered from a busing standpoint is looking at potential sponsors that would allow people to attend functions or participate in activities at the new school.

A second area of transportation delivery involves the automobile. A rather novel idea is being pursued by the “Almaguin Highlands Community Partners” group, a dedicated number of individuals who are applying for a FedNor grant to develop a website providing a car pool to get people from point “A” to point “B”. Simply put, there would be a “pool” of drivers available on the website that you could phone if you needed a ride. Another option to consider is car pooling. This could be coordinated through the activity that people are involved in and could result in addressing some of the transportation delivery issues.

Potential fees

Potential fees might depend not only on the type of activity being offered, but numbers as well. The new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School with a host of potential internal and external enhancements being offered to the students and communities is a tremendous marketing tool that needs to be explored in more detail possibly within the Regional Economic Strategic Plan currently being considered. As each enhancement becomes a reality, agreements are worked out identifying revenues and expenditures that could indicate potential user fees.

5. “Financial analysis of each proposed bare bones school enhancement, cost estimates (initial/ongoing/maintenance)”

Because of the public information session discussions the consulting team agreed that most of the talk centered on some key areas. It was felt that costing estimates and comments could focus on the key enhancements as opposed to each “proposed bare bones school enhancement” because of those discussions. In discussions with the architectural firm, Evans, Bertrand, Hill & Wheeler Inc. of North Bay, the following information is provided for this report. When talking about operational costs, we include heating, maintenance and cleaning.

a) Amphitheatre(Bandshell)

The architectural firm indicated that a free standing amphitheatre that could accommodate approximately 300 people is estimated to be in the area of \$175,000.00. If this was included in the design of the school as an attachment obviously it would cost a lot less. As part of the school facility probably the operating costs would be the responsibility of the Board unless the facility was rented out and other arrangements were made that identified an operational component. If the building was a stand alone, directly unrelated to the school design, operating costs would have to be worked out as to who would maintain the theatre, heat it if heat was required and clean it. The consulting team found it difficult to find examples of stand alone amphitheatres so did not include operating costs in this study.

The other option involved creating a large “grassy” knoll (sort of a small hill that faced a “bandshell” type of structure, possibly attached to the new school that could seat several hundred people on the hill. During the construction of the new school, it was mentioned that maybe the Architect, at little cost could include the power sources to the bandshell. As well, the knoll could be built using the material removed from the actual site of the school as they dig. In the long run, little maintenance would be required to keep this area attractive. The site would serve a wide range of purposes that could include student and community use.

b) Cafetorium

If you were building seating for 500 persons (\$300/seat plus storage alcoves for stacked platforms) it would cost in the area of \$208,500.00. Note that the cost for the gross floor area for the cafeteria is not included in this quotation as it would be included in the base bid cost for the construction of the school. The storage alcoves for the seating are the premium costs that would be added to the gross floor space and the architect estimated 450 square feet at \$130/square foot. There is something called a “rigging package” that includes the lighting and sound components along with curtains at a cost of \$175,000.00. The chairs, if they become a community project would be a cost factor; otherwise the Board would be providing the standard, all purpose chairs for lunch time use.

It is assumed that dressing rooms, the stage area and sound booth would be included in the bid for school construction. This leaves lighting, sound and chairs as the other significant costs for consideration. The idea of lighting, sound and chairs to complete the theatre component hopefully will be considered as part of the overall budget preparations by the Board. In further discussions with the architect, he indicated that a tiered floor should not be an additional cost and could be accommodated in the design. Another consideration when designing the cafetorium could include retractable seating. Also, if the cafetorium concept is the theatre option chosen, the NNDSB and the arts community could work out articulation agreements that would address the key issues of operating costs, usage and so on.

c) Theatre(s)

A 500 seat detached theatre would cost \$2,900,000.00 – \$3,200,000.00. With a 500 seat attached theatre, you would reduce the costs by 15% for reduction in washrooms, reduced building-entrance/exiting, reduced mechanical and electrical equipment resulting in an overall cost of \$2,500,000.00 - \$2,750,000.00. In the attached theatre, proximity of washrooms would have to be considered in the design. (the Nipissing University Kiwanis theatre for 220 persons cost \$950,000.00 in 1998). Again, in a stand alone theatre, whoever is responsible would have to look at operating costs that would look at maintenance, heating and cleaning. Since no decision has been made on the

theatre component, the consulting team did not obtain an estimate on the operating costs but that could be done based on the decision.

d) Aquatic Center

The North Bay YMCA six lane Aquatic Center was built at a cost of \$6,300,000.00 in 2002. A six lane aquatic center in 2009 would cost \$8,750,000.00. If it was a leisure pool as opposed to a competitive pool it would be less as it would be smaller. The operating costs exclusive of staff costs would be between \$300,000.00 and \$400,000.00 annually. Revenue generation would be dictated by pool design. A leisure pool allows much more variety from a programming perspective and would restrict or eliminate some competitions. In talking with people at the North Bay YMCA, opportunities do exist to partner with them where it would or could be a turnkey operation. They would provide the expertise in managing such a facility using their staff combined with aquatic staff for the new facility.

e) Outdoor Education Center

This one is interesting in that a number of outdoor educational components are already in place. You have the provincial park system, different outdoor educational opportunities such as Outward Bound in Burks Falls and numerous all season trails connecting different communities. If people in the communities and the school come together and develop outdoor education centers for a healthier lifestyle, the school could be the “hub” that draws the communities together. Looking at portables to start off with for potential storage and class rooms, including relocation costs, possible washrooms, foundations, electrical hookups and heat, the cost could range anywhere from \$15,000.00 to \$25,000.00 per portable depending on the requirements.

6. “Identification and analysis of potential funding sources”

The focus of most funding applications, in order to meet the requirements of the funding agency, appears to be economic impact. What will the project do for the economic growth and sustainability of the Almaguin Highlands area? An argument can be made with regards to the economic impact any new facility could have in terms of enhancing the quality of life for people in the region. For example, offering adult training programs would have an economic impact if the training opportunities and local industry were aligned resulting in employment opportunities in the area.

Incorporation becomes a prerequisite for any organization making application. In this case, it would be recommended that the *AHCSSC* enter into an agreement with a municipality to act as the applicant and that all applications for funding flow through the municipality. This means the *AHCSSC* would be formally recognized as a community organization coming under the umbrella of the host municipality as well as providing the committee with liability coverage.

There are a number of agencies that need to be brought up to speed on the project so they have a solid understanding of the goals and objectives along with the ideas of the *AHCSSC*. During dialogue with the different groups, a better understanding of the project will result and levels of support could be identified. Some agencies or ministries that should be considered include:

Ministry of Art and Culture (The Hon. Aileen Carroll is the Minister of Culture and Minister responsible for Seniors) Agencies under this include the **Ontario Arts Council** that offers more than fifty funding programs for Ontario based artists and arts organizations. Also under this Ministry is the **Ontario Trillium Foundation** which just recently announced that 491 local and province wide not-for-profit and charitable organizations will receive in excess of \$33,000 000.00.

Ministry of Economic Development (The Hon. Michael Bryant is the Minister of Economic Development) helps Ontario businesses innovate and compete. Possibly if the committee looks at Outdoor Education as a separate business from the school that links the communities, this Ministry might be one to look at for assistance.

Ministry of the Environment (Minister John Gerretsen) This Ministry might also be one to review especially if part of the project such as the Horticulture or Greenhouse idea can be linked to the environment.

Ministry of Health Promotion (Minister Margaret Best) Funding might be available through the Sport and Recreation section of this Ministry.

Ministry of Natural Resources (Minister Donna Cansfield). This is another possibility if the project is linked to a forest management component maybe through school linkages and outdoor education.

Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (Minister Michael Gravelle). The **Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation** supports community development projects that build a foundation for future economic growth and enhanced quality of life. Funding from this Ministry is on a 90/10 split with the communities picking up the 10%. Many projects have benefited from these grants to secure staff on a one year contract basis for specific tasks. It would be recommended that this project seek out funding to oversee program development, communications and marketing.

Ministry of Tourism (The Hon. Monique Smith) The Ministry of Tourism supports the delivery of high quality tourism and recreation experiences to Ontarians and visitors to Ontario. Promoting a sustainable customer focused tourism industry and an active population helps improve our quality of life, increase pride in our communities and increase economic growth.

Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Affairs: They have a program called *Building Canada* that offers support for sports and culture infrastructure projects providing significant regional or economic benefit that can:

- Provide increased opportunities for sports activities that can improve the health of Canadians and strengthen communities.
- Provide increased opportunities for the development of Canadian athletes and/or the hosting of major amateur sports events.
- Support arts and/or heritage facilities.
- Help communities express, preserve, develop and promote their culture and/or heritage within Canada.

This program seems to align itself with the mission and vision of the Almaguin Highlands Secondary School project.

As recommended, it would be beneficial for the committee to host an awareness event for all local, provincial and federal ministries to heighten awareness of this project and to identify ways in which they could be of assistance.

7. “Existing school disposal recommendations”

To address this deliverable, meetings were set up with personnel from the NNDSB to review the process they use. As well, Ministry of Education documents such as the Education Act and Ontario Regulation 444/98 were used. The following summary addresses what will happen to the current building once the new school is complete.

The current Almaguin Highlands District High School has two main features, a sand-dust outdoor 400 metre track with a multi-purpose field contained inside the track and the main school building. Given that the new by-pass, soon to be completed, will dramatically reduce the traffic flow on Hwy#11, making it somewhat safer to cross the highway from the new facility to the current one and given that a new track might not be ready when the school opens, consideration might be given to putting a proposal together on retaining the current track and field. This would require some negotiation with the NNDSB along with the necessary documentation to insure the safety and liability of the users. It would also require agreements on the maintenance and upkeep of the field.

As for the current building, Ontario Regulation 444/98, in accordance with the Education Act, deals with the disposal of PTR (Prohibitive to Repair) school buildings. It gives the right to the Near North District School Board (NNDSB) to dispose of the surplus property and/or building. In its’ Policies and Procedures Manual, the Board clearly lays out a series of steps that must be followed. They include the following:

- Board proposes to sell, lease or dispose of property
- Board adopts resolution that the property is surplus to their needs and offers it for sale or lease under the provisions outlined in Regulation 444/98 of the Education Act.
- An appraisal and opinion of value is obtained to determine fair market value.
- Letters sent to preferred agencies offering the property up for sale or lease at fair market value.
- Preferred agencies have 90 days to submit an offer.
- After the expiration of 90 days the Board may offer the property for sale publicly to any other body or person. The property is listed for sale in area newspapers.
- If unable to sell privately, the Board lists with real estate through MLS.
- Offers are taken to the Board for final approval.

Given this procedure, it is the responsibility of the Board to deal with the disposal of the current school building once the new school is complete.

8. “Recommendations”

The following recommendations deal with the main topics that served as the focus for the public forums and are based on the public input and the consulting team’s interpretation of those discussions.

▪ Theatre

Theatre was one of the main topics identified for discussion at the public forums. It received a lot of discussion and was one of the top two supported by those in attendance. There were four theatre types discussed and we left the amphitheatre idea out at this time because we felt it is something that could be dealt with later as an add-on or it could be tied into the Outdoor Education program component.

In looking at new projects, the key ingredients to longevity include funding, commitment, maintenance and responsibility. The key words are supported in the types of questions people asked at the public meetings.

- Would the initial stand alone costs be too great a challenge?
- Would it be fully utilized making it cost effective?
- Would it be competing against towns like Parry Sound?
- What about long term sustainability?
- Is the demand there to support theatre arts?

The stand alone theatre and the theatre attached to the education facility identify a price tag excluding operating costs that is possibly too steep to handle at this time. As well, it was felt that any major attractions would be competing for audiences that currently attend performances in the Huntsville and North Bay areas. To have a theatre be financially manageable, entertainment would be required for at least a 150 – 200 nights during the year which is basically 3 nights per week.

The cafetorium idea gives the NNDSB and the arts/theatre communities a common focus and purpose. Working together with students and the communities in mind will strengthen the relationship between education and the arts. The arts/theatre community will have no shortage of ideas on how to finance and make the facility a showcase for the region.

Recommendation-

The cafetorium concept becomes part of the school design with the NNDSB and the Theatre Arts Community working together in partnership to develop a facility that allows for a strong in school program while at the same time supports community theatre initiatives.

▪ **Outdoor Education**

Looking at the key components that are required over the long term, that include, funding, commitment, maintenance and responsibility, outdoor education was one of the five topics of discussion at the public meetings and was one of the top three supported by those in attendance. A number of advantages were mentioned earlier in the report. The main disadvantages mentioned included costs, sensitivity to the environment and competition because a number of outdoor education components are already located in the region. The costs are not overly excessive to build a program and the funding component would not be a major burden. As far as commitment goes, the communities including South River which is the entrance to two major parks, as well as communities located on the Magnetawan River and communities connected by all season trails, it seems that a partnership could develop that could be housed at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School allowing for the coordination of a host of outdoor educational activities. Maintenance is an area that could become the partial responsibility of a number of key players that could include students, staff and programs at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School, different federal and provincial ministries, Canadore, Nipissing and those communities directly involved.

Recommendation-

That outdoor recreational and educational alternatives be pursued involving a number of partnerships with the idea of the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School being the main center for outdoor education activities in the region throughout the year.

A sample implementation plan might have some of the following components:

1. Identify two – three key players, (i.e.) maybe someone from the outdoor education center in South River or Burks' Falls
2. Strike a Steering Committee to include:
 - Key teacher (s) at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School (you want to offer the program as a credit course as well as outdoor education for other schools in the Board, region and the province)
 - Key outdoor education people from camps or lodges in the region;
 - Representatives from a variety of communities;
 - Local politicians;
 - Others as necessary.
3. The role of the new committee would be to develop goals and objectives and set up a long term plan that would result in outdoor education activities being available on a year round basis for people of all ages;
4. Potential subcommittees will have to be developed to work on specific tasks.
 - To establish a liaison with government agencies;
 - To focus on funding, fund raising and setting fee structures;
 - To market how to develop the potential in the area;
 - To work closely with the school program to ensure credits meet ministry requirements;
 - To inventory and maintain equipment;
 - To liaise with the different communities on a regular basis and so on.
5. Start-up budget would be approximately \$150,000.00. This would include the purchase of two portables, two part-time staff and the necessary office equipment;
6. Maintenance would include heating, hydro and cleaning costs. If it was part of the school operation, possibly an agreement could be worked out so that it falls under the umbrella of the new high school.
7. The following are some benefits for this type of program:
 - Brings communities together. (outdoor amenities, expertise and trails)
 - Good potential economic benefits (fee services) that could dramatically reduce costs to the point of almost breaking even or having a small surplus;
 - Instills community pride utilizing the natural resources of each community;
 - There is a high interest level which makes it easier to sustain;

- It could have close linkages between the school, the communities and possibly Canadore and Nipissing;
- The population draw is reasonably close geographically.
- It offers potential in the active healthy living concept for people of all ages.

Sportplex

The Sportplex idea was one of the top two topics of discussion at the public meetings and there was a lot of support for the idea. The challenge for this idea is how it is defined, which includes what facilities it would or could offer. The cost of the pool, along with maintenance is unrealistic at this time. Looking at a stand alone building with a number of amenities such as a gymnasium, weight/training room, multi purpose rooms, change rooms and so on would probably cost in the range of \$1 500 000.00 – \$1 750 000.00 excluding staffing, insurance, operating costs as well as upkeep.

Key questions that need to be answered if this project is to move forward include, “What programs and services would be offered and at what cost?” and “Is the population of the region large enough to sustain the facility over an extended period of time?”

Program development could involve a number of choices and/or categories such as physical activity, skill/trade based programs, social programs, intergenerational programs, or healthy lifestyle programs (nutrition/self-esteem).

In order to develop programs and services there needs to be an inventory of existing community resources including; instructors (local expertise and internal training opportunities), instructors (on a fee for service basis from provincial organizations) and apprenticeship programs.

At this time, the consultants agree that if any of the other projects are identified as major priorities maybe the committee in working with the NNDSB can utilize the new school facility that will have a number of components built into the new design. (gymnasium, change rooms, multi- purpose room, fitness room) The key here is working together so that opportunities can be provided for people in the Almaguin communities to use the facilities as well as the students and monitor usage over an extended period of time. In this way, there might be fundraising opportunities by different community groups to outfit the room or provide furniture for a multi-purpose room that would result in the school facility and the communities being partners and the school becomes the center for people of all ages.

Recommendation-

That the new steering committee not proceed with a stand alone facility, but enter into a partnership with the NNDSB so that everyone in the Almaguin Highlands region benefits from the amenities offered by the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School to promote healthier lifestyles.

Fitness Room

A partnership can be developed with the communities and the school if space is provided for a training facility in the design of the new school. If a room can be built into the design, having it attached to an exterior/outside wall would be advantageous for potential expansion. Depending on the population that would use the room, opportunities are presented that would allow different community groups and the students to have a say in what equipment goes into such a room. At our meeting with the students, they expressed a keen interest in such a room and would love to have input into identifying the proper equipment that should go into this type of a room. In this way it would make it more inviting for the students and members of the community, who are interested, to participate. There is keen interest on the part of Canadore College for support around fitness and training program options that could be pursued.

Recommendation-

That a fitness facility be incorporated into the design of the new school and that the students and the community members along with fitness experts have input into what is included and how it is set up.

Childcare/Daycare

Of the major topics identified for discussion at the public meetings, Child/Day Care did not receive a lot of discussion or attention even though the focus was on providing space for young mothers to leave their children while they attended classes. It was felt that a number of providers already were set up in many different communities. People expressed concern that the population numbers weren't there to sustain a program. A number of people said that location and transportation were issues. Finally, it would be very difficult to get a commitment from a provider that would also meet the conditions required by the NNDSB.

Recommendion-

That the Child/Day Care idea requiring space in the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School not be pursued at this time.

Youth/Seniors Drop-In Center

This topic did not receive much discussion compared to the others at the public forums. There were as many disadvantages identified as advantages. The main thrust involved giving seniors an opportunity to meet at a central location to share their expertise and participate in a number of other activities. It would also allow intergenerational programming where youth and seniors would get involved. A number of questions were raised that include "Would transportation be an issue?", "Will seniors and youth mix?", "Are staffing requirements needed?", and "Would the space be an issue?"

Recommendation-

That a "Drop-In" center concept not be pursued at this time that would be housed in the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School but that

consideration be given for providing an area where students could meet when discussing the design of the new school facility.

9. “Implementation”

Implementation Strategy for Newly Expanded Steering Committee

The study has identified several initiatives that are feasible and has explored several initiatives that in the opinion of the consulting team are not feasible. The consulting team has developed an implementation plan that will allow the new Steering Committee an opportunity to begin the process of moving each feasible initiative into the action stage of a project.

The implementation component of a project has four key components that are critical to the success of each initiative. They include; relationship building, education and awareness, programs and services and long term planning.

Relationship building suggests that success of each initiative will be dependent upon people working together, identifying the human resources in the area and their expertise as well as involving a number of key stakeholders in the community as identified in the implementation strategy. There will be a need to create a sense of community amongst all groups and develop a strategy whereby they can work collectively and in a coordinated manner.

The proposed new direction and opportunities that could be available will require an education and awareness for all community members. This change in mindset will be dependent upon the ability of the new Steering Committee to develop strategies, programs and services that will meet the needs of the citizens.

Programs and services that ultimately enhance the quality of life for the residents and visitors to the area is really what this project is all about. It has to be realized that this is a process and its success is geared to building capacity while at the same time allowing for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This is a long term process that must be started slowly and allowed to grow based upon the level of participation.

There are some activities and actions more geared to the long term planning than others. Within the implementation component, timelines have been identified that will develop key target dates.

| Recommendation | Rationale | Action Steps | Timelines |
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| <p>That a new long term Steering Committee be developed that is more representative of the key stakeholders in the area. The new Committee should include, but not be restricted to municipal government representatives, students, parents, teachers, business sector, Board of Education, public health, sport and recreation, community coalitions, seniors, residents with disabilities and key administrators from both the public and private sector.</p> | <p>The success of this project is dependent upon a high level of buy in from a broad based representation of all sectors. All sectors of the community must come together and work collectively in order to attain any level of success in making this facility a community based facility. There will be a need to “share the responsibilities” and for that to happen it will be very important to engage all of the sectors identified in this recommendation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine who could best represent each of the key stakeholders that are listed in the recommendation ▪ Develop a terms of reference for the expanded Steering Committee ▪ Approach key individuals with the terms of reference and outline the role of the Steering Committee ▪ Once as many positions as possible have been filled, bring the group together to create an understanding as to how the committee is going to work ▪ Assign responsibility areas and encourage each committee member to solicit other citizens to work with them on their respective responsibilities ▪ Set up a process for training and recognition of your key stakeholders | |
| <p>That the Steering Committee work with the Near North Board to increase the lines of communications between the school board and the Steering Committee to ensure that the facility, where ever possible, can meet the needs of both sectors</p> | <p>There are two distinct parties involved in this project with similar yet differentiating goals. While each has to respect the overriding goals of each group, there needs to be a very close liaison between the two parties to ensure that the needs of each party are understood and that each of these needs are addressed as the project moves forward</p> | <p>Using the information in this report as a guideline, establish a series of meetings with the School Board to review each of the recommendations and gain an understanding as to how they might be incorporated into the overall plan for the new facility</p> <p>Allow a representative of the Steering Committee to be a member of the Board Planning Committee for the new school.</p> | |
| <p>That a Communications Strategy be developed to ensure that all segments of the communities are aware of the project. The strategy should be aimed at education and awareness as to the benefits and</p> | <p>There is an apparent lack of awareness with regard to the overall project. The area is aware of the proposed new facility, but it appears that there is a lack of knowledge as the potential impact that the facility could have on the quality of life for residents of the area. As the project grows and programs and</p> | <p>Identify a champion who will oversee the development and implementation of the Communications Strategy</p> <p>Develop a communications team that will work together to provide as much information on the project as possible</p> | |

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| capabilities that the new facility could afford the residents. It should also be used to provide ongoing | services are made available and fundraising initiatives move forward, ongoing communications will be essential in order to succeed. | Work with the School Board to ensure that all parties are aware of all information that is being disseminated | |
| That a meeting take place with all government agencies to create an awareness of the project, to develop a relationship with them and to determine their capacity to assist the project in moving forward | While there may not be a lot of external government dollars available, there is a need to develop an ongoing relationship with all potential funding agencies. It is important for them to have an understanding of the project. At the same time, it is important to keep them up to date as to the developments of the project in the event that potential funding might become available | Set up a meeting with all government agencies that could directly or indirectly provide assistance to this project Plan a formal presentation outlining the project and facilitate dialogue to gain an understanding of what they might be able to provide to the Steering Committee Arrange a follow up 1:1 meeting with each government agency to further discuss what assistance they might provide to the Steering Committee and include all agencies on your communications contact list | |
| That a presentation be made to all municipalities requesting an annual commitment of funding for a staff coordinator to oversee the day to day functions of programming, monitoring, marketing and communications and to serve as the liaison and catalyst for all community based activities | The need for community coordination of the various strategies, program development, program registration, program monitoring and evaluation and statistical analysis will require concentrated work time. There will be a need for a coordinator to oversee all of this and it can't be done by a volunteer or volunteers. This could be the municipal contribution to the project through the funding of a Project Coordinator. If there is a level of buy in from all municipalities the costs could be marginal, yet the rewards could be unlimited. If there was an annual budget of \$50,000.00 and it was shared by all municipalities, it would break down as follows: \$50,000.00 divided by 13 communities = \$3847.00 Based on an approximate population of the area being 13,000 residents, the cost per resident on an annual basis = \$3.85 per resident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the benefits of a program coordinator in terms of what that person could do for the development, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of programs and services that are offered ▪ Prepare a financial breakdown indicating annual increments and actual costs to municipalities over a 5 year period ▪ Seek funding for a one year intern position to serve as a coordinator at little cost to the municipalities (10% of cost of staff person) ▪ Establish key performance standards and measurements for all programs and services that are offered in order to be able to properly measure the level of success that is attained | |
| That a community needs | Aligned to the pilot programs, a community needs | Program development will be dependent on | |

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| <p>assessment be carried out to determine the programs and services that the residents might like to have available and to determine the level of expertise that is available in the area to act as instructors and trainers for the programs and services that might be offered.</p> | <p>assessment will advise the Steering Committee as to the wants and desires of the residents. If program delivery is to be successful, then engagement of the potential participants is critical to determining the future needs of the area from a program and service perspective. Seeking as much up front information will allow for successes to be created based on analysis of the data collected. It should address The potential scope of participation Level of buy in to a pay as you go program Existing subsidies for programs and services Desire of existing community based groups offering the same programs to come together to maximize resources, cover costs and offer an expanded program Identify what training opportunities might be required in order to have in house instruction Create an in house measurement tool to determine the impact of programs and services on the communities</p> | <p>understanding the culture and desires of all segments of the community Develop a survey and work with the communications committee to determine the best method of circulation Identify any major community events where a survey can be circulated Approach the Canadore College Leisure Studies program to determine if they might take the lead on this project Determine the key questions that need to be answered that will address new methods of delivering programs and services</p> | |
| <p>That a Media Relations Strategy be developed and that coordination take place amongst all media outlets</p> | <p>The need to educate and create awareness will be incumbent upon the relationships that will be created with all media. They need to be continually included in the loop and constantly be up to date on all activities that the Steering Committee are pursuing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appoint a Media Coordinator to the Steering Committee ▪ Host a meeting of all media outlets servicing the area and seek their input as to how you can best provide them with ongoing information relating to the progress of the project | |
| <p>That a Marketing Strategy be developed to heighten the awareness of the public as to the programs and services that are available. The marketing strategy will need to be both internal to the residents as well as external to a myriad of organizations who might be able to bring events, clinics and training</p> | <p>The growth and importance of the Marketing Strategy will happen as programs and services take place. Over time there will be a need to develop brochures and promotional packages outlining programs and services that will be available at the school. This type of marketing tool can become the voice of all quality of life activities in the area.</p> | <p>Identify a champion who will oversee the development of the marketing strategy Work with local media to determine what level of involvement they might desire as part of the marketing strategy Develop tracking tools to measure the impact that the marketing strategy has and how much it is used by the citizens Develop tracking tools to measure the success of the</p> | |

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| opportunities to the area | | marketing opportunities that are created Work with all sectors of the population to create partnerships that could offset costs related to the Marketing Strategy | |
| That a Fundraising Strategy be developed that will formally work towards generating the dollars necessary to grow, develop and expand both capital and operating projects and programs. Further, key local champions will need to be included as part of this committee. | The capacity of the area to generate external dollars to support both a capital campaign as well as to provide funds to sustain the operation of the “add on facilities, programs and services” will require a number of strategies and a high level of concentrated work time. | Develop a Terms of Reference for this committee Approach the citizen who will provide instant credibility to the fundraising campaign Identify all potential “products” that are a saleable commodity and clearly articulate the product, its impact on the area and the benefits of the project Follow basic fundraising principles as outlined in the addendum If possible host a fundraising workshop for the benefit of the fundraising team to develop a clear understanding of the best method of approaching this task | |
| That a series of meetings take place with all potential external partners who might be able to assist with program development and implementation ie YMCA, Health Unit, Provincial Sports Organization, various social service agencies, Ministry of Health Promotion | There is no need to start from scratch in developing programs and services. There are many existing agencies and organizations that can assist in terms of providing programs and services as well as start up assistance. They need to be viewed as key partners with regard to the growth and development of whatever programs and services are identified | Contact each organization and invite them to a meeting to outline the project with them and to have a discussion as to what resources they might be able to make available to the Steering Committee Arrange for a follow up 1:1 meeting with each of them that express some sort of assistance Include them as part of your communications network to keep them informed on your progress | |
| That a plan be developed to build relationships with feeder schools to incorporate the concept of a Healthy Active Living Schools into the whole region | A community based school should not be restricted to a singular facility. It should be viewed as a concept whose success will be dependent upon a high level of buy in from all key stakeholders. Acceptance of the Healthy Active Living School concept will not only help all schools that buy into the concept, but more importantly it will create a natural link to Almaguin Highlands Secondary School that could assist over the long term in sustaining if not increasing the enrollment numbers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the secondary school proceeds with the development of a Healthy Active Living School concept, all feeder schools should be invited to be part of the original meetings in order to gain buy in to the program. <p>Invite representatives from OPHEA to attend the meeting and request that they do a formal presentation on Healthy Active Living Schools and have them outline how the program could work in the Almaguin Highlands</p> | |
| That the concept of “Healthy Active | The feelings of the Steering Committee are that | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once the Steering Committee has been | |

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| <p>Living Schools” be explored as a concept to grow and develop programs and services within both the new school and the feeder schools and that this concept once developed be expanded to involve community based programming and services</p> | <p>staged development is a necessity and it will have to be over a long period of time (20 years). The growth of a community based school concept should start with a proven target market. The students of the school should be that target market. This will require a change in the way that the school does business. The concept of a Healthy Active Living School has proven to be very successful in a number of school areas in the province. These Healthy Active Living Schools focus on the “live right... feel right” concept. In initiating such a program, the change of mindset that is required will start with a captive audience and will work towards the creation of a strong base from which community programming can grow.</p> | <p>established, set up a meeting with OPHEA representatives to discuss the mission and vision of the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School and work with them to establish a program for the new school and linked programs for all of the feeder schools</p> | |
| <p>That a series of pilot projects be developed with the intent being to: Introduce the community to the benefits of participating in programs at the new facility Test the market in terms of the desire of the municipality to use the new facility Evaluate the impact that the marketing and communications strategies are having Use participation as a method of creating community buy in to the facility and the programs and services that are to be offered</p> | <p>Pilot projects serve to expose programs to the target markets while at the same time provide the Steering Committee with information as to the needs and wants of its clients. Funding is available to cover up to 90% of the cost of a coordinator for one year to oversee these projects. These projects will serve the Steering Committee well in determining the success of their marketing and communications strategies as well as determining the types of programs and services that the community would support and desire</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on the information gathered through the community needs assessment, identify a series of pilot programs that can be used to test the level of buy in for community based programs. ▪ Develop programs that cross demographic lines and include family events ▪ Work with the Fundraising Committee to develop a major annual event that will create awareness, buy in and an opportunity to generate revenue | |
| <p>That cross sector events be coordinated in order to bring all</p> | <p>Major community events designed to bring all sectors of the community serve to create a greater</p> | <p>Identify existing as well as new potential major events that can be hosted at the new facility in order to</p> | |

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| <p>sectors together. These crossover programs need to be utilized to show the opportunities for family and intergenerational interaction</p> | <p>sense of community amongst all participants. Family oriented events where all of the family unit can get involved assist in bringing people to programs. There is a shortage of such opportunities and these types of programs lend themselves well towards the mission and vision that have been developed</p> | <p>educate and create a greater sense of awareness for the residents as to the opportunities that the facility affords Identify a major new event that is linked to the new facility that will create awareness as to the potential the facility will afford the area</p> | |
| <p>That programs be developed that target key areas such as seniors, families, youth and the physically challenged</p> | <p>The facility is first and foremost a school, but the focus of the Steering Committee is much more than that. It will be important to engage all sectors and to show them that it is “their” facility. Sustainability will be dependent to a certain extent on the dollars generated from users and the more buy in there is from all sectors the less the cost burden will be on all users. There is also a need by all sectors to meet physical, social, mental and environmental needs and by developing a diverse program, the impact on the quality of life of all residents will be greater</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize the needs assessment to identify programs and services that will meet the needs of the citizens | |

CONCLUSIONS

In the beginning stages of this study, namely the presentation in the Council Chambers in the Village of Burks Falls, a number of educational design principles were shared with those in attendance. They bear repeating at this time because those principles, if followed, will result in what the communities and the school want – *“to work in collaboration with all potential partners to develop an integrated education, arts and recreation infrastructure that provides quality programs and services supporting education, recreation and arts growth and development as well as serving as an economic generator for the Almaguin region.”*

Educational Design Principle No. 1

“Maximize Collaboration in School Planning and Design

- Obtain multiple perspectives while exploring all potential problems and opportunities.
- Broad community participation can be difficult and frustrating but the benefit of authentic participation creates community ownership, defuses politically motivated issues and generates consensus on the final design.

Educational Design Principle No. 3

“Plan Schools as Neighbourhood-Scaled Community Learning Centers”

- Plan for the traditional school to be transformed into a community learning center.
- Allow shared school and community functions.
- Allow the design of the school to become a beacon for those seeking opportunities for enrichment – an increased involvement and awareness of the educational process should be a goal.

Educational Design Principle No. 4

“Plan for Learning to Take Place Directly in the Community”

- Sharing school facilities with a variety of community organizations may foster meaningful inter-organizational partnerships that can strengthen educational opportunities for learners. Gymnasiums, auditoriums, laboratories, performance spaces, libraries and video conference spaces can be designed to anticipate future community use.
- Formal educational program partnerships can be established with other public institutions particularly with close adjacency to Nipissing University and Canadore College.

Educational Design Principle No. 20

“Establish a Community Forum”

- From the main entry provide a public assembly space to act as a community forum (lobby) connecting the school and the community that is accessible, open, free-flowing, and flexible. Supercharge the forum with direct connection to program areas that can be utilized both day and night including the library, cafeteria, gymnasium, theatre arts, music studio, exhibit areas and temporary displays of student work.
- The forum should allow for small gathering areas and areas of socialization potentially offering a “living room” feel.

Giving these principles consideration, will provide opportunities where strong, effective community school linkages result in the new Almaguin Highlands Secondary School becoming that “gathering place” drawing people from the region. Just think, in 2012 less than three years from now, this potential can be realized.