



Appendix to Key Directions Report

City of Richmond Hill Parks Plan / Recreation & Culture Plan

Phase 1: Background & Preliminary Needs Assessment Report

January 24, 2022

Prepared by:



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1.0

Introduction

This section highlights the benefits of master planning for parks, recreation and culture, provides a high-level overview of the planning approach to preparing the Parks Plan and Recreation and Culture Master Plan.

1.1 Planning for Parks, Recreation and Culture

With a growing emphasis on personal health and wellness, community vibrancy, and environmental and economic sustainability, the provision of high-quality parks, recreation and culture opportunities has never been more important. The City has been guided by its 2013 Parks Plan and Recreation Plan, along with the 2011 Cultural Plan over the past 10 years. To keep pace with changes that have occurred within the community, a refreshed vision for parks, recreation and culture is needed so that the City can continue to offer a high quality of life, build complete communities, foster active and healthy lifestyles, and provide an adequate supply of parkland to serve the City. Updating these Plans will also position the City to be environmentally sustainable, culturally vibrant, economically strong, financially responsible and engaged with the community.

To achieve these goals, the new Parks Plan and Recreation and Culture Master Plan (herein referred to as the “PRC Plans”) are being undertaken through a coordinated approach. The Consulting Team (led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants) is preparing the Recreation and Culture Master Plan, while the City is leading the preparation of the Parks Plan (with assistance from the Consulting Team). The City and Consulting Team will also work collaboratively to develop a Costing Strategy to inform the capital budget process.

To ensure that the PRC Plans are responsive to community needs, consideration will be given to background research, demographic shifts, trends, service gaps, and park and facility requirements, as well as public and stakeholder input. Like the Plans before them, the PRC Plans will be designed as living documents that will be regularly reviewed and updated to respond to new opportunities and changing needs within the community. In doing so, the PRC Plans will assist the City with prioritizing corporate initiatives, budgetary requirements, support the search for external funding, partnerships, and align with other initiatives.

Parks, recreation and cultural facilities, programs and services are integral to Richmond Hill’s success and wellbeing. These services and facilities contribute in a significant way to our social, economic and environmental priorities by providing spaces for activities and programs that benefit residents and support community-building. Universal access to leisure opportunities that address diverse needs and offer affordable, high-quality opportunities is vital to individual and community health and prosperity.

In short, parks, recreation and culture:

- Enhance mental, social and physical wellbeing;
- Promote community engagement and inclusion;
- Build strong families and communities;
- Help people connect with nature;
- Help people develop critical and creative thinking skills;
- Provide space for outdoor recreation; and
- Provide wide-ranging economic benefits.

1.2 Planning Approach

The PRC Plans are guided by a Terms of Reference and overseen by the City of Richmond Hill. The project is being prepared through a four-phase process, organized as follows:

Phase 1: Background Research and Preliminary Needs Assessment Report

Involves a review of background documents, community demographics, trends, inventory review and benchmarking, targeted stakeholder consultation, preliminary needs assessment and opportunities and constraints mapping. This information results in the Background & Preliminary Needs Assessment Report.

Phase 2: Preparation of Key Directions Report

A Key Directions Report will be prepared summarizing the findings from the background research and preliminary needs assessment, which will be presented to City Council.

Phase 3: Preparation of Draft Parks Plan, Draft Recreation and Culture Master Plan, Draft Phased Costing Strategy and Consultation on Draft Plans

A draft visualization of urban open spaces will be prepared for incorporation into the City's draft Parks Plan. A needs assessment of recreation and culture facilities, programs and services will be undertaken, together with an analysis of partnerships and unsolicited proposals, which will culminate into a First Draft of the Recreation and Culture Master Plan. A First Draft Phased Costing Strategy will also be prepared. Based on feedback from City staff, Final Drafts will be prepared, which will be followed by a Council presentation and online public feedback session.

Phase 4: Preparation of Final Parks Plan, Final Recreation and Culture Master Plan and Final Phased Costing Strategy.

Based on the comments received from the online public feedback session, the draft Parks Plan, draft Recreation and Culture Master Plan and Phased Costing Strategy will be finalized and presented to Council for approval.

1.3 Alignment with Council Strategic Priorities 2020 – 2022

Council’s Strategic Priorities for 2020 to 2022 provides a roadmap for Richmond Hill’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; the document emphasizes initiatives that minimize the financial impact on residents, while focusing on the environment, transportation and community building.¹ Table 1 summarizes four strategic priority areas to achieve the vision articulated in the 2009 Strategic Plan. Each priority area identifies initiatives that have relevance to the PRC Plans.

Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community.

2009 Strategic Plan Vision

The City of Richmond Hill Council and staff are committed to providing exceptional public service to our community.

2009 Strategic Plan Mission Statement

Table 1: Summary of Relevant Projects, Programs and Initiatives from Council Strategic Priorities, 2020 - 2022

Strategic Priority Area	Major Projects, Programs or Initiatives relevant to the PRC Plans
Balancing Green and Growth	<p>Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plans – to plan for the future of parks, recreation and culture needs of Richmond Hill residents.</p> <p>Urban Forest Management Plan – to plan, protect and preserve tree canopy cover while strengthening the urban forest to increase resilience.</p> <p>Climate Change Framework – to create climate change action programs for community risk mitigation and green infrastructure.</p> <p>Environment Strategy – to create a strategy to protect the natural environment through responsible community development, responsible municipal management and effective community programming.</p>
Fiscal Responsibility	<p>Asset Management Plan – to ensure continued and sustained asset and infrastructure health through long-term financial sustainability planning.</p>
Strong Sense of Belonging	<p>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative – to increase awareness to support diversity, equity and inclusion through corporate training; and to develop recruitment strategies that aim to attract a more diverse candidate pool.</p> <p>Age Friendly Community Initiative – to enhance the City’s capacity and approach to provide, design, plan, facilitate and deliver age-friendly features within the community.</p> <p>myRichmondHill community e-newsletter – to keep residents and stakeholders informed and engaged about what’s going on the in City.</p>
Getting Around the City	<p>Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan and Yonge North Subway Extension – To coordinate the expected growth in the Richmond Hill Centre area that will also support the creation of public spaces, walkable streets, and transit-oriented development.</p> <p>Transportation Master Plan Update – to establish a vision for all travel models within the City, including active transportation.</p>

¹ City of Richmond Hill. Council Strategic Priorities 2020-2022. <https://pub-richmondhill.escribemeetings.com/>

1.4 City of Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010)

Richmond Hill's current Official Plan provides the vision for all matters related to land use planning, with consideration given to important social, economic and environmental factors. In accordance with the *Planning Act*, the City is updating its Official Plan to reflect various planning-related changes that have occurred since this important document was approved and to ensure that it remains reflective of the local context. Several new legislative requirements, policy frameworks and initiatives have come into effect since Richmond Hill's Official Plan was approved – such as Bill 197 (COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act), 2020 Provincial Policy Statement, changes to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, updated population forecasts and related land needs, etc.

The Official Plan establishes the vision for Richmond Hill, which is:

“Richmond Hill’s Official Plan – building a new kind of urban”

This vision represents a fundamental shift in the City's approach to land use planning where approaches to environmental policy, socio-economic diversity and housing and residential intensification combine to reflect a city-building approach to growth management and planning for a complete, vibrant and connected community. As the Official Plan suggests, building a new kind of urban is about city building in a way that maintains and enhances the character of a community as it evolves from growth and development. This process can bring about opportunities to improve, restore and enhance aspects of the community including the provision of parks and open spaces to create more vibrant places and services to effectively meet the needs of a growing population.

The Official Plan's vision is reinforced through guiding principles which reflect the community's vision from the People Plan Richmond Hill consultation process. The guiding principles are rooted in the core directions of complete communities, environment, economy, place-making and connectivity and mobility and signify the type of community valued by the residents of Richmond Hill. Table 2 highlights the Official Plan's five guiding principles and key goals.

The urban structure identified in Richmond Hill's Official Plan depicts the physical make-up of the City over the long term which has been shaped over many years by environmental, economic and socio-cultural factors to become what it is today. The land use and growth management policies of the Official Plan direct the majority of new growth to the centres and corridors as a method of city-building and planning for a complete community. The centres and corridors are comprised of the areas that are primarily for intensification and include: the Richmond Hill Centre; the Yonge and 16th and Yonge/Bernard Avenue Key Development Areas; the Oak Ridges and Downtown Local Centres; the Trench, Newkirk and BayMac Local Development Areas; certain areas of the Yonge and Highway 7 Regional Mixed Corridors; and certain areas of the Major Mackenzie Drive Local Mixed-Use Corridor. Supplementing intensification development within these centres and corridors is population growth within greenfield areas, specifically in the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plans.

With a new kind of urban, development patterns within Richmond Hill's urban structure are envisioned to be much different than the past. Of particular importance to the PRC Plans are that evolving development patterns that will influence the way parks, recreation and culture opportunities are provided as they adapt over the long-term to the City's urban structure. With a great deal of short-term growth directed to the remaining greenfield areas and as development pressures for intensification emerge throughout Richmond Hill's centres and corridors, there will be a need to assess the capability of existing infrastructure to adequately service additional growth in population. Specifically, within the centres and corridors, where developable lands are generally scarcer due to their built-up nature, parks, recreation and cultural services must adapt to fit into higher density and infill forms of development and could result in different forms of parks, recreation and cultural spaces than we are used to such as smaller design templates (e.g. urban squares or smaller community centres), stratified parks and facilities, etc. Specific policies related to parkland dedication, design and development can be found in Section 4.0 of this Report.

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Table 2: Guiding Principles and Key Goals, City of Richmond Hill Official Plan

Guiding Principle	Key Goals
Complete Communities	<p>Direct growth to built-up urban areas with existing infrastructure and services in a network of centres and corridors.</p> <p>Create an integrated, vibrant and diverse community that provides a mix of land uses, including a balance of housing, employment, community services, parks and open spaces.</p>
Environment	<p>Protect and enhance natural environmental systems, functions and resources over the long term.</p> <p>Incorporate and promote sustainable development practices and initiatives.</p>
Economy	<p>Protect employment lands over the long term.</p> <p>Promote economic vitality and provide for a balanced and diverse range of employment opportunities.</p>
Placemaking	<p>Recognize and enhance the inherent and unique aspects of Richmond Hill and create focal points, gateways, experiences and landmarks.</p> <p>Strive for design excellence in the public and private realm.</p>
Connectivity and Mobility	<p>Plan for transit and pedestrian oriented development.</p> <p>Promote connectivity, mobility and accessibility within and between neighbourhoods, employment lands, parks and open spaces.</p>

Source: City of Richmond Hill Official Plan (2010).

2.0

Community Profile

There are a number of socio-demographic factors that influence parks, recreation and culture needs including population growth and age structure, income, education, cultural diversity, place of work and method of transportation to work. This section explores each of these indicators and identifies the implications on parks, recreation and culture services in Richmond Hill. This review primarily relied upon statistics collected from the 2016 Census as well as other sources including the Development Charges Background Study (2019), Socio Economic Study (2019) and other secondary research resources.

2.1 Historical and Projected Population

Richmond Hill experienced substantial growth during the 1990s and early 2000s. Recently, population data reveals that the population has been increasing at a slower rate.² Statistics Canada's 2016 Census recorded a population of 195,022 persons in Richmond Hill, representing an increase of approximately 5% from the 2011 Census population.

The PRC Plans examine parks, recreation and culture needs over the 10-year period between 2021 and 2031. Population projections developed for the City through the Official Plan Update process estimates that Richmond Hill currently has a population of 214,000 (rounded) for 2021, which will be used as the basis for the PRC Plans. By the end of the planning period (2031), Richmond Hill will reach a population of 253,000 (rounded), representing a growth of 18%.³

The City's interim forecast is based on the best available information at the time of its preparation, taking into consideration the City's urban structure and Official Plan policy context, demographic trends, market demand, intensification policy targets, active development applications, and the supply of residential development in the City. Notwithstanding this, York Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review (M.C.R.) will result in a comprehensive update of the York Region Official Plan in accordance with the policy requirements of the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

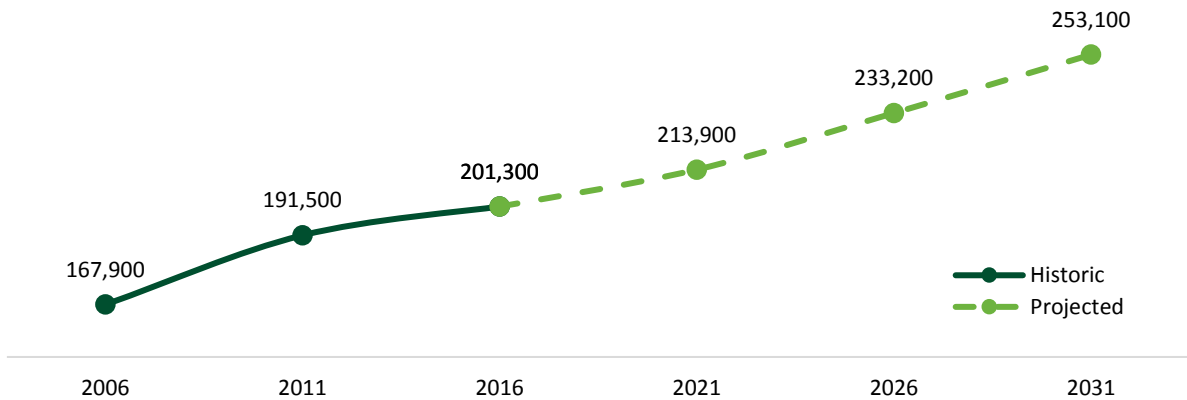
Anticipated changes to the York Region Official Plan (ROP) through the M.C.R. process include, among other matters, updated population and employment projections for each local area municipality. This includes potential changes to the City's 2031 population and employment forecasts currently set out in Richmond Hill's Official Plan (2010), as adopted by Council, and the inclusion of a 2041 planning horizon. At the time of writing, the Region's M.C.R. work is not complete. Updates to the ROP through the M.C.R. process could affect the composition and spatial distribution of the City's interim growth forecast, including population and employment growth to 2031 and beyond. Accordingly, users of this data should note that the interim growth forecasts may be subject to further changes pending the completion of York Region's M.C.R. as directed under the provincial Growth Plan.

² City of Richmond Hill. 2019 Socio-Economic Study. 2019.

³ Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Updated Population and Employment Growth Forecast by Traffic Zone. 2021.

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Figure 1: Historical and Population Growth by Census Year, City of Richmond Hill (includes census undercount), 2006 to 2031



Note: Population figures include a census undercount of 3.2%.

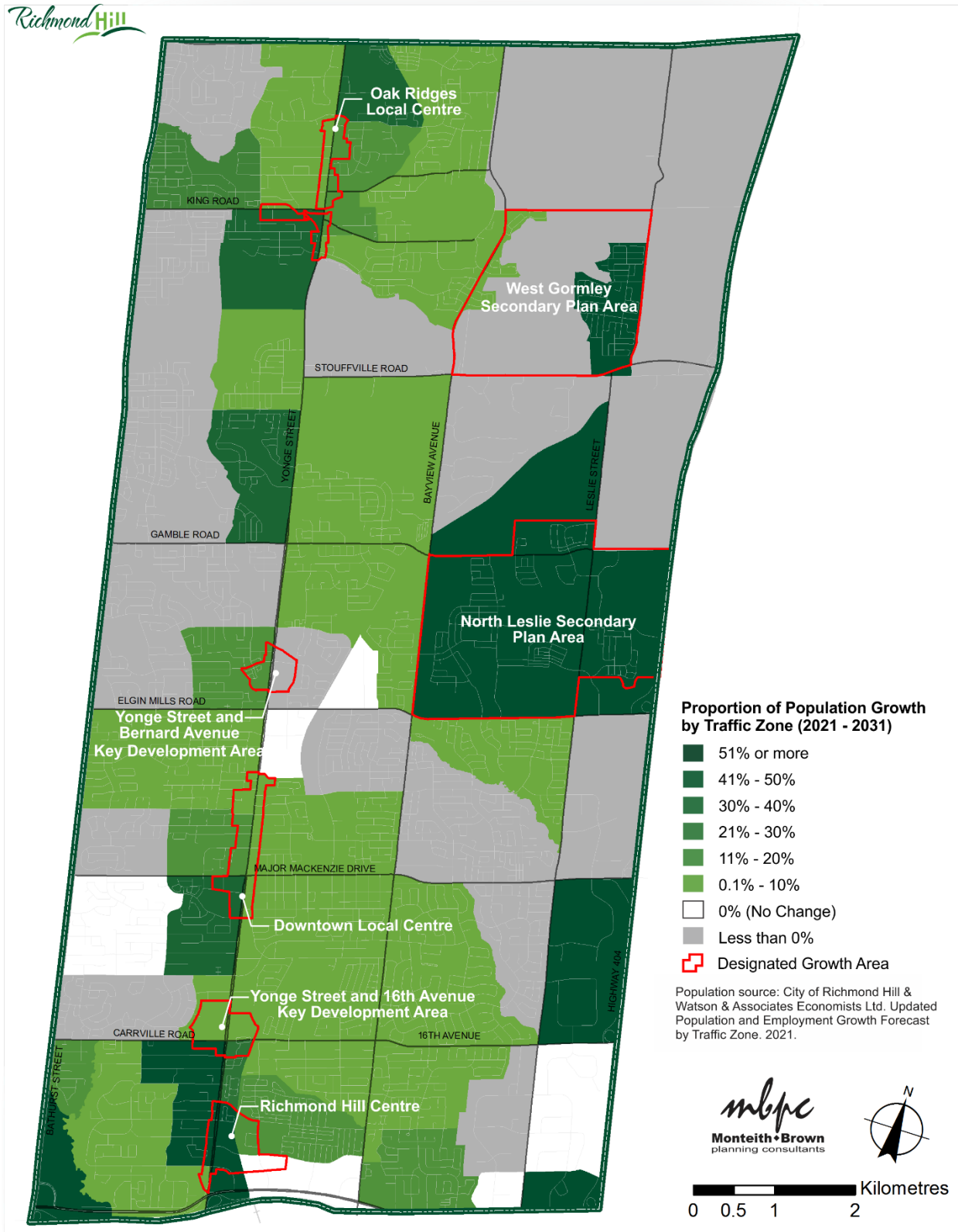
Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. 2019.

Over the next 10 years, future population growth within Richmond Hill is expected to occur through a number of key areas. The City is expected to face greater pressures for intensification and infill-related development to accommodate new residents. Focusing residential development through intensification and infill supports the City's goals for creating walkable streets and transit-oriented development (the Yonge Street subway station in Richmond Hill Centre is expected to be completed by 2030) and will likely foster greater intensification pressures. The City's Official Plan identifies that intensification and infill development will be concentrated within designated centres, corridors and key development areas (Figure 2). During the planning period, these intensification and infill areas are expected to accommodate approximately 15,000 residents. Notably, the Downtown Local Centre, North Yonge Street Corridor, Richmond Hill Centre and the Yonge 16th Key Development Area are each planned to accommodate 5,000 residents by 2031.

The City's remaining greenfield lands are located within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas, which are expected to accommodate approximately 15,100 and 4,600 additional residents by 2031, respectively.

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Figure 2: Proportion of Population Growth by Traffic Zone, 2021 - 2031

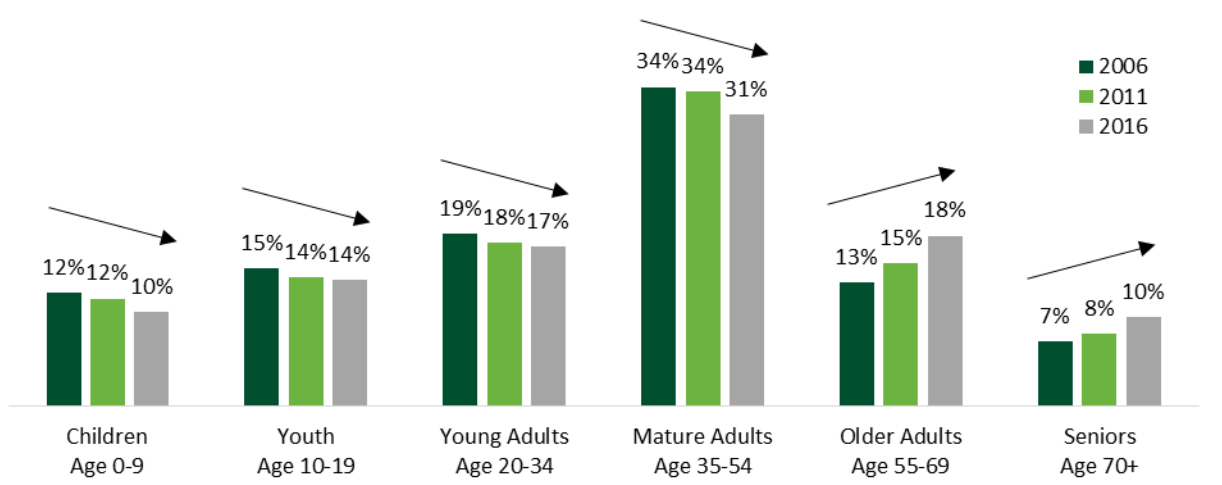


2.2 Population Growth by Age Group

According to the 2016 Census, Richmond Hill’s median age of 42.2 years was slightly older compared to York Region (41.1 years) and the Province (41.3 years). Richmond Hill’s population is aging as a whole with the median age increasing by more than two years compared to the 2011 Census median age of 39.8 years. This is a common demographic trend that is being observed across Canada and this is expected to continue in Richmond Hill throughout the foreseeable future as the baby-boom generation continues to age.

Additional evidence of Richmond Hill’s aging community is found by looking at population growth by age group. Between the 2006 and 2016 Census, the proportion of Richmond Hill’s older adults (ages 55 to 69) increased from 13% to 18% and seniors (ages 70+) experienced a growth from 7% to 10%. By contrast, the proportion of all other age groups declined by 1% or 2%. While this suggests that the City will face mounting pressure for parks, recreation, and culture opportunities for adults ages 55+, there will still be a need to offer a broad spectrum of facilities, programs, and services for all age groups. Age group data projections for 2021 to 2031 horizon were not available at the time of this report.

Figure 3: Population Growth by Age Group, City of Richmond Hill, 2011 to 2016



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 – 2016 Census.

2.3 Income and Education

Income levels can influence participation in structured and unstructured leisure activities. Generally speaking, higher levels of income are correlated to greater levels of participation since households with higher incomes typically have a greater ability to pay for activities and related costs (e.g., equipment, travel, etc.). By contrast, households with less disposable income may have to seek low to no-cost activities or choose activities that they can reasonably afford.

The 2016 Census median household income of \$88,353 for Richmond Hill is lower compared to York Region (\$95,776) but higher in relation to the Province (\$74,287). Based solely on income (recognizing that there are other variables involved in determining participation), this could indirectly suggest that participation in parks, recreation and culture opportunities in Richmond Hill is higher compared to the Province but lower than York Region.

While the level of income alone may suggest a certain level of participation, housing affordability must also be considered in the local context. Due to the rising cost of housing in Richmond Hill, the City's 2019 Socio-Economic Study found that a significant portion of Richmond Hill households (owners and renters) are experiencing housing affordability issues.⁴ According to the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board, the average resale price of all home types in Richmond Hill for 2020 was approximately \$1.1 Million (on par with the York Region average), which was 60% higher compared to the provincial average of about \$708,000.^{5,6} Thus, while Richmond Hill's median income is 19% higher compared to the Province, the cost of housing is 55% higher compared to the provincial average. Richmond Hill's higher housing costs may constrain the amount of disposable income available to spend on parks, recreation and culture activities.

Richmond Hill also has a higher proportion of residents experiencing low-income. Based on the low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT) as recorded in the 2016 Census, approximately 16% of Richmond Hill's residents are experiencing low income, which was higher compared to York Region (12%) and the Province (14%). These findings suggests that there is a need to ensure that there are affordable parks, recreation and cultural opportunities available in Richmond Hill to minimize financial barriers to participation.

Richmond Hill has a Fee Assistance Program that reduces financial barriers to parks, recreation and culture activities among households experiencing low incomes. Other fee assistance programs may exist through other providers and agencies such as the Region, Jumpstart, and policies/practices in place by local community groups (e.g., minor sports, arts and cultural service providers, service club contributions, etc.).

The level of education attained can also influence participation rates. Many studies correlate higher degrees of education with increased participation levels. Among Richmond Hill residents aged 15 years or older, Richmond Hill has a higher proportion of educated residents compared to York Region and the Province. The 2016 Census identified that 64% of Richmond Hill residents have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, compared to 58% in York Region and 55% in the Province. Based solely on education attainment alone, it can be expected that Richmond Hill's residents are more likely to participate in parks, recreation and culture activities as compared to York Region as a whole and the province.

⁴ City of Richmond Hill. 2019 Socio-Economic Study. 2019.

⁵ Toronto Regional Real Estate Board. Market Watch December 2020. 2020.

⁶ Canadian Real Estate Association. CREA Updates Resale Housing Market Forecast. 2020.

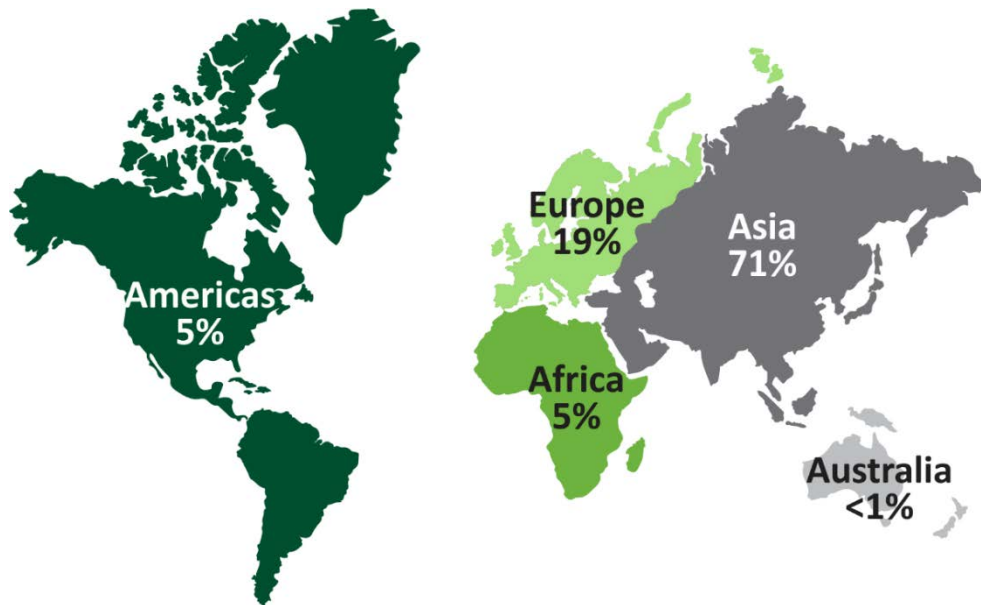
2.4 Cultural Diversity

A community's level of ethno-cultural diversity can influence demand for parks, recreation and cultural programs, services and activities. Approximately 57% of Richmond Hill's population are immigrants. This proportion is considerably more compared to York Region (47%) and the Province (29%). The majority of Richmond Hill's immigrant population (58%) arrived before 2000. Based on immigration trends observed in the Greater Toronto Area, it is anticipated that the proportion of immigrants in Richmond Hill will continue to increase as immigrants tend to be attracted to areas with established cultural communities and social ties.

Newcomers arriving between 2006 and 2016 account for 15% of the population, meaning that the other 85% of Richmond Hill's population are fairly well established in Canadian culture. For residents born outside of Canada, the largest source of immigration comes from China, followed by Iran. In total, visible minorities account for 60% of residents in Richmond Hill, the largest being the Chinese population.

This strong level of cultural diversity influences demand for non-traditional programs, services and activities, encouraging an integrated social support system that cultural groups typically seek. As a result, the flexibility in the design and function of facilities and services that are available in multiple languages will be a key consideration in the development of the PRC Plans.

Figure 4: Place of Origin for Immigrant Population, City of Richmond Hill, 2016



2.5 Place of Work and Mode of Transportation

Approximately 60% of Richmond Hill residents over 15 years of age are employed, which is comparable to the Province and slightly lower than York Region (62%). Richmond Hill also has a large commuter population, with only 22% of the workforce employed within Richmond Hill. Nearly one out of three labour force participants (31%) are employed within York Region and 47% of employees work outside of the region.

Given that the majority of employed residents work outside of the City, Richmond Hill is an auto-oriented community. More than four out of five employed residents travel by car to work, while 15% take public transit and less than 3% use active transportation modes such as walking and cycling. These findings suggest that residents are most likely to travel by car to their parks, recreation and culture activities and as the majority work outside of Richmond Hill, there will be pressure on prime-time activities.

2.6 Community Profile Summary

A summary of Richmond Hill’s community profile and its implications on the provision of parks, recreation and culture services is presented below.

Table 3: Community Profile Summary

Indicator	Trend	Implication on Parks, Recreation and Culture
Population Growth	Over the past 15 years, Richmond Hill has experienced considerable growth. Population growth over the planning period is expected to be focused on both greenfield development and within built-up areas, particularly along centres and corridors where intensification and infill development is occurring, with the remaining growth occurring in the City’s two remaining greenfield areas (North Leslie and West Gormley). Growth in Richmond Hill (and York Region as a whole) has slowed in recent years, although this may change once the subway extension is completed.	Continued population growth will place pressures on parks, recreation, and culture services. A growing focus on centres and corridors where intensification and infill are expected to occur will require creativity in utilizing existing and new spaces to meet the needs of residents.
Age Growth	Richmond Hill is an aging community, consistent with trends across Canada. It is expected that this trend will continue over the planning period.	While the aging of the population will drive increased demands for services geared towards adults age 55+, parks, recreation, and culture needs across all age groups will need to be considered.
Income	Richmond Hill has a higher level of income compared to the Province. The high cost of living, however, will leave less disposable income for parks, recreation, and culture activities, particularly among low-income households.	Generally speaking higher levels of income tend to correlate with higher levels of participation, placing greater pressures on the City to deliver high quality parks, recreation, and culture activities. At the same time, affordable and free opportunities can help lower income groups access to similar types of opportunities.
Education	A greater proportion of Richmond Hill residents have a post-secondary degree compared to the Region and Province.	Similar to income, higher levels of education tend to correlate to higher levels of participation.
Cultural Diversity	Richmond Hill is a culturally diverse community; the largest visible minority group is represented by Chinese residents. The population is expected to continue diversifying given that newcomers tend to be attracted to established ethnic communities and social ties.	Richmond Hill’s strong level of cultural diversity can influence the demand for programs, services, and activities. Flexibility in the design of facilities and services in multiple languages could be a key consideration in the development of the PRC Plans.
Place of Work and Mode of Transportation	Richmond Hill has a large commuter population working in York Region and beyond. Most employed residents travel by car.	The large commuter population will place pressures on prime-time activities as well as those that can be self-scheduled depending on one’s availability.

3.0

Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Given the rapid pace of change that the COVID-19 global pandemic has brought, planning for an uncertain future is a challenge with people trying to find new ways of living, working, playing, and connecting with each other. Clearly, this is uncharted territory and municipal parks, recreation, and culture departments must continually assess and adjust their expectations, practices, and norms.

The pandemic has the potential to affect the long-term demand for and delivery of parks, recreation and culture services; however, the ultimate scope and scale of change is unknown. Long-range planning and strategic investment are believed to be as vital as they have ever been to support the significant role that the parks, recreation and culture sectors play in the personal, social, and economic recovery/revitalization of the community.

Recognizing that the situation is evolving and new information and guidance is emerging on a regular basis, municipalities must prepare for a wide range of scenarios. The following are some preliminary thoughts about how the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the sector in the short to longer-term.

3.1 Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the PRC Plans

The PRC Plans are being prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a significant impact on national, provincial, and local economies. Public health measures have been put in place since the onset of the pandemic, which has affected the way in which municipalities are delivering services, including for the parks, recreation, and culture sector. The disruptive nature of the pandemic, along with shutdowns mandated by senior levels of government significantly skew data for 2020 and 2021 in comparison to previous years.

In addition to shifting in-person consultation initiatives to online formats, analysis of many parks, recreation, and culture components relies upon data compiled between 2017 and 2019. Any year-to-date data presented for 2020/21 may not be directly comparable to past years nor may it be a strong indicator of expected future performance due to facility closures, changes in rental activities or program participation, or shifts in recreation preferences such as changes in demand/usage of parks resulting from COVID-19.

It is understood that City Council and staff are monitoring protocols pertaining to the pandemic and are continually developing plans to deliver services as guidelines are updated by senior levels of government and public health agencies. While the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the parks, recreation, and culture system are unknown, the Consulting Team is confident that the City of Richmond Hill will work diligently to address the new challenges presented by COVID-19.

3.2 A COVID-19 Recovery Strategy for Parks, Recreation and Community Sport

ReImagine RREC (Renew, Retool, Engage and Contribute) is a national COVID-19 recovery initiative for parks, recreation and community sport leaders supported by the Government of Canada and delivered by the Canadian Parks & Recreation Association. This multi-phase initiative applies a knowledge-to-action model to identify, analyze, synthesize, catalogue and disseminate knowledge needed for planning, operating and delivering parks, recreation and community sport programs in pandemic and post-pandemic environments. It will aid parks, recreation and community sport leaders to renew their value proposition; retool their programming and service delivery; safely engage and support their employees, clients and partners; and contribute to community recovery.

Phase One of the project included four integrated activities: 1) Collection and review relevant literature; 2) Collection and analyze survey data from multiple sources (undertaken by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants); 3) Collect input from key informants working in parks, recreation and community sport at the local, provincial and national levels; and 4) Document promising and 'next' practices undertaken by the sector in response to lockdowns and other pandemic related changes. Richmond Hill parks, recreation and culture staff participated in the project by providing promising "next" practices that had been conceived by staff to respond to local impacts of the pandemic.

The CPRA has identified the following early learnings to date:

- **There is heightened awareness of the value of parks, recreation and community sport.** Past efforts by the sector have advocated and touted the important societal role of parks, recreation and community sport, including the Benefits of Recreation initiative, the Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Well-being (2015), as well as policy initiatives such as Affordable Access. The pandemic has brought into focus the public's acceptance that access to parks and other open spaces, recreation services and community sport are a right and centrepiece of individual and community health and well-being.
- **Many sub-population groups continue to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.** A litany of pre-existing health, social and economic inequalities have been exacerbated by COVID. The pandemic continues to have great negative impact on disadvantaged and underrepresented population groups and communities, including Indigenous and BIPOC communities, women and girls, persons with a disability, children and youth, front-line essential workers, low-income families, LGBTQ2+ communities and others. Equal access to parks, recreation and community sport facilities and programs must be accessible and essential for all as the sector renews, retools and contributes to broader community recovery.
- **Public expectations, preferences and behaviours are changing.** Phase One findings confirmed that some users are hesitant to return to organized sport and recreation programming. COVID-19 lockdowns have resulted in widespread decreases in physical activity and increases in sedentary behaviour, underscoring the importance to promote the integration of health-enhancing physical activity into everyday living, and to capitalize on heightened interest in parks and outdoor green spaces. The demand for outdoor, holistic and self-directed programming - including winter programming - is on the rise. "Animating" outdoor programming to attract existing and new users – including vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations - has been identified as a best or "next" practice by leaders.
- **Staffing and other human resource challenges will need to be addressed.** Data shows that parks, recreation and community sport administrators are facing mounting human resource challenges as the pandemic continues. They will linger if not increase post-pandemic. There is an exodus of staff and volunteers who may not return post-pandemic. Changing roles and responsibilities, including abiding by public health measures, as well as new and oft-changing policies and guidelines, will require new and different skills.

- **The public's desire and demand to recreate outdoors.** Increased use – sometime overuse - of parks and green spaces during lockdowns has been a global phenomenon. In Canada, the use of parks, paths and trails has increased dramatically during the pandemic. Data demonstrates that in 2020, 70% of Canadians expressed an increased appreciation for parks and green spaces; 66% report increased levels of walking/jogging outdoors; and there has been a 25% increase in cycling.
- **Transitioning to pandemic-resilient operations and program delivery.** Phase One findings drawn from domestic and international experiences make clear that changes will be required to meet user expectations and public safety. Some will be incremental, others permanent, costly and time consuming. For example, facility design, re-design and retrofitting will be a priority. Retrofitted or new air handling, zonal HVAC sanitation and other air disinfectant requirements will be required.
- **Need for clear and authoritative guidance, standards and messaging.** The public's top concern will continue to be focused on personal and community safety. While there have been varying degrees of compliance with public health directives, most Canadians have respected guidelines and measures put in place by national, provincial and local public health officials. As the parks, recreation and community sport sector moves toward a new normal, it will be imperative that authoritative, clear and accurate guidance, standards and messaging be provided to guide policy, planning, operations and program delivery.

3.3 The Importance of Parks, Recreation and Culture

Levels of stress and anxiety are running high during the pandemic and work/life balance is creating challenges for many Canadians. Parks, recreation and culture play a critical role in the mental and physical health recovery of citizens – particularly those living in urban environments – and play an equally important role in community economic revival. 82% of Canadians said that parks have become more important to their mental health during COVID-19 and 70% indicated that their appreciation for parks and green spaces has increased during the pandemic.⁷ More than ever, parks, recreation and culture activities are becoming essential services.

Access to public spaces and programs is a fundamental service for Canadians, especially children, seniors, and marginalized populations. The pandemic is helping to create a new and greater appreciation for the benefits of parks and leisure services, many of which provide respite from our growing social isolation. Recent surveys suggest that park use has increased during the pandemic – according to Google Mobility reports, park usage increased by 147% across the Province in the summer of 2020 compared to 2019, although this trend does not appear to be as strong in the wintertime.⁸ With the knowledge that many activities may be safer outdoors than indoors, Canadians are living in a time where we need more parks and public spaces, not less. To respond to the needs of our citizens, investment in parks, recreation and culture must continue. The large majority (87%) of Canadians support increased spending on parks in particular.⁹

⁷ Park People. COVID-19 and Parks Survey. July 2020. <https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys>

⁸ Toronto Foundation. The Toronto Fall Out Report. Half a Year in the Life of COVID-19. November 2020.

⁹ Park People. COVID-19 and Parks Survey. July 2020. <https://parkpeople.ca/2020/07/16/covid-19-and-parks-highlights-from-our-national-surveys>

3.4 Arts and Culture Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the arts and culture sector. Artists and organizations rely heavily on being able to make, present, and share cultural experiences for a community or individual to enjoy. Not being able to deliver these cultural experiences has disrupted the ability for these artists and organizations to maintain essential relationships with their audiences and taken a financial and economic toll on both individuals and the sector.

As lockdown procedures were put in place, most operations hit a standstill. Concerts, exhibitions, performances, festivals, and other events ceased, and so have most other avenues for generating revenue. Many organizations have been required to maintain their fixed operating costs and while some artists and organizations have been able to create virtual programming, others were not as well prepared to adjust quickly.

A late 2020 report from the Ontario Arts Council¹⁰ highlighted short-term and anticipated long-term impacts that its membership base has and may be facing in the future. Under current and short-term impacts, the Ontario Arts Council report notes that event cancellations and slowed fundraising opportunities have resulted in drastic revenue losses across the sector, with an estimate, as of June 2020, of upwards to a combined total of \$128 million in revenue loss.¹¹ The result in revenue losses has directly led to the loss of jobs across the arts and culture sector, with Statistics Canada reporting that employment in the sector was down 27.6% and working hours down by 44.2% in 2020, compared to 2019.¹²

The Ontario Arts Council report notes that it anticipates long-term impacts to the arts and cultural sector in Ontario even after the pandemic ends. The report notes that it is very likely that performing arts venues will be among the last to reopen once the pandemic settles. These key facilities will also see long-term audience loss likely from audience participation either being limited or audiences not feeling safe enough to return.

The ongoing economic downturn will likely also continue to persist long after the pandemic ends. The report notes that downturn will mean revaluations of grants and sponsorships that have typically been the main source of revenue for non-profit community arts and cultural organizations. Coupled, with delayed openings and reduced support revenue, organizations will likely remain at reduced capacity, lose volunteers, causing a potential loss of institutional knowledge and reduction of capacity to provide programming in the community.

The Ontario Arts Council report concludes with a request that governments look to step in to provide resiliency and stability to a weakened sector. Stability in ongoing annual or multiyear operating funding will be the single most important piece of ongoing recovery for the sector

¹⁰ Ontario Arts Council Early COVID-19 Impacts on OAC-Funded Arts Organizations (2020)

¹¹ Members of Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council Early COVID-19 Impacts on OAC-Funded Arts Organizations (2020)

¹² Julien, Frederic, "Employment in arts and culture industries, July 2020," Canadian Association for the Performing Arts (CAPACOA), August 17, 2020

3.5 Finance and Economics

During the active pandemic phase, municipalities are losing considerable revenue due to the temporary closure of parks and facilities and the suspension of programs. According to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), every month that community recreation facilities remain shuttered costs Canadian municipalities a combined \$221 million.¹³

The arts and culture sector, which typically brings in a strong GDP, has been among the most severely affected. The GDP for the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector was 59.0% lower in June 2020 than in February 2020.¹⁴ The cancelling of events, fundraisers, and programs will have major economic impacts, both short- and long-term as many organizations may fold and events or services will not return. Although some communities have pivoted to virtual programming, these do not offer nearly the same revenue potential as traditional models. Further, many sports, recreation, and culture organizations have been amongst the hardest hit, with entire seasons cancelled and revenues approaching zero. Some communities and organizations may struggle to return to pre-COVID-19 service levels and rationalization and efficiency reviews may be required to identify priorities once the stimulus influx from senior levels of governments disappears.

Financially, there may be short-term volatility surrounding planned capital projects and service initiatives as municipalities reallocate funding to priority areas. Conversely, economic stimulus to the sector – such as senior government grants – may allow communities to address needed infrastructure improvements, particularly those projects with wide-ranging benefits and sound rationale. Added costs for design and capital construction can be anticipated for certain facility types. As unemployment rates rise and remain high, household discretionary spending may decline in the short-term, which could lead to lower participation – especially in more costly and time-intensive sports and leisure activities – until everyday life stabilizes. A continued focus on expanding free and low-cost activities for all residents could help to boost participation.

Aspects associated with physical distancing has led to reduced maximum capacities for classes, camps, teams, and events, requiring higher levels of subsidy to offset increased labour costs and decreased revenues. This could cause us to shift how we perceive success from quantifiable measures (e.g., number of people served) to qualitative metrics (e.g., meaningful outcomes and benefits).

Municipalities have also provided financial aid during these pressing times to alleviate the financial burden brought upon the recreation, arts and culture sector by COVID-19. As an example, the City of St. Catharines developed an Arts and Culture Community Revitalization Program in response to the pandemic to support new music, arts and cultural activities that support downtown revitalization and enhance public life during the community's recovery.

¹³ <https://www.cpra.ca/covid19>. Accessed May 15, 2020.

¹⁴ Connell, A. 2020. Towards an Intersectional Approach: Rethinking Arts Ecosystems - Current Climate: An Analysis of the Arts, 2020. Prepared in conjunction with Mass Culture Digital Gating

3.6 Infrastructure and Community Design

There may be new infrastructure needs in a post-COVID-19 setting, with a priority being placed on accessible, resilient, and human-scaled spaces that provide for adequate separation. Every opportunity must be taken to enhance safety and minimize risk of illness, including preventative measures for future outbreaks. Supporting amenities such as hand washing stations, improved HVAC systems and outdoor ventilation within indoor environments (windows, “mid-door” spaces, etc.), easy-to-read directional signage, non-porous cleanable furniture and equipment, touchless amenities, one-way corridors and use of multiple entrances and exits, and more will likely be required. Even the design and allocation of office and workspace for municipal staff may be impacted, with consideration of making some work from home assignments permanent.

An emphasis may be placed on flexible spaces that can be closed off from other areas and subdivided for a variety of small and large group activities, as well as non-recreational or cultural use during public health emergencies. Community centres have become social and health service hubs, serving as venues for health care treatment and testing, food distribution, and shelter.

With demand for public open space being accelerated by COVID-19, many communities are reimagining these spaces in creative ways,¹⁵ such as car-free streets (or temporary street closures) and open space enhancements that allow for creative programming and community interaction. Some of these interventions may become permanent. Over time, government regulations and guidelines pertaining to community and building design are likely to be modified to include new approaches to public space planning, financing, and design.

3.7 Operations

Visitor management will become more critical as Canadians are likely to have new expectations and concerns around the public health and safety of parks, recreation, and culture facilities and programs. This will likely lead to the introduction of new and improved protocols and policies that ensure the safety of both customers and staff, such as cleaning and sanitization (spaces, surfaces, shared equipment, etc.), use of personal protective equipment, physical barriers, load capacities, crowd control (including pre-registration for drop-in activities) and enforcement, form of payment, services for vulnerable populations, communications, etc. Contact-free services and experiences will be in demand.

Extra effort will be required to train staff and communicate these new protocols to the public and gain their confidence, including real-time reporting of capacities and occupant densities – municipal social media strategies are becoming more robust in response. In some cases, additional staff may be required to implement new operational requirements, in turn escalating labour expenses and subsidy levels. CPRA estimates that new disease deterrence procedures (e.g., hygiene, cleaning, physical distancing) could raise Canadian facility operating costs by as much as \$226 million annually.¹⁶ We can expect new innovations and cleaning technologies to emerge that may help to generate efficiencies over time.

In addition, many municipalities (and their residents) rely on access to space provided by third-party facilities to offer their programming, such as schools, non-profit groups, and private sector operations. Many of the aforementioned protocols would apply to these providers and must be properly coordinated. In certain cases, some service providers have decided to permanently close facilities due to pandemic-related financial losses (e.g., YMCAs in Niagara Region, Windsor, Orillia, etc.), which may result in program gaps and an expectation for municipalities to step in and fill the void. For those that remain open, new operational and financial realities may necessitate the renegotiation of existing contracts.

¹⁵ PwC and the Urban Land Institute. Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2021. 2020.

¹⁶ <https://www.cpra.ca/covid19>. Accessed May 15, 2020.

With community access to schools being mostly eliminated during the active pandemic phase, some municipalities and user groups are further reducing their programming and seeking alternative solutions. With school curriculums that are modifying or eliminating physical education due to the pandemic, there is a heightened need for recreation departments to offer appropriate opportunities for physical activity. Appropriate messaging is also required to encourage participation and reducing stigmas that may prevent participation.

Moving forward it is evident that technology is increasingly being used to help deliver services, from social media, online registration, and apps that help to spread information and enhance service, to thermal/motion sensors, drones, and Internet of Things smart technologies that help to monitor activity and collect real-time data to be used in decision-making.

3.8 Health Equity

The pandemic is bringing to light a number of shortcomings that exist in our society, including the inequities for marginalized populations and disproportionate access to health care. The research is clear that certain ethno-cultural and income groups are being impacted disproportionately by the pandemic. Open spaces and active transportation amenities not only give people room to enjoy the outdoors safely, but they also help reduce chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. This experience may lead to a closer working relationship with the public health sector, including the use of a health equity lens in all we do, ensuring that our most vulnerable have access to essential services and opportunities to safely spend time outdoors. The sector may also have a role to play in the dissemination of credible information, as parks, recreation and cultural services reach a wide audience and are often the means through which citizens engage their social networks.

3.9 Activities and Sport Participation

This pandemic has imposed a new lifestyle on participants and there is evidence that overall physical activity levels have declined – a study found that only 2.7% of children and youth were meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day at the outset of the pandemic.¹⁷ The lack of physical activity was influenced by the closure of schools, cancellation of sports and activities, increase of sedentary time, and personal living arrangements – those living in houses were more likely to play outdoors than those living in apartments. There is a need to increase physical activity promotion to ensure that these lifestyles do not become permanent. The study found that parental encouragement and support can lead to greater activity, as does dog ownership.

Despite this, many people are adjusting and finding new ways to stay active. Most notable are unstructured outdoor activities (e.g., walking, hiking, cycling, visiting natural areas, swimming in backyard pools, etc.) during all four seasons, often undertaken as a family/household. Conservation areas and provincial/national parks have been in particularly high demand, often reaching capacity on weekends. However, those living in lower-income or high density areas may have less favourable access to space and resources, underscoring the need for social equity to be at the centre of decision-making. Opportunities to maximize outdoor play and learning, especially amongst children, have been a focus in recent years and should continue.

From a customer perspective, there may also be heightened interest in health/wellbeing services, active transportation, and food security, and moving “indoor” activities outside, which could lead to increased demand for community gardens, outdoor fitness equipment, trails and bike lanes, outdoor group activities, outdoor classrooms, interaction in nature, etc. The increase in pet-ownership during the pandemic may also drive demand for off-leash dog areas. It is recognized that some communities are experiencing unauthorized use of public outdoor space by for-profit groups. This has created some challenges in maintaining and providing equal access to public space and thus, municipalities are encouraged to regularly monitor the use of their parks, ensure that all user groups follow the approved permit process, and ensure that all public use of space guidelines are followed.

¹⁷ Moore et al. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (2020) 17:85
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-020-00987-8>. Accessed October 26, 2020.

The increase in outdoor activity, along with restrictions placed on other sectors, has also underlined the importance of washrooms in parks and public spaces, which can be expected to be in even greater demand going forward, including during the winter season. Travel restrictions may also lead to fewer seniors leaving the community for warmer weather, creating greater demand for activities during the winter (along with winter park maintenance and snow clearing on trails). It will be important to quickly and effectively address barriers to winter activity, such as equipment and access to amenities.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated several trends that were already in motion. For example, with in-person programs being restricted or cancelled during the pandemic, online virtual classes and events are now becoming commonplace, such as public events (e.g., lecture series, concerts, etc.) and group-based fitness and competition (e.g., virtual marathons, fitness classes, etc.). Another example that has been highly effective for populations at higher risk of isolation is the Seniors' Centre Without Walls program, which provides adults 55+ with free recreational activities over the phone in many communities. While this cannot not fully replace the in-person experience, it does provide a way for residents and staff to stay connected and benefit from physical and social activity. As we emerge from the pandemic, a hybrid model of in-person and virtual programming can be anticipated – this has the potential to attract new audiences and increase participation.

As mentioned earlier, the short-term prohibition on team sports – combined with the high personal and financial costs of participation – could lead many families to rethink participation even when assembly restrictions are relaxed. Early on, the focus has been placed on developing “return to play” guidelines, which has required greater municipal oversight of group’s operational practices. While providers will be challenged to help people feel comfortable again, they are also presented with an opportunity to make community and elite sport more balanced, inclusive and responsive to modern realities.

3.10 Lifestyles and Behaviours

The pandemic could have an extended impact on our individual behaviours, including travel as people may be more hesitant to leave their local surroundings. Even before the pandemic, there had been a strong trend toward close-to-home recreation. This could continue to enhance interest in neighbourhood parks, trails and other local / low-cost activities, while those communities that typically rely on seasonal or tourist markets could be negatively affected. This may impact tournaments and sport tourism destinations, at least in the short-term.

The newfound ability for many to work from home has translated to greater flexibility, which may allow for increased participation in activities during daytime hours, times that have traditionally been difficult to fill. Some municipalities are revisiting their definitions of prime time and corresponding fee structures. Understanding the long-term impact of the pandemic on people’s values and priorities will require regular monitoring and discussion.

A renewed focus on equity and inclusion is shining a light on the distribution of public space as people seek localized opportunities. Now more than ever, municipalities have an obligation to target investment (e.g., engagement activities, programming, park renewal, facility development, etc.) within neighbourhoods without adequate access.

3.11 Looking Ahead

The longer-term projection is less certain and much will depend on the duration and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerns around gatherings may keep some people away from large group events and crowded spaces. There is evidence that some are taking it a step further and relocating to less populated, suburban or rural areas; many communities with sizable seasonal populations are reporting a shift toward permanent residency as the notion of working from home becomes more entrenched. Complete communities with a mix of residential, education, employment, recreational, park and active transportation opportunities that function as self-sustaining and connected neighbourhoods will be most desirable. This will require a rethink of how many aspects of public space are designed and managed – this could lead to a shift away from large multi-use complexes towards smaller localized facilities – which could take decades to fully realize.

To be successful, there is a need to continue to look ahead to research and understand lessons from around the world and invest time and resources in new technologies and approaches that will assist in realizing the many benefits associated with parks, recreation and culture participation.

4.0

Parkland Opportunities

Public parks offer numerous community benefits. A well-designed parks system provides safe space to build a sense of community and social belonging, while inspiring creativity and energizing individuals. Parks provide spaces for sports and physical activity, support habitats for wildlife, sustain healthy ecosystems and watersheds, and build resiliency to climate change. Parks systems can also support sport, cultural and eco-tourism objectives that create revenue generating opportunities and distribute economic spin-offs that benefit local businesses.

Research suggests that there is a growing segment of the population experiencing nature deficit disorder that is impacting personal health and well-being. This societal issue has become more apparent in 2020 and 2021 as Canadians have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past year, Richmond Hill has experienced a surge in the use of its parks and trails, re-enforcing the high value that residents place on the local parks system.

This section examines the City's parkland system, with consideration given to the existing classification system, inventory, distribution, parkland service level and preliminary needs. Where applicable, comparisons were made to benchmark municipalities including Brampton, Burlington, Markham, Oakville, Toronto and Vaughan. A review of parkland opportunities and constraints in Richmond Hill was also undertaken to inform the City's Urban Open Space Master Plan.

4.1 Provincial Policy Documents

4.1.1 Ontario Planning Act

The *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990 is the guiding legislation for all land use planning in Ontario to promote sustainable economic development in a healthy environment. A notable change to the *Planning Act* occurred in 2019 with the removal and replacement of Section 37 (height and density bonusing provisions), which was replaced with Community Benefit Charges (CBCs) through municipal by-law. CBCs may be imposed against the value of land (up to 4%) to pay for the capital cost of facilities, services and other matters. This tool can be utilized for high density areas, particularly for developments with more than five storeys and more than 10 residential units. To apply this tool, municipalities must first prepare a CBC strategy (in consultation with the public) that establishes projected development where CBCs will be imposed, identified needs as a result of development, and identifies the facilities, services and matters that will be funded using this tool.

The *Planning Act* establishes the framework for parkland dedication in Section 42, which provides approval authorities with powers to impose parkland dedication requirements as a condition of development of land. Up to 2% of land for commercial and industrial purposes, or 5% of land for residential purposes or 1 hectare per 300 units, may be conveyed to the municipality for parkland or other public recreational purposes. In certain cases, where the approval authority has established specific policies regarding parkland dedication, an alternative rate of one hectare for each 500 dwelling units may be utilized. The *Planning Act* also permits municipalities to accept cash in lieu of parkland equal to the value of land otherwise required to be conveyed. In addition to parkland, other land dedications may be negotiated for other purposes such as utilities, maintaining/improving watercourses and transportation right of ways.

The *Planning Act* recognizes the importance of sustainability and promotes transit and pedestrian oriented development. The use of sustainable design elements is encouraged including, but not limited to, landscaping, green roofs, geothermal heating and cooling, ground cover, permeable surfaces, street furniture, waste and recycling containers, and bicycle parking facilities. Proposed developments may also be eligible for reduced cash-

in-lieu payment pursuant to Official Plan policy. Richmond Hill does not have any Official Plan policy to accept sustainability measures as parkland as the City has implemented a robust, award-winning Sustainability Metrics program to incent sustainable development

4.1.2 2020 Provincial Policy Statement

The *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS) provides direction on matters of provincial interest as it pertains to land use planning and development. In support of the Planning Act, all planning matters must conform to the PPS. The PPS contains policies regarding a range of land use planning matters which encourage building strong communities, managing resources, and public health and safety. Section 1.5 of the PPS established policies for public spaces, recreation, parks, trails and open spaces, promoting healthy, active communities by:

- Planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity;
- Planning and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parkland, public spaces, open space areas, trails and linkages, and, where practical, water-based resources;
- Providing opportunities for public access to shorelines; and
- Recognizing provincial parks, conservation reserves, and other protected areas, and minimizing negative impacts on these areas.

4.1.3 Development Charges Act

The Development Charges Act (DCA) was first enacted in 1989 and set out the process municipalities were to follow to create development charge by-laws. Development charges are imposed on development and redevelopment within municipalities to assist in offsetting the cost of increased municipal infrastructure and services required due to population and employment growth. Since 1989, the DCA has had several refinements with a significant refinement in 1997. The 1997 DCA is the current Act municipalities work under today. In recent years, legislative amendments to the 1997 DCA have taken place, which are highlighted in the sub-section that follows.

Bill 73: Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, 2015

Bill 73 was proclaimed in December 2015 and became effective as of January 1, 2016. The changes to the DCA as a result of Bill 73 included the following:

- The need to implement area-specific development charges for prescribed services and/or for specific municipalities which are to be regulated (Note that currently there are no municipalities or services prescribed/regulated), and for the background studies to include consideration of the use of more than one development charge by-law to reflect different needs for service in different areas (Note that this requires Council to consider the use of area rating but does not mandate that they impose on an area specific basis).
- The need to include an Asset Management Plan that deals with all assets that are proposed to be funded, in whole or in part, by development charges.
- An extended public process which requires that a development charges background study be made available to the public at least 60 days prior to passage of a development charge by-law.
- A refinement to the timing of collection of development charges to be at the time of the first building permit.

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- Changes to the methodology used for Transit Services including the use of a forward-looking service standard based on ridership capacity and the removal of the 10% mandatory deduction.

Bill 108: More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019

On May 2, 2019, the Province introduced Bill 108, which proposed changes to the DCA. The Bill has been introduced as part of the Province's "More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan". The Bill received Royal Assent on June 6, 2019.

While having received royal assent, many of the amendments to the DCA would not come into effect until they are proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor (many of these changes were revised through Bill 197). At the time of writing, the following provisions have been proclaimed:

- Effective January 1, 2020, rental housing and institutional developments will pay development charges in six equal annual payments commencing at occupancy. Non-profit housing developments will pay development charges in 21 equal annual payments. Interest may be charged on the instalments, and any unpaid amounts may be added to the property and collected as taxes.
- Effective January 1, 2020, the development charges amount for all developments occurring within 2 years of a Site Plan or Zoning By-law Amendment planning approval (for application submitted after this section is proclaimed), shall be determined based on the development charges in effect on the day of Site Plan or Zoning By-law Amendment application. If the development is not proceeding via these planning approvals, then the amount is determined the earlier of the date of issuance of a building permit.

On February 28, 2020, the Province released updated draft regulations related to the DCA and the Planning Act. A summary of these changes to take effect upon proclamation by the Lieutenant Governor is provided below:

Changes to Eligible Services – Prior to Bill 108, the DCA provided a list of ineligible services whereby municipalities could include growth related costs for any service that was not listed. With Bill 108, the changes to the DCA would now specifically list the services that are eligible for inclusion in the by-law. Further, the initial list of eligible services under Bill 108 was limited to "hard services", with the "soft services" being removed from the DCA. These services would be considered as part of a new community benefits charge (discussed below) imposed under the Planning Act. As noted in the next section this list of services has been amended through Bill 197.

Mandatory 10% deduction – The amending legislation would remove the mandatory 10% deduction for all services that remain eligible under the DCA.

Remaining services to be included in a new CBC under the Planning Act – it is identified that a municipality may, by by-law, impose a CBC against land to pay for the capital costs of facilities, services and matters required because of development or redevelopment in the area to which the by-law applies. The CBC is proposed to include formerly eligible development charge services that are not included in the above listing, in addition to parkland dedication and bonus zoning contributions.

Bill 138: Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019

On November 6, 2019, the Province released Bill 138 which provided further amendments to the DCA and Planning Act. This Bill received Royal Assent on December 10, 2019 and was proclaimed which resulted in sections related to the DCA (schedule 10) becoming effective on January 1, 2020. The amendments to the DCA included removal of instalment payments for commercial and industrial developments that were originally included in Bill 108.

Bill 197: COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020

In response to the global pandemic that began affecting Ontario in early 2020, the Province released Bill 197 which provided amendments to a number of Acts, including the DCA and Planning Act. This Bill also revised some of the proposed changes identified in Bill 108. Bill 197 was tabled on July 8, 2020, received Royal Assent on July 21, 2020, and was proclaimed on September 18, 2020. The following provides a summary of the changes:

- Under Bill 108 some services were to be included under the DCA and some would be included under the CBC authority. Bill 197, however, revised this proposed change and has included all services (with some exceptions) under the DCA. These services include parks and recreation services.
- The 10-year planning horizon has been removed for all services except transit.

Classes of services:

- The DCA now allows a development charge by-law to provide for any eligible service or capital cost related to any eligible service to be included in a class that is set out in the by-law.
- A class may be composed of any number or combination of services and may include parts or portions of the eligible services or parts or portions of the capital costs in respect of those services.
- A development charge by-law may provide for a class consisting of studies in respect of any eligible service whose capital costs are described in paragraphs 5 and 6 of s. 5 of the DCA.
- A class of service set out in the development charge by-law is deemed to be a single service with respect to reserve funds, use of monies, and credits.

Bill 213: Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020

On December 8, 2020, Bill 213 received Royal Assent. One of the changes of the Bill that took effect upon Royal Assent included amending the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act by introducing a new section that would exempt the payment of development charges for developments of land intended for use by a university that receives operating funds from the Government.

With respect to parks and recreation, changes to the DCA have provided municipalities with the ability to recover up to 100% of infrastructure costs associated with population and employment growth with the removal of the previous 10% mandatory deduction. Further, with the removal of the 10-year planning period, municipalities can undertake reviews that provide for longer planning horizons with the ability to include the costs in the development charges calculations. These changes are both positive for municipalities in ensuring that growth pays for growth needs.

However, other changes to the DCA, including the freezing of development charge rates at the day of site plan and/or zoning amendment application date and installment payment for non-profit housing, rental housing and institutional developments may result in a loss of revenue and/or create cash-flow issues for municipalities.

4.1.4 2020 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The 2020 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe provides a framework to guide sustainable development. As one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, the Growth Plan was necessary to address urban sprawl putting Ontario's natural heritage areas at risk, encouraging the development of higher densities across the GTA (including Richmond Hill), while improving quality of life and standards of living. New population projections are established in the new Growth Plan, which forecasts York Region reaching a population of 2.02 million by 2051.

With regards to parks, recreation and culture, the Growth Plan maintains that urban centres will be the focal point for leisure opportunities, supporting large concentrations of residential, commercial and employment areas. It encourages municipalities to establish an open space system within settlement areas, which may include opportunities for urban agriculture, rooftop gardens, communal courtyards, and public parks. The role of parks, recreation and culture will continue to be a key factor in urban areas, particularly given that the Growth Plan establishes a target of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare for Downtown Richmond Hill Centre by 2031.

With respect to less urbanized, greenfield areas, the Growth Plan promotes these locations as livable areas, complete with a mix of parks, housing and employment opportunities, as well as a multi-modal transportation network that supports walking, cycling and transit. Within these greenfield areas, the Growth Plan establishes density target of 50 persons and jobs per hectare.

4.1.5 Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan, alongside the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan identifies areas where development should not occur so as to protect ecological areas and watersheds as well as agricultural lands and countryside. The Greenbelt Plan includes lands within the NEP and ORMCP and also builds on protections provided within those documents.

The vision for the Greenbelt Plan is to permanently protect land which:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use;
- Gives permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in southcentral Ontario will be organized;
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses; and,
- Builds resilience to and mitigates climate change.

Lands that are within the Oak Ridges Moraine Area but are not governed by the policies of the ORMCP are deemed to be within the Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt Plan. The Greenbelt Plan contains geographic-specific policies for three types of land within the Protected Countryside: Agricultural System, Natural Heritage System and settlement areas. Policies related to parkland, open space and trails are also contained in the Greenbelt Plan.

4.1.5.1 Natural System

Areas within the Natural System serve important ecological functions including water storage and filtration, clean air, protect and preserve habitats, support pollinators, carbon storage and resilience to climate change. The Natural System consists of the Natural Heritage System, which includes core areas and linkages of the Protected Countryside with the highest concentrations of the most sensitive and/or significant natural features and functions. The Natural System also includes the Water Resource System, which includes ground and surface water features,

as well as their associated functions.¹⁸ Policies for the Natural System are contained in Section 3.2 of the Greenbelt Plan and ensures the protection of natural heritage, hydrological and/or landform features.

Policies for the Natural Heritage System limit development or site-alteration to situations where it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts to key natural heritage features or key hydrological features and their functions. The Greenbelt Plan recognizes that key natural heritage features include (but are not limited to) habitats of endangered species, wetlands, fish habitats, and significant valleylands and woodlands. Key hydrologic features include streams, lakes and wetlands. As part of development, the removal of these key features should be avoided and they are encouraged to be incorporated into the planning and design of the proposed use wherever possible. Connectivity within the Natural Heritage System should be maintained and where possible, enhanced to support the movement of native plants and animals.

The Greenbelt Plan identifies that external connections between the Natural System and other local, regional and provincial natural heritage and water resource systems that are beyond the Greenbelt should be maintained and strengthened, where possible. This will require a coordinated approach between municipalities, conservation authorities, other agencies and stakeholders to undertake appropriate planning and design and consider land use activities and changes, as well as promote stewardship, remediation and initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing ecological functions.

4.1.5.2 Parkland, Open Space and Trails

The Greenbelt Plan recognizes that parkland, open space and trails are important features in creating complete communities and contributes to a greater quality of life. From an environmental perspective, these components provide benefits in supporting environmental protection and preservation, improved air quality and mitigate climate change. The Greenbelt Plan encourages that public access to parkland, open space and trails should be maintained and enhanced, where possible, through strategic planning initiatives and ongoing collaboration between municipalities, conservation areas, other agencies and stakeholders (including private landowners). Key policies contained in the Greenbelt Plan include (but are not limited to):

- Develop and incorporate strategies (such as community-specific levels of provision) into official plans to guide the adequate provision of municipal recreation facilities, parkland, open space and trails.
- Provide a full range of publicly accessible, built and natural settings for recreation, including facilities, parklands, open space areas, trails and water-based activities.
- Include the following considerations in municipal parks plans and open space strategies:
 - Providing for open space areas for current and future populations and promoting stewardship of open space areas;
 - Providing facilities, parklands, open space areas and trails that particularly support an active, healthy community lifestyle;
 - Identifying key areas or sites for the future development of major facilities that avoid sensitive landscapes;
 - Identifying and targeting under-serviced areas for improved levels of protection;
 - Protecting the recreation and tourism values of waterfront areas as a high priority; and
 - Supporting urban agriculture and other local food initiatives.

¹⁸ Greenbelt Plan (2017).

4.1.6 Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

The Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) is one of the most significant landforms in Ontario. The ridge stretches 160 kilometres in length. Approximately half of Richmond Hill's municipal boundary is overlapped by the ORM Conservation Plan Area (ORMCP).

The 2017 ORMCP provides land use and resource management planning direction to provincial ministers, ministries, and agencies, municipalities, landowners and other stakeholders on how to protect the Moraine's ecological and hydrological features and functions.

ORMCP Vision:

The vision for the Oak Ridges Moraine is that of "a continuous band of green rolling hills that provides form and structure to south-central Ontario, while protecting the ecological and hydrological features and functions that support the health and wellbeing of the region's residents and ecosystems."

The Oak Ridges Moraine is comprised of four land use designations – Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Area, Countryside Areas and Settlement Areas. With respect to Natural Core and Natural Linkage Areas, these components serve key ecological functions and form connections within the Moraine and policies have been established to recognize the importance of maintaining the ecological functions of these areas. Among a variety of uses, low-intensity recreational uses and unserviced parks are permitted within these areas, as well as in the Countryside Area. The ORMCP defines low-intensity recreational uses as recreational uses that have minimal impact on the natural environment, and require limited terrain or vegetation modification and few, if any, buildings or structures, including (but not limited to) non-motorized trails, natural heritage appreciation, unserviced camping and accessory uses. Small-scale accessory structures are only permitted provided that it can be demonstrated that the ecological integrity of the ORMCP is maintained. Unserved parks are parks that provide recreation opportunities and facilities without outdoor lighting, accessory facilities, paved parking lots or permanent infrastructure (e.g., water and wastewater facilities).

4.1.7 Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve Management Plan

The Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve (ORCCR) is located in the north end of Richmond Hill and is managed by the TRCA. The intent of the reserve is to provide a continuous east-west natural corridor, while protecting the headwaters for the Humber and Rouge Rivers. The ORCCR contains a number of significant natural features such as wetlands and kettle lakes as well as some of the most diverse wildlife habitat in the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The Management Plan was developed to fully protect the existing natural features (forests, lakes, wetlands etc.), restore lands previously used for agricultural purposes (reforestation, establishment of grasslands etc.), and explore potential locations for expansion and connections.

Vision Statement:

"The Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve will be a sanctuary for nature and an essential ecological linkage on the Oak Ridges Moraine where visitors can learn about ecosystem features and functions, wildlife and human influences, and enjoy activities that are compatible with the natural and cultural values of the park."

Goals of the Management Plan:

1. To support the implementation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act by contributing to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the Moraine's ecological functions, protecting water quality and quantity, maintaining the integrity of the continuous natural system and fostering partnerships for stewardship.

2. To address the challenge of sustaining a sanctuary for nature in an urban setting by including public uses that provide opportunities for passive recreation, linkages to the Oak Ridges Trail, and experiential learning, while protecting the environmental integrity of the reserve.

4.1.8 Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve East Management Plan

Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve East (ORCCRE) is comprised of wetlands and forests as well as other unique and sensitive natural areas on the east side of Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve. The main goal of the ORCCRE management plan is to protect these diverse habitats and sensitive natural areas like the previous management plan. The management plan outlines recommendations and actions for implementation to protect the natural heritage system while also allowing for natural recreation experiences by visitors.

Vision Statement:

“The ORCCRE will be a sanctuary for nature and an essential ecological linkage on the Oak Ridges Moraine where visitors can learn about ecosystem features and functions, wildlife and human influences, and enjoy activities that are compatible with the natural and cultural values of the reserve.”

Goals of the Management Plan:

1. To conserve, protect and manage Authority lands in consultation with the public in a manner that values, respects and enhances the natural, cultural and heritage resources; and,
2. To encourage uses that are compatible with healthy watersheds, respectful of the unique character of the lands and sustainable in environmental, physical and economic terms.

4.2 Municipal Policy Documents and Studies

4.2.1 Official Plan Parkland Policies and Parkland Dedication By-law

Richmond Hill’s parkland policies are contained in Section 3.1.8 of the City’s Official Plan. Parkland Dedication By-law 58-13 regulates Richmond Hill’s parkland dedication practices. In accordance with the *Planning Act*, Richmond Hill’s Parkland Dedication By-law requires the dedication of park land, or payment in lieu of park land dedication as a condition of residential, commercial and employment development.

For commercial and employment developments, 2% of the land proposed for development is required for park land purposes. For residential developments/redevelopments, the City requires the greater of:

- 5% of the land proposed for development/redevelopment; or
- The lesser of:
 - I. 1 hectare of land for each 300 Dwelling Units proposed for development or redevelopment: or
 - II. 1 hectare of land for each 730 persons to be housed within the Dwelling Units in the proposed development based on the persons per unit figures outlined in the Parkland Dedication By-law.

Where parkland dedication is not recommended, cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication is required at a rate of one hectare per 500 proposed dwelling units to a maximum of \$10,000 per multi residential dwelling unit within a multi-residential building or \$11,500 per unit within stacked and townhouse developments.

Land uses that are exempt from the requirements of the Parkland Dedication By-law include: long-term care facilities, not-for-profit or charitable uses (e.g., religious and educational institutions, etc.), and federally owned lands. The OP and By-law also identify lands that are not suitable for conveyance including stormwater

management facilities, hazard lands, environmentally significant areas, areas of natural and scientific interest, wetlands, significant woodlands and buffers to key natural heritage areas.

The Official Plan directs that Richmond Hill Council may accept stratified parkland if it can be demonstrated that:

- The public has a reasonably similar level of access to that of parkland conveyed in fee simple; and
- The limited title and associated physical conditions of the land to be conveyed do not unduly limit the intended role and function of the parkland.

The Official Plan also contains a policy for establishing public access to privately-owned open space by easement or other appropriate mechanism.

Parkland Classification

A robust parkland classification system is critical to guide communities in park development and to convey to the public what they may expect for different types of parks.

Section 3.4.4 of Richmond Hill’s Official Plan contains a classification system, which includes the following park typologies: Community Park, Neighbourhood Park, Linear Park and Urban Square. The 2013 Parks Plan also contains a parkland classification system and while it is based on the hierarchy contained in the Official Plan, it introduces a new Destination Park typology and describes each park type in greater detail including its intended function, permitted uses, and catchment area. The classification system contained in the 2013 Parks Plan is highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: 2013 Parks Plan Parkland Classification System

Park Type and Description
Destination Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contain features and facilities not found anywhere else in the City• Attract visitors from across the City and beyond because of their unique attractions• Typically used as the sites for large events and celebrations• Contain an active parkland component as well as additional lands, including stormwater management facilities and natural heritage/environmental lands
Community Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Function as hubs where residents can meet, interact and engage in a wide variety of recreational activities, as well as nature appreciation• Typically campused with indoor recreation facilities (e.g., community centres, arenas, pools, etc.), sports fields with lighting and associated parking spaces, picnic and passive recreational areas, and a mixture of smaller recreational facilities (e.g., playgrounds, sport courts, splash pads, etc.)• Serve residents living within a long walk or a short drive (1 to 2 kilometres) or by residents across the City who participate in organized sports or recreational programming
Neighbourhood Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary function is to provide neighbourhood-oriented play areas, recreational opportunities and outdoor greenspace within 400 metres of residential areas• Provide spaces for people to walk their dogs, offer views of nature, meet with neighbours, and contains sports fields used for house league or pick-up games• There are two types of Neighbourhood Parks within the City’s inventory:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Local Parks which contain a variety of active recreation facilities as well as passive recreational spaces

Park Type and Description

- Parkettes which are typically smaller in size and often contain no active recreation facilities other than a playground

Linear Parks and Urban Squares

- Serves residents living and visiting within intensification areas, particularly in centres and corridors
- Facilitate safe and comfortable areas for gatherings, as well as pedestrian and cycling connections to the urban open space system and other community destinations
- Provide play opportunities, public art, fitness equipment, collective gardens, shade and seating, water features, and other features to create a sense of place
- Act as a physical green separation between abutting land uses

Source: 2013 Parks Plan

Parkland Classification Systems in Benchmark Municipalities

Park classification systems in each benchmark municipality are summarized in Table 5, highlighting information from municipal Official Plans and Parks and Recreation Plans. Richmond Hill's parkland classification system is consistent with benchmark municipalities with a few exceptions. Parkland among benchmark municipalities is categorized at a regional, municipal-wide, community, neighbourhood, and sub-neighbourhood level. The intent and function of each park type is also consistent across benchmark municipalities where regional (or destination) parks accommodate a broad range of active and passive recreational uses, as well as unique and specialized facilities that may not be found elsewhere within a municipality's parks system. Unstructured and small-scale amenities (such as playgrounds and seating areas) are typical for lower order parks. Richmond Hill is the only benchmark that provides a Linear Park typology.

Generally speaking, Richmond Hill's parkland classification system remains appropriate to guide parkland development over the planning horizon and beyond. During the next Official Plan Review, a few minor adjustments should be considered:

- Richmond Hill does not currently **define park sizes**. A size range for each park type can be a helpful tool when negotiating for parkland through the development process, as well as to ensure that parks are adequately sized to accommodate planned uses and supporting amenities. While Richmond Hill's existing and planned parks are a range of sizes, consideration should be given to implementing defined park sizes for new park typologies planned along the City's growth centres and corridors.
- The City should explore how its classification can be enhanced with **details regarding permitted uses** to provide the public with a sense of what types of amenities they can expect to see within new or redeveloped parks. Benchmark municipalities generally identify this for each park type. Markham for example, contains detailed information on what types of parks are suitable for major sports fields (as well as supporting amenities such as parking and field houses), as well as other amenities such as playgrounds, festival space, public art, sport courts, and more. **Defined service areas** may also be considered.

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Table 5: Parkland Classification Comparison with Benchmark Municipalities

	Parkland Classification	Park Size	Service Area
Richmond Hill	Destination Park	Undefined	Regional
	Community Park	2 to 4 ha	Several neighbourhoods (1 to 2 km)
	Neighbourhood Park	Undefined	Neighbourhood (400 m)
	Linear Park	Undefined	Undefined
	Urban Square	Undefined	Intensification Areas
Brampton	City Park	Undefined	Entire Town
	Community Park	10 to 12 ha	3.0 km (15,000 to 20,000 residents)
	Neighbourhood Park	0.8 to 1.2 ha	0.2 to 0.4 km (4,000 to 5,000 residents)
Burlington	Special Resource Area	Undefined	Entire City
	City Park	Undefined	Entire City
	Community Park	Undefined	Several neighbourhoods
	Neighbourhood Park	Undefined	Neighbourhood
	Parkette	Undefined	Sub-neighbourhood
Markham	Destination Park	Undefined	Regional
	City Park	12 ha or more	Entire City
	Community Park	6 ha or more	800 m
	Neighbourhood Park	1 to 6 ha	400 m
	Urban Square	0.5 to 5 ha	Mixed use neighbourhoods
	Parkette	0.5 to 1.5 ha	150 to 400 m of low-rise and mid-rise residential areas
	Urban Parkette	0.2 to 0.5 ha	150 to 400 m of mixed-use neighbourhoods
Oakville	Community Park	Undefined	Entire Town
	Neighbourhood Park	Undefined	Neighbourhood
	Urban Square/Parkette	Undefined	Sub-neighbourhood
Toronto	Legacy Park	8 ha or more	Regional
	City Park	5 to 8 ha	Entire City
	Large Park	3 to 5 ha	3 km
	Medium Park	1.5 to 3 ha	1.5km
	Small Park	0.5 to 1.5 ha	1 km
	Parkette	0.5 ha or less	0.5 km
Vaughan	Regional Park	15 ha or more	Regional
	District Park	5 ha or more	Entire City
	Neighbourhood Park	0.75 to 5 ha	800 m of residential areas
	Urban Park	1 ha or more	Intensification Areas
	Public Square	0.2 to 1 ha	Intensification Areas

Preliminary Findings – Official Plan Parkland Policies and Parkland Dedication By-law

1. Through the City’s review of its Official Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law, consideration should be given to the following:
 - a) **Legislative changes** that have taken place since the last Official Plan update, including Community Benefit Charges, the cash-in-lieu rate of one hectare per 500 units, etc.
 - b) Establishing criteria to determine **when to take 5% land conveyance versus the alternative conveyance rate**.
 - c) Strategically accepting strata parks while considering a **discounted conveyance rate** relative to non-strata parks due to inherent encumbrances on the use and the development of the strata park (the value of the conveyance should be determined at the direction of Council).
 2. Explore opportunities to enhance the City’s parkland classification system to ensure that it is well-positioned to guide future parkland development including establishing a range of sizes for each park type, describing detailed permitted uses, and defining service areas.
-

4.2.2 Parkland Dedication Practices in Benchmark Municipalities

Similar to Richmond Hill, Official Plan policies and/or Parkland Dedication By-law standards in benchmark municipalities require development proposals to convey 5% of residential lands and 2% for non-residential lands for parkland dedication in accordance with the *Planning Act*. Each Official Plan contains policies permitting parkland dedication at the alternative rate of one hectare per 300 dwelling units. Notable findings relating to parkland dedication include the following:

- Richmond Hill, Burlington and Markham have alternative dedication standards that are based on density. Burlington has also established criteria to determine which *Planning Act* conveyance standard should be used. For example, Burlington’s Official Plan specifies that low density residential development require 5% dedication while medium and high density developments require parkland to be conveyed at the alternative rate.
- Richmond Hill, Burlington and Markham have parkland dedication policies for mixed-use development. Burlington maintains that the residential portion will apply to residential dwellings and that 2% of parkland is required based on the total non-residential floor area. Markham states that “conveyance requirements are the sum of the parkland conveyances for each individual use.”
- Richmond Hill and Markham may both accept strata parks. In Markham, stratra parks are typically located in mixed-use neighbourhoods as an urban square or parkette. The value of the contribution to parkland conveyance is discounted relative to non-strata parks due to inherent encumbrances on the use and the development of the strata park (the value of conveyance is determined at the discretion of the City).

City of Toronto

In addition to benchmark municipalities, a review of parkland dedication policies and practices contained in the City of Toronto 2006 Official Plan and the 2019 Parkland Strategy was undertaken. Parkland acquisition policies have been established for priority and non-priority areas. Parkland priority areas are considered to be locations with low park provision, low park supply, high growth and low-income.

Residential development proposals within non-priority areas are required to convey 5% of land for park purposes. For residential development within priority areas, the City will require conveyance at an alternative rate of 0.4 hectares for every 300 dwelling units. The City of Toronto also maintains that through the alternative rate, parkland dedication will not exceed 10% of the development area for sites less than one hectare, 15% of the development area for sites one to five hectares in size, and 20% of the development area for sites greater than 5 hectares in size. The City of Toronto maintains that in cases where parkland dedication is not feasible, payment will be accepted in lieu of parkland, but will not exceed the percentage value of the development area for sites as previously specified for land conveyance. It is important to view Toronto's parkland dedication requirements in the context that reductions to the *Planning Act* requirement are a function of the City essentially being built-out and land prices per acre are significantly higher than elsewhere in the province. Parkland dedication practices are also a result of infill and intensification opportunities, often at higher densities than found elsewhere in the province.

Considerations for Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill's existing Official Plan policies regarding parkland dedication pursuant to the *Planning Act* largely remain appropriate. Based on legislation changes and best practices found in benchmark municipalities, the following should be considered during the City's next review of its Official Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law.

- Recognize Community Benefit Charges and the cash-in-lieu rate of one hectare per 500 units, etc. The alternative rate is already referenced in Richmond Hill's Parkland Dedication By-law.
- Establish criteria to determine **when to take 5% land conveyance versus the alternative conveyance rate of one hectare per 300 units** (or one hectare per 730 units).
- Create a procedure to take strata parks at a **discounted conveyance rate** relative to non-strata parks due to inherent encumbrances on the use and the development of the strata park (the value of the conveyance should be determined at the direction of Council).
- Develop a policy or procedure for **off-site parkland dedication** and calculating the value of the dedication.

4.2.3 Richmond Hill Parks Plan

The 2013 Parks Plan provided the City with direction on the planning and development of Richmond Hill’s park system over a 20 year period. The Parks Plan was guided by four key goals:

1. To understand current and future parks and outdoor recreation facility needs in Richmond Hill.
2. To make recommendations regarding how the City’s inventory of parks and outdoor recreation facilities should be focused to meet community needs now and in the future.
3. To examine the role and function of the various types of parks in Richmond Hill, and determine parkland needs in relation to the City’s planned urban structure.
4. To develop a methodology for deciding when older parks should be redeveloped to meet the changing needs of the community.

The Parks Plan identified City-wide park needs with consideration given to key guiding documents including the Strategic Plan and Official Plan, socio-demographic data, forecasted development, relevant trends, and the existing parks and outdoor recreation system. Opportunities for park enhancement, replacement or repurposing was also identified. Table 6 highlights park needs as identified in the 2013 Parks Plan, as well as land that has been secured since the Parks Plan was completed. Table 7 identifies outdoor recreation facility needs as per the Parks Plan together with facilities that have been constructed and replaced.

Table 6: Summary of Parkland Needs as per 2013 Parks Plan

Park Type	Park Needs (hectares)	Parks Secured Since 2013 (hectares)
Destination Parks	0.8	20.5*
Community Parks	18.0	5.4
Neighbourhood Parks (Local Parks and Parkettes)	34.0	2.8
Urban Squares & Linear Parks	11.2	1.7
Total	64.0	30.4
Parkland Secured Through Existing Development Approvals (e.g., North Leslie, West Gormley, Bernard KDA, etc.)		22.0

*Includes lands re-classified for active parkland uses through the Council approved David Dunlap Observatory Master Plan (2016).

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Table 7: Summary of Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs as per 2013 Parks Plan

Facility Type	New Facility Needs Identified	New Facilities Completed Since 2013	Planned Facilities Since 2013*
Soccer Fields	14	3	6
Ball Diamonds	5	2	0
Tennis Courts	12	2	13
Basketball Courts	13	1	0
Splash Pads	6	4	2
Playgrounds	1 per 400 metres of residential areas	18	27
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	1 per block	4	10
Community Gardens	As per Community Garden Policy	8	1
Skateboard/BMX Parks	2	1	1
Off-Leash Dog Areas	2 (one in north end and one south end)	2	1
Outdoor Skating Rinks	2 artificial skating rinks	0	2
Bocce Courts	Provide in response to public demand	0	0
Tobogganing Hills	Investigate this need	0	1
Ball Hockey/Multi-use Courts	Provide in response to public demand	5	7 (replacing basketball courts with multi-use courts)
Beach Volleyball	Provide in response to public demand	1	0
Table Tennis	Locate at Local Parks in urban areas, as appropriate	1	0
Dirt Bike Tracks	As per public demand and volunteers	0	0
Pickleball Courts	n/a	2	8

*Planned facilities identified in the Capital Plan or in park blocks in the process of being secured through draft approvals. Note that the number of planned facilities exclude any additional facilities identified through the update process.

4.2.4 2020 – 2040 Urban Forest Management Plan

The Urban Forest Management Plan will guide the responsible management of all trees and their growing environments in the City over a 20-year period. The Plan acknowledges the value an urban forest has on communities.

Vision Statement

“Richmond Hill and its urban forest grow and thrive together, each contributing to the health and vitality of the other”

Key initiatives that have relevance to the PRC Plans include (but are not limited to):

- **In partnership with York Region, assess canopy cover and woodland cover.** The City has already undertaken a potential plantable areas analysis, which identified low canopy coverage in Richmond Hill’s planned growth corridor. Opportunities exist to enhance the City’s tree canopy in proximity to growth through the Urban Open Space Master Plan.
- **Assess the urban forest for vulnerability to climate change.** Tree planting trials undertaken by the City have been ongoing to better understand the suitability of tree species in different areas of Richmond Hill in response to climate change, including which species may be at risk and to identify suitable alternatives.
- **Update the City-wide total canopy cover target to 30% in the Official Plan to protect existing canopy.** The Official Plan currently identifies a tree coverage target of 25%; however, the City’s most recent tree coverage study determined that the current canopy coverage is 29%. Updating the target to 30% would ensure that the City maintains its existing service level as Richmond Hill grows.
- **Create a Natural Heritage Strategy that will help set priorities for natural area management.** The City has a number of successful programs geared towards managing its natural areas (e.g., Community Stewardship Program). A Natural Heritage Strategy would better understand the condition of natural areas and establish priorities moving forward.

4.2.5 Transportation Master Plan Update

Richmond Hill is currently preparing an update to its Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to prepare for future growth and reflect on new priorities and emerging trends. The TMP update will guide the future of the City’s road, walking and cycling networks, including recreational trails to the year 2041. Strategic improvements and policy recommendations will be provided to achieve an economically and technically feasible multi-modal roads, active transportation and recreational trails networks that cater to the needs of all users.

Vision Statement:

“Roads, active transportation routes and trails are planned, designed, built and maintained to support a well-connected, sustainable, multi-modal and accessible network for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists. The transportation system will enable daily travel and plan for the mobility needs of future generations.”

The Urban Open Space Master Plan being undertaken as part of the PRC Plans will have a direct connection to the TMP. The Urban Open Space Master Plan will explore establishing a priority spine trail network to facilitate active transportation opportunities between destinations, thereby reducing the reliance on motorized transportation. The Urban Open Space Master Plan is also intended to serve as a link between the active transportation and recreational trail directions emerging from the TMP and the planning directions from the Parks Plan.

4.2.6 The Environment Strategy

Greening the Hill was the City's first Environment Strategy (2014) that builds upon on the successful initiatives and creates new opportunities to protect, enhance and restore the local environment. The Strategy is currently being updated to renew its commitment to manage Richmond Hill's natural environment.

4.2.7 Climate Change Framework

The City adopted a Climate Change Framework in 2020 to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to address climate change including setting priorities, recommending potential actions, identifying relevant legislation and obligations, and looks at how current actions are addressing climate change. This Framework recognizes that the City's Parks Plan helps to guide the development of outdoor recreation facilities and parks, which contribute to climate change mitigation.

The following actions have relevance to the PRC Plans:

- Apply a climate change lens to City park plans and reviews.
- Map priority areas for tree planting to reduce heat island effects and flooding, and sequester carbon.
- Ensure that new and renovated community centres are designed to act as emergency centres.
- Develop canopy cover targets for specific land uses (dependent on timing of Official Plan update).
- Develop standards for tree, shrub and plant species, location, spacing, soil volume, and protection after planting to ensure resiliency of City plantings.
- Develop a Natural Heritage Strategy to increase the quality, connectivity, integrity, and diversity of the natural heritage system.

4.2.8 Community Energy Emissions Plan

Richmond Hill's Community Energy Emissions Plan (CEEP) (2021) establishes that the City will achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. By achieving this target, Richmond Hill will further its position as a thriving, resilient and low-carbon community. The following priorities identified in the CEEP have relevance to the PRC Plans:

- Adopt a "Climate Lens" for City decision-making.
- Develop land-use based tree canopy targets for the City.
- Continue to restore Elgin Mills Greenway.
- Continue restoration and tree-planting in David Dunlap Observatory Park.
- Develop a Natural Heritage Strategy.

In addition to these priorities, the CEEP identifies that the City will plant approximately 300,000 trees in Richmond Hill by 2050 to reduce emissions by 8 kilotons.

4.2.9 Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Plan

The Richmond Hill Centre is an intensification area located around the intersection of Yonge Street and Highway 7. This Centre is the planned terminus of the Yonge Line subway extension, a bus terminal for Viva, York Regional Transit, and GO Transit, and the 407 Transitway inter-regional route. With the major investments occurring in public transit in and around Richmond Hill Centre, the City is developing a Secondary Plan to coordinate anticipated growth in this area. The Secondary Plan will shape the vision for the urban centre with a balance of residential and commercial uses where people can live, work, and play. It will also support the creation of public spaces, walkable streets, and transit-oriented development. A series of linear parks and pedestrian and cycling corridors are proposed to create a network of open space through the site.

Figure 5: Richmond Hill Centre Study Area



4.2.10 Yonge Street and 16th Avenue Key Development Area

The Yonge Street and 16th Avenue Key Development Area is envisioned to be a mixed-use urban centre that's positioned to be a transit and pedestrian-oriented destination. One of the key guiding principles is to improve connectivity by promoting a walkable and connected pedestrian and cycling environment, as well as to create an urban open space system that's connected to the existing greenway system. The preferred land use plan for the Key Development Area seeks to connect planned and existing parks and open spaces including German Mills Creek Greenway, David Dunlap Observatory Park and Spruce Park. Planned space for urban squares, linear parks, and community parks have also been identified.

Figure 6: Yonge Street and 16th Avenue Key Development Area Preferred Land Use and Design Scenario



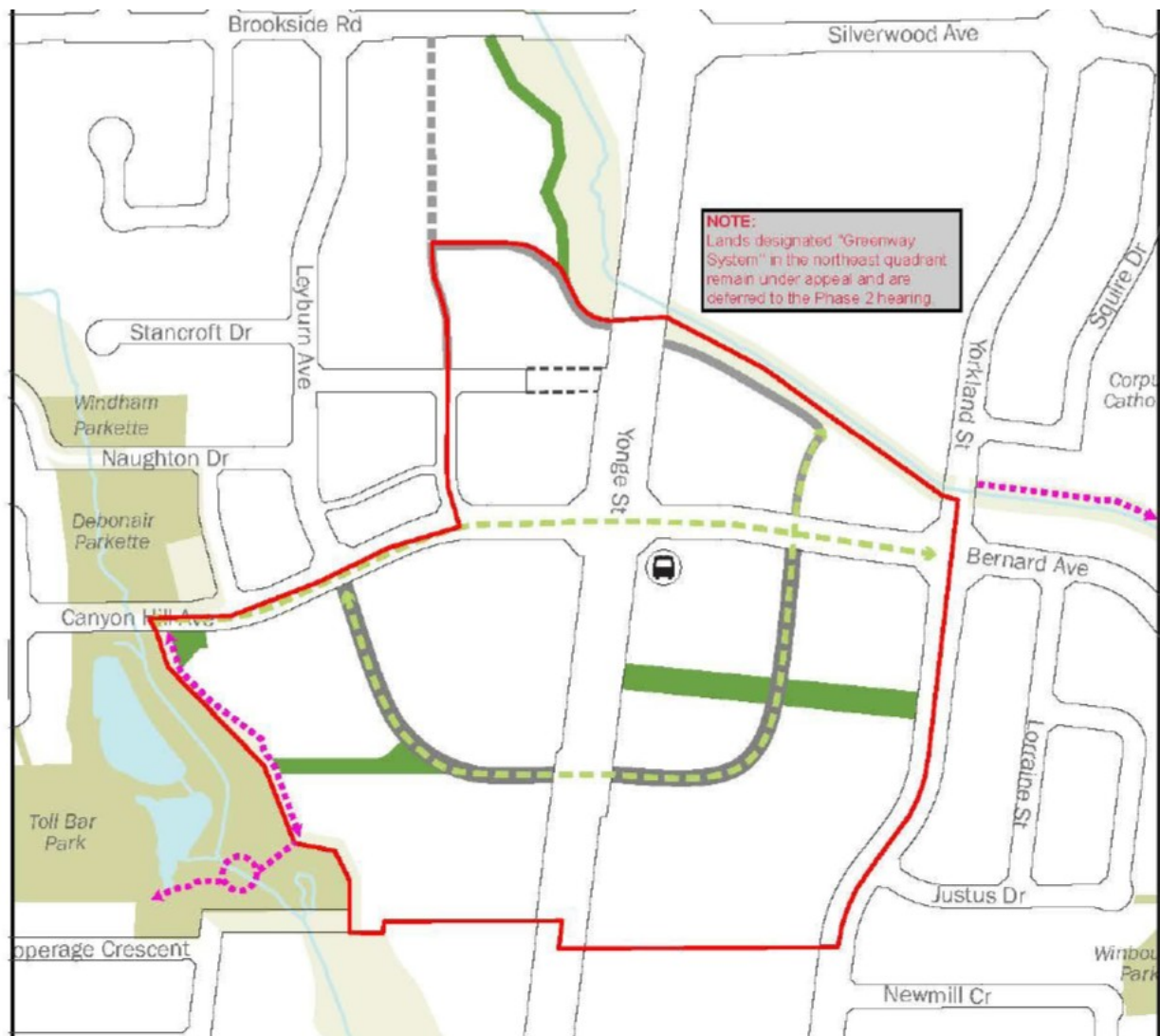
Preferred land use and design scenario map for the 16th KDA

4.2.11 Yonge Street and Bernard Avenue Key Development Area Secondary Plan

The Yonge and Bernard Key Development Area Secondary Plan was adopted in 2017; however, it is currently under appeal at the Ontario Land Tribunal. This Secondary Plan contains policies to guide the evolution of the Bernard Key Development Area (KDA) Secondary Plan area, which is located at the intersection of Yonge Street and Bernard Avenue. The policies guide and direct intensification of the Bernard KDA in a manner that will maintain and enhance the existing commercial and retail focus of the area by establishing a greater mix of uses through new development.

The parks and urban open space system within this area is intended to support mobility and connectivity while improving the public realm and enhancing a sense of place within the Bernard KDA. The linear parks envisioned east and west of Yonge Street will strengthen connectivity and improve passive recreation. Urban squares will contribute to the character of the Bernard KDA, and are planned in areas to complement and support places of greater activity.

Figure 7: Yonge Street and Bernard Avenue Key Development Area Except of Schedule 3 – Open Space (Approved LPAT Case No. PL180073)



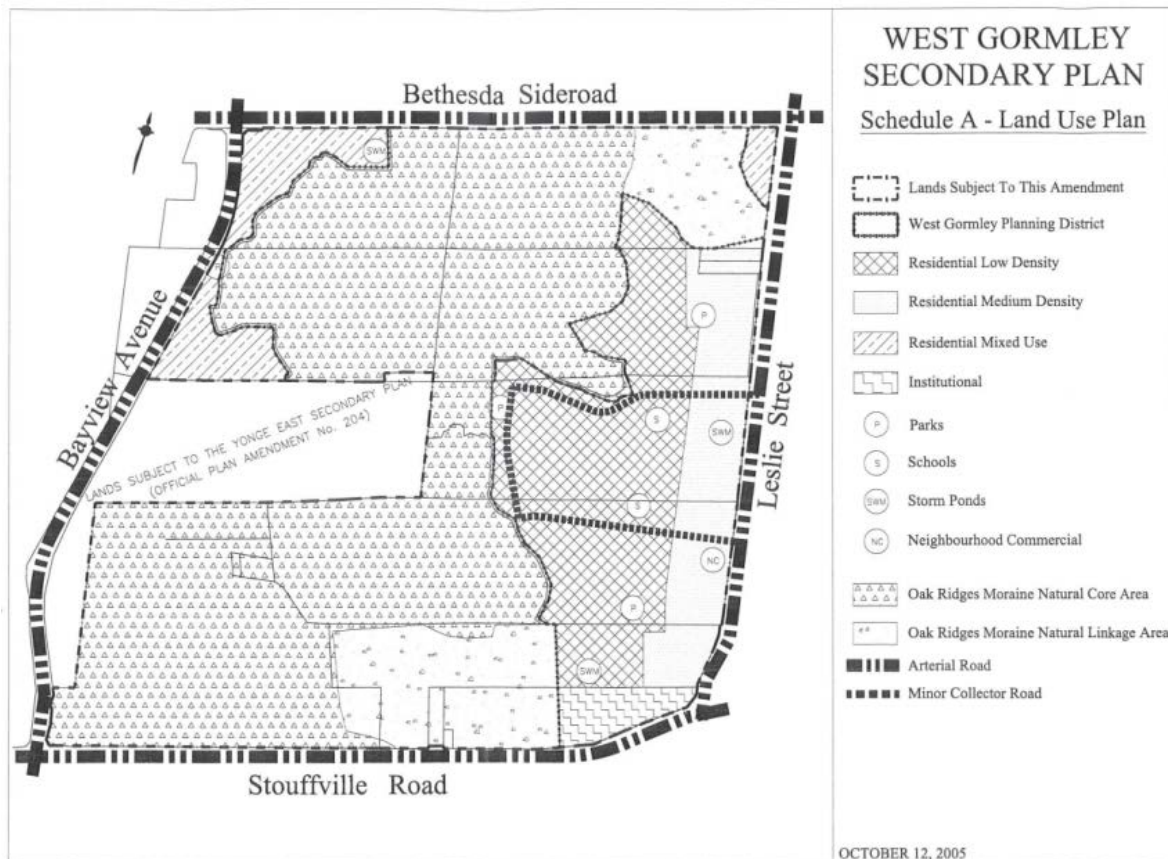
4.2.12 West Gormley Secondary Plan

The West Gormley Secondary Plan establishes the principles and policies for developing approximately 361 hectares of greenfield land bounded by Stouffville Road to the south, Bayview Avenue to the west, Bethesda Sideroad to the north, and Leslie Street to the east (Figure 8). The lands within the West Gormley Secondary Plan are designated “Settlement area”, “Natural Core Area”, and “Natural Linkage Area”, in accordance with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). The designated settlement area is intended to accommodate urban growth and permit a range of residential, commercial, employment and institutional uses.

Natural Core Areas are lands containing a high concentration of key natural heritage features, key hydrological features or landform conservation areas with low-intensity recreational uses and unserviced parks. Natural Linkage Areas are intended to provide open space connections between Natural Core Areas. It is intended that there will be an open space system linking the City’s parkland at Lake Wilcox, the Lake St. George Conservation Area, the ORM Natural Core and ORM Natural Linkage Areas and the Rouge Watershed together with the public park land dedicated within the settlement area of the West Gormley Secondary Plan.

This Secondary Plan requires parkland dedication at a rate of 1.0 hectare per 300 residential units proposed or 5% of net residential area or 2% of commercial lands. The parks system planned for the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area includes Local Parks (Neighbourhood Parks and Linear Parks), Urban Squares and pedestrian and bicycle paths and should be linked to the urban open space system. The majority of planned parkland identified in the Secondary Plan Area has been secured through draft approved plans of subdivision.

Figure 8: West Gormley Secondary Plan Schedule A – Land Use Plan



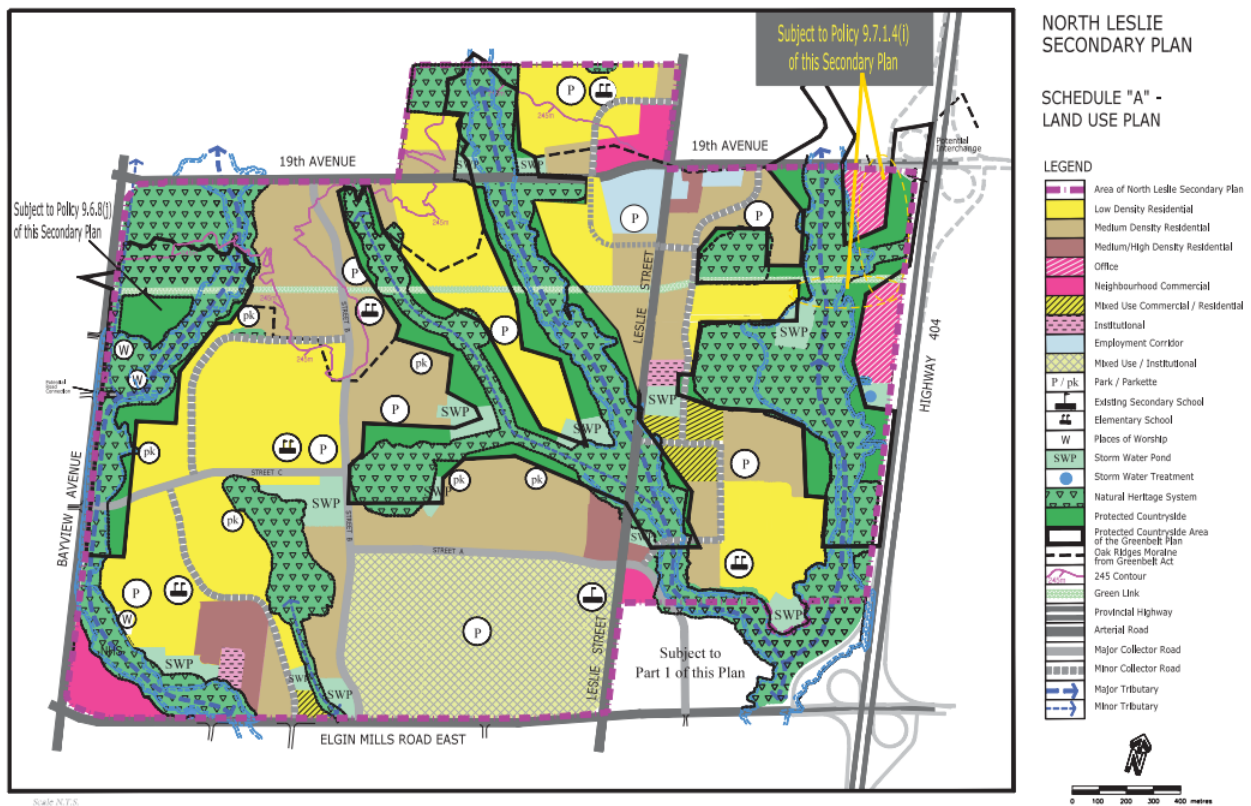
4.2.13 North Leslie Secondary Plan

The North Leslie Secondary Plan establishes principles and policies for the 620 hectares of greenfield land bounded by Elgin Mills Road East to the south, Bayview Avenue to the west, 19th Avenue to the north and Highway 404 to the east (Figure 9). The Secondary Plan identifies a variety of permitted land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, parks, open spaces and natural heritage areas.

The open space and parks system within the Secondary Plan Area shall be designed to include an interconnected network linking Richmond Green, neighbourhood parks, parkettes and tot lots together with other public uses including public schools and stormwater management ponds. The linkages between these facilities shall be implemented through the development of a natural trail system which includes the Trans Canada Pipeline as well as connections to the Rouge North Park to the south of the Secondary Plan Area. Pedestrian and bicycle linkages will also be developed in coordination with an overall parks and open space system for the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area.

Parkland within this Secondary Plan Area will include community parks, neighbourhood parks, parkettes and tot lots. The majority of planned parkland identified in the Secondary Plan area has been secured through draft approved plans of subdivision and/or the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement.

Figure 9: North Leslie Secondary Plan – Land Use Plan



4.3 Other Relevant Documents

4.3.1 Parks for All

Parks for All is **An Action Plan for Canada’s Parks Community**, published in 2017 through a collaboration between the Canadian Parks Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. This document aligns with and supports the Framework for Recreation in Canada, particularly the FRC’s third goal of “Connecting People and Nature”.

Parks for All focuses on how all Canadians benefit from healthy parks and natural areas and shares the community’s vision and goals for our parks. Parks for All includes a variety of perspectives that helped form a distinct set of responsibilities and practices moving forward. Parks for All is intended to unite the parks community through specific actions, priorities and strategic directions. The plan is guided by four strategic directions: **Collaborate, Connect, Conserve, and Lead**. Some specific actions that may be considered through the PRC Plans or subsequent implementation initiatives include:

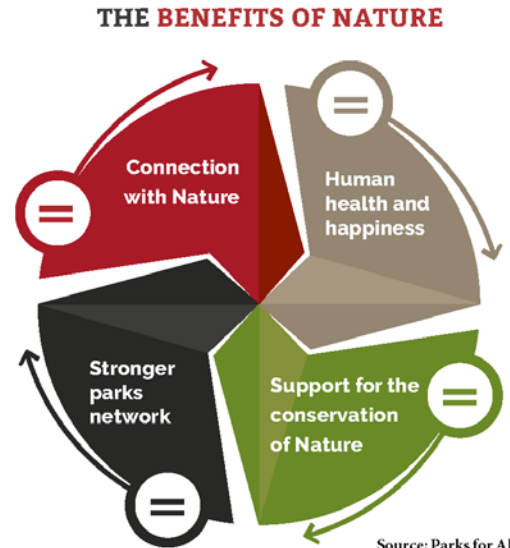


Table 8: Summary of Strategic Directions and Actions, Parks for All

Strategic Directions	Strategic Actions
Collaborate	Reach out to unconventional partners and organizations that could creatively contribute to the Parks for All vision.
Connect	Forge connections between community parks and less accessible wilderness parks by sharing information and coordinating activities and campaigns. Support the creation of new parks and the expansion of current parks to offer more opportunities for local connections.
Conserve	Share expertise and best practices among the parks community. Champion the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits provided by healthy ecosystems. Ensure these are accounted for in decision-making as contributing to stronger economies.
Lead	Invest time and money in employees for the development of high-performing, dynamic, and caring leaders.

4.3.2 TRCA Living City Policies for Planning and Development in the Watersheds of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

The 2014 Living City Policies for Planning and Development in the Watersheds of TRCA (LCP) outlines principles, goals, objectives and policies for the administration of TRCA's roles and responsibilities during the planning and development approvals process. The TRCA works collaboratively with its partners, including Richmond Hill, to create complete communities and foster a higher quality of life. In particular, the TRCA and the City work in coordination to provide a comprehensive and connected system of parks, urban open spaces and trails in Richmond Hill to optimize public access, while protecting and enhancing the natural system. Continuing to strengthen this relationship will be particularly important over the long-term and will involve regularly engaging the TRCA to seek comments regarding parks and recreational development and connections within regulated areas.

Policies for creating sustainable communities are identified in Section 6 of the LCP. The policies contained in this section have regard for a range of matters related including addressing climate change, energy, transportation, green buildings and infrastructure, near-urban agriculture, ecological design, culture heritage and environmental stewardship. The following are a selection of policies that have relevance to the parks and urban open space system:

- To take a precautionary and adaptive approach to watershed management that considers the compounding effect of climate change on current stresses, and to endeavour to protect and restore natural heritage and water resources for the communities within TRCA watersheds to make them as resilient as possible to climate change.
- To encourage municipalities to explore opportunities for integrating TRCA trail systems into their active transportation plans.
- To work with municipalities to protect, enhance and expand the urban forest for the benefits that trees contribute to neighbourhoods and the Natural System.
- To continue to work with municipalities, the building industry and other stakeholders to encourage ecological design through land use planning, site planning and urban design, as well as building design.
- To encourage the protection and enjoyment of cultural heritage resources, including built heritage, cultural heritage landscapes, and archaeological resources throughout our watersheds' urban and rural landscapes.
- To continue TRCA partnerships and programs in environmental education and stewardship that increase watershed awareness and encourage sustainable behaviours and stewardship among residents and neighbourhoods.
- To continue to provide environmental learning opportunities on TRCA lands in conjunction with school boards and other partners in education.

Section 7 of the LCP contains policies for environmental planning and apply to applications that the TRCA receives under the Planning Act and the environmental assessment process. Recreational use policies are outlined in Section 7.4.5 of the LCP and apply to both major and minor recreational uses. Major recreational uses are facilities that require large scale modification of terrain and/or vegetation, large buildings/structures and extensive parking areas such as golf courses, and serviced sports fields and campgrounds. Minor recreational uses require little to no modification of terrain or vegetation and few (if any) buildings or structures with limited parking such as non-motorized trails, and open spaces for passive activities and nature appreciation. Key policies under this section include the following:

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- To collaborate with municipal partners, private interests, community groups and the general public to realize a linked regional open space system, as identified in TRCA board-approved plans and strategies.
- To recommend that lands within the Natural System not be considered for municipal parkland dedication.
- When minor recreational uses or minor expansions to major recreational uses remove a natural feature, or part of a natural feature, that compensation be provided in accordance with the policies in the LCP.
- To adopt and implement best management practices and TRCA standards for recreational uses on TRCA-owned lands and to recommend their use on recreational lands owned by others, including landform conservation plans and minimizing of disturbed areas and conservation plans for water, etc.
- To recommend that all major and minor recreational use projects, where applicable, meet all of TRCA's stormwater management criteria as outlined in the LCP.

Policies related to the administration of TRCA's development, interference with wetlands and alterations to shorelines and watercourses regulation is contained in Section 8. Section 8.10 contains policies related to recreational uses within these areas. Key recreational use policies include the following:

- Development, interference and alterations associated with new major recreational uses will not be permitted within hazardous lands, watercourses, wetlands or natural features, areas and systems contributing to the conservation of land.
- That development, interference and alterations associated with minor modifications, environmentally compatible changes of use or configuration, and minor expansions to existing major recreational uses may be permitted within a regulated area where it has been demonstrated through a comprehensive environmental study or equivalent technical report to the satisfaction of the TRCA that considers avoiding wetlands and watercourses, maintaining topography where feasible to protect landforms and functions, maintaining existing risk levels associated with flooding and erosion, minimizing the area of construction disturbance, etc.

The development, interference and alterations associated with minor recreational uses may be permitted within regulated areas where it has been demonstrated through a comprehensive environmental study or equivalent technical report to the satisfaction of the TRCA that considers avoiding wetlands and watercourses.

4.3.3 Cross-jurisdictional BILD Position: Parkland Dedication (February 2021)

The Building Industry and Land Development Associated (BILD) represents over 1,300 member companies to provide "the voice of the home building, residential and non-residential land development and professional renovation industries in the greater Toronto Area". According to their website, their mission is to be:

- a strong, unified, proactive industry advocate
- go-to resource for government, stakeholder and members on industry issues
- a platform for industry learning and business relationships

In February 2021, BILD issued the Cross-jurisdictional BILD Position Paper: Parkland Dedication. The paper provided a timeline backgrounder on recent parkland dedication activities from February 2019 to December 2020, spoke to aligning goals such as "standardized core aspects of parkland processes and requirements across levels of government" such as passive and active parkland definitions and "Municipal parkland dedication policies should implement Provincial, Regional, and Municipal objectives, with a number of examples provided from the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan".

With respect to municipal Parks Plans, the paper indicated that parkland (existing and future acquisitions) should be able to be maintained by the municipality to ensure that requests were not for more parkland than could be

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managed. It states that municipalities should “consider early and large acquisitions” to keep land acquisition costs lower, and to meet the future needs of residents for parkland to accept off-site parkland dedication “especially in an urban infill context”.

The paper further describes that “Municipalities should not restrict parkland dedication to unencumbered land and accept new forms of parkland dedication”. In doing so, the paper suggests that active parkland include:

- Urban forms (including urban squares, plazas, pedestrian mews, pocket parks, POPS, etc.)
- Strata parks
- Trails
- Parks within the greenbelt

For passive parks, the paper suggests:

- Lands not otherwise developable such as trails and nature walks
- Amenity space in condominiums

Efficient use of land using “low impact development” (LID) techniques and “green development standards” with examples noted as “bioretention swales, underground greywater storage tanks, infiltration chambers or dry ponds”. It is noted in the paper that soccer fields and ball diamonds could be situated in dry detention ponds allowing their use “except in cases of a major storm event”.

In terms of methodology, the paper indicated that “Municipalities should adopt methods of parkland dedication costing such as fixed rates or percentage caps” and when using the alternative parkland dedication rate, a “multi-dimensional sliding scale” be utilized “whereby the greater the density the lower the rate”. Other methodologies included the “reduction in the amount of cash-in-lieu of parkland payments if sustainable features are included in redevelopment projects”, that “fees and any related formulas” be publicized, transparency in how municipalities “plan to use parkland reserve funds” and “not imposing parkland dedication requirements for adaptive re-use/renovation projects”.

The paper suggests improvements for dialogue and decision-making by allowing for more collaboration and dialogue opportunities between municipalities and applicants, opportunity to avoid appeals of parkland dedication decisions to be “transparent about the rationale”, and when deciding on cash-in-lieu over dedication, not being “prejudice (or discount) the collection of certain types of land over others”.

In collecting parkland, the paper indicates for members to plan site dedication appropriately, especially “in an urban or infill context”, municipalities be “upfront, through municipal reporting and through any pre-consultation discussions”. Also, that “municipalities should accept cash-in-lieu and/or off-site dedications” when “land-first” cannot be achieved.

Lastly, the paper provides a position on the timing of collections indicating that the “municipality should take land or CIL as a condition of approval” when approving a plan of subdivision or condominium instead of delaying to the building permit stage.

Input received from members of the development industry echoed messages presented in the Cross-jurisdictional BILD Position: Parkland Dedication Paper. It was recognized that securing large parcels of land for parkland within proximity to intensification areas is a challenge, highlighting the need to obtain these lands (purchased using cash-in-lieu of parkland funds) early in the development process to lower acquisition costs. It was suggested that these lands be identified in a more transparent manner. Opportunities to acquire surplus school sites was also identified as an option. Other discussion points centred around alternative parkland provision strategies to meet community needs such as privately owned public spaces and strata parks in areas of intensification. Designing multi-functional parks that accommodate infrastructure servicing to optimize the use of space was suggested, such as incorporating stormwater management facilities under parks and recreation spaces.

The development industry also suggested that the City should be open to accepting non-developable tableland as part of parkland dedication (e.g., certain portions of the Protected Countryside), or providing a partial credit, as it was suggested that these lands could support trail usage activities, which are highly desirable to the community. Other suggestions included establishing parkland agreements with landowners to collectively meet parkland goals and looking at innovative parkland dedication by-laws in other communities such as the Town of Newmarket.

4.4 Parkland Supply and Distribution

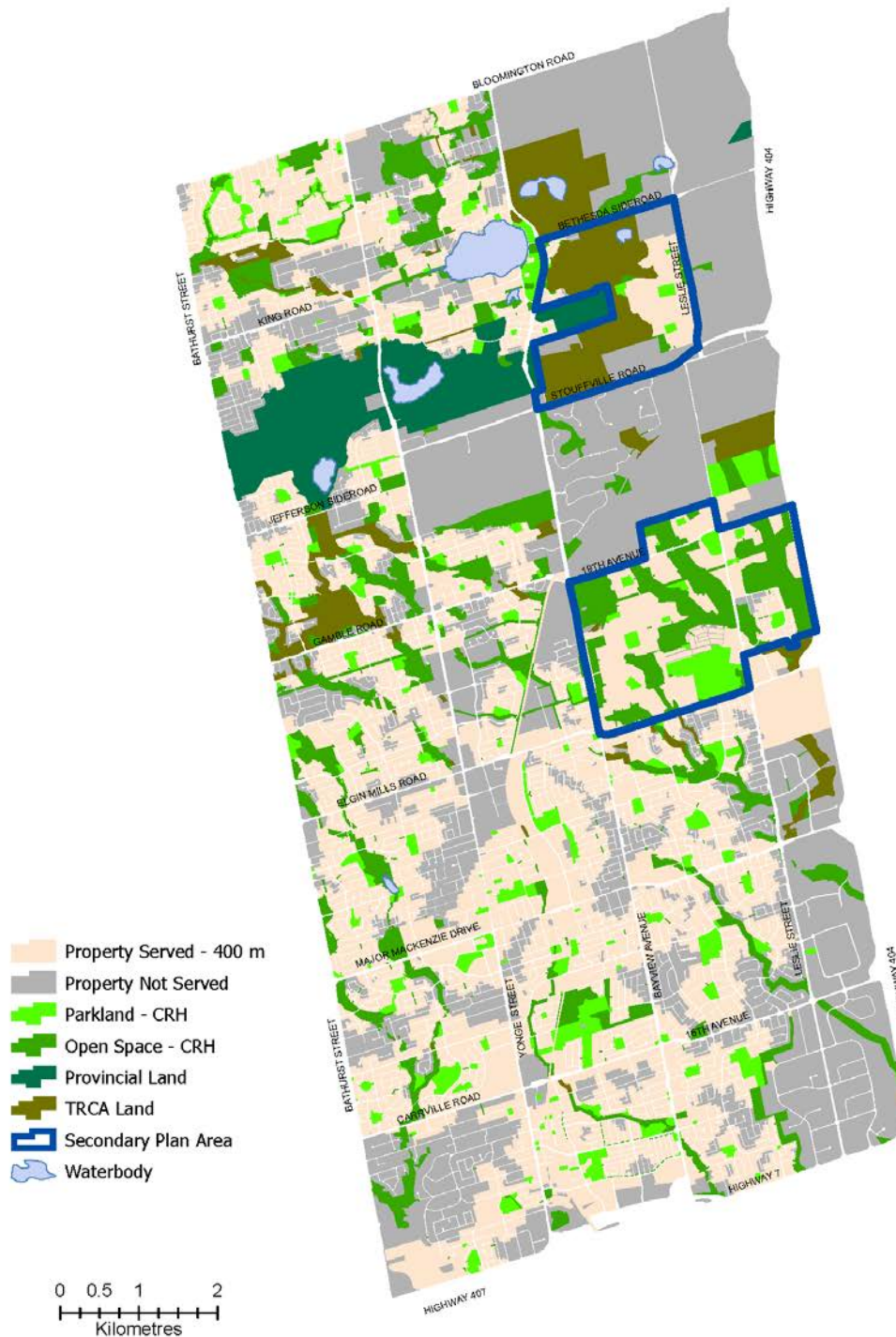
4.4.1 City-Owned Parkland

There are 358 hectares of active parkland in Richmond Hill (August 2021 data). **Active parkland** refers to municipally-owned lands that are suitable for development or the installation of built recreational amenities such as sports fields, playgrounds, sport courts, etc., and may be used for both organized and unorganized activities. The distribution of the City's parkland is illustrated in Figure 10, which shows that Richmond Hill has a strong distribution of parks. To maintain this distribution as Richmond Hill continues to grow, the City should continue to acquire parkland with the primary goal of providing access within a 400 metre walking distance (5 minute walk) of residences.

There are 1,629 hectares of Open Space, or Greenway, in Richmond Hill (August 2021 data). **Open space** contributes to the broader natural environment system and includes municipal and non-municipal land such as conservation areas. These spaces generally refer to sites with no to low development potential and are primarily designated for purposes such as provincially significant wetlands, environmentally significant and sensitive natural areas, watercourses and floodplains. Due to the lack of development potential of these lands, they can be used for passive recreation activities; however, some lands may not be suitable for public access as they are meant for preserving environmentally sensitive areas, pose user risks, are hazard lands, or serve stormwater management purposes. While open spaces and natural environmental lands are not a direct focus of the Parks Plan, they should be integrated with the active transportation and trail directions emerging from the Transportation Master Plan to inform an Urban Open Space Master Plan to improve connectivity and resident's opportunities to experience open spaces in proximity to the City's intensification and infill areas. Initial opportunities are illustrated in Figure 11.

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Figure 10: Parkland Distribution, Property Served by Walking Distance, 400 metres



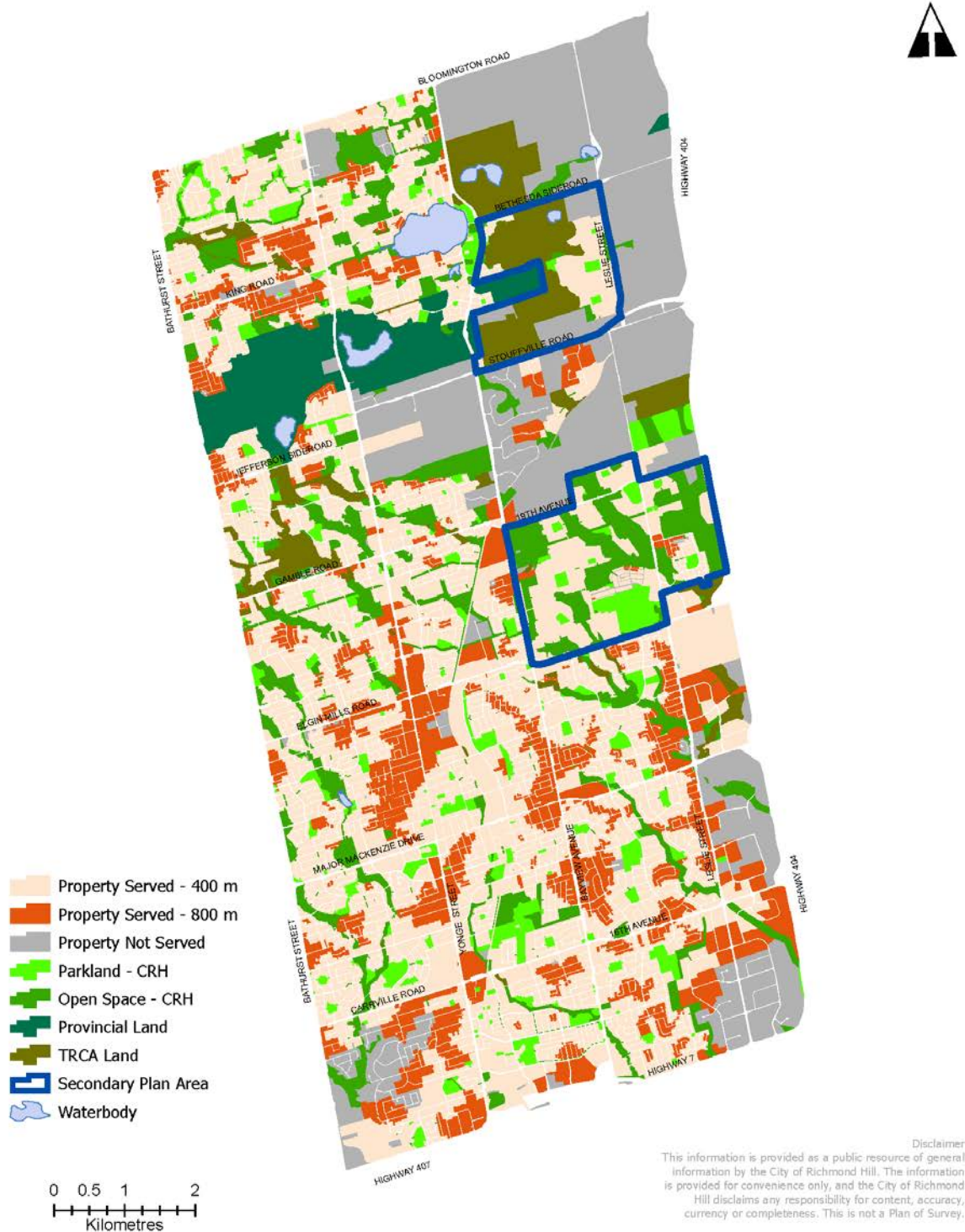
Walking Distance to Developed or Secured Parkland: 400m

Disclaimer
 This information is provided as a public resource of general information by the City of Richmond Hill. The information is provided for convenience only, and the City of Richmond Hill disclaims any responsibility for content, accuracy, currency or completeness. This is not a Plan of Survey.

Greenspace supply is accurate as of August 2021 and is subject to change. Residents in the **West Gormley Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be served with planned parks secured through draft approved plans of subdivision. Park needs in the **North Leslie Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be met as per the North Leslie West Community Master Parks Agreement.

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Figure 11: Parkland and Open Space Distribution, Property Served by Walking Distance, 400 to 800 metres



Walking Distance to Developed or Secured Parkland and Open Space: 400m & 800 m

Greenspace supply is accurate as of August 2021 and is subject to change. Residents in the **West Gormley Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be served with planned parks secured through draft approved plans of subdivision. Park needs in the **North Leslie Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be met as per the North Leslie West Community Master Parks Agreement.

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Major parkland gap areas exist along the growth centres and corridors and in the southwest and southeast areas of Richmond Hill. A large portion of these lands were not yet being considered for residential development at the time of the 2013 Parks Plan, and therefore not factored into the parkland service targets in 2013. Future parkland opportunities (complemented with linkages to existing parks within the area) should be explored to reconcile these gaps, particularly if future population growth is expected. Efforts should also be made to ensure that residents are within 400 metres of an active park to ensure that convenient access is achieved, particularly within or in proximity to centres and corridors along Yonge Street including Key Development Areas and Richmond Hill Centre.

Residents planned to be located within the **West Gormley Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be served with planned parks secured through draft approved plans of subdivision. Park needs in the **North Leslie Secondary Plan Area** are expected to be met as per the North Leslie West Community Master Parks Agreement and draft approved plans of subdivision. Efforts should be made to ensure that adequate capital funding is allocated towards the development of planned park sites.

Portions of these gap areas are anticipated to be addressed through future park development. Based on what is known at the time of writing, Richmond Hill is expecting to add nearly 42 hectares of active parkland through approved development plans by 2031, along with 225 hectares of open space. Of this amount, approximately 16 hectares will be located within the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area and 13 hectares will be located within centres and corridors where intensification is planned to occur. The remaining amount will be distributed throughout Richmond Hill including in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.

As the City is expected to accommodate a considerable portion of population growth through intensification along centres and corridors, existing parks within proximity to these areas will need to be examined and revitalized to optimize their use to address future needs. Strategic opportunities to revitalize existing parks will be required to ensure that they can support a higher intensity of use and appeal to a broad range of users. The City has begun to recognize this by initiating revitalization Master Plan and projects for a number of aging parks (e.g., David Hamilton Park, Carrville Park, Town Park, Bayview Hill Park, Mill Pond Park, Dove Park, Harding Park, Bridgeview Park). Future revitalization Master Plans/projects should be undertaken with consideration given to criteria that may include, but not limited to, the age of the park, age of facility components, park type, usage level, proximity to centres and corridors, and areas where parkland gaps exist. Section 4.7.1 also identifies potential parks that may have the potential for redevelopment that should be evaluated further.

4.4.2 Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) manages over 10,000 hectares of natural open spaces. The TRCA's mission is to "protect, conserve and restore natural resources and develop resilient communities through education, the application of science, community engagement, service excellence and collaboration with our partners." The TRCA seeks to enhance the general health and well-being of the watershed through the protection and restoration of the environment, while providing outdoor recreation and educational programming.

TRCA oversees more than 930 hectares of open space in Richmond Hill (including tableland woodlands and/or significant woodlands) and natural heritage features, portions of which are located within the Oak Ridges Moraine (Figure 12). Management of TRCA lands is a collaborative effort with the City of Richmond Hill being responsible for maintaining certain areas such as Mill Pond Park and the East Humber Trail.

The **Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve** is a natural destination within the Moraine. The majority of the Reserve is managed by TRCA although portions are owned by the provincial government. Located in the north end of Richmond Hill, this 600-plus hectare property is characterized by mature forests, wetlands, meadows, lakes, and a comprehensive recreational trail network. The conservation area draws numerous visitors a year, who enjoy passive activities such as hiking and mountain biking, cross-country skiing, bird watching, and general nature enjoyment. Attendance has been higher in recent years and more recently due to COVID-19 and the desire to be outdoors, which has put a strain on the ecological sensitivity of the area, as well as parking areas.

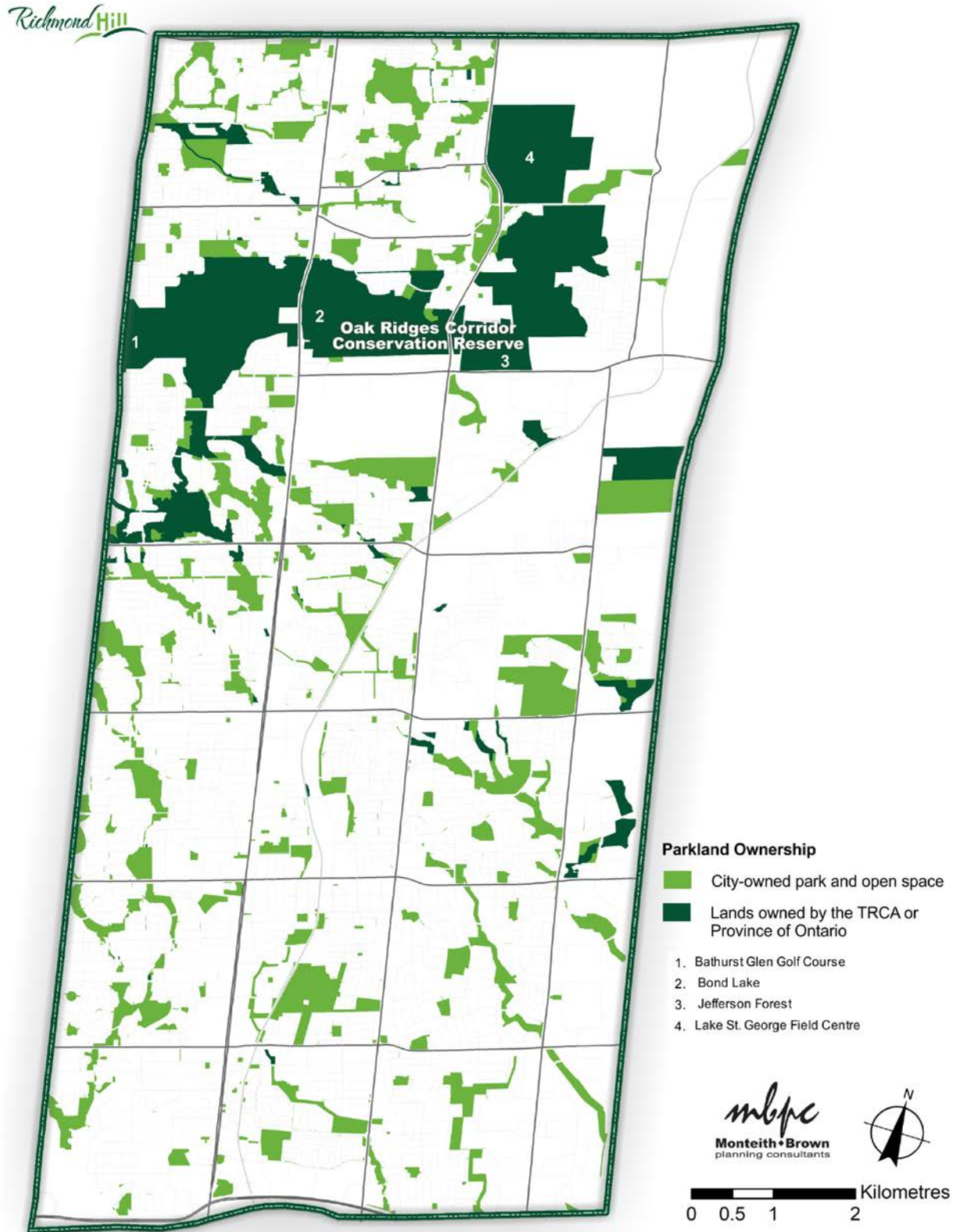
Notable outdoor spaces within the Oak Ridge Corridor Conservation Reserve include:

- The **Lake St. George Field Centre** is one of TRCA's educational facilities in the Toronto region, which is located in the northwest corner of Bayview Avenue and Bethesda Side Road in Richmond Hill. Nestled adjacent to Lake St. George, there are two facilities at this site that are used to provide various educational programs to schools and community groups.
- The **Bathurst Glen Golf Course** is an 18-hole golf course owned by the Province. This public golf course is located at the western side of the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve on the east side of Bathurst Street, north of Jefferson Side Road.
- **Bond Lake** is located on the east side of Yonge Street, north of Stouffville Road. This natural body of water provides a scenic outdoor location to enjoy an assortment of activities including bird watching, cross-country skiing, dog walking, hiking, and mountain biking. Bond Lake is one of the many kettle lakes in the areas and offers a network of recreational trails through the forest and wetland.
- **Jefferson Forest** is a heavily wooded forest that is recognized as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest as it has a number of important natural heritage features that require preservation and protection, particularly given that the forest is home to the Jefferson Salamander, which is an endangered species in Ontario. While permitted passive activities are limited to walking and hiking along trails, the TRCA is currently working with a regional community organization to establish designated mountain biking trails.

The provision of parks and outdoor space in Richmond Hill is a collaborative process between the City and TRCA, the latter of whom has historically worked closely with the City to provide advice about development applications, trail development opportunities to strengthen linkages with the broader active transportation network (particularly within the Oak Ridges area), and environmental and stewardship programs such as tree plantings, community events, and educational initiatives. It is logical to continue this relationship as the strength of the TRCA and the City in providing open space and programming ultimately benefits residents and users. In addition to building upon existing initiatives, other collaborative opportunities to connect the public with nature should be explored such as creating community learning hubs where users can access outdoor educational services and programs, providing adequate parking to meet the high demands being placed on existing parking areas, providing interpretive signage, improving trail connectivity in areas of intensification, and more.

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Figure 12: Municipal and Non-Municipal Parkland, City of Richmond Hill



Preliminary Findings - Parkland Supply and Distribution

3. The acquisition and/or development of future parkland should consider key gap areas where residents reside or where future population growth is expected including along the centres and corridors and the southeast and southwest corner of Richmond Hill.
4. Bolster the supply of parkland within Key Development Areas and Richmond Hill Centre to respond to planned intensification.
5. Strengthen access to parkland with the goal of ensuring that all residents are located within 400 metres of a park.
6. Through the capital budget process, ensure that adequate funding is allocated towards the development of planned parks, particularly those located in the centres and corridors and within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas.
7. Work cross-divisionally to ensure a coordinated approach to strengthening connections between the parkland system and the trail system in the emerging Transportation Master Plan. Emphasis should be given to the Urban Open Space Master Plan, particularly as it relates to better utilizing existing parks, new park opportunities, linkages to existing trails, and streetscape and canopy enhancements.
8. Identify and evaluate existing parks suitable for revitalization to respond to population growth expected within Richmond Hill's centres and corridors. Consideration should be given to criteria including, but not limited to the age of the park, age of facility components, park type, usage level, proximity to centres and corridors, areas where parkland gaps exist, and ability to achieve the City's climate change goals.
9. Continue to build upon current initiatives with the TRCA and evaluate new opportunities to connect the public with nature. Potential collaborative opportunities to connect the public with nature should be explored including (but not limited to) creating community learning hubs where users can access outdoor educational services and programs, providing adequate parking to meet the high demands being placed on existing parking areas, providing interpretive signage, improving trail connectivity in areas of intensification, and more.

4.5 Parkland Service Level

Parkland supply levels across the GTA, including within benchmark municipalities, are dictated by factors such as historical parkland supplies, urban form and population density, extent of natural heritage systems, and other variables. Since the mid-twentieth century, municipalities have targeted acquiring active parkland and open space at a ratio of 4.0 hectares per 1,000 persons, as a rule of thumb. More recently, GTA municipalities have placed a strong emphasis on acquiring active parkland given their ability to accommodate a variety of parks and outdoor recreation uses, which is reflected in parkland classification systems contained in Official Plans and Master Plans. Thus, recent parkland targets established by GTA municipalities are applicable to active parkland only.

Based on the existing supply of City-owned active parkland and the 2021 population estimate of 214,000 persons, **Richmond Hill is currently providing a service level of 1.7 hectares per 1,000 residents**, which is a slight improvement since the 2013 Parks Plan was completed, which identified a service level of 1.6 hectares per 1,000 residents. Richmond Hill is also at or exceeding the service levels established in the 2013 Parks Plan for Destination and Community Parks, but falling short for Neighbourhood Parks and Linear Parks and Urban Squares (Table 9).

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Table 9: Summary of Park Service Level by Active Park Type, City of Richmond Hill

Park Type	Supply (hectares)	Current Service Level (ha per 1,000 pop.)	2013 Parks Plan Target (ha per 1,000 pop.)
Destination Parks	106.3	0.5	0.4
Community Parks	111.3	0.5	0.5
Neighbourhood Parks	120.1	0.56	0.63
Linear Parks and Urban Squares	20.4	0.1	0.12
Total	358.1*	1.7	1.6

Parkland Inventory source: City of Richmond Hill GIS Data. *Parkland supply is accurate as of August 2021 and is subject to change.

Notes: Neighbourhood parks include local parks and parkettes. Current service level is based on a current 2021 population estimate of 214,000 residents.

4.5.1 Parkland Service Levels in Benchmark Municipalities

Richmond Hill's current service level compares favourably to benchmark municipalities, which have established parkland service targets that range between 1.6 hectares of active parkland per 1,000 residents (Brampton) to 2.2 hectares per 1,000 residents (Oakville). Actual parkland service levels in benchmark municipalities are generally lower across the board as these communities have been challenged with meeting their targets due to a variety of factors, but most notably the fact that parkland dedication has not kept pace with population growth. The prevalence of smaller development parcels has resulted in smaller parks based on the application of a 5% parkland dedication rate and development pressures within intensification areas yield limited opportunities for meaningful parkland acquisition (particularly large parcels). Acquiring land for park purposes has also been a challenge with reduced cash-in-lieu contributions due to changes to the *Planning Act*, rising land costs, and growing land scarcity.

Table 10: Service Level Comparison, Recommended Parkland Target

Municipality	Hectares per 1,000 Residents	Square Metres per Person
Brampton	1.6	16
Richmond Hill	1.6	16
Markham	1.7	17
Vaughan	2.0	20
Oakville	2.2	22
Burlington	-	-
Average	1.8	18

City of Toronto

The City of Toronto takes a unique approach to establishing its parkland service level which has been reviewed. Toronto's area per person ratio may be more easily interpreted by the general public compared to a ratio that is based on hectares per 1,000 residents. Toronto's 2019 Parkland Strategy reported a city-wide average parkland service level of 28 square metres per person (which is equivalent to 2.8 hectares per 1,000 residents), which is higher compared to the parkland service targets set by benchmark municipalities (service targets in benchmark municipalities include active parkland only, although some parks may include naturalized space). This was achievable due to the fact that Toronto's supply calculation included parks within ravine lands, which make up approximately 69% of all parkland in that city. Excluding ravine lands would decrease Toronto's parkland service level to 8.7 square metres per person or 0.87 hectares per 1,000 residents. While Toronto does not have a specified parkland service target, they have identified priority areas for parkland acquisition based on the following factors:

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1. Areas with low parkland provision levels (areas with less than 12 square metres of parkland per person);
2. Low park supply (less than 1.5 hectares of parkland within a 500 metre walking distance);
3. Impact of growth (areas projected to have over 5,000 residents per hectare by 2033); and
4. Low-income residents (areas with 25% or more residents experiencing low-income).

4.5.2 Considerations for Richmond Hill

With Richmond Hill expecting to add approximately 41 hectares of new active parkland through residential development over the next 10 years, the future parkland service level can be expected to decline to 1.6 hectares per 1,000 residents by the end of the planning period. This lower rate reflects the same challenges that are being experienced by other benchmark municipalities where parkland dedication (and acquisition) has not kept pace with population growth. Further evidence that parkland service levels are not keeping pace with development is found through a review of current and future parkland supplies by growth area. Table 11 illustrates anticipated reductions in parkland service levels in the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plans Areas, however, these areas will continue to provide a higher parkland service level relative to other areas of the City. Modest service levels increases are expected in areas of intensification along Yonge Street and Richmond Hill Centre.

Table 11: Existing and Future Parkland Service Levels by Growth Area

	2021			2031		
	Existing Park Supply (ha)	Population Estimate	Service Level (ha per 1,000)	Future Park Supply (ha)	Population Estimate	Service Level (ha per 1,000)
Total	358.3	214,000	1.7	400.0	253,000	1.6
Downtown Local Centre	3.6	14,600	0.2	3.6	17,700	0.2
North Leslie Secondary Plan Area	45.7	1,300	35.2	61.7	16,400	3.8
North Yonge Corridor	0.2	30,900	0.01	0.4	36,100	0.01
Richmond Hill Centre	0.8	11,800	0.1	5.2	14,000	0.4
West Gormley Secondary Plan Area	1.2	500	2.4	7.2	5,100	1.4
Yonge and 16th Key Development Area	0.4	17,600	0.02	6.9	21,200	0.3
Yonge and Bernard Key Development Area	0.1	7,400	0.01	0.8	8,000	0.1
Other Established Areas of Richmond Hill	306.3	129,700	2.4	314.2	134,700	2.3

Population Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. Updated Population and Employment Growth Forecast by Traffic Zone. 2021. The City's forecast is based on the best available information at the time of its preparation, taking into consideration the City's urban structure and Official Plan policy context, demographic trends, market demand, intensification policy targets, active development applications, and the supply of residential development in the City.

With the City-wide parkland service level anticipated to decline marginally over time, emphasis should continue to be placed on conveying active parkland to maximize the amount of usable park space that is suitable for a broad range of active and passive uses. New park development can be expected to be predominantly oriented to neighbourhood park, parkette, linear park and urban square acquisitions. Although one Community Park is planned for the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Area, it will be challenging for Richmond Hill to acquire additional land for Destination Parks and Community Parks as there are limited opportunities remaining in the city. Future Destination Parks and Community Parks would likely have to be purchased, negotiated and/or partially funded through cash-in-lieu of parkland reserves or through other tools available to the City.

Preliminary Findings – Parkland Service Level

10. With Richmond Hill’s parkland service level per 1,000 population expected to decrease over time, emphasis should continue to be placed on the acquisition of active parkland to maximize the amount of usable space that is suitable for a variety of active and passive uses. The parkland service level should recognize that parkland conveyances will primarily be neighbourhood and sub-neighbourhood level parks. The City will need to consider alternative strategies to secure high order parks or expand existing parks using parkland reserves or other tools available to the City.
-

4.6 Strengthening Park Experiences

While Richmond Hill provides a high-quality parks system that can be accessed by residents across the City, it is recognized that it will be difficult for the parkland service level to keep pace with growth given the difficulty of acquiring large blocks of parkland along the growth corridor. Given the future challenges of securing and acquiring parkland, there is a need to consider alternative approaches to providing park space. The City’s Official Plan identifies that parkland dedication practices can be supplemented by land purchases or expropriation, land exchanges, partnerships, agreements with public/quasi-public agencies, and land donations. There is also a need to evaluate how existing parks can be better positioned to accommodate intensified uses and respond to the diverse needs of a growing population. This section explores some of these themes and identifies strategies to consider to augment parkland conveyance tools as permitted by the *Planning Act*.

4.6.1 Parks within Urban Areas

The continued intensification of Richmond Hill’s centres and corridors will drive the demand for high quality parks and outdoor amenities within urban areas. Between the 1980s and 1990s, sports facilities and other major venues were solutions for boosting local economic development, urban renewal, and revitalization. Today, the demand for parks and public spaces – such as urban squares, urban plazas and linear parks – within highly urbanized areas has become increasingly popular, particularly in areas where the availability of traditional parkland, open spaces, and amenities within walkable distance are limited. Urban spaces provide a wealth of outdoor opportunities and variety of uses, but park projects also can stimulate economic development and urban regeneration, while providing a space for leisure activities, social gatherings and outdoor enjoyment. Compared to major facilities, parks tend to be more affordable solutions that have been found to support highly populated, livable, urban areas.¹⁹

With population growth expected to occur within Richmond Hill’s centres and corridors, the outdoor space needs will primarily be met through the provision of urban parks. Urban parks are dynamic and function as a focal point to facilitate passive recreational opportunities or play a supporting role in complimenting surrounding land uses by providing places for people to meet, gather, and socialize. Community groups and other stakeholders often desire public spaces in urban settings to hold community programs and special events within the downtown or other well-established areas. Integrating parks and open spaces in these neighbourhoods have become a key component in providing livable urban spaces for a community to come together, while also softening the streetscape with green features.

High quality urban spaces generate the greatest demand for socialization and passive unscheduled activities; therefore, while providing the appropriate spaces to the community is important so is designing and maintaining them to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of uses. Public spaces should be inviting, accessible, bright, safe, and designed on a human scale. Key considerations in planning of urban spaces include location, microclimate, surrounding land uses, and proximity to key destinations and amenities. Other factors such as accessibility, street views, seating, and vegetation contribute to the design of these spaces.

¹⁹ Project for Public Spaces. 2010. The Re-Emergence of Public Squares.

While the provision of urban parks is beneficial to improving the quality of life and sense of place, they can be a challenge for municipalities to provide. For example, with rising land values, acquiring land within centres and corridors may not be financially viable and as a part of development, proponents may offer off-site dedications that may not serve the needs of residents within the areas of intensification. Year-round maintenance may also pose a challenge, particularly during the winter season where residents expect regular snow clearing and winter activities and events.

The challenges associated with providing parks within urban areas highlights the need to ensure that linkages exist to connect residents to existing and planned parks and trails in Richmond Hill, which will be explored further through the City's Urban Open Space Master Plan. Further emphasis also needs to be placed on creating a public realm that enhances pedestrian connections to the outdoors through streetscape and canopy enhancements.

4.6.2 Privately Owned Public Space

As municipalities continue to grow inwards and upwards, it has become more challenging to assemble parkland in areas of intensification due to land scarcity, land cost, and changes to the Ontario Planning Act. Progressive municipalities are working with like-minded private sector interests, particularly those partners that see the benefits of parkland for their individual development and the community as a whole to create Privately Owned Public Space (POPS) such as a plaza or greenspace surrounding buildings or pedestrian walkways. POPS are privately owned and maintained outdoor spaces that are universally accessible and open to the public.

POPS exist in many densely populated cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and New York and can be secured through a variety of means. In Toronto, it has been common practice to establish POPS through Section 37 of the Planning Act and through Site Plan Agreements. The City of Vancouver established a Community Amenity Contribution as part of their rezoning process whereby a developer is incentivized to offer publicly accessible space as part of a rezoning by-law. The City of New York utilizes incentive zoning where developers are granted additional floor area in exchange for publicly accessible space.²⁰ Richmond Hill recognizes that POPS will play a key role in alleviating pressure for public space within areas of intensification as Section 3.4.4.16 of the City's Official Plan identifies that "private urban squares created through the development process shall be encouraged to provide public access."

4.6.3 Revitalization and Renewal of Existing Parkland

The park experience is tied to design, intended function, and the quality of facilities/amenities found within it. These factors are often influenced by the area of original construction. A park built decades prior can impart positive feelings of history, sentiment, and pride; however, older parks may also be in need of rejuvenation if deterioration is apparent and/or if the intended functions no longer respond to modern interests or the demographics of the community surrounding the park.

Parkland revitalization is thus an important part of attracting continued use over time. Rejuvenation efforts can be major in scale, ranging from complete park redevelopments to renewal of major amenities or adding new facilities where space permits. Rejuvenation can also take more basic or minor forms in response to specific needs or limited budgets. Often, redevelopment of a park is initiated because of:

- Population growth pressures or an evolution that has occurred in demographics of surrounding areas (e.g., intensification or infill developments, a greater proportion of adults 55+ and fewer children living around a park compared to the past, etc.);
- Volunteer initiatives (e.g., fundraising or service club contributions); and/or
- Multiple park-based facilities or amenities approaching the end of their lifecycle.

²⁰ Ricker, C. 2016. An exploration into the creation of 'privately owned publicly accessible spaces' in Toronto, Ontario. Retrieved from <https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/>

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Richmond Hill has been proactive when it comes to assessing how to improve the parks system in established neighbourhoods. There are presently a number of park redevelopment and revitalization projects that are ongoing, which demonstrates that the City is cognisant of the importance that parkland plays in relation to community well-being, while also anticipating the future needs of new populations that may be relying on parks in the future. Such projects include the redevelopment and revitalization of Town Park, Bayview Hill Park, David Dunlap Observatory, Mill Pond Park and more.

During the planning period, Richmond Hill will need to continue to consider strategic parks that may benefit from redevelopment and revitalization, particularly in areas where intensification is expected. As the City moves forward with re-imagining key parks that may result in a higher intensity of use, there will be a need to consider the operational requirements to ensure that levels of service and upkeep continue to be met. This may have an impact on operational budgets and staffing and may require the City to implement strategies to assist with maintenance such as leveraging volunteers and community organizations, working with condominium boards or the private sector, or other innovative management solutions.

As Richmond Hill continues to accommodate population growth through intensification, it may be necessary for the City to undertake a park utilization study to fully understand which existing parks are being used by residents living along the intensification corridors and how they may be redeveloped and revitalized to meet their needs. The redevelopment and revitalization of projects to date has been primarily based on the age of the park; however, this usage study may determine that other criteria should be considered such as the intensity and evolution of park use and proximity to intensification areas. The usage study may also be a valuable tool to inform the planning and design of future parks, particularly those serving higher growth areas.

4.6.4 Connecting People with Parks

The City's Official Plan identifies that Richmond Hill's parks and urban open space system will be interconnected to ensure that all residents are located within walking distance to the parks system. Emphasis needs to be placed on linking existing and future parks together, which can be achieved through the development of linear parks, as well as establishing a comprehensive network of active transportation routes that support walking and non-vehicular movement (supplemented by vehicular transportation and public transit options).

Parkland opportunities within Richmond Hill's intensification areas along Yonge Street, as well as in existing neighbourhoods, are expected to be limited, particularly with respect to Destination Parks and Community Parks. This highlights the importance of strengthening connections to nearby park spaces within proximity to these high growth areas and will need to be an important consideration for the City as its Transportation Master Plan is updated (currently underway). As parkland linkages are evaluated, consideration should be given to other guiding documents such as the TRCA Trails Strategy to maximize connectivity between municipal and non-municipal parks and open spaces.

4.6.5 Celebrating Inclusion through Parks

Richmond Hill's diverse socio-economic and multi-cultural profile is one of Richmond Hill's core attributes. Inclusion is not only embraced in Richmond Hill, it is celebrated. The parks system presents an excellent opportunity to exemplify the City's commitment to providing opportunities for residents of many backgrounds to experience the outdoors.

There are several examples demonstrating Richmond Hill's commitment to providing safe and tolerant spaces for all residents to feel welcome and comfortable within the parks system. Guided by the City's 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Richmond Hill has recently revitalized parks such as Kings College Park and Bradstock Park, which includes removing playground barriers and incorporating accessible design standards (e.g., paved pathways). Consideration is also given to planning and designing parks that provide multi-generational experiences that benefit all ages. For example, through the City's Town Park Master Plan, there was a public desire to create a multi-generational park for all residents, including seniors. Recognizing that the City is also in the process of preparing an age-friendly strategy, opportunities exist to further emphasize the need to make Richmond Hill's

parks more welcoming of seniors such as through the provision of shade and seating, casual meeting spaces to support gatherings and socialization, outdoor fitness equipment, and other initiatives.

From a program and service perspective, Richmond Hill recognizes the broad interest of the City's culturally diverse population and provides activities that respond to different segments of the population. The City also works collaboratively with community organizations and volunteers to host community cultural events throughout the year, which are discussed further in Section 6.0. Additionally, the City provides a financial assistance program for eligible families that may receive up to \$200 per year towards recreation and cultural programs and memberships.

4.6.6 Building Resiliency to Climate Change

Intricately linked to sustainability and environmental goals are efforts to promote urban design features that integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation. Richmond Hill has been involved in a variety of climate change and sustainability initiatives at the municipal level through its Climate Change Framework and other initiatives including its Corporate Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan, Clean Air Council, and programs related to tree planting and natural area stewardship, valleyland restoration, community gardening and pollinators.

Parks are being designed and constructed with sustainability in mind as they play an important role in creating sustainable urban environments, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, and adapting to climate change impacts. The Environment Strategy is Richmond Hill's guiding document to creating a sustainable community. Recent accomplishments included trail development projects to encourage active transportation, restoration of the Richvale Greenway, and park development projects to encourage biodiversity and pollinators. Park improvement projects also incorporated naturalization efforts and the use of recycled building materials and environmentally friendly finishes, as well as the use of LED lighting.

The provision of stormwater management ponds are also important green infrastructure features that are important for controlling soil erosion and flooding. The provision of stormwater management ponds, however, should not hinder the primary function of public park spaces, which is to provide residents with public space for active and passive recreational activities, gatherings and outdoor enjoyment. From a parks planning perspective, stormwater management ponds should not be included as part of land dedicated to municipalities for park purposes to preserve appropriate park functions. This is reinforced through Richmond Hill's parkland dedication by-law and is a best practice in many municipalities.

From the perspective of climate change mitigation, parks are integral to a city's urban forest canopy and often represent the highest concentration of trees in an urban area. Trees, plants, soil sequester and store carbon (and other pollutants).²¹ This helps not only reduce greenhouse gases, but also cleans the air and improves air quality in urban environments. Parks also support ecosystem-based climate change adaptation in the following ways:

- **Higher temperatures and urban heat island effect** - Parks have been called the "first and best line of defense" against local climate changes and urban heat island effect through the positive temperature effects of shading and evapotranspiration.²² Parks and open spaces in Richmond Hill are an important source of cooling to counteract the effects of both increasing temperatures and artificially higher temperatures caused by the urban heat island effect (wind passing through parks can also cool neighbouring areas). Shading provided by tree canopies provides a significant defense against ultraviolet radiation.²³
- **Extreme weather events and increased precipitation intensity** - Parks help urban environments manage intense weather events when watersheds and rainwater management systems are functioning optimally and able to absorb and direct intense rainfall and snowmelt. Restoring features such as meadows,

²¹ MacDonald, J. A. (n.d.). How Cities Use Parks for Climate Change Management (City Parks Forum Briefing Papers #11).

²² Ibid. MacDonald, J. A. (n.d.).

²³ Nowak, D. J., & Heisler, G. M. 2010. Air Quality Effects of Urban Trees and Parks (Research Series).

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wetlands, forests, stormwater ponds, and other naturalized areas can help create a more resilient ecosystem that withstands the effects of extreme weather events and buffers adjacent communities from these impacts. Forested areas can also provide protection against wind during storms.

Given the importance of sustainability and climate change mitigation and the City's commitment to addressing it, staff should align their respective planning, operations and design and construction efforts to complement the City's Climate Change Framework.

4.6.7 Park Comfort and Design

Richmond Hill's parks contain features that are indicative of evolving interests (e.g., splash pad, outdoor fitness equipment, etc.). Strategic design and investment to parks that enhance functionality, unstructured use, comfort, and accessibility can attract greater levels of use within parks for informal gatherings, picnics, and social gatherings, highlighting the importance of creating inviting public spaces.

Comfort amenities benefit everyone and can position Richmond Hill's parks system to be more inviting for every day users. Best practices suggest that well-designed parks that invoke a feeling of comfort tend to be used frequently. Trends indicate that there is a growing desire for comfort amenities such as paved pathways, seating, shade, outdoor fitness stations, and more. Washrooms also tend to be a common request; however this type of amenity is best provided within higher order parks that can support this level of investment. Where possible, park users should be encouraged to utilize washrooms in indoor municipal facilities.

Shade in parks to protect users from the elements is a common request. This can be provided through shade structures or tree plantings, although both options have their advantages and disadvantages. Shade shelters can be costly due to the initial construction costs and maintenance, while shade from trees is not realized until they have reached a mature state. Trees offer the added benefit of increasing Richmond Hill's canopy cover and supports green initiatives such as enhancing natural habitats, purifying air, and lowering temperatures in the surrounding area.

Signage is an essential park amenity that plays an important role in establishing a visual identity and communicating vital information. Municipal signage is also important to promote awareness of public spaces and to minimize confusion regarding access. The City's 2020 Signage Manual provides direction and guidance on creating signage that promotes the City's brand, establishes consistency in design, and offers wayfinding.

4.6.8 Collaboration with School Boards

To help bolster public access to open space, school boards can play an important role in bolstering public access to greenspaces. School boards operating in higher density communities share similar land-acquisition challenges as their municipal counterparts which is leading to greater collaboration among these parties across the GTA. Richmond Hill has a strong history of collaborating with school boards to share indoor and outdoor space. Section 3.4.4.17 of the City's Official Plan states that "The Town in co-operation with the School Boards shall ensure that parks are located adjacent to school sites, wherever possible." Examples include Morgan Boyle Park, which is adjacent to Langstaff Secondary School and Helmkey Park next to Bayview Hill Elementary School. The City also has a shared use agreement at the Langstaff Community Centre with York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board.

As future population growth continues, opportunities to continue working together will be paramount. At a minimum, consideration should be given to:

- Understanding if/when surplus schools are identified where the City may benefit from purchasing them to meet indoor and/or outdoor parks and/or open space needs.
- Joint land use planning activities, particularly when there is an opportunity to situate parkland adjacent to a school block with the intent of maximizing the amount of publicly accessible greenspace;

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- Anticipating that combined activity in joint use areas will be more intensive than in stand-alone parks and designing amenities and budgeting maintenance with this in mind; and
- Explore opportunities to work collaboratively with school boards in development projects (joint use of facilities and parks must be located on City-owned property).

4.6.9 Increased Environmental Awareness, Conservation and Stewardship

As people become more aware of the benefits of environmental protection, demand for passive settings that connect people to nature is growing. Many communities are placing a greater emphasis on the development of passive park space (e.g., woodlots, prairie grasslands, flower gardens, civic gathering spaces, etc.); often times ensuring that a portion of new active parks remains in a natural state.

Naturalized park spaces (whether achieved through ‘maintaining’ a site in its natural state or ‘returning’ a site to its natural state) are consistent with many principles related to environmental sustainability and stewardship. Naturalization typically involves reduced grass cutting, planting of native species, and public education to create awareness in the community. Interpretative signage in appropriate areas can help park patrons understand the importance of indigenous or significant plants and habitats.

In addition to planning efforts, stewardship programs may be established locally by the City or community group(s) to engage the community in the protection of environmentally significant areas. These may be supported through partnerships with non-profit organizations – such as Ontario Streams, Ontario Stewardship and Evergreen – that promote green community initiatives and provide funding opportunities (a common barrier). Stewardship initiatives can include shore-line restoration, enhancing wildlife habitats, tree plantings, restoring local ecosystems with native plant species, and education to share ideas about the environment. These programs provide opportunities to combine outdoor physical activities with education and action on environmental restoration. By facilitating education, interests, and understanding of natural processes through stewardship opportunities, many municipalities promote a philosophy that is aligned with overall sustainable development and shift the way community planning is imagined away from traditional urban sprawl.

Increased environmental awareness can be recognized by incorporating sustainable design features into new parkland development. Green infrastructure such as onsite stormwater ponds, bio swales, and pervious trails and parking areas can enhance ecological functions. Increasing tree cover and canopies, as well as creating ‘urban forests’ and engineered wetlands can also be effective design tools to create carbon sinks, offer shade to park users and surrounding residences, provide habitat opportunities for select wildlife, and contribute to naturalization or reforestation objectives. Furthermore, incorporating sustainability and conservation measures into park designs can contribute to the overall greening of the community and showcase leadership in addressing environmental issues.

Richmond Hill has demonstrated its commitment to protecting and preserving the natural environment through various initiatives and community programs, some of which have been undertaken in partnership with others such as the TRCA (described in Section 4.4.2). Guiding documents such as the City’s Environment Strategy provides directions for creating healthier environments through responsible community development, reliable municipal management, and effective community programming. In 2020, the following were achieved:

- Sections of the Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail were completed including sections along Leslie Street between Major Mackenzie Drive to Elgin Mills Road;
- Portions of the Patterson Creek greenway were restored to protect against erosion and flood damage and preserve the ecosystem;
- Redevelopment of David Hamilton Park and expansion of the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre was completed, which included a LEED silver certification for the arena and sustainability features including tree plantings, splash pad water recycling, LED lighting and the use of sustainable materials; and

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- The City's first Urban Forest Management Plan was completed, which will guide the preservation and enhancement of trees over a 20-year period.

In partnership with organizations, the City's Community Stewardship Program delivers a variety of activities throughout the City, including community tree planting, wildlife workshops, stream and riparian restoration, habitat creation, and more. The City also delivers the Healthy Yards program and RH Blooms programs which support and engage residents in naturalizing and beautifying their private properties.

4.6.10 Multi-Use Parks

There is a growing demand for parks that contain something for everybody, rather than those designed solely for singular uses. While single use parks still have merit in appropriate locations (e.g. sports field complexes), parks that provide opportunities for a range of ages, family/household types, and abilities are viewed as spaces for inclusive activity. Furthermore, there has been a considerable trend province-wide towards participation in non-programmed (spontaneous) outdoor activities such as pick-up sports, picnicking, family gatherings, special events, etc. In this sense, parks can be viewed as "outdoor community centres" that combine a number of programmed and non-programmed uses.

The provision of high quality, multi-field parks and open spaces in larger complexes or parks such as those found at Richmond Green and David Hamilton Park not only encourage physical activities among all age groups but are of high quality that provide opportunities for attracting tournaments at a regional and even international scale. When developing new or existing parks with sports fields, municipalities are considering the needs of local users and spectators with supplementary amenities such as washroom facilities, covered shelters, Wi-Fi, sport-friendly features, etc. Incorporating more non-programmed spaces and natural areas, as well as linkage to the trail network, are also becoming increasingly important in serving local needs.

Multi-use parks can achieve efficiencies similar to multi-use community centres by sharing common infrastructure (such as irrigation, lighting and drainage systems, and common parking areas) and centralizing operations and maintenance activities. In addition, the ability to offer cross-programming opportunities and their responsiveness to a 'time crunch' make multi-use parks an attractive 'one-stop shopping' destination, particularly among households with a wide range of outdoor interests; for example, while one household member attends a baseball practice, another can partake in a leisurely walk in the park or make use of outdoor fitness equipment provided these amenities exist.

4.6.11 Multi-Season Usage

While the majority of park usage occurs in the summer months, many communities are creating formal and informal year-round opportunities within their parks system. Berms and hills can be used for tobogganing while recreational infrastructure such as hard surface courts (e.g., tennis or basketball) can be flooded during the winter to provide outdoor ice skating, although the warmer winter weather has made it more challenging to maintain natural ice rinks. Some municipalities have constructed covered refrigerated skating pads within parks, which are also used as sport courts during the warmer seasons. The supply of multi-season outdoor facilities may, however, reduce the lifespan of infrastructure due to increased wear and tear requiring higher levels of year-round maintenance.

Positioning parks to be year-round destinations is a way to maximize physical activity goals. Strategic tree planting and landscaping can create wind buffers to offset the winter wind chill and blowing snow, while ensuring that internal park walking circuits are free of snow can facilitate greater use. Richmond Hill has experienced a growing demand for snow clearing trails and pathways, which was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategically locating supporting amenities that are designed for year-round use such as winterized washrooms can also draw park users during the colder season. The provision of washrooms that are intended to be used year-round tend to be located at higher order parks that receives a greater level for use such as Destination Parks and Community Parks. While there are inherent costs associated with winter maintenance (even if it is limited to plowing of parking lots), the availability of no-to-low cost activities throughout the year is a benefit to the community.

Preliminary Findings – Strengthening Park Experiences

11. Continue to design new parks and redevelop existing parks with accessibility, inclusivity and flexibility in mind to ensure that they are welcoming of all Richmond Hill’s diverse population based on age, income, ability, ethno-cultural groups and socio-economic groups. Regular consultations with the community will continue to benefit the park design/redesign process. Park design should consider multi-use and multi-seasonal opportunities, as well as supporting amenities including, but not limited to, seating, shade (structures, tree canopy, etc.), washrooms, signage, and other amenities to enhance the user experience within appropriate park types.
 12. Undertake a park utilization study to develop a stronger understanding of park use to inform potential redevelopment and revitalization opportunities, as well as new park development, particularly in areas within proximity to the City’s intensification corridors. The findings from this study may be used to inform how the City evaluates candidate parks for redevelopment and revitalization.
 13. Align the planning, operations and design and construction of Richmond Hill’s parks to complement the City’s Climate Change Framework.
 14. Regularly engage the York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board to discuss opportunities for shared public access between municipal and school properties and identification of surplus school sites, particularly in areas of intensification.
 15. Review the operational requirements (e.g., staffing, budgets, etc.) to maintain redeveloped or revitalized parks to reflect a more intensive use of space to meet established levels of service, with consideration given to leveraging volunteers and community groups, working with condominium boards and the private sector, or other innovative management solutions.
 16. Consider developing a procedure to address the provision of publicly-owned public space to enhance the public realm, particularly in areas where public parkland cannot be readily assembled. Consideration may also be given to guiding the provision of stratified parkland.
-

4.7 Urban Open Space Opportunities

To develop the basis for the Urban Open Space Master Plan and inform the update to the Parks Plan, it is important to evaluate the opportunities within the parks and open space system. It is useful to look at the system as a single, unified interconnected network that services the public at large. The general public does not always know who owns what in terms of publicly accessible land, but they do experience the gaps and barriers which are important to identify to develop appropriate connections and linkages.

Mapping of opportunities was informed by a thorough review of pertinent background documents, as well as interviews with key stakeholders and discussions with City staff. While proposed future elements that are already planned for are contained in other documents, they have been identified in the mapping (although not specifically called out with labels).

Potential elements are another layer of opportunities as identified by the consultant. These locations have additional information provided and are highlighted in the sections below.

Key Opportunities for Richmond Hill's Parks and Greenways system are identified and illustrated in Figure 12.

4.7.1 Park Opportunities

Potential New Local Parks, Urban Squares and Urban Plazas

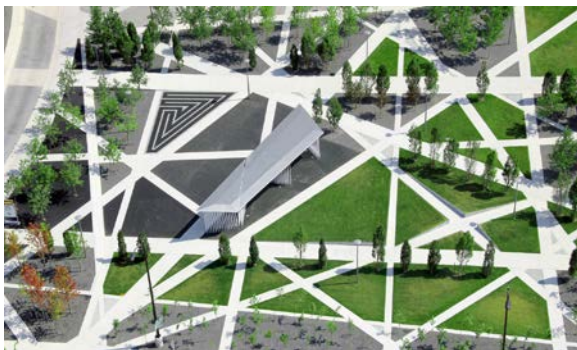
Richmond Hill is focusing its growth along centres and corridors which largely follow Yonge Street towards Highway 407. As development and intensification occurs along this spine there are opportunities to negotiate and develop urban parks along the corridor to help create supply for parkland to new and existing residents. These parks would also create nodes in which to connect the east and west and foster linkages across Yonge Street.

There is also the possibility of expanding existing parks which are immediately adjacent to the proposed development. Park expansions help to increase the area of parks and also to accommodate new amenities which may be needed and desired by the community.

There is a park hierarchy within this corridor including Local Parks, Urban Squares and Urban Plazas. Local Parks are traditional softscape parks, while Urban Squares are publicly-owned and accessible and consist of mostly hardscaped areas. Urban Plazas are also smaller and mostly hardscape; however, they tend to be privately owned and publicly accessible. There is also an opportunity to explore potential partnerships with existing landowners such as the TRCA.

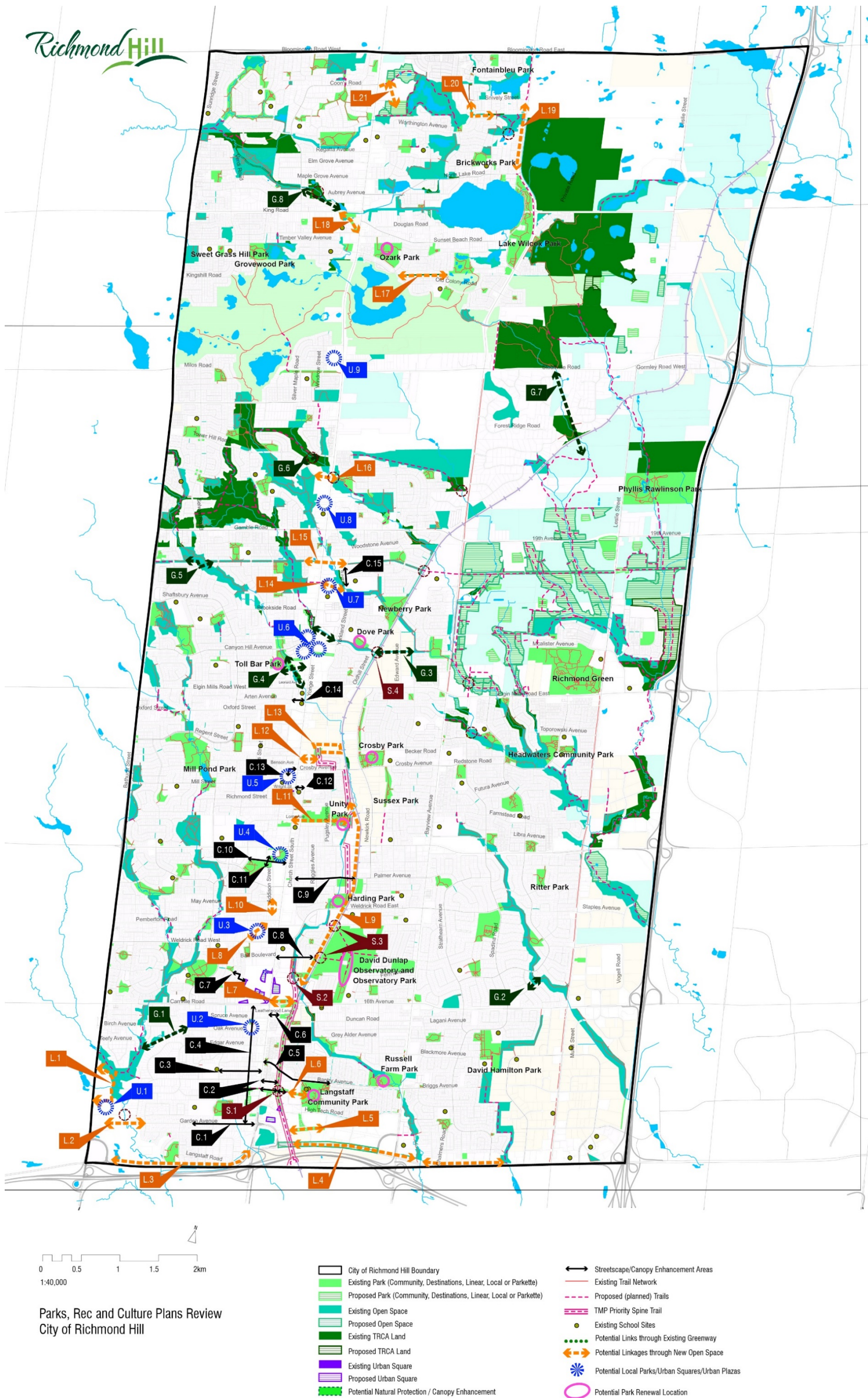


Berczy Park, Toronto, Ontario



Scholar's Green, Mississauga, Ontario

Figure 13: Urban Open Space Opportunities



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City of Richmond Hill Parks Plan, Recreation Plan, and Culture Plan

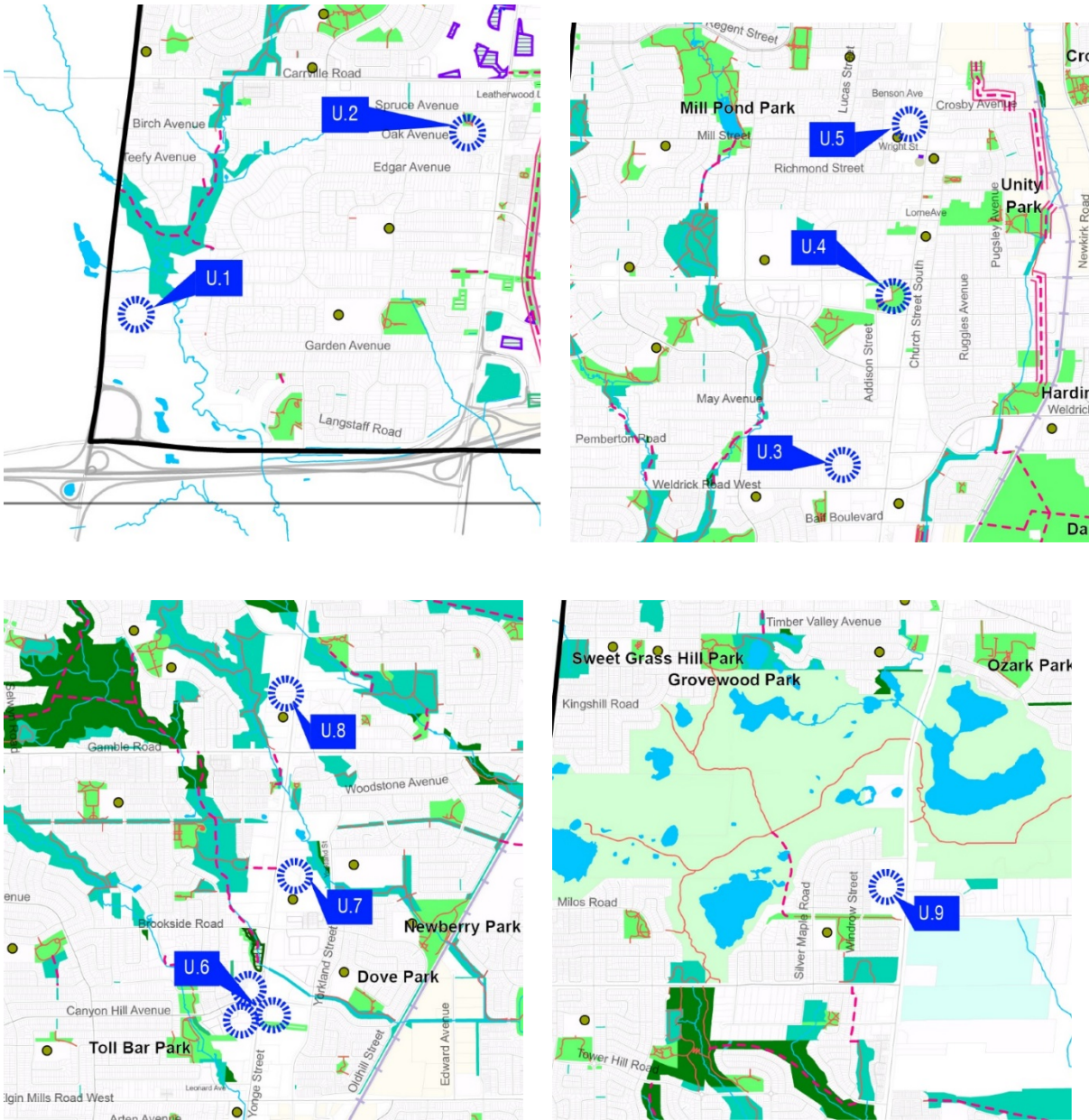
Urban Squares and Plazas have the potential to house elements that are more unique than that of a traditional neighbourhood park. Options for these elements will be discussed during future exercises; however, some could include special event and cultural space, outdoor fitness equipment, public art, interpretation and cultural experiences, unique landscaping, use of special materials, etc. They should also be designed to provide appropriate soil space to allow for shade trees to reach their full canopy maturity to enhance the urban tree canopy along the growth corridor.

Potential locations are listed below and illustrated in Figure 13. Others aim to create new Urban Parks at consistent intervals along the Yonge Street corridor and within centres and Key Development Areas.

- U.1. Potential for a Local Park for expected parkland needs area and future residential growth nearby east of Bathurst Street.
- U.2. Potential Local Park expansion area between Spruce Avenue and Oak Avenue.
- U.3. New Local Park off Sorrento Drive in the Weldrick Road Tertiary Plan area.
- U.4. Explore potential Urban Squares and Plazas as part of the Downtown Local Centre direction contained in the Official Plan Review.
- U.5. Potential opportunity for a Local Park as the corridor develops west of Yonge Street and north of Wright Street.
- U.6. Proposed Linear Parks as part of Yonge and Bernard KDA.
- U.7. Potential Urban Squares and Plazas as part of potential future intensification along Yonge Street, south of Devonsleigh Boulevard. Also to connect into existing linear park network.
- U.8. Potential Urban Squares and Plazas as part of potential future intensification along Yonge Street on the west side, south of Tower Hill Road.
- U.9. Potential long-term Local Park or Urban Square as part of redevelopment west of Yonge Street and south of Silver Maple Road.

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Figure 14: Potential Park Opportunities



Potential Park Revitalization Locations

Parkland revitalization opportunities exist for locations situated within proximity to the growth corridor to enhance use and ensure that it is designed in a manner to accommodate a higher intensity of use as a result of a growing population. Parkland revitalization should continue to be prioritized at the following sites given the higher intensity of uses expected adjacent to these parks:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Dr. James Langstaff Community Park | 6. Crosby Park |
| 2. Russell Farm Park | 7. Toll Bar Park |
| 3. David Dunlap Observatory Park | 8. Dove Park |
| 4. Harding Park | 9. Ozark Park |
| 5. Unity Park | |

4.7.2 Linear Park Opportunities

Linear Parks are creative ways to develop linkages and connect communities which may not have been so previously. Developing linkages within new developments and open space lands hold opportunities for further connection and passive recreational activities. They also open up the opportunity to develop wildlife crossing and eco-passages. This can also occur along the rear of existing long linear lots which flank watercourses along the rear yard.

Linear parks are often longer parks that have narrower widths. They are wider than a typical right-of-way for dedicated trails so they allow for more elements such as seating, waste/recycling receptacles and shade trees while also allowing meandering of the trails.

Below is a list of potential Linear Parks and linkages (illustrated in Figure 14).

- L.1. Linkages into Webster Park, which currently has no street access. New development north of the tennis facility will provide an avenue for a linkage for both pedestrians and vehicles from Bathurst Street, providing an opportunity to activate and connect to Webster Park.
- L.2. Linkage connection to Bathurst Street through the existing woodlot to the existing parks in the Richvale Community.
- L.3. Linear Park opportunity along Old Langstaff Road between Bathurst and Yonge Street in anticipation of connecting into the South York Greenway.
- L.4. Potential for trail linkage along hydro corridor, through proposed open space connecting along the south municipal border. Potential Linear Park within the hydro corridor that could include a designated off-leash dog area. Inspiration for how this can be achieved should be taken from the Meadoway project in Toronto as led by the TRCA.
- L.5. East-west linkage within the proposed Linear Park from the Priority Spine Trail. Potential pedestrian linkage or Linear Park as part of Richmond Hill Centre Secondary Planning Process.
- L.6. Continue proposed trail and link along proposed linear park for better connection into Langstaff Community Park.
- L.7. Linear Park linkage along 16th Avenue from Yonge Street to the Priority Spine Trail as identified in the Yonge and Carrville/16th Key Development Area Secondary Plan.

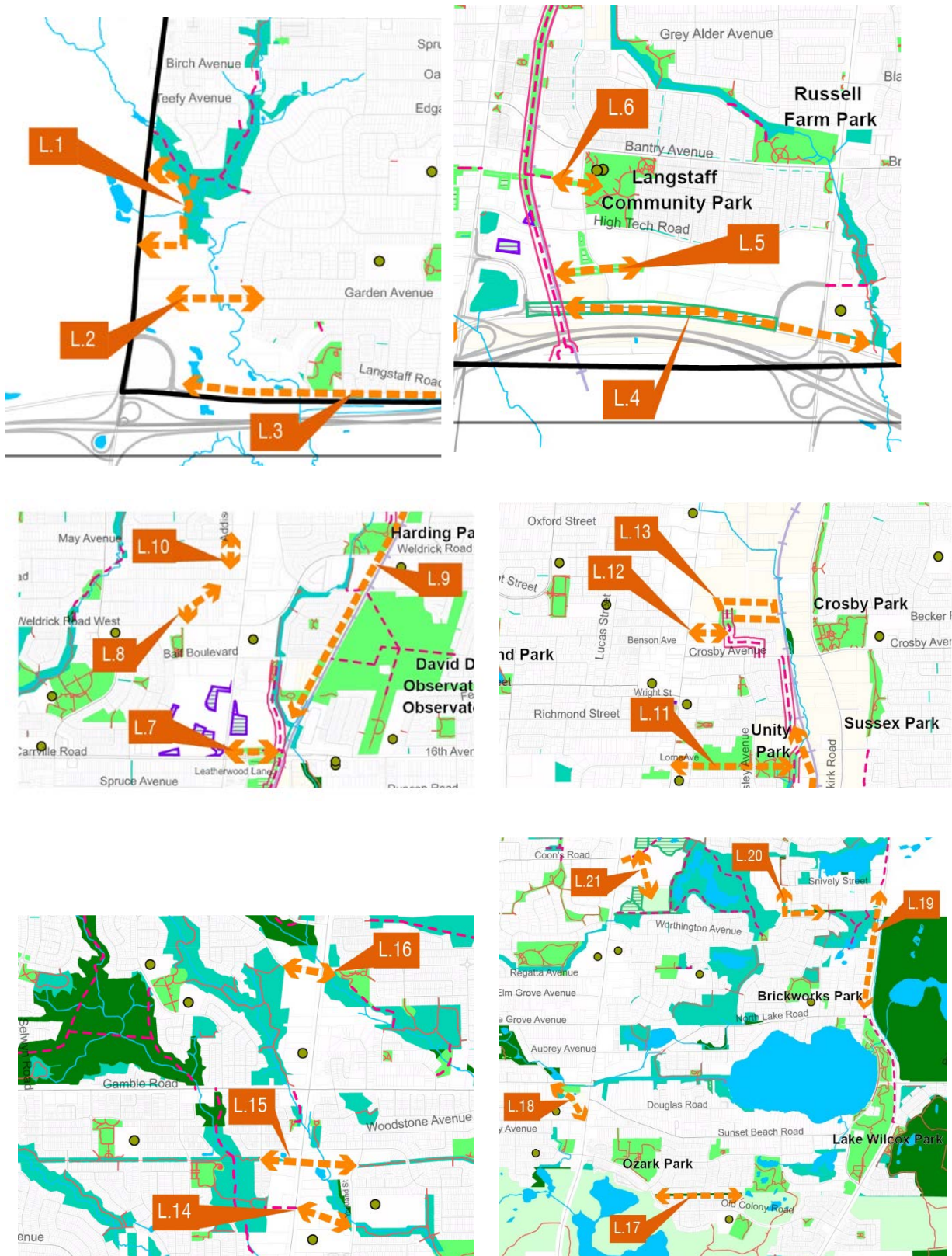
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- L.8. Linear Park linking proposed new Local Parks in the Weldrick Road Tertiary Plan.
- L.9. Utilize City Owned land west of rail corridor as a linear park/rail-trail connection which will link north to Elgin Mills area.
- L.10. Create a Linear Park connection from Addison Street to May Avenue.
- L.11. Create a Linear Park linkage along Lorne Avenue, through Town Park, across Pugsley Street, and through Unity Park to create a seamless pedestrian connection between Yonge Street, the Priority Spine Trail along the railway, and the Major Mackenzie GO Station.
- L.12. Opportunity to create a Linear Park or tree-lined pedestrian linkage from Yonge Street to Stephenson Crescent to a proposed trail connection through Kozak Parkette and the proposed expansion to the north.
- L.13. Potential trail loop north of Kozak Parkette / Park expansion.
- L.14. Linkage through potential Urban Square connecting Yonge Street to woodlot and trail to Newberry Park.
- L.15. Potential linkage to address gaps in the Trans Richmond Trail across Yonge Street.
- L.16. Potential linkage from Tower Hill Road east across Yonge Street to Monticello Park.
- L.17. Potential linkage through buffer from Old Colony Road to Moraine Park.
- L.18. Bostwick Crescent Linear Park potential alignment.
- L.19. Potential linkage to address gap in proposed trail alignment parallel to the west side of Bayview Avenue between Snively Street and North Lake Road.
- L.20. Potential linkage between the existing loop from Worthington Avenue to proposed woodlot trail network south of Snively Street.
- L.21. Potential linkage between proposed new parks south of Bloomington Road.

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Figure 15: Potential Linear Park and Linkage Opportunities



4.7.3 Potential Greenway Linkages

With the Oak Ridges Moraine to the north and the various watercourses which flow north to south, there are a number of green connections which are already in place. Many of these greenways already contain pedestrian connections while others still hold the potential to fill in the gaps in a continuous network of pathways. The Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve system also creates a thick green band of natural cover across the northern part of the municipality with existing and future potential for trails and low intensity recreation opportunities.

Connecting into this existing network of greenway spaces is important for closing the loops and gaps within an overall regional network of open space and trails. Potential locations are listed below and illustrated in Figure 15.



East Humber Trail, Richmond Hill, Ontario

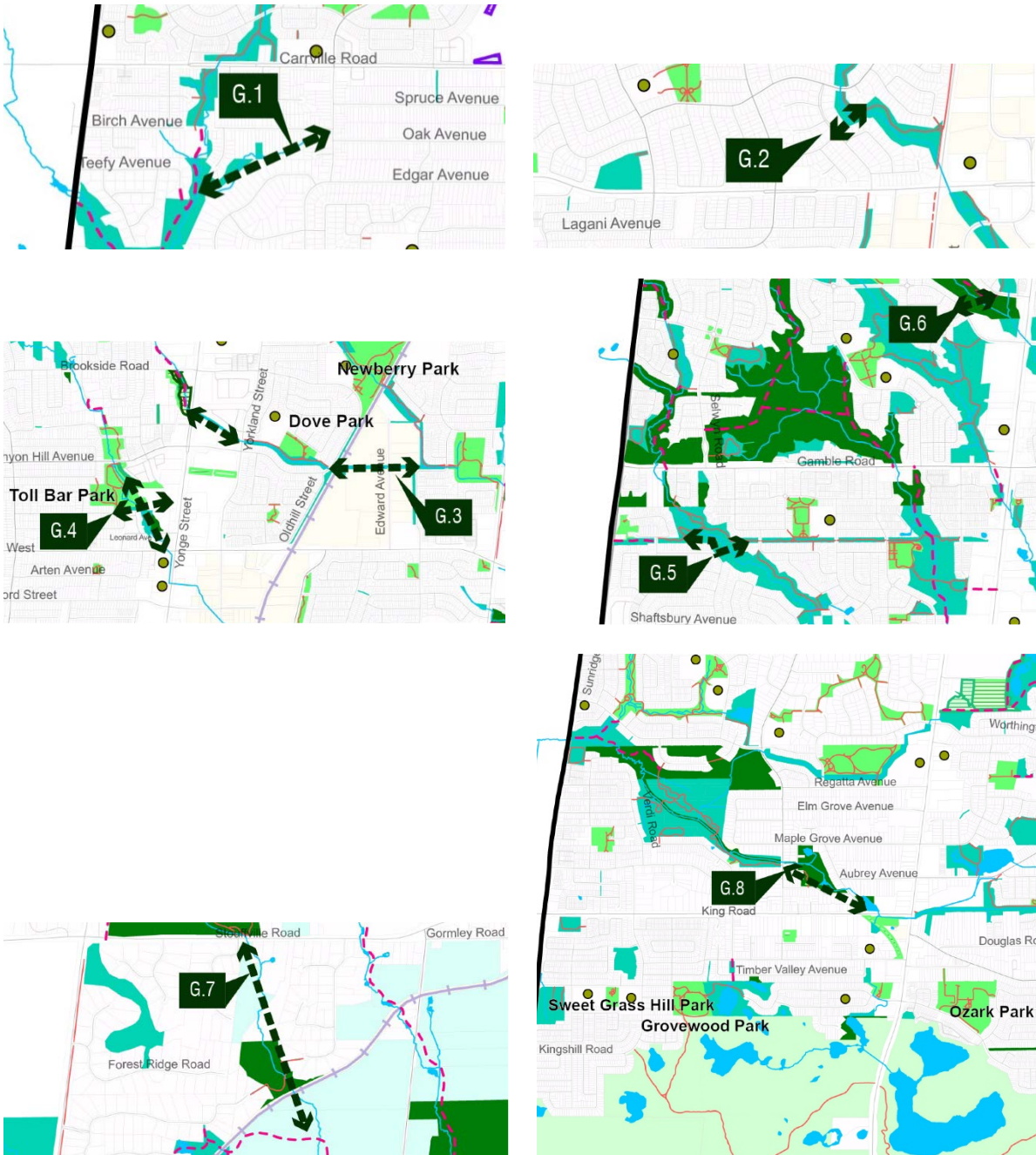
- G.1. Create a greenway link along watercourse from Webster Park northeast to Avenue Road.
- G.2. Create new greenway link to existing trail across watercourse from Killarney Street.
- G.3. Create a new greenway link along natural water corridor connection existing trail network west of Oldhill Street to existing trails that connect to Rose Branch Dr. and into Leno Park.
- G.4. Potential greenway trail linkages through Toll Bar Park connection across as well as south watercourse to Elgin Mills Road East. Connection into Bernard KDA.
- G.5. Potential new greenway trail links to increase walkability to schools for area residents.
- G.6. Potential new greenway link and crossing between Tower Hill Road and Townwood Drive to increase connectivity.
- G.7. Create greenway link from existing Jefferson Forest trails on south side of Stouffville Road to proposed trails network.
- G.8. Potential Greenway Link connecting King Road northwest along the creek into Oak Ridges Meadow, connecting to East Humber Trail in Parker Park.



Highland Creek Trail, Scarborough, Ontario

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Figure 16: Potential Greenway Linkage Opportunities



4.7.4 Safe Crossing Opportunities

Opportunities for safe crossings allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross certain barriers with lower risk to their safety. Opportunities are also present to develop some of these to accommodate wildlife crossings and eco-passages. Some options include over and under passes in the form of tunnels and bridges which can be used to connect two sides of a railway corridor or water course. In areas of constraint at grade crossings for railways and busy roads are also an option with flashing lights, signage and pavement markings.

Potential safe crossings are listed below and illustrated in Figure 16.

- S.1. Bridge crossing over rail corridor from Priority Spine Trail east into Langstaff Community Park.
- S.2. Bridge connection from 16th KDA to Bridgeview Park.
- S.3. Safe crossings needed to across rail corridor between Church Street South and Hillsvie Drive as well as Observatory Lane railway overpass (part of David Dunlap Observatory Park master plan).
- S.4. Potential to provide safe crossing to connect across rail corridor connection linear parks/open space linkages.

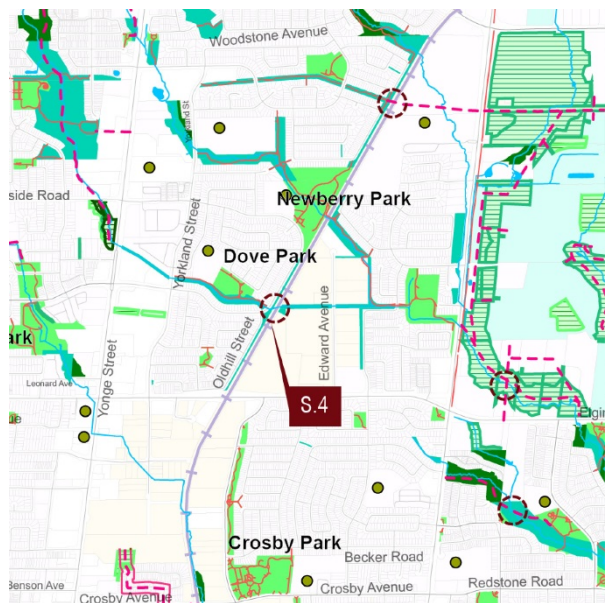
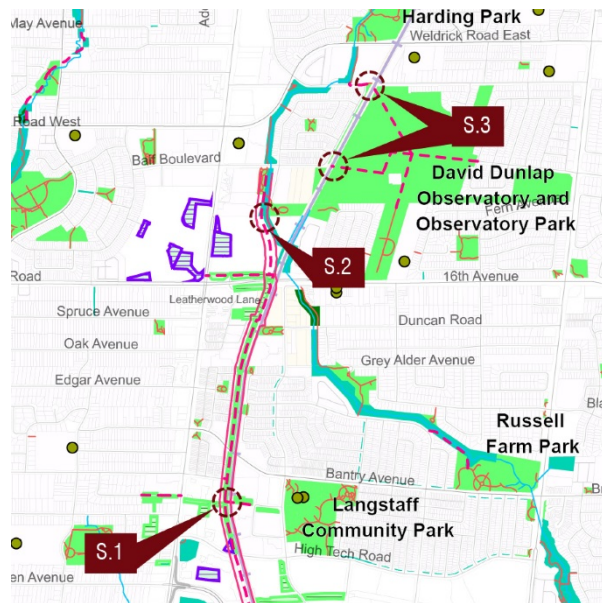


Example Pedestrian Crossing



Example Eco-Passage

Figure 17: Potential Safe Crossing Opportunities



4.7.5 Streetscape and Canopy Enhancement Opportunities

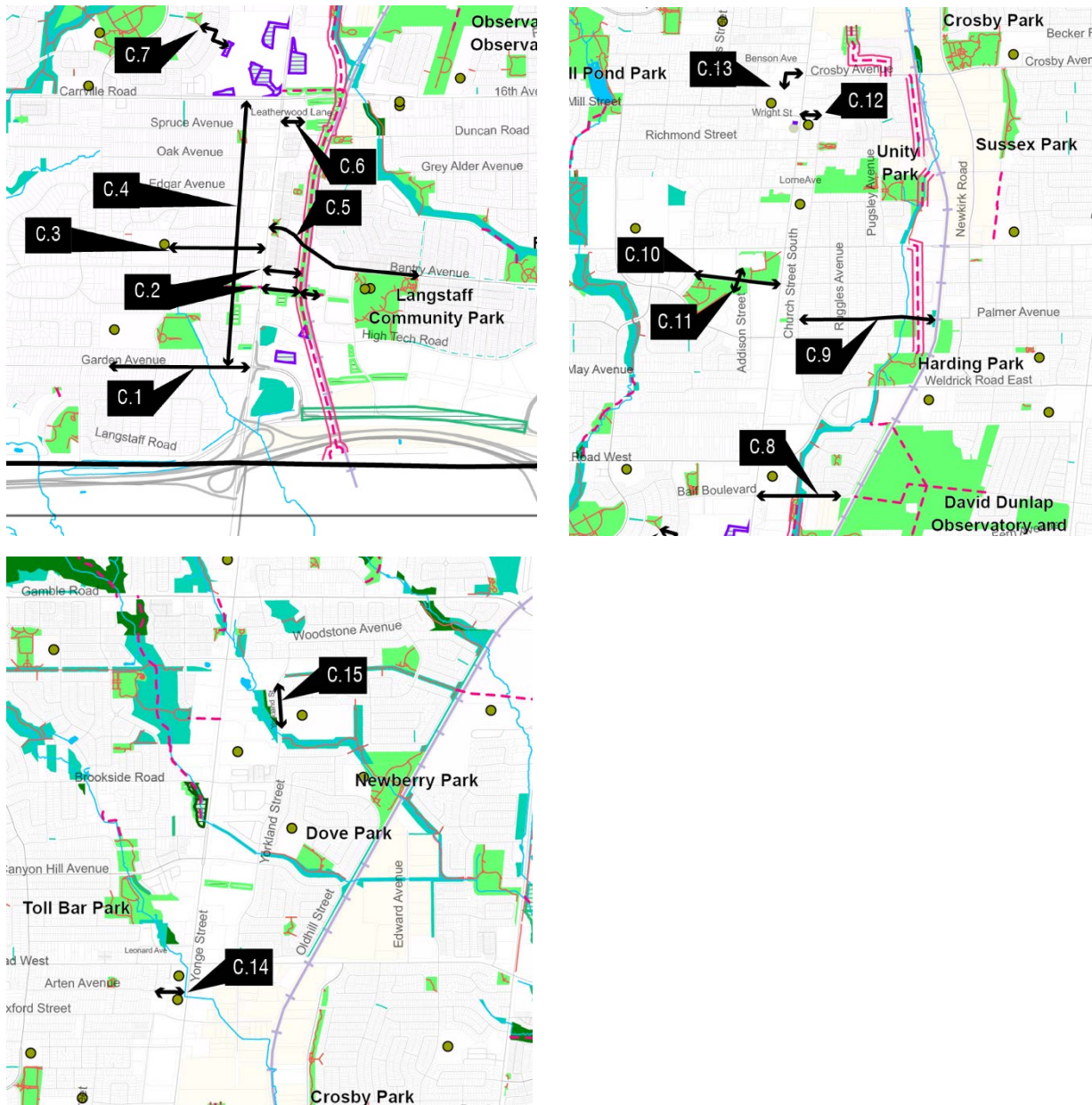
There are two strategies to increase tree canopy in Richmond Hill. The first approach is through streetscape enhancements. Creating green connections along streetscapes help create visual connections between parks and open spaces, increase canopy coverage, and provide shade for pedestrians.

The second is to improve canopy coverage within City-owned sites. Sites that are currently City-owned or that will be transferred to the City in the future have the potential as usable open space, but also have the opportunity for natural enhancement and reforestation activities. This will also help to bolster the urban forest canopy and help the City achieve their target canopy goals. There is also potential for the City to acquire existing natural properties to support their canopy targets and natural preservation goals. Potential streetscape and canopy enhancement opportunities are identified below and illustrated in Figure 17.

- C.1. Enhancements along Garden Avenue to facilitate improved connections to Langstaff Secondary School.
- C.2. Canopy enhancements along Beresford Drive to the Priority Spine Trail and along Oneida Crescent from Red Maple to Yonge Street.
- C.3. Canopy enhancement along Westwood Lane from Yonge Street connecting to Charles Howitt Public School.
- C.4. Opportunity to provide streetscape urban canopy enhancements along future north-south road between Carrville Road and Garden Avenue.
- C.5. Develop canopy enhancement along Bantry Avenue along Langstaff Community Park west to Yonge Street.
- C.6. Canopy enhancement along existing Woonerf (Leatherwood Lane) connecting Yonge Street to existing Red Maple Parkette and the future planned park on the east side of Northern Heights Drive.
- C.7. Enhancement along Rathfon Crescent, Springhead Gardens and Denva Gate connecting Penwick Park to future development.
- C.8. Observatory Lane streetscape enhancement opportunity.
- C.9. Opportunity to develop streetscape enhancements along Palmer Avenue connecting Yonge Street to the Priority Spine Trail and potential rail trail.
- C.10. Hopkins Street canopy enhancements between the library and Mount Pleasant Park.
- C.11. Pedestrian canopy enhancements at the corner of the intersection (on a diagonal) between the library and Mount Pleasant Park.
- C.12. Canopy enhancement along Dunlop Street in front of the existing school.
- C.13. Potential canopy enhancement and pedestrian linkage through future redevelopment in order to foster a linkage west of Yonge Street, connecting Crosby Street to Wright Street adjacent to the École secondaire Norval-Morrisseau.
- C.14. Potential canopy enhancement and pedestrian connection along the former Leonard Avenue right of way.
- C.15. Canopy enhancement along Yorkland Street to facilitate improved connections to Richmond Hill High School.

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Figure 18: Potential Streetscape and Canopy Enhancement Opportunities



Preliminary Findings – Opportunities and Constraints

17. Consider the parkland opportunities as the City’s Urban Open Space Master Plan is prepared. Strive to create a coordinated park and open space network through enhanced connections and links through new and existing local parks, linear parks, urban squares and urban plazas, and by enhancing new and existing streetscapes.
18. Richmond Hill should continue to work together internally across divisions to link the parks and urban open space system throughout the growth corridors and existing adjacent neighbourhoods to achieve a coordinated Urban Open Space Master Plan.

5.0

Recreation Opportunities

Recreation facilities, outdoor amenities and associated services play an important role in the daily life of residents in Richmond Hill as they promote physical activity, healthy lifestyles, community interaction and economic growth.

This section reviews Richmond Hill's inventory of indoor and outdoor parks and recreation facilities, assesses utilization levels, and identifies preliminary needs focused on the next 10 years. In addition to new amenities, opportunities for facility optimization are examined through the perspective of emerging activities and trends.

5.1 Recreation Plan

The 2013 Recreation Plan was a guiding document for the City's indoor recreation facilities over a 10-year period. The primary objectives of the Recreation Plan were to:

- Understand the needs of Richmond Hill's current and future residents through a combination of community engagement, review of trends and best practices, and application of accepted needs assessment methodologies.
- Provide recommendations centred around the type and quantity of indoor recreation facilities required in Richmond Hill.
- Develop strategic directions for the City to consider as it implements recommendations to effectively and efficiently meet community needs.

Together with an understanding of background research, community benchmarking, community engagement and facility analysis, specific attention was paid to service delivery efficiencies and facility provision, with analyses and assessments regarding programming, facility needs, potential partnerships, and financial requirements. Table 12 summarizes key achievements or the status of pending recommendations.

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Table 12: Summary of Indoor Recreation Facility Needs as per 2013 Recreation Plan

Facility Type	Achievements / Status
Arenas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One ice pad added to the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre • Two ice pads planned for the North Leslie Community Centre (2023+) • One ice pad not yet implemented/planned
Aquatic Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One indoor aquatic centre planned for the North Leslie Community Centre
Gymnasiums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One gymnasium planned to be located at the North Leslie Community Centre • Bocce courts at Rouge Woods Community Centre converted to gymnasium
Fitness Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One fitness centre planned for the North Leslie Community Centre • Fitness centre added to the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre • Fitness studio at Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool closed during COVID and it is recommended to be re-purposed • Fitness studio at Centennial Pool closed; aerobic room remains
Multi-Purpose Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-purpose rooms planned for the North Leslie Community Centre • Lake Wilcox Community Hall decommissioned • Richmond Green Agricultural Building #2 used for indoor portable bocce courts • Connor Room main floor leased; potential use for municipal works yard
Indoor Walking Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor walking track added to the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre
Indoor Artificial Turf Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second location not completed due to land constraints
Indoor Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis Strategy completed • Second indoor tennis facility to be investigated at the community club courts planned for the future West Gormley Community Park.

5.2 Notable Studies Relevant to Recreation

5.2.1 Framework for Recreation in Canada

The Framework for Recreation in Canada (FRC) was developed through significant consultation with Canadians as to their thoughts on the benefits and importance of recreation.

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association – in collaboration with the senior levels of government and the Provincial Recreation and Parks Associations – developed a framework that rejuvenates the definition of recreation and parks, articulates the economic impacts of recreation and parks, identifies their benefits, and states five evidenced-based goals for communities across Canada to strive towards. Through the preparation of the PRC Plans, an opportunity exists to incorporate elements of the FRC.

Vision

Everyone engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences, that foster:

Individual Wellbeing	Wellbeing of Natural & Built Environments	Community Wellbeing
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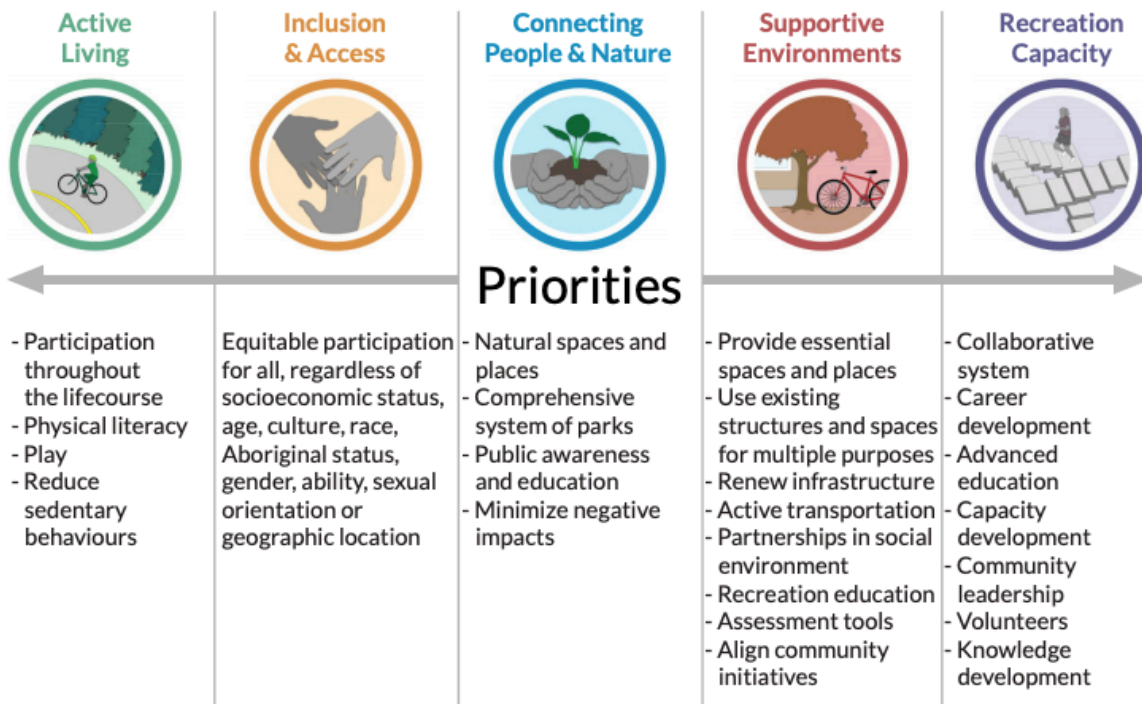
Values

Public Good	Inclusion & Equity	Sustainability	Lifelong Participation
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Principles of Operation

Outcome-Driven	Quality & Relevance	Evidence-Based	Partnerships	Innovation
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Goals



5.2.2 2019 Socio-Economic Study

The Socio-Economic Study (2019) provides an updated picture of Richmond Hill, allowing for a better understanding of the community. The Study is intended to inform future planning initiatives such as the review of Richmond Hill's Strategic Plan and help guide the objectives and strategies of other major policy documents. This Study analyzed a variety of community indicators such as demographics and economic characteristics, traffic, commuting and recreation patterns, housing profile, affordability, homelessness and poverty, and general quality of life.

Key findings related to the PRC Plans include (but are not limited to):

- Richmond Hill remains a growing community but at a slower rate than in previous years.
- Richmond Hill is an aging population.
- The senior population in Richmond Hill are less likely to have knowledge of an official language; the majority are married.
- Richmond Hill remains a culturally diverse community with an increasing immigrant population.
- Richmond Hill is a highly educated population.
- The proportion of single detached houses in Richmond Hill is decreasing as new attached and multi-residential housing types are being built.

5.2.3 2018 – 2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is the City's guiding document to make Richmond Hill a more accessible place to live, work and play. As required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan identifies strategies to minimize or remove barriers for persons with disabilities, as well as to address recent legislative requirements. The Plan is guided by a number of key goals set for the next five years including:

- Continued provision of programs and services adapted for person with disabilities; and
- Making all new and revitalized public spaces accessible to persons with disabilities.

More specifically, the Plan outlines a number of initiatives that have relevance to the PRC Plans, some of which are in progress or have already been completed. Notable projects include the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre Expansion, and a number of park revitalization or development projects for David Dunlap Observatory Park, David Hamilton Park, Kings College Park, and others, as well as trail construction projects.

5.2.4 Tennis Strategy (2016)

Richmond Hill's 2016 Tennis Strategy investigated court development strategies, provision standards, assessed club court needs, and policies and procedures to support strategy implementation and tennis opportunities.

The document reconfirmed the City's service level standard for outdoor tennis courts at one per 2,700 residents and identified the need for 12 new tennis courts by 2031. Other recommendations contained within the Strategy included a tennis court improvement strategy to enhance the playing conditions of existing courts, programming considerations, tennis club locations (including potential locations for a six-court facility that can be domed for year-round use, and a Community Tennis Club Policy). A number of the recommendations contained in this Strategy have already been implemented or are in progress including (but not limited to) planned locations for new courts and the completion of a six-court facility at David Hamilton Park, which is used year-around by the Blackmore Tennis Club. In addition, six community tennis club courts are planned for the West Gormley Community Park.

5.2.5 Tennis Court Assessment and Condition Analysis Report (2018)

A detailed condition assessment of Richmond Hill's tennis courts was undertaken in 2018 to inform locations for future upgrades and expansion. The analysis discovered that Richmond Hill's tennis courts are generally considered to be in good condition. A short list of 10 high priority sites were identified for revitalization including Mount Pleasant Park, Bayview Hill Park, Willow Grove Park, Silverstream Park, Stavert Park, Brickworks Park, Ozark Park, Newberry Park, Raccoon Park and Pine Farm Park.

5.2.6 Options for the Implementation of an Indoor Bocce Facility Staff Report SRCS.19.20 (2019)

A staff report was prepared to provide Council with options for the provision of a new indoor bocce facility to replace the courts that were removed from the Rouge Woods Community Centre. Four options were presented:

- a) Maintain the current removable bocce courts installed at Richmond Green Agriculture Building
- b) Install specialized bocce court flooring at Richmond Green Agriculture Building while utilizing the existing three removable bocce court setups
- c) Modify the existing Richmond Green Agriculture Building to install four permanent bocce courts and improve amenities
- d) A new permanent bocce facility complete with convertible courts and amenities

Council voted in favour of option d) – a new permanent bocce facility complete with convertible courts and amenities. Implementation of this option was referred to the Recreation and Culture Master Plan.

5.2.7 Council Motion Regarding the Richmond Hill Canoe Club C#41-19 (2019)

A Council Motion (C#41-19) was made on November 20, 2019 to direct staff to investigate future facility options for the Richmond Hill Canoe Club. The current facility was reported to be inadequate with limited accessibility, lack of storage, no space for winter training and no running water or lockers. Staff are directed to investigate opportunities to rebuild and expand the Canoe Club to include:

- a) Training facilities for the club
- b) Opportunities for public private partnership for capital and ongoing operating costs for the property
- c) No added tax burden for Richmond Hill residents

5.2.8 Community Garden Staff Report SREIS.17.012 (2017)

A staff report was prepared to provide direction for the provision of community allotment gardens and collective gardens, as well as to approve a Community Garden Policy. Interest in community gardening in Richmond Hill is strong, demonstrated by increasing demand for community allotment gardens at Phyllis Rawlinson Park. There are 61 people using the community allotment gardens and a waitlist of 68 residents. Requests have also been made from organizations to establish collective gardens.

Based on background research, review of best practices and consultation, a centrally located allotment garden was recommended to be constructed. Four new collective gardens were also recommended to address demand. To date, the four collective gardens have been established (for a total of seven across the City). A new community allotment garden is planned to be located at Bridgeview Park.

5.2.9 Tower Hill Off-Leash Dog Area Staff Report SRPRS.14.018 (2014)

A staff report was prepared to provide Council with direction on whether the Tower Hill off leash area should be closed or remain open, as well as to investigate the potential for additional off leash locations. Based on a site monitoring of Tower Hill off leash area which included assessing noise and parking, together with consideration of City-wide facility needs, staff identified two potential provision options:

Option A: Multi-facility Model, Tower Hill off leash area remain open permanently, a revised Off Leash Dog Area Policy be approved and staff select preferred locations for two additional neighbourhood off leash areas – one in the south portion of the City and one within Oak Ridges;

Option B: Single Facility Model, Tower Hill off leash area be closed and decommissioned.

Council ultimately voted in favour of Option A. Two new off leash dog areas have not yet been implemented.

5.3 Recreation Facility Trends

5.3.1 Aging Infrastructure

The 2019 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card found that approximately one-third of Canada’s sports and recreation facilities were considered to be in “Fair” condition or worse. This suggests that municipal sports and recreation facilities require attention, show signs of deterioration, or have deteriorating components.²⁴ Provincially, many municipal facilities were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s and since this period, infrastructure province-wide has been underfunded. These pressures have been somewhat alleviated through various provincial and federal stimulus plans. Initiatives such as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) will see up to \$30 billion in funding allocated to various community, culture and recreation projects across the country.

Richmond Hill has also benefited from past provincial and federal government funding programs such as the Canada Infrastructure Program, Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program, Community Improvement Infrastructure Fund and Gas Tax Fund to undertake renovations and/or improvements to recreation facilities including the McConaghy Centre, Elvis Stojko Arena, Bond Lake Arena, Eyer Homestead Historical House, as well as various park renewal projects such as Humber Flats Mallard Marsh Park and Phillips Park.

5.3.2 Removing Physical Barriers Through Design

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) seeks to “improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province” (c.32, s.1). Barriers are defined to include anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of disability, including physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological, or policy/practice barriers.

Richmond Hill’s Accessibility Advisory Committee provides Council with comments and advice on matters related to accessibility, including the preparation of a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The 2018-2022 Accessibility Plan identifies accessible recreation and cultural programs and facilities for persons with disabilities, as well as the City’s accessible spaces such as Crosby Park and Lake Wilcox Park. The Accessibility Plan identifies initiatives to make the City’s public spaces more accessible – many of which have already been completed – including revitalizing and/or expanding Westview Parkette, Bradstock Park, David Hamilton Park, Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre; Oak Ridges Library construction; accessible trail development projects; and more.

5.3.3 Demand for High Quality Facilities and Design

Today’s consumers expect and demand high quality, a trend that is applicable to sports and recreation facilities. What highlights this demand is that as users are now paying more for the use of sports and leisure facilities than they have in the past, and with the rise in user fees province-wide comes an expectation for higher levels of service and facilities. Notwithstanding public expectations, modern recreation facilities are typically constructed in highly visible areas of a community and are being positioned as desirable community destinations that leverage the design of the facilities to support principles of place-making and foster sense of place. New facility design should also respond to the growing demands of users to provide superior and inclusive experiences. Such design considerations may include removing barriers to improve physical accessibility and providing causal spaces or viewing area (such as a lobby, open area, or galleries) for people to gather, meet, or relax.

With respect to sports fields, irrigation and lighting are two amenities commonly requested by field users. Irrigation is becoming a standard feature in sports field development. While recent long, dry summers have been a factor in requests for irrigation, the lack of irrigation leads to field compaction, field degradation and possible injuries. A number of municipalities, often in partnership with a third party, are developing artificial turf fields as a

²⁴ Canada Infrastructure. 2019. Canadian Infrastructure Report Card. Retrieved from <http://canadianinfrastructure.ca>

means to provide a more consistent quality of play since such fields are not prone to damage due to extreme or inclement weather.

The lighting of sports fields provides additional capacity of use through extended playing hours (e.g., evenings). The lighting of fields is a strategy that is implemented when a shortage of fields is an issue or when meeting adult needs (since youth play in early evenings). However, while lighting is a desirable amenity, it is also costly in terms of utility expenses (electricity and irrigation, as the latter is required to offset the increased level of use). It is standard practice for the City to bear the capital cost of lighting, although some municipalities may impose a lighting surcharge on rental fees. Minor sports groups, however, may not want to pay the extra costs associated with lighting resulting in a “catch-22” situation for municipalities trying to meet the demand for playing fields.

5.3.4 Multi-use Facilities and Community Hubs

There is a growing expectation that community centres contain something for everybody, rather than being designed solely for singular uses. Co-location of complementary facility components often creates convenient, centralized activity centres and generates financial efficiencies through centralized operations. The provision of high quality, multi-use facilities encourages physical and social activity among all age groups, while also creating opportunities for sport tourism at a regional scale. Building on the aspect of convenience and consumer demand for high quality facilities, the traditional single field park is losing favour among sport groups who instead prefer multi-field parks that provide amenities such as parking, concession stands and washrooms. Multi-field complexes, such as Richmond Green are gaining favour because they cater to the lucrative tournament market and provide opportunities for households to have participants at the same location at the same time.

Richmond Hill has embodied the spirit of multi-use facility developments for some time as most community centres contain a mix of aquatics, arena, fitness, and gymnasium components, while being co-located onsite outdoor recreational areas. Furthermore, recreation and culture facilities and services are being used more often to supplement civic building initiatives pertaining to healthy and active community designs, place making, urban design, etc. all of which are intended to develop places that people want to live, work and play.

5.3.5 Sport-Friendly Recreation Facilities

Organized sport in general, but particularly at high-performing levels, requires access to specialized facilities whether aquatic centres, arenas, sports fields, or others. While some population centres make full use of large competition facilities such as stadiums, there are many ways for recreation facilities to support the needs of athletes. The consideration of sport needs during the design of new facilities or renovation of existing ones can create significant opportunities for sport groups to utilize these facilities for training and/or competition. Examples of how recreation facilities can be sport-friendly are highlighted below:

- **Aquatic centres:** While most national/international sanctioned swimming competitions require a 50-metre pool, modifications of traditional 25-metre pools can support athletic development. For example, by ensuring a minimum water depth of 1.35 metres extending from 1 metre to 6 metres from the starting wall is required to accommodate the use of starting blocks. A depth of 1 metre may be required in all other areas. The addition of bleacher seating can also create opportunities for local competitions.
- **Arenas:** Building arenas to NHL or Olympic regulation size ensures that athletes are practicing and playing on an appropriate rink. The provision of bleacher seating allows for spectators during practices and competitions.
- **Sports Fields:** Building sports fields to regulation size and adding lights ensures that sports teams are able to meet their practice and competition needs. Bleacher seating supports spectator comfort during competitions. In addition, where possible, having multiple sports fields in one park further supports groups that wish to organize competitions.

In evaluating the needs of sport in the design/redevelopment of recreation facilities, municipalities must factor in existing and future demand, as well as opportunities for sport tourism. Sport tourism offers a number of economic

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benefits, supporting amenities within a neighbourhood or city such as hotels, restaurants, and parking, among other things.

5.4 Indoor Recreation Facilities

Table 13 provides a summary of indoor recreation facilities that are owned/maintained by the City of Richmond Hill. Figure 18 illustrates the distribution of Richmond Hill's indoor recreation and culture facilities. The City's indoor facility inventory is augmented by non-municipal providers in Richmond Hill such as schools, private sector facility providers, and more.

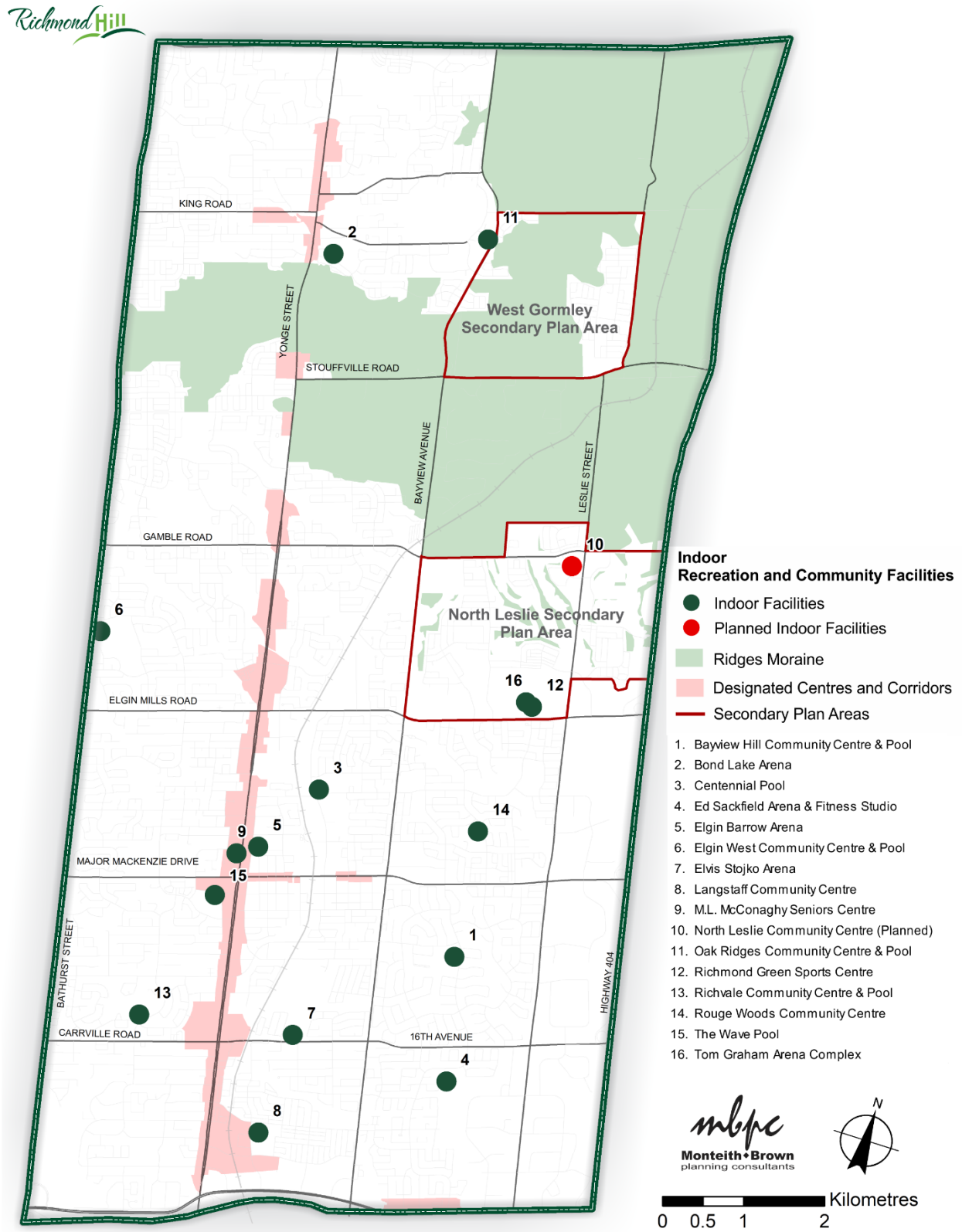
Table 13: City of Richmond Hill Indoor Recreation and Culture Facilities

Facility Type	Supply	Location(s)	Current Service Level
Indoor Aquatic Centres	6	Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool, Centennial Pool, Elgin West Community Centre & Pool, Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool, Richvale Community Centre & Pool, Wave Pool	1 : 35,700
Arenas	8	Bond Lake Arena, Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre (2), Elgin Barrow Arena (2), Elvis Stojko Arena, Tom Graham Arena Complex (2)	1 : 26,800
Gymnasiums	9	Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool, Elgin West Community Centre, Langstaff Community Centre* (3), Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool, Richvale Community Centre, Rouge Woods Community Centre (2) <i>* The City owns 1 gymnasium and has access to the two other gymnasiums after school hours Gymnasium at the M.L. McConaghy Seniors Centre is not typical and is classified as multi-purpose space due to its size, configuration and general activity use. Some gymnasiums can be sub-divided to support simultaneous programs.</i>	1 : 23,800
Fitness Centres	3	Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool, Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre and Indoor Track, Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool <i>Fitness centres include equipment, studio and indoor walking track. Fitness programs are also offered within space at other community centres.</i>	1 : 71,300
Multi-Purpose Spaces	61	Refer to Section 5.4.6 for locations	1 : 3,500
Youth Spaces	2	Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool, Eyer Wideman Youth Centre <i>Youth programs may also take place within other public spaces.</i>	1 : 107,000
Space for Adults 55+	3	Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool, Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool, McConaghy Centre <i>Adult 55+ programs may also take place within other public spaces</i>	1 : 71,000
Indoor Artificial Turf Fields	2	Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park (2)* <i>*The indoor artificial turf field at the Richmond Green Sports Dome can be booked as one, two or four fields.</i>	1 : 107,000
Indoor Bocce Courts	3	Richmond Green Agricultural Building #1 (3)	1 : 71,000

Note: Current provision based on a population estimate of 214,000 residents.

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Figure 19: Distribution of Indoor Recreation and Community Facilities



5.4.1 Indoor Recreation and Community Centres

The City’s community centre model contains of both single purpose and multi-use facilities. Bond Lake Arena is primarily considered to be a skating facility, though it is accompanied by community spaces, which was a common design for the era of construction. By contrast, the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool co-locates multiple recreation amenities at a single site to create a destination for all segments of the community. The M.L. McConaghy Seniors’ Centre is dedicated to serving adults aged 55+, but also can be considered multi-use in the sense that there are a number of distinct programmable spaces within it ranging from a small gymnasium and meeting rooms, reading areas, kitchen and more. Each of these community centres and their components are discussed in greater detail in their respective facility sections contained in pages that follow.

As illustrated on the previous map, Richmond Hill’s community centres are predominantly located on the south side of Richmond Hill, south of Gamble Road and 19th Avenue, where the majority of residents currently reside. Community centres within close proximity to Yonge Street can be expected to experience greater levels of use over the planning period given that population growth is expected within designated intensification areas. Population growth is also anticipated to occur in the north end of Richmond Hill. While there are currently a limited number of community centres serving the north area, the City has planned a new community centre within the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area which is expected to include an indoor aquatic centre, twin ice pad arena, gymnasium fitness centre, and multi-purpose program rooms. An estimated construction date has not been identified.

5.4.2 Indoor Aquatic Centres

Supply

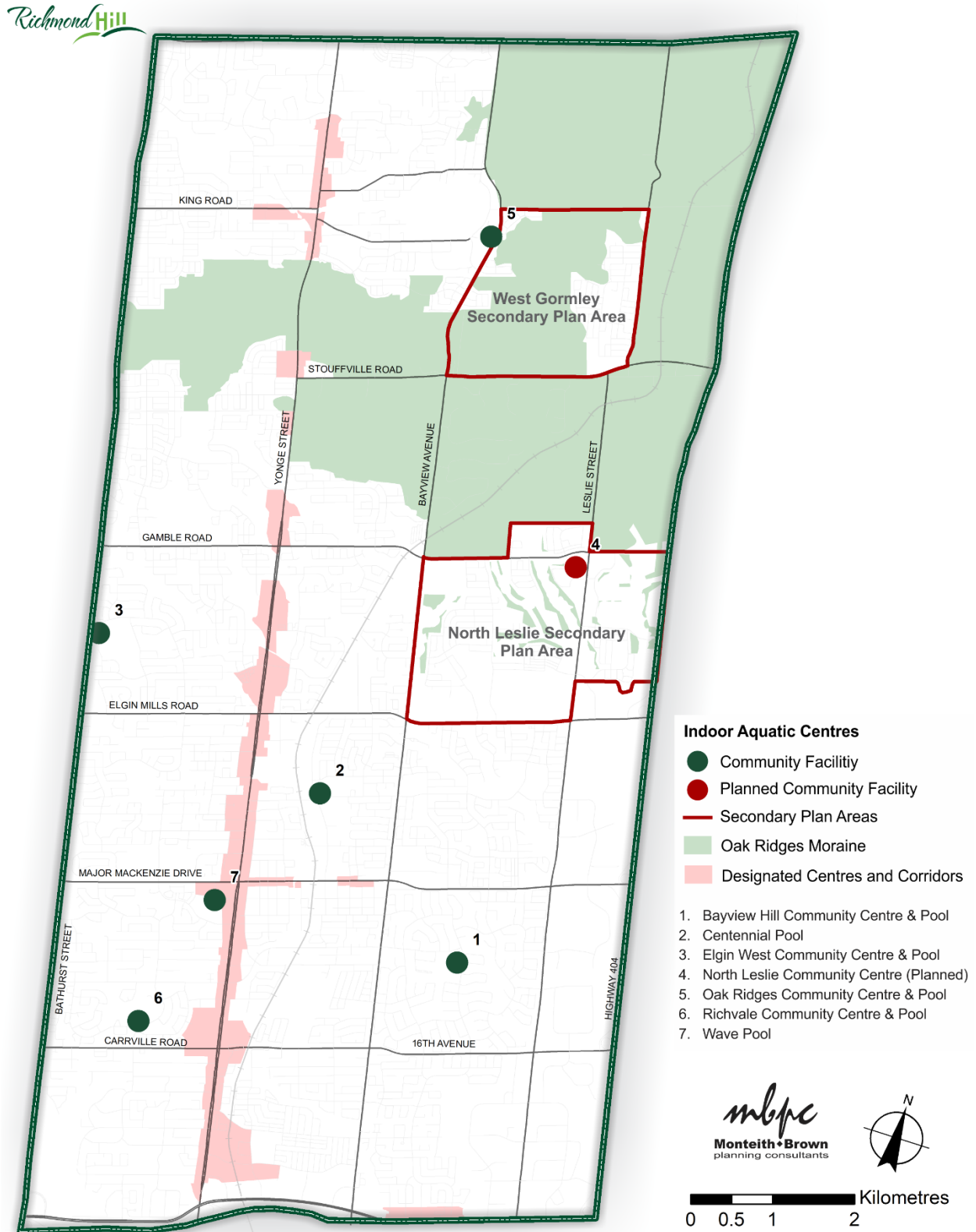
Six indoor aquatic centres are provided by the City of Richmond Hill, each of which contains a different pool configuration and range of amenities. Table 14 highlights the key features found at each indoor aquatic centre location. The City’s supply translates into a service level of one indoor aquatic centre per 35,700 residents, which is the highest level of service compared to benchmark municipalities

Table 14: Summary of Municipal Indoor Aquatic Centres

Indoor Aquatic Centre	Number of Tanks	Length, Lanes	Amenities
Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool	1 Lane Pool 1 Tot-Teaching Tank	25-metre, 5 lanes	Accessible, waterslide, sauna
Centennial Pool	1 Lane Pool	25-metre, 6 lanes	Accessible, starting blocks, diving board
Elgin West Community Centre & Pool	1 Lane Pool 1 Tot-Teaching Tank	25-metre, 5 lanes	Accessible, waterslide, water spray features
Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool	1 Lane Pool 1 Tot-Teaching Tank	25-metre, 6 lanes	Accessible, waterslide, water spray features, sauna
Richvale Community Centre & Pool	1 Lane Pool 1 Tot-Teaching Tank	25-metre, 6 lanes	Accessible, starting blocks
Wave Pool	1 Wave Pool 1 Swirl Pool	Irregular	Accessible, waterslide, beach entry, sauna

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Figure 20: Distribution of Indoor Aquatic Centres



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Table 15: Service Level Comparison, Municipal Indoor Aquatic Centres

Indoor Aquatic Centres	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Richmond Hill	214,000	6	1 : 35,700	1 per 32,000 residents
Vaughan	324,000	9	1 : 36,000	1 per 35,000 residents
Oakville	194,000	5	1 : 38,800	1 per 32,000 residents
Burlington	183,000	4	1 : 45,800	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	13	1 : 47,200	1 per 60,000 residents
Markham	347,000	7	1 : 49,600	1 per 60,000 residents
Average	313,000	7	1 : 42,200	

Aquatic Trends

Pools have the ability to deliver programs for a wide range of age groups, interests, and abilities. A report on Canadian youth sports found that over 1.1 million youth between the ages of 3 and 17 were enrolled in a swimming program, making this the most popular organized recreation activity.²⁵ Indoor pools deliver year-round aquatic programming and are venues for residents to form community ties. Notwithstanding such benefits, indoor aquatic centres are among the most intensive and expensive recreation facilities to operate.

The most common design template for a municipally operated indoor pool is a 25-metre rectangular tank with six swimming lanes, as is found at three indoor pool locations in Richmond Hill. Trends in pool construction and retrofitting have seen an evolution in public pool design that offers more variety and that accommodates a growing diversity of users, thereby raising the bar in facility quality. Municipalities across Canada are responding to user demands for modern amenities including, but not limited to, family or gender-neutral change rooms, warmer pool temperatures, spray features, updated viewing galleries, and universal design elements. Smaller leisure tanks are sometimes incorporated into facility design to support warm water therapy, training, and lessons for young children, adults 55+, or persons with disabilities. As is the case with the City's indoor pools, they are frequently co-located with other recreation facilities such as gymnasiums, fitness space and/or dedicated space for adults 55+ to bolster overall usage, provide opportunities for cross-programming and cross-subsidization among facility operating units, and creating a holistic and convenient experience at a single destination.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Recreation Plan recommended a service target of one per 32,000 residents for indoor aquatic centre. This target is generally on the higher end of the spectrum compared to benchmark municipalities, where targets range between one per 32,000 to 60,000 residents. With a current service level of one per 35,700 residents, Richmond Hill's supply of indoor aquatic centres is slightly falling short of the recommended target.

A visual scan of existing and planned indoor aquatic centres in Richmond Hill revealed that there is currently a strong geographic distribution of indoor aquatic centres where most residents are located within proximity to at least one location. The supply of municipally-operated indoor aquatic centres is also complemented by privately-operated indoor swimming pools including those found in condominiums in the City, which bolsters recreational swimming opportunities for tenants and owners in Richmond Hill. This may be one contributing factor to the fact that participation in municipal swim programs has been softening in recent years. As discussed in Section 7.4, drop-in recreational swims declined by 5% between 2018 and 2019. During the same period, registered swim programs also declined by 4%.

Coupled with the fact land scarcity and rising costs has made land acquisition more challenging and costly, there is merit in considering adjusting the current service target downwards to one per 36,000 residents, which is

²⁵ Solutions Research Group Consultants Inc. 2014. Canadian Youth Sport Report. Retrieved from <http://www.srgnet.com>

consistent with the current service level. Applying the recommended service target suggests that Richmond Hill would require one additional indoor aquatic centre by 2031. This need would be met through the future North Leslie Community Centre, which is planned to include an indoor aquatic centre.

Over the course of the planning period, indoor aquatic needs may evolve, particularly in areas of intensification. While residents may have access to private swimming pools within condominiums, the City should monitor the demand for indoor aquatic facilities within centres and corridors, with consideration given to system-wide aquatic utilization, including program participation and wait lists. With this information, the City will be in a better position to evaluate future indoor aquatic needs and confirm or adjust the service target.

Preliminary Findings – Indoor Aquatic Centres

19. To meet an adjusted service target of one per 36,000 residents, Richmond Hill would require one additional indoor aquatic centre, which would be met by 2031 with the planned indoor aquatic centre to be located at the future North Leslie Community Centre. Over the long-term, evaluate future indoor aquatic needs, particularly within the City’s centres and corridors. Consideration should be given to system-wide utilization, program registration and waitlists to re-confirm or adjust the service target.

5.4.3 Arenas

Supply

Richmond Hill operates eight ice pads at five arenas (Figure 21). Table 16 summarizes the City’s arena supply, including a general description for each location. This level of supply translates into a service level of one ice pad per 26,800 residents, which is the third highest level of service compared to benchmark municipalities (Table 17).

Table 16: Summary of Municipal Arenas

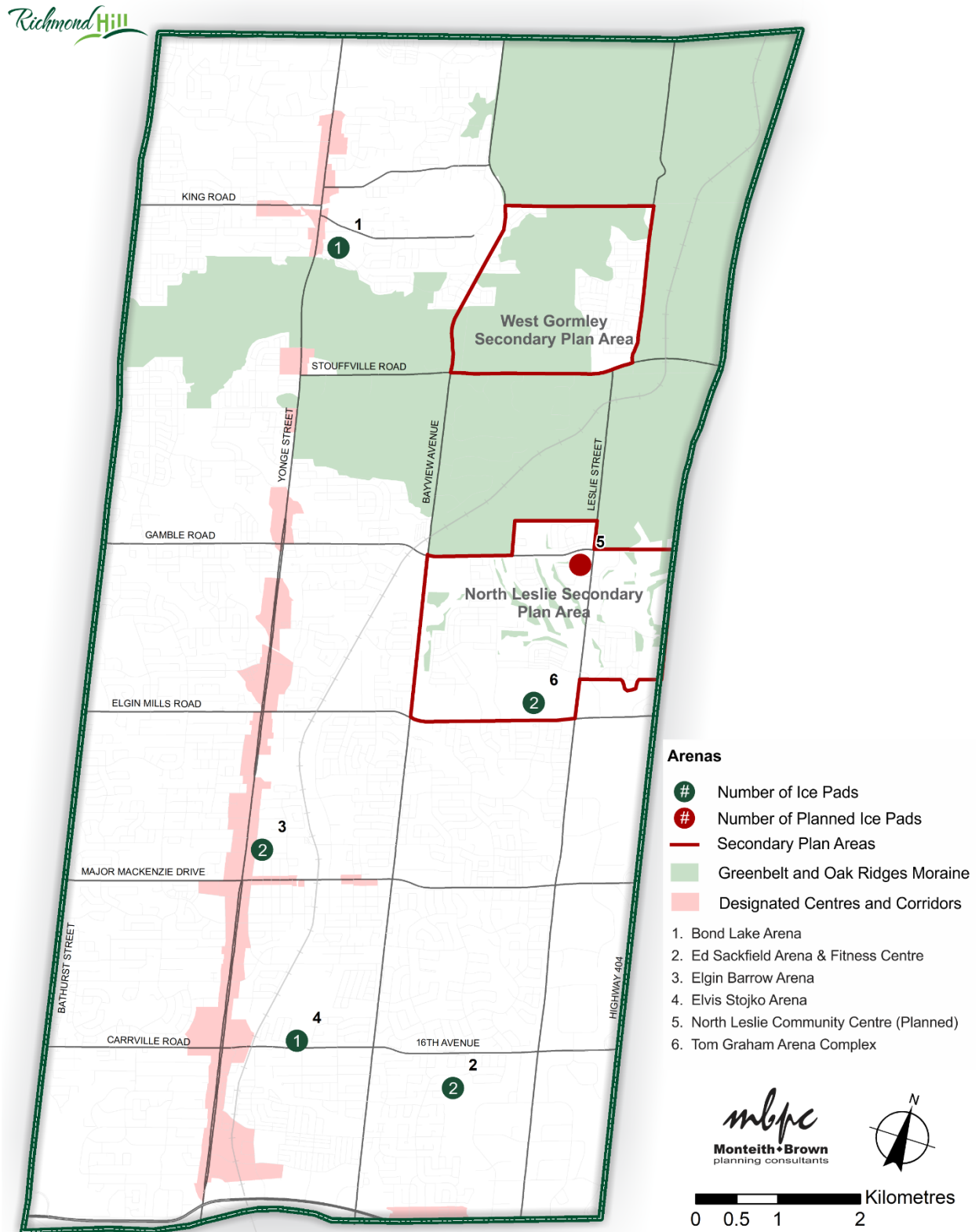
Arena (Year of Construction, Expansion/Renovation)	Ice Pad Supply
Bond Lake Arena (1972, 2010, 2011)	1 Ice Pad (180’x80’)
Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre (1991, 2020)	2 Ice Pads (200’x100’ and 200’x85’)
Elgin Barrow Arena (1923, 1967, 1982, 2010)	2 Ice Pads (200’x85’ and 179’x75’)
Elvis Stojko Arena (1986, 2013)	1 Ice Pad (200’x85’)
Tom Graham Arena Complex (1997, 2005)	2 Ice Pads (200’x85’)

Table 17: Service Level Comparison, Arenas (non-municipal arenas are excluded)

Ice Pads	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	13	1 : 14,900	1 per 650 youth players
Burlington	183,000	11	1 : 16,600	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	8	1 : 26,800	1 per 21,000 residents (or 1 per 800 players)
Brampton	614,000	17	1 : 36,100	1 per 700 to 800 players
Markham	347,000	10	1 : 34,700	1 per 450 youth players
Vaughan	324,000	6	1 : 54,000	1 per 500 youth participants
Average	313,000	11	1 : 30,500	

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Figure 21: Distribution of Arenas



Arena Trends

While Canada is internationally regarded for ice sports such as hockey and figure skating, there are signs that the participation in these sports has been waning. Data from Hockey Canada indicates that participation in minor hockey has been steadily declining since 2009 although there was a slight uptick in the number of players for the 2019/2020 season. Minor hockey registration has been supported by increasing participation among females. Hockey Canada reports that females make up 21% of registration among affiliated organizations in Ontario, which is an increase from 16% reported in 2014/2015 season. Anecdotally, the increasing popularity of female hockey has negatively impacted ringette, which has seen declining participation in some communities. The growth in female hockey is driven by a variety of factors such as changing lifestyle and personal commitments, efforts to break free from stereotypical gender roles and promote sport participation among females.

As a result of increased participation in female hockey, there is greater competition for prime-time ice, placing pressure on municipal arenas. However, this trend may be disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as a study conducted by Canadian Women & Sport found that nine in ten girls decreased or stopped participating in sports during the pandemic and one in four girls are not expected to return to sport post-pandemic.²⁶ Reasons for not returning include (but are not limited to) the lack of self-confidence and the lack of opportunities (e.g., organizations no longer active). The study identified strategies to ensure that there are opportunities available for females to remain in sport including involving females in the development of return to play plans and creating supportive environments that foster healthy social connections among participants and leaders.

Participation in figure skating has also declined from historic levels. While the number of figure skaters registered with Skate Canada and Skate Ontario are not at levels experienced in past decades, Skate for Life registrations reported for 2020 (which include CanSkate and PowerSkate) have grown by 2% nationally since 2014 and provincial figures have rebounded to reach 2014 registrations.

The decline in hockey and figure skating participation over the past decade was driven by factors such as the escalating cost of equipment and travel, the increasing cost of ice, time commitments, and immigration trends since the country's growth is being driven by newcomers arriving from countries that do not have strong ice sport programs (e.g., Asian, Caribbean and South American nations) or are not familiar with arena activities.²⁷ Additionally in a survey commissioned by Hockey Canada and Bauer Hockey Inc. for non-hockey playing families, one of the top reasons for not playing the sport is due to safety concerns, including the risk of concussion.²⁸

Declining participation has resulted in surplus arena capacity in many communities, particularly on weekends and during shoulder hours that fall just outside of prime time hours. Municipalities have implemented strategies to cope with shifting arena trends including creating/amending ice allocation policies, offering new program opportunities to promote learn-to-skate, learn-to-hockey, and sport safety, and subsidies to reduce the cost to participate. Some municipalities also close arenas on certain days or hold blackout periods to reduce operating costs.

²⁶ Canadian Women & Sport. (2021). COVID alert. Pandemic impact on girls in sport. Retrieved from <https://womenandsport.ca/>

²⁷ Urciuoli, A. (2020). Fewer Canadians are playing hockey, but does it matter? Retrieved from <https://quickbitenews.com/>

²⁸ Hockey Canada. (2013). Bauer Hockey, Hockey Canada research shows that growing the game is achievable. Retrieved from <https://www.hockeycanada.ca/>

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Declining participation in ice sports is being experienced in Richmond Hill. At the time when the 2013 Recreation Plan was prepared, there were nearly 7,000 youth and adult arena users. For the 2018/2019 season, the City's participation data revealed that this figure declined by approximately 32% to 4,700 players, the majority of whom were youth (4,000 players). In the following 2019/2020 season (prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of youth players in particular declined further to approximately 3,600 participants. The impact of COVID-19 has created an uncertain future for arena participation, particularly team-based sports such as hockey. Governing sport bodies have released protocols guiding practices and play that reduce the number of players on the ice at a given time, reducing or eliminating physical contact, and encouraging skaters to come to the arenas dressed to avoid use of dressing rooms.

Utilization Profile

Richmond Hill's prime time²⁹ ice schedules were analyzed to understand arena demand between the 2016/17 and 2018/19 season (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). This analysis excluded the use of the Ed Sackfield Arena #2 given that it was not operational during this period.

The City reported 13,588 hours booked for the 2018/19 season, translating to a system-wide usage rate of 86%. This represented a decline from 15,574 hours booked (or 96% utilization) from the 2016/17 season. While this decline suggests that arena demand is softening, a City-wide usage rate of 86% is indicative of a strong arena profile. During the three-season period, all City ice pads were fully booked during the early weekday prime time between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm and at near capacity during the late evenings after 9:00 pm (92%<). During the 2018/19 season, Tom Graham Arena Complex #1 was the most used ice rink with a usage rate of 91%. By contrast, Bond Lake Arena was the least used location with a usage rate of 80%.

The decline in ice usage was primarily driven by fewer weekend bookings as major arena users favour weekday evening ice, which is a trend observed in other municipalities. It is also noted that early morning weekday ice is generally underutilized. Over the three ice seasons, City-wide arena utilization between 6:00 am and 8:00 am during the week fluctuated between 36% and 43%. These findings suggest that there is capacity to accommodate additional usage within the arena system. The recent addition of a second ice pad at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre is expected to alleviate some arena pressures, particularly during the early weekday prime time period; however, the true impact has not yet been confirmed given that construction was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

²⁹ The prime time period includes 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm during the week and 9:00 am to 11:00 pm during the weekend.

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Figure 22: Summary of Prime-Time Ice Utilization, 2016/17 to 2018/19 Season

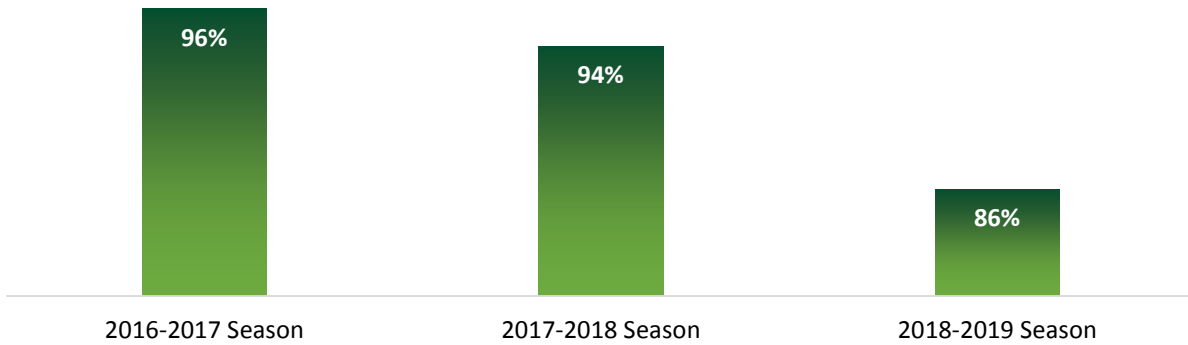
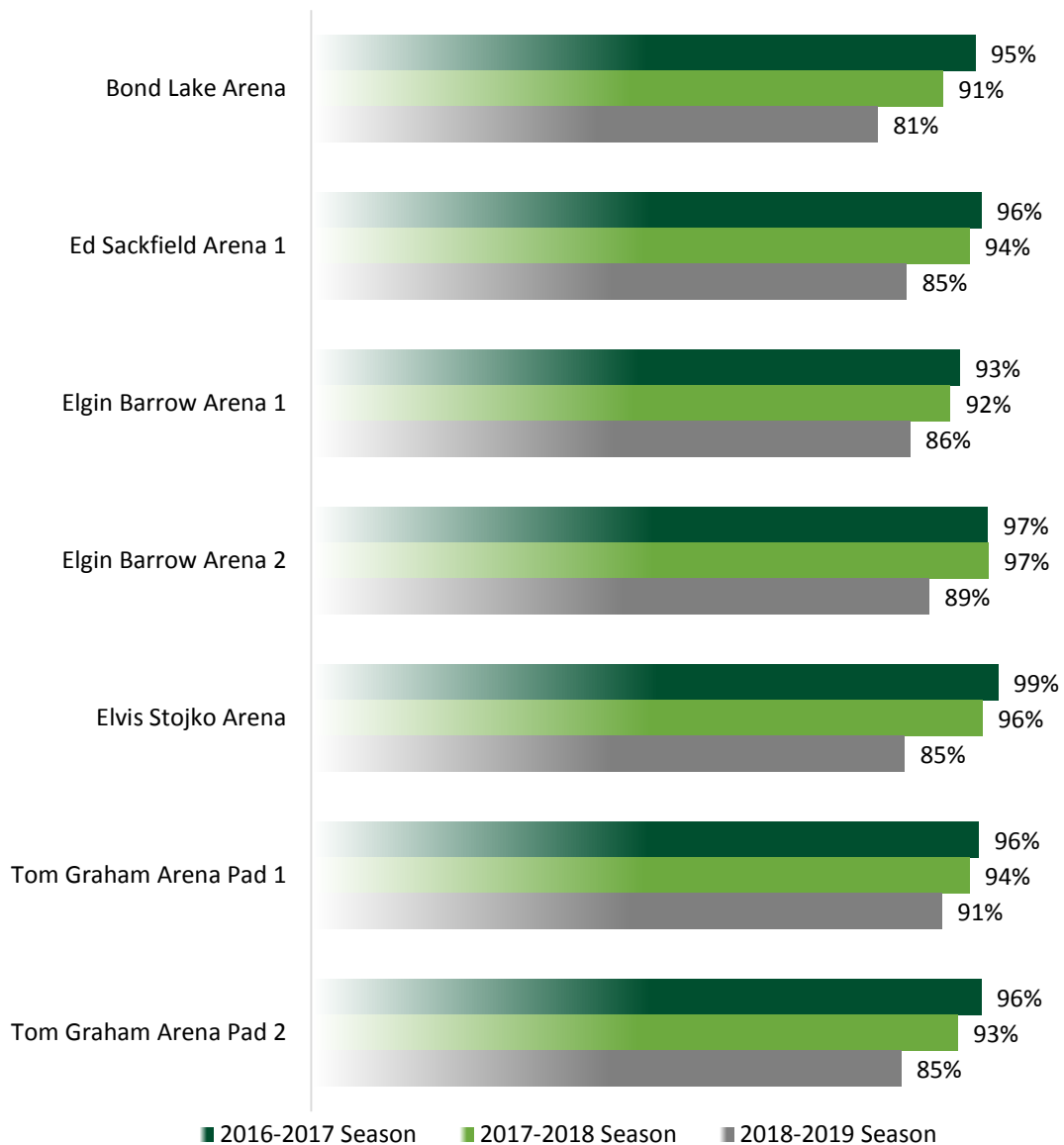


Figure 23: Summary of Prime-Time Ice Utilization by Arena, 2016/17 to 2018/19 Season



Preliminary Needs Assessment

With a current service level of one ice pad per 26,800 residents, Richmond Hill is below the target recommended in the 2013 Recreation Plan (one ice pad per 21,000 residents, which at the time translated to 1 ice pad per 800 registered players/skaters). Benchmark municipalities are guided by registration-based targets that range from one ice pad per 450 to 650 youth players or one ice pad per 700 to 800 youth and adult players. Registration data collected by the City revealed that there were approximately 4,700 youth and adult players for the 2018/2019 season translating into a service level of one ice pad per 600 players.

The City's historical ice pad service target suggests that there is currently a need for 12 ice pads in total, which is four more than what is currently provided. However, there is merit in adjusting this target given that since the 2013 Recreation Plan was completed, local participation in ice sports has declined by nearly one-third. This trend resulted in softening ice usage as the arena analysis revealed that the prime-time utilization declined from 96% to 85% over the past three seasons leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. With these considerations in mind, it is recommended that the service target be adjusted to one ice pad per 27,000 residents, which matches the existing service level and is more in line with the current ice pad to participant ratio (one ice pad per 600 participants).

Adjusting the service target also responds to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on arena organizations. During this unprecedented event, arena organizations across the Province have experienced lower participation levels. While indoor recreation facilities are beginning to re-open to the public, historic arena participation levels are not expected to return over the short-term, which will likely impact ice demand. Applying the adjusted service target to the projected 2031 population suggests that nine ice pads would be required to meet community needs during the planning period, one more than what is currently available.

A future multi-use community centre is being planned in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area, presenting an opportunity to establish a single ice pad at this location. This approach would strengthen the geographic distribution of arenas in Richmond Hill given that there is currently only one arena north of Gamble Road/19th Avenue (Bond Lake Arena). As a new construction, the City would have greater flexibility in the design process and it would be important to ensure that the arena is planned in a manner that it can be twinned in the future to add a second ice pad.

Recognizing that the new ice pad would not be required until 2031, the City should monitor ice usage during the planning period, particularly as the City continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the medium term, the City is encouraged to undertake an arena strategy to re-confirm the need for additional ice pad(s). As a part of this strategy, consideration should be given to historical ice utilization trends, participation data, waitlists, COVID-19 impacts, and other trends associated with ice usage.

Preliminary Findings – Arenas

20. The City should continue to regularly monitor ice utilization and participation to further understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have implications on future arena needs.
 21. Prior to constructing any additional ice pads, undertake an arena strategy to evaluate long-term ice pad needs. As a part of this strategy, consideration should be given to historical ice utilization trends, participation data, waitlists, COVID-19 impacts, and other trends associated with ice usage. The current information available suggests that adjusting the arena service target to one ice pad per 27,000 residents would be required to meet future needs. This would result in the need for one additional ice pad by 2031, to be accommodated at the North Leslie Community Centre with the potential to be twinned in the future.
-

5.4.4 Gymnasiums

Supply

Richmond Hill provides nine municipal gymnasiums at six locations across the City (Figure 24). This supply includes a new gymnasium at the Rouge Woods Community Centre that was added in 2018 through the conversion of the indoor bocce courts, as well as the three gymnasiums located at the Langstaff Community Centre where one gymnasium is owned by the City and other two are school gymnasiums. It should be noted that public-use of the two school gymnasiums is prohibited during school hours (they also tend to be under-sized for many gym-based sporting activities). Some of the City’s gymnasiums can be configured into smaller or larger spaces to facilitate simultaneous activities. For example, the Rouge Woods Community Centre has two full gymnasiums that can be subdivided into four small spaces or one large room.

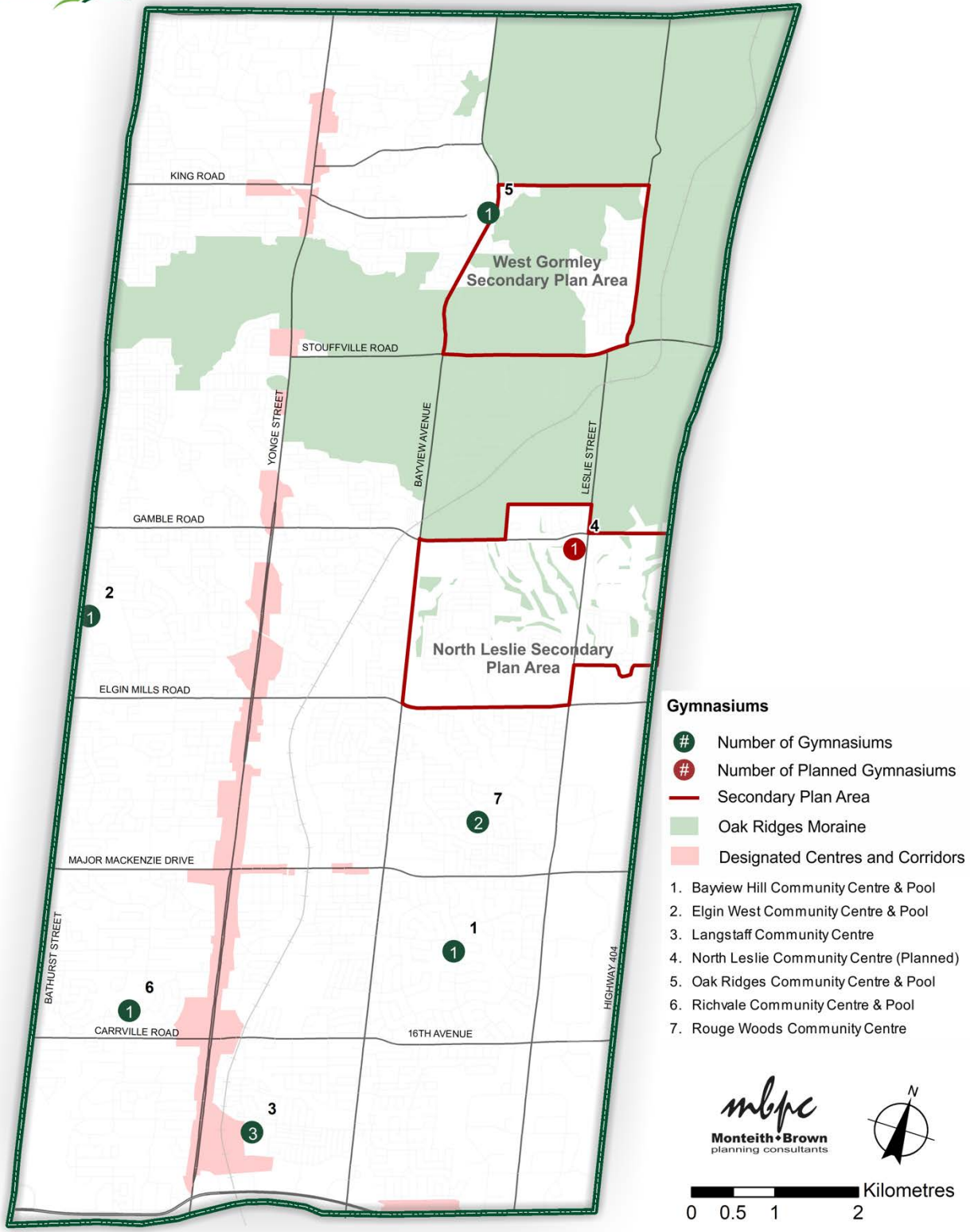
When factoring the number of single, double and triple gymnasiums that can be partitioned for concurrent uses, the City can program up to 13 gymnasiums simultaneously. The City’s gymnasium supply translates into a service level of one per 23,800 residents, which is the highest level of service compared to benchmark municipalities. Similar to other benchmark municipalities, the City’s gymnasium supply is supplemented by those offered through school boards. The gymnasium at the M.L. McConaghy Seniors Centre is excluded from the supply as it is not a typical gymnasium space given its small size and the fact that it is predominantly used for adults 55+ programming.

Table 18: Service Level Comparison, Gymnasiums

Gymnasiums	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Richmond Hill	214,000	9	1 : 23,800	1 per 25,000 residents
Burlington	183,000	7	1 : 26,200	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	9	1 : 36,000	1 per 30,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	16	1 : 38,400	Consider as part of a major facility development or renewal, and/or pursue by partnership opportunities
Markham	347,000	8	1 : 43,400	1 per 45,000 residents
Oakville	194,000	3	1 : 64,700	1 per 50,000 residents
Average	313,000	9	1 : 38,700	

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Figure 24: Distribution of Gymnasiums



Gymnasium Trends

Gymnasiums facilitate a variety of indoor sports and recreation opportunities that require a hard surface, large open space and high ceilings. Gymnasiums support both organized and drop-in activities including basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball, group fitness, and other active programs. While many other activities may take place in these facilities, such as special events and large social gatherings, non-sport related rentals tend to be given lower priority to ensure that gymnasiums are used for high demand recreation uses and to protect floor finishes from damage.

As gymnasiums accommodate broad opportunities, they are designed with adaptability and flexibility in mind. While there is no standard template, gymnasiums are typically influenced by community needs, although the minimum gymnasium size should be large enough to accommodate a school-sized basketball court with high ceilings (similar to dimensions found at the Langstaff Community Centre). Richmond Hill's newest gymnasium at the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool was designed to meet college standards with dividing walls and other amenities.

It is common for larger communities to provide multiple gymnasiums to facilitate simultaneous programs such as at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool. Municipalities may also partner with others (e.g., school boards) to provide gymnasium space such as at the Langstaff Community Centre. Some new gym builds consider capability for hosting multi-court tournaments with lines to match, sufficient ceiling height and window design to support all levels of sport (sometimes using a 'training court' or 'centre court' concept). Gymnasium amenities may also include storage, change rooms, seating areas, a stage, and/or kitchen.

The supply of municipal gyms is often bolstered by school boards that provide afterschool access to their gyms through the Province's Community Use of Schools initiative. School boards have complete control of gymnasium rentals at school sites and there is no requirement to provide local users with priority bookings, which can often create pressure for municipalities to provide or find space for groups. However, this approach continues to have strong merit in principle as it reduces the need for municipalities to construct facilities and avoid tax-funded duplications in service, while maximizing geographic distribution due to the nature in which schools are located throughout a community. Certain school gyms are of an older and smaller design that may not be conducive to quality sport and recreation activities (e.g., elementary schools may not be regulation court size or have enough 'run-out' space between the court and the walls). Individual schools may have discretion about the type of activities that can take place (e.g., some prohibit ball hockey to protect their floors) and can bump regular renters for school programs, thereby creating uncertainty.

Usage Profile

Utilization of Richmond Hill's gymnasiums generally remained steady between 2018 and 2019.³⁰ During this period, prime-time usage remained unchanged at 72% capacity. Non-prime usage increased moderately from 46% to 49%, which suggests that the City improved how its gymnasiums were used during the off-peak period. The gymnasium at the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool is the City's most used location, which was booked at full capacity during both years. Non-prime usage at this location also increased from 57% in 2018 to 72% in 2019. By contrast, Gymnasium C at the Langstaff Community Centre had the lowest prime and non-prime time usage at 53% and 30%, respectively.

³⁰ 2017 usage data was not available due to a change in registration software.

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Figure 25: Summary of Prime Gymnasium Usage, 2018 and 2019

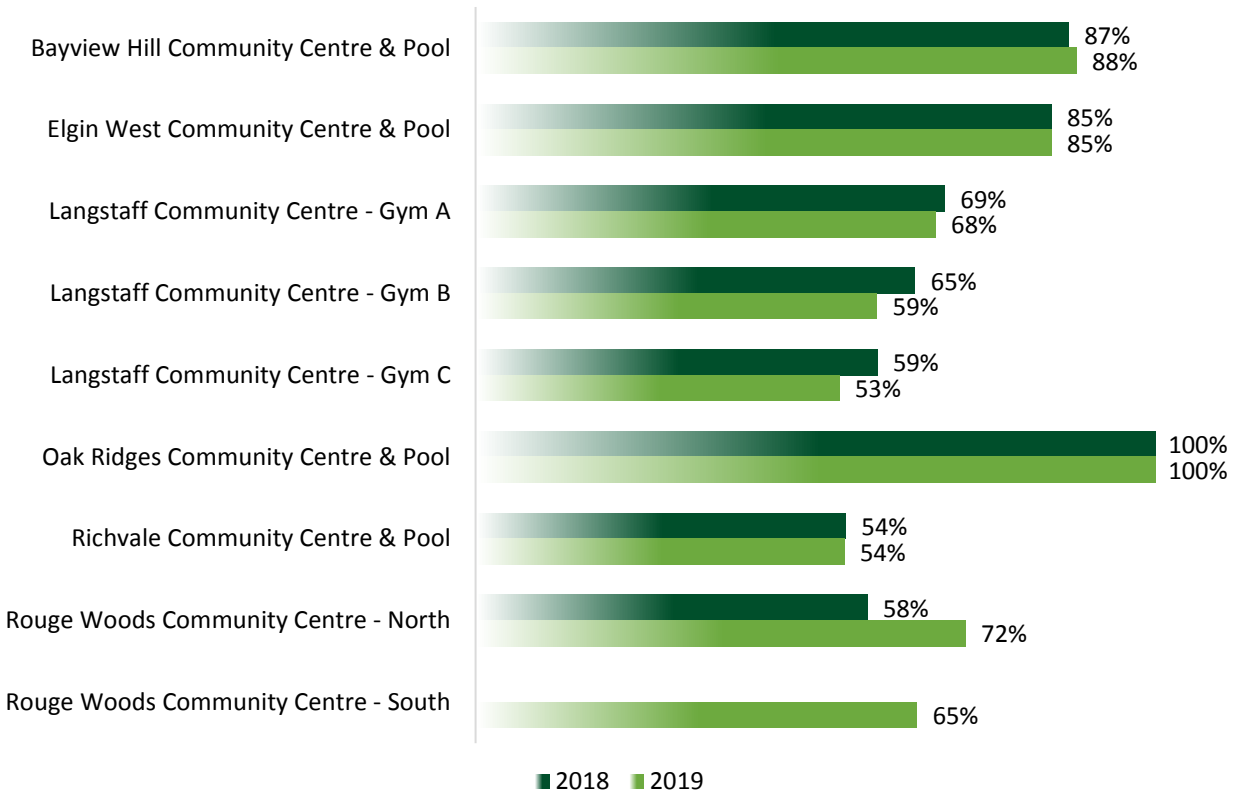
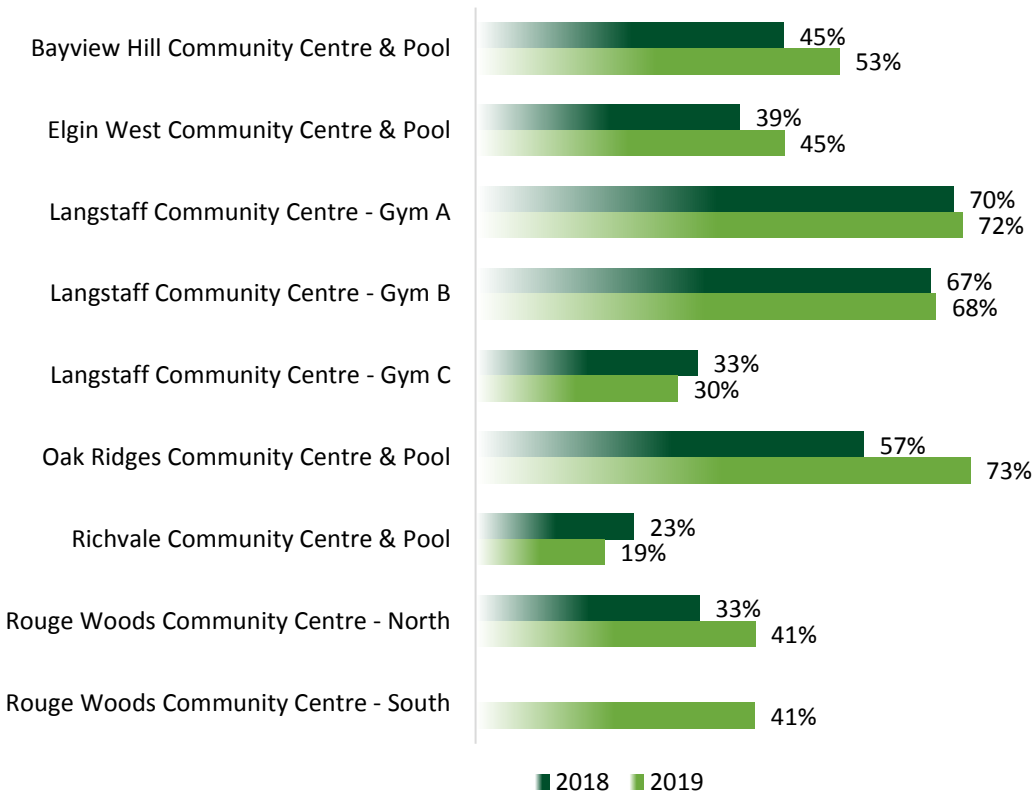


Figure 26: Summary of Non-Prime Gymnasium Usage, 2018 and 2019



Preliminary Needs Assessment

Richmond Hill's service level for gymnasiums is generally in line with the target recommended in the 2013 Recreation Plan at one per 25,000 residents, which is the highest compared to benchmark municipalities that range between one per 30,000 to 50,000 residents. While the utilization suggests that there is available capacity to accommodate additional usage, continuing to maintain the current service target is recommended in an effort to ensure a good distribution of publicly-accessible, indoor multi-purpose space available throughout the community that can support a variety of active recreation programs and rentals.

Maintaining adequate access to gymnasium space will be particularly important due to greater restrictions on the use of school gymnasiums due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, joint facility development opportunities with school boards should be explored as opportunities become available. Working with school boards to program gymnasium space located at school sites for after school activities, with a priority placed on local Richmond Hill groups, is also encouraged.

The service target would require that one additional gymnasium be added to the supply by 2031, which is expected to be addressed by the gymnasium planned for the future North Leslie Community Centre. To facilitate a variety of programs, new gymnasiums should be designed using a similar layout that's found at the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool with consideration given to a college-size dimensions with dividing walls and other supporting amenities.

Preliminary Findings – Gymnasiums

22. Maintain the provision target of one gymnasium per 25,000 residents. This results in a need for one additional gymnasium by the end of the planning period, which is expected to be met through the planned gymnasium at the future North Leslie Community Centre. The design of future gymnasiums should utilize a template similar to the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool with college-size dimensions, dividing walls and other supporting amenities. In an effort to optimize the use of gymnasium space, continuing to allocate gymnasium time in a fair and equitable manner to user groups is encouraged.
 23. As a best practice, the City should augment its gymnasium supply by exploring potential joint-development opportunities with school boards, as opportunities become available with a focus on access to larger college sized gymnasiums. Working with the school board to program gymnasium space located at school sites for after school activities, with a priority placed on local Richmond Hill groups, is also encouraged.
-

5.4.5 Fitness Centres

Supply

The City provides two equipment-based fitness centre and one fitness studio in Richmond Hill (Figure 27). Richmond Hill’s newest fitness centre is located at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre, which was created as an addition in 2018 and includes an indoor walking track, as well as a new aerobic room. The Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool features a variety of free-weights and cardio equipment and an aerobic room. The Bayview Hill Community Center & Pool contains the City’s smallest fitness studio. Given its small size and limited features, the fitness studio at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool is considered to be equivalent to half of a fitness centre when compared to the City’s newer fitness offerings.

With an adjusted supply of 2.5 fitness centres, Richmond Hill is providing a service level of one per 85,600 residents, which is the second lowest among benchmark municipalities. Richmond Hill’s indoor walking track yields a service level of one per 214,000 residents, which is the lowest among the two other municipalities (Oakville and Brampton) that provide this facility type while also noting plans for indoor walking tracks are in place in Vaughan and Markham through future facility development projects.

In addition to the City’s fitness centres, municipal fitness programs are also provided within spaces across the City, including the aerobic studio at the Centennial Pool and other multi-purpose spaces. This approach to providing fitness programs is consistent with those provided by benchmark municipalities.

Table 19: Service Level Comparison, Fitness Centres

Fitness Centres	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	4	1 : 48,500	1 per multi-purpose community centre
Vaughan	324,000	6	1 : 54,000	1 per 55,000 residents
Markham	347,000	5	1 : 69,400	1 per 60,000 residents
Richmond Hill	214,000	2.5	1 : 85,600	1 per 50,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	7	1 : 87,700	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	5	1 : 69,000	

Note: Fitness centres include spaces with free-weights, cardio equipment and fitness studios. Fitness programs may also be delivered within other multi-purpose spaces.

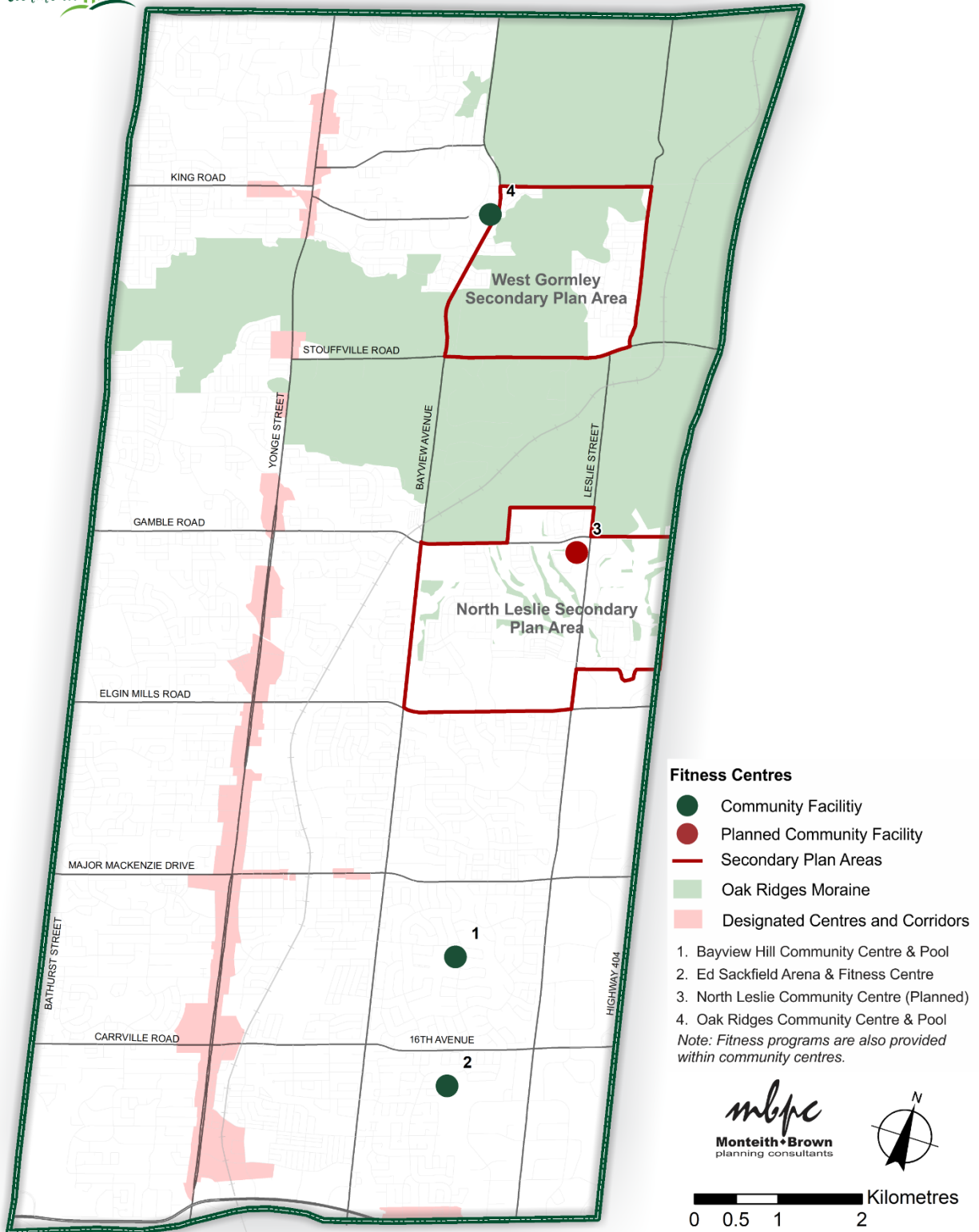
Table 20: Service Level Comparison, Indoor Walking Tracks

Indoor Walking Tracks	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Brampton	614,000	4	1 : 153,500	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	1	1 : 194,000	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	1	1 : 214,000	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	Not defined
Markham	347,000	0	-	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	1	1 : 187,200	

Note: Indoor walking tracks are planned at future facilities in Vaughan, Brampton and Markham.

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Figure 27: Distribution of Fitness Centres



Fitness Trends

Physical fitness and individual wellness are top of mind issues among many Canadians, resulting in a greater emphasis being placed on personal health. This has translated into increasing use of private and public sector fitness services, including active living programming centred on general health and wellness, weight-training, cardiovascular training and stretching activities (e.g., yoga and Pilates).

While many municipalities provide group fitness programming through fitness studios (with hardwood floors and mirrored walls) or through flexible multi-purpose program space, some municipalities, including the City of Richmond Hill, provide public equipment-based fitness centres. Public fitness centres are not intended to be direct competitors with the private sector as they are provided as an affordable fitness alternative. Municipally-provided fitness centres also align with overall community health goals as well as a holistic wellness experience given that municipalities have historically operated gymnasiums, indoor pools and more recently indoor walking tracks, which are all complements of fitness centres. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the fitness industry and led to closing of some private sector clubs, particularly smaller and niche-training venues but also larger operators such as some YMCAs; as a result, there may be more pressure placed on municipal fitness services, at least for the short-term.

With greater emphasis being placed on health and wellness, group fitness programming has become one of the fastest growing segments of the fitness sector, more so than traditional weight-training, as these programs are designed to be fun and social activities. Municipalities are also keeping pace with fitness trends such functional training (e.g., TRX, Cross-Fit, and High Intensity Interval Training) based on scientific evidence documenting its benefits but also in response to client demands.

According to recreation surveys across the province, walking is typically identified as the most popular recreation pursuit given that it is a self-structured activity that residents can engage in at one's leisure. This is one reason, among many, that has resulted in the growing popularity of indoor walking tracks as they offer several benefits such as year-round training for sport organizations and providing a safe and controlled environment for walking. Canada's varied climate conditions provide further support for walking tracks within community centres. Intangible benefits are also achieved as walking tracks promote physical activity and encourage users to remain active during the winter months. Richmond Hill has positioned itself to respond to these trends through the provision of an indoor walking track at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Recreation Plan recommended that fitness centres should be provided at a rate of one per 50,000 residents. It was also recommended that the City should provide large-scale fitness centres (3,000 square feet or more) that includes fitness equipment and an aerobic room. Consistent with this approach, the City recently completed an expansion and renovation to the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre. Given that it is a goal for the City to continue providing high quality and affordable fitness experiences for users, there is merit in adjusting the service target. The presence of fitness centres located in existing and planned condominiums, as well as private sector operators, also provides supporting evidence to re-visit the service target.

It is recommended that the City adopt a service target of one per 85,000 residents for fitness centres, which matches the current service level. This service target would require the City to provide three fitness centres by the end of the planning period. This is half of a fitness centre more than what is currently provided given that the fitness space at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool is currently undersized and lacks an aerobics studio.

At a high level, site observations suggest that expansion of this fitness space at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool would be a challenge given the placement of parking and outdoor amenities that are currently located on site. It is also recognized that the fitness spaces at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre and Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool are located within close proximity of each other and as a result, they generally serve the same catchment area in the south end of Richmond Hill. Given that the fitness space at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool does not fit the City's large-scale fitness provision model and is a service duplication, alternative uses for this space should be explored. As identified in Section 5.4.7 and 5.4.8, there is a service gap for youth and adults 55+ in the south end of Richmond Hill. An opportunity exists to convert the fitness space at the

Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool to dedicated youth and/or adult 55+ space to better respond to the needs of these age cohorts, which would result in a better use of space.

From a geographic distribution perspective, fitness centres are serving residents in the north and south end of Richmond Hill. Incorporating a fitness centre as part of the planned North Leslie Community Centre would be a logical addition to ensure that residents in this emerging area have access to public fitness opportunities. A fitness centre at this location would address fitness needs by the end of the planning period.

There is currently no recommended target guiding the provision of indoor walking tracks for Richmond Hill, nor is there an industry standard as these spaces are best provided where opportunities are available. As a best practice, indoor walking tracks can be integrated as part of new facility development projects, or through building renovations, preferably as a complementary amenity with fitness space, or encircling a major facility component such as an arena or gymnasium. An existing indoor walking track at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre satisfies needs in the south end, suggesting that there is a service gap in the central area and north end. Incorporating an indoor walking track at the future North Leslie Community Centre is a logical consideration to address these gaps and complement the planned fitness space and other facility components that have been recommended at this location. A second indoor walking track in Richmond Hill would yield a service level of one per 107,000 residents by the end of the planning period.

Preliminary Findings – Fitness Centres

24. The City should continue to provide large-scale fitness centres that features space for equipment and adjoining aerobic room. Recognizing the higher quality fitness experience provided by the City together with private-sector providers and fitness spaces within condominiums, the City should adjust service target to one per 85,000 residents. The following strategy is recommended to meet fitness needs by 2031:
 - a) Incorporate a fitness centre at the planned North Leslie Community Centre, which should include space for equipment, an adjoining aerobic room, and indoor walking track.
 - b) Investigate the feasibility of re-purposing the undersized fitness centre at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool to a dedicated youth and/or adult 55+ space (see Section 5.4.7 and 5.4.8).

5.4.6 Multi-Purpose Rooms

Supply

The City offers 58 multi-purpose rooms within its facilities across Richmond Hill. These spaces consist of meeting rooms, halls, activity and craft rooms and general program rooms that are suitable for a wide range of activities and community functions. Multi-purpose spaces vary in size and amenity including, but not limited to, storage, dividing walls, kitchens, and more. Due to the variability in size, amenity and function of multi-purpose spaces, a comparison with benchmark municipalities has not been completed. Richmond Hill also has three community rooms located within condo buildings (two existing and one not yet completed), boosting the supply to 61 multi-purpose spaces resulting in a service level of one per 3,500 residents.

Table 21: Summary of Multi-Purpose Rooms

Facility Name	Multi-Purpose Rooms	Facility Name	Multi-Purpose Rooms
Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool	7	M.L. McConaghy Seniors' Centre	5
Bond Lake Arena	2	Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool	3
Boynton House	1	Richmond Green Sports Centre	1
Centennial Pool	2	Richmond Green Sports Dome	1
David Dunlap Observatory	5	Richmond Hill Performing Arts Centre	1
Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre	4	Richvale Community Centre & Pool	8
Elgin Barrow Arena	3	Rouge Woods Community Centre	2
Elgin West Community Centre & Pool	5	Tom Graham Arena	1
Elvis Stojko Arena	1	Wave Pool	2
Langstaff Community Centre	4	Various Condominium Buildings	3 (2 existing, 1 not yet completed)
Total Multi-Purpose Rooms			61

Multi-Purpose Space Trends

Incorporating multi-purpose space within multi-use community facilities has been an ongoing best practice in modern facility planning and design due to efficiencies in cross-programming, staffing, construction, and other factors. For these reasons, the construction of stand-alone multi-purpose program spaces are generally discouraged as they tend to be underutilized, have higher operational costs, and exhibit program limitations when compared to multi-purpose spaces within community centres.

Municipalities that have historically provided stand-alone multi-purpose space are trending towards re-purposing opportunities to better utilize space or decommissioning them completely as they reach the end of their useful lifespan. Richmond Hill has experienced this first hand with its three stand-alone community spaces. The Lake Wilcox Hall, which was owned by the City and leased to a community group, has now been decommissioned. The Connor Building is currently leased to the Oak Ridges Soccer Club, and the Agricultural Building #2 at Richmond Green is currently being used for indoor bocce. The City will be undertaking a feasibility study commencing in 2022 to re-purpose the Connor Building into a public works yard to service the north end of the community.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

With a current service level of one per 3,500 residents for multi-purpose space, Richmond Hill is currently exceeding the target contained in the 2013 Recreation Plan (one per 4,500 residents). It is a best practice to consider the provision of multi-purpose space within new facility development or redevelopment. Multi-purpose spaces are flexibly designed in a variety of sizes and amenities to accommodate a broad range of activities and functions. Consideration should be given to dividing walls, storage space, kitchens, and other supporting features. Wood-sprung floors and mirrors should also be contemplated to accommodate fitness programs.

While the currently target would suggests that the City would not require any additional multi-purpose spaces, the inclusion of multi-purpose space within the future North Leslie Community Centre would achieve the benefits of providing integrated community space such as cross-programming opportunities and efficiencies with staffing and maintenance, while enhancing the geographic distribution of affordable multi-purpose space across the City. As a best practice, between three to five multi-purpose spaces should be provided within new community centres. Based on the projected 2031 population, this would result in a service level of one per 3,800 residents. Optimizing use of these spaces will be important for the City to ensure a broad range of programs, activities and rentals are available to residents.

To address indoor community space needs within areas of intensification, it has been the City's practice to secure public space within condominium buildings. The City has been successful in negotiating three of these spaces. Two of these spaces have been completed and the third space, which is also the largest, has not yet been completed. The City has had challenges with realizing the full potential of multi-purpose spaces within condominium buildings given the size of the two existing spaces and the lack of parking and on-site staffing. Due to these constraints these particular spaces are generally underutilized. While there are limitations with the currently supply of multi-purpose spaces within condominium buildings, it continues to be an important strategy to provide residents living within intensification areas with a public space to gather and participate in recreation activities if they are designed appropriately and offer supporting amenities.

It will be important for the City to continue to monitor the need for multi-purpose space in areas of intensification with consideration given to partnership opportunities with the private sector and development industry. The negotiation of future public spaces within condominium buildings should have regard for public access, flexible and sufficiently sized spaces, parking accommodation and other associated amenities.

Preliminary Findings – Multi-Purpose Rooms

25. A revised service target of one per 4,000 residents for multi-purpose rooms would require Richmond Hill to provide between three and four new multi-purpose spaces during the planning period, which should be met through the future North Leslie Community Centre.
 26. As a best practice, multi-purpose rooms within new facility development or redevelopment should be flexibly designed in a variety of sizes and amenities to accommodate a broad range of activities and functions. Consideration should be given to wood sprung floors, mirrors, dividing walls, storage space, kitchens, and other ancillary features.
 27. Continue to monitor space needs in areas of intensification with consideration given to partnership opportunities with the private sector and development industry. The provision of indoor recreation facilities within or near intensification areas should have regard for public access, flexible and sufficiently sized spaces, parking accommodation and other associated amenities.
-

5.4.7 Youth Spaces

Supply

Richmond Hill operates the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre that provides a variety of activities and spaces geared to youth including a games room, lounge area, computer room, kitchen and other amenities that can support programs and events. The Youth Centre’s indoor spaces are complemented by outdoor amenities including a half basketball court and a ropes challenge course. A dedicated youth space is also located at the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool. This supply translates into a service level of one per 107,000 residents, which is on par with the benchmark average; however, this should be interpreted with caution given that youth programs are also provided through multi-purpose program rooms across the City (as is the case in other benchmark municipalities).

Table 22: Service Level Comparison, Youth Spaces

Dedicated Youth Centres	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	3	1 : 64,700	Not defined
Markham	347,000	4	1 : 86,800	1 per 10,000 residents (age 10-19)
Richmond Hill	214,000	2	1 : 107,000	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	1	1 : 183,000	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	3	1 : 110,400	

Note: Municipally-delivered youth activities may also take place within multi-purpose program rooms.

Youth Trends

The City of Richmond Hill’s Youth Action Committee (YAC) provides a voice for the youth of Richmond Hill, while advising City Council of important recreational and social issues concerning the City’s younger population. Activities and events facilitated through YAC include an annual Youth Week, Santa Clause Parade, and other programs and social activities for local youth.

The importance of serving youth is crucial as there is ample research to suggest that access to parks, recreation and cultural services are of prime importance during their critical formative stage of physical, mental and emotional development.

Research suggests that youth have a preference for unstructured activities allowing youth spaces to be flexibly designed to allow for a broad cross-section of structured and unstructured activities. Not only are youth spaces important to provide a safe meeting space, they can also facilitate positive reinforcement to combat concerns surrounding mental and physical health among youth. The Eyer Wideman Youth Centre is an example of such a positive, flexible space. The City is also recognized as a Youth-Friendly Community, which has become a standard symbol for municipalities across Ontario to demonstrate quality assurance and compliance with principles of positive youth development.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Recreation Plan did not recommend a service target for youth spaces. It was instead recommended that where possible, integrated space geared towards youth should be considered within multi-purpose community facilities, with consideration given to lounge space, art and music studio, kitchen, and storage. This is a common approach used in benchmark municipalities as the co-location of youth space within a multi-use community centre achieves benefits and efficiencies with respect to staffing and cross-programming opportunities.

The continuation of this facility provision approach for youth space is a best practice that should continue to be encouraged to achieve the previously mentioned benefits. With a future North Leslie Community Centre being planned, it is imperative that space geared towards youth is considered. The importance of providing engaging and inviting youth space in this area cannot be understated given that the demographic profile of residents in the north end of Richmond Hill is younger compared to the south due to the number of young families. The style of housing planned for the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area suggests that this location will continue to be attractive for this segment of the community.

Youth space within community centres may be provided in the form of dedicated rooms, shared space with older adults, or multi-use space that is accessible to youth during designated times (e.g., after school hours). Complementary amenities that are desirable to youth should be considered such as lounge space, kitchen, and other ancillaries.

It is important to provide a balanced distribution of youth spaces due to the limited distance that this demographic group can travel. A scan of existing community spaces in the City's south end revealed that opportunities may exist to re-purpose the fitness centre at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool (see Section 5.4.5) to create drop-in space for youth. This space would be complementary to the indoor and outdoor amenities already available at this location. Opportunities to incorporate youth space at other community spaces, such as at the Elgin West Community Centre & Pool, should be explored to enhance the distribution of drop-in space for this segment of the community.

The preferred model for providing youth space is through the integration of multi-use community facilities. As a standalone building, the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre provides a unique experience that ties together indoor drop-in activities with an outdoor ropes challenge course; however, the City has had challenges with boosting interest and utilization at this site as youth typically have a preference for space integrated within multi-use community centres and the fact that transportation and access to the site is a challenge. This is consistent with trends found in other communities, reinforcing that communities should refrain from establishing stand-alone youth spaces and that opportunities should be in areas that are easily accessible. On this basis, the City should cease operating the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre; consideration should be given to relocating the associated ropes challenge course to another location that is complementary to other youth opportunities such as Phyllis Rawlinson Park (see Section 5.5.14). A separate study should be undertaken to evaluate alternative uses for the facility that's respectful of the house's heritage status.

Preliminary Findings – Youth Spaces

28. There is no current recommended service target for dedicated youth spaces. As a best practice, the following provision strategy should be considered to achieve benefits in cross-programming opportunities and staffing efficiencies, potentially as dedicated space or shared with adults 55+. Complementary amenities that are desirable to youth should be considered such as lounge space, kitchen, and other ancillaries. Planning and decision-making regarding youth space should involve consultation with the Mayor’s Youth Action Committee.
- a) Incorporate youth space as part of the future North Leslie Community Centre.
 - b) Re-purpose the fitness centre at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool to youth space.
 - c) Investigate opportunities to integrate youth space within community centres in the south end of Richmond Hill, such as at the Elgin West Community Centre & Pool.
 - d) Cease operations of the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre and undertake a study to evaluate alternative uses for the facility that’s respectful of the houses’ heritage status. The outdoor ropes challenge course should be relocated (see Section 5.5.14).
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5.4.8 Space for Adults 55+

Supply

Richmond Hill provides three dedicated spaces for adults aged 55+. The M.L. McConaghy Centre is a standalone membership-based facility that offers many activities and events including fitness, dance, cards, clinics and more. Dedicated spaces for adults 55+ that is integrated within larger community centres are also located at the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool (shared with youth) and Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool. The adults 55+ space at the Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool is provided in partnership with Carefirst. This facility provision model is similar in benchmark municipalities, where most communities provide both standalone and integrated adults 55+ spaces. Some of the adults 55+ spaces in comparative communities may be operated by community-based clubs (e.g., leased) or are used by older adult clubs during designated times.

The City’s supply of standalone adults 55+ centres translates into a service level of one per 214,000 residents, while the service level for integrated adults 55+ spaces is one per 107,000 residents, which is higher compared to the benchmark averages. It is noted that most benchmark municipalities (including Richmond Hill) also deliver adults 55+ programming within other multi-purpose spaces.

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Table 23: Service Level Comparison, Dedicated Space for Adults 55+

Space for Adults 55+	Approximate Population	Standalone Adult 55+ Centres	Service Level	Dedicated Adult 55+ Rooms	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	2	1 : 97,000	2	1 : 97,000	Scale declining over time from 0.5sf to 0.32sf per resident (age 55+)
Burlington	183,000	1	1 : 183,000	0	-	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	1	1 : 214,000	2	1 : 107,000	Not defined
Markham	347,000	1	1 : 347,000	4	1 : 86,800	1 per 20,000 residents (age 55+)
Brampton	614,000	1	1 : 614,000	1	1 : 122,800	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	11	1 : 29,500	Not defined
Average	313,000	1	1 : 291,000	2	1 : 226,200	

Note: Dedicated Adult 55+ Rooms includes integrated spaces within community centres, some of which are operated by community-based clubs. Municipally-delivered programs for adults 55+ may also take place within multi-purpose program rooms.

Adult 55+ Trends

Statistics Canada reported that the population of Richmond Hill’s adults aged 55+ grew by 26% between the 2011 and 2016 Census period, while the City’s median age also increased by 2.4 years to 42.2 years. While Richmond Hill’s population is getting older, which is consistent with broader aging trends, it is older compared to York Region (median age: 41.1 years) and the Province (41.3 years). Aging trends suggest that the population of adults 55+ in Richmond Hill will be the fastest growing age group over the next decade and beyond. This trend is driven by the baby boomer generation, which is expected to drive demand for activities given that this group has been found to be wealthier and more physically active than previous generations.

As a result of the many physical and social benefits produced by dedicated spaces for adults 55+, these assets are generally regarded as an important part of the health care and recreation sectors. In general, these centres province-wide have been most successful in attracting individuals from lower or middle income brackets, including a very high portion of single women. Because these spaces are designed to appeal to such a wide age range, members tend to stay involved for a very long time. Members of centres for the 55+ age group tend to be healthier and have strong activity patterns that help them remain physically well (55% of members described their level of physical activity as fair/moderate, and 33% as good/excellent).³¹

As a result of a more active 55+ population, there is a shift away from traditional programs such as playing cards and Bingo. Instead, many adults 55+ are seeking activities that focus on active living, health and wellness, education, and other activities that centre upon cognitive stimulation and socialization, although a balanced program offering is necessary to ensure that there is something for all interests, abilities and age ranges (e.g., ages 55 to 65, 66 to 75, 76 and over). Residents in Richmond Hill who are aged 55+ benefit from access to the McConaghy Seniors Centre and the programs and workshops available across the City.

³¹ Older Adult Centres’ Association of Ontario. 2010. Building Bridges to Tomorrow: User Profile of Older Adults Centres in Ontario. p.4, p.68.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

There is no standard guiding the provision of dedicated space for adults 55+. Best practices in facility design dictate that this type of space should be incorporated as part of multi-purpose community facilities to maximize cross-programming opportunities and efficiencies associated with facility construction and staffing. The integration of space for adults 55+ is also beneficial in optimizing the use of recreation and community facilities during the daytime for active and passive programming. This approach has been adopted by the City as articulated in its 2013 Recreation Plan and has been demonstrated through the integration of space for adults 55+ at Richmond Hill's Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool.

The integration space for adults 55+ as part of multi-use community facilities should continue to be the preferred provision model moving forward to best serve the needs of residents beyond the planning period. With this in mind, space for adults 55+ should be included at the future North Leslie Community Centre. Other opportunities may exist in the south end of Richmond Hill including investigating opportunities to establish space for adults 55+ at the Elgin West Community Centre & Pool. Potential provision models may be considered include dedicated space or shared space with youth, or multi-purpose space with designated timeslots. Complementary amenities such as a kitchen, lounge, storage and other ancillaries should be included.

Richmond Hill's existing integrated spaces for adults 55+ should continue to be augmented by the M.L. McConaghy Centre to ensure that programs and opportunities to gather and socialize with others are accessible throughout Richmond Hill. With continued aging of the population and planned intensification along Yonge Street, this stand-alone space is well positioned to serve its membership over the next 10 years.

Preliminary Findings – Spaces for Adults 55+

29. Space for adults 55+ should be provided based on opportunities to be integrated as part of multi-use community centres to facilitate cross-programming opportunities and achieve efficiencies. On this basis, the following strategy should be considered to provide space for adults 55+, potentially as dedicated space or space shared with youth. As a part of the design process, Complementary amenities such as a kitchen, lounge, storage and other ancillaries should be considered.
 - a) Provide adult 55+ space within the future North Leslie Community Centre.
 - b) Investigate opportunities to incorporate adults 55+ space within other multi-use community centres in the south end of Richmond Hill such as at Elgin West Community Centre & Pool.

5.4.9 Indoor Artificial Turf Fields

Supply

The City provides two indoor artificial turf fields at the Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park. The Richmond Green Sports Dome is a FIFA-sized turf field contained within an air-supported bubble (the field can be rented as one, two or four fields). This Dome is a seasonal facility to support winter programming, although the air-supported bubble was not removed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A smaller permanent indoor turf field is located within the Richmond Green Sports Centre, which is one-quarter of the size of a FIFA turf field. The City’s indoor fields translate into a service level of one per 107,000 residents, which is the highest level of service among the three benchmark municipalities that provide this type of facility.

Table 24: Service Level Comparison, Indoor Artificial Turf Fields

Indoor Turf Fields	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Richmond Hill	214,000	2	1 : 107,000	1 per 100,000 residents
Markham	347,000	3	1 : 115,700	1 per 75,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	4	1 : 153,500	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	0	-	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	3	1 : 125,400	

Note: Indoor artificial turf fields can be rented in various configurations. For example, the indoor artificial turf field at the Richmond Green Sports Dome can be rented as one, two or four fields.

Indoor Artificial Turf Trends

Richmond Hill has developed indoor artificial turf facilities to provide enhanced recreation experiences that complement its outdoor fields and respond to increasing demand for year-round play. While the primary use of artificial turf fields is for soccer, these facilities can also accommodate other field sports such as rugby, lacrosse, football, team conditioning and training, and fitness pursuits. Indoor fields allow municipalities to deliver their own instructional programming and leagues while servicing local sports field associations that organize their own leagues and related programs, as well those seeking pick-up rentals.

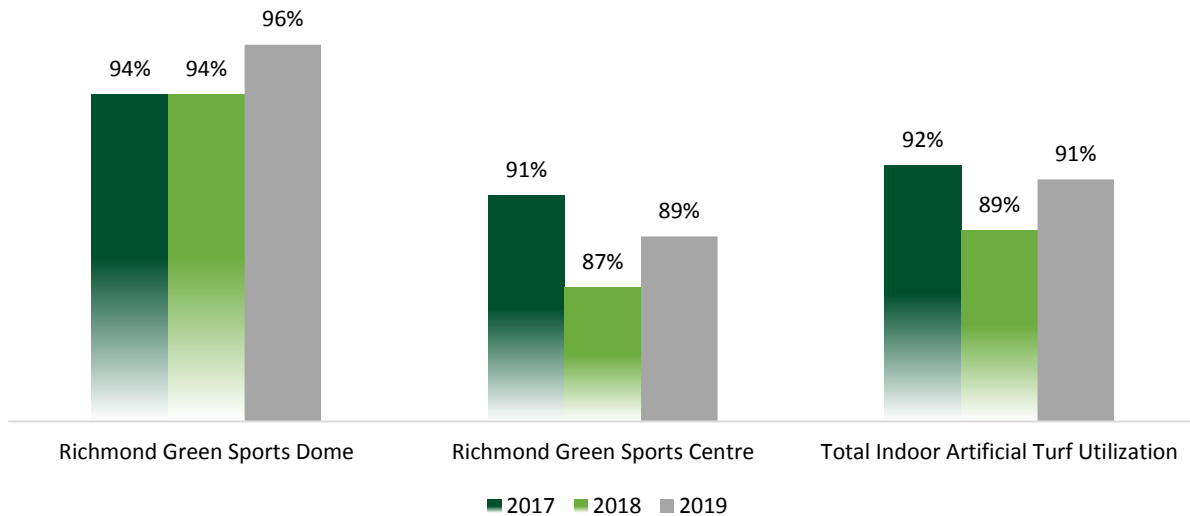
Indoor turf fields are typically provided by a municipality, the private sector, a community group, or a combination of the three to share financial and operating responsibility. Partnership agreements between municipalities and community-based operators are typical where an air-supported structure (bubble) encloses the field. Many municipalities that have constructed permanent structures have tended to do so by integrating them with other municipal recreation facilities such as the turf field at the Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park, and thus usually operate such facilities autonomously given that there are already municipal staff onsite to schedule, maintain, and provide access to the fields while overhead costs are usually built into the entire facility budget.

The size of indoor turf fields varies considerably. Some municipalities have designed fields around the dimensions of an ice pad (including some that have converted surplus ice pads) while templates employed by other communities take the shape of a rectangular field. Even the size of an indoor rectangular field differs by community as some provide a full-size field that can be divisible into four while others provide fields that can only be divisible in two (or are not divided at all).

Utilization Profile

A review of utilization data suggested that Richmond Hill’s two indoor artificial turf facilities are well used. In 2019, the City had a system-wide utilization rate of 91%, which was a decrease of one percent from 2017 (Figure 28). The strong usage level suggests that the City’s indoor artificial turf fields are under pressure. During this period, the Richmond Green Sports Dome was the most popular location, which had a usage rate of 96% in 2019, an increase from 94% in 2017. Usage of the Richmond Green Sports Centre declined marginally from 91% in 2017 to 89% in 2019, although this continues to demonstrate a strong level of use.

Figure 28: Summary of Indoor Artificial Turf Field Utilization, 2017 to 2019



Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Recreation Plan recommended a target of one indoor artificial turf field per 100,000 residents, making Richmond Hill undersupplied by its own standards although the City provides the highest level of service compared to benchmarked municipalities; Brampton is the only other benchmark municipality with a defined service level target of one per 75,000 residents.

While the current service target would suggest that Richmond Hill does not require any additional indoor artificial turf fields, historical utilization data identified that the existing supply is under pressure and operating at near capacity. The space constraints at the Richmond Green Sports Centre are also recognized given that it’s one-quarter the size of the Richmond Green Sports Dome, which is a FIFA size field. There may be merit in adopting a higher service target to alleviate pressure for indoor artificial turf facilities; however, given the nature of these specialized facilities, an Indoor Turf Study is recommended to confirm future needs. This study should confirm a location for the indoor artificial turf field, including associated amenities and an implementation strategy. Sports field users should be engaged as a part of this process to ensure that the space is responsive to their needs.

Preliminary Findings – Indoor Artificial Turf Fields

30. Undertake an Indoor Turf Study to confirm a location for an indoor artificial turf field, including associated amenities and an implementation strategy. Input from sports field users should form part of the process to ensure that the space is responsive to their needs.
-

5.4.10 Indoor Bocce Courts

Supply

The City previously operated an indoor bocce facility at the Rouge Woods Community Centre; however due to low utilization, the space was converted into a gymnasium in 2018. As an alternative, the City now offers three portable indoor bocce courts at Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park, which translates into a service level of one per 71,300 residents that falls in between the two other benchmark municipalities that operate bocce courts (noting provision of municipal indoor bocce courts is not common across the province). Vaughan and Markham were the only other benchmark municipalities that provide indoor bocce courts. A bocce club in Brampton utilizes school space to meet their facility needs.

Table 25: Service Level Comparison, Indoor Bocce Courts

Indoor Bocce Courts	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Vaughan	324,000	17	1 : 19,100	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	3	1 : 71,300	Not defined
Markham	347,000	4	1 : 86,800	1 per 75,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	0*	-	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	11	1 : 52,900	

* A bocce club in Brampton utilizes school space to meet their facility needs.

Bocce Trends

Bocce is predominantly played by adults 55+ and the Italian-Canadian community. The strength of the organization(s) promoting and driving interest in bocce often dictates the level of demand and participation. Importantly, for bocce to be successful it will not only require that current participants continue to be involved but that younger adults and youth are encouraged and welcomed to learn and participate in the sport. There are no provincial trends that suggest participation is increasing among youth which suggest work will be required to sustain bocce in communities that currently provide opportunities.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

There is currently no recommended target guiding the provision of indoor bocce courts. A staff report (SRCS.19.20) was prepared in 2019 to identify options for four indoor bocce courts to respond to comments from existing bocce court users and their expectation for an indoor facility. While staff did not conduct a community-wide evaluation of bocce for the 2019 report, recent membership data revealed that between 2017 and 2019, the number of bocce memberships sold declined by 30% from 77 to 54 memberships. Usage data also indicated that use of the membership pass declined by 70% from 1,378 to 395. Four facility solutions were presented in the staff report:

- a) Maintain the status quo;
- b) Install specialized bocce court flooring at Richmond Green Agricultural Building;
- c) Modify the existing Richmond Green Agricultural Building to install four permanent bocce courts and improved amenities; and
- d) New permanent bocce facility complete with convertible courts and amenities.

The fourth provision option was ultimately supported (new permanent bocce facility complete with convertible courts and amenities at an approximate cost of \$7 Million). This option ensures that the new indoor bocce courts are designed with flexibility in mind and include removable floor coverings so the facility could be utilized for multi-purpose space to support other programming needs. However, it is important to recognize that the 2019 report prepared by staff identified that indoor bocce memberships and use of the existing courts has been steadily declining over a three-year period. This participation trend is consistent with the findings from the 2013 Recreation Plan, as well as broader trends observed in other communities as bocce is not considered to be a growth sport.

It is also expected that the \$7 Million cost estimate for the new permanent indoor bocce court that was identified in the 2019 staff report has increased given the increase in construction labour and material costs due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a substantial public investment for 54 indoor bocce members and is not consistent with Richmond Hill's corporate strategic priority of being fiscally responsible as the City emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly given that there are other parks, recreation and cultural needs that have been identified through this planning process. While it is recognized that the permanent indoor bocce courts would be convertible to other uses, the construction of indoor multi-purpose space is typically more affordable than what is currently being proposed. With this in mind recognizing the low and decreasing number of bocce players and priorities identified for consideration in the PRC Plan Reviews, the decision to establish a new permanent indoor bocce court should be re-evaluated to determine a more cost-effective solution to meeting a low and decreasing number of bocce participants.

Preliminary Findings – Indoor Bocce Courts

- 31. In light of a continued decrease in participation, continue to use the indoor bocce courts at the Richmond Green Agricultural 2 building for year-round bocce use as an alternative to constructing a new indoor bocce facility.
-

5.5 Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Table 26 summarizes outdoor recreation facilities that are owned or actively maintained by the City of Richmond Hill, as well as school facilities permitted through the Recreation & Culture Division. The City’s outdoor facility inventory is augmented by non-municipal providers such as conservation areas, non-permitted school amenities and private sector recreation providers operating locally.

Table 26: City of Richmond Hill Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Facility Type	Supply	Location(s)	Current Service Level
Rectangular Fields	52 or 60 ULE	Lit Artificial Turf: Crosby Park, Richmond Green (2) Lit Senior Field: David Hamilton Park, Grovewood Park, Headwaters Community Park, Dr. James Langstaff Community Park, Leno Park, Morgan Boyle Park, Rouge Crest Park, Silver Stream Park, William Bond Park, William Neal Park	1 ULE : 3,600
Lit Artificial Turf	3		
Lit Senior Field	10		
Unlit Senior Field	10	Unlit Senior Field: Alexander MacKenzie HS, Bayview Hill Park, Bayview SS, Dr. Bette Stephenson Centre for Learning, Jean Vanier CHS, Langstaff SS, Pleasantville PS, Richvale Athletic Field, Russell Tilt Park, St. Theresa of Lisieux CHS	
Unlit Junior/Mini Field	29	Junior/Mini Field: Autumn Grove Park, Bradstock Park (2), Don Head Park, Dove Park, Dr. James Langstaff Community Park, French Royalist Park, Gapper Park, Harding Park, Helmkey Park, John Tipp Park, Little Don Park, Mitchell Pond Park, Monticello Park, Palmer Park (2), Philips Ridge Park, Pine Farm Park, Raccoon Park, Redstone Park (2), Richmond Green, Richvale Athletic Field, Russel Tilt Park (2), Temperanceville Park, Timber Mill Park, Toll Bar Park, William Harrison Park <i>Supply excludes non-permitted fields</i>	
Ball Diamonds	39 or 47.5 ULE	Lit Senior Hardball: David Hamilton Park, Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park (3) Lit Senior Slo-Pitch: Crosby Park, David Hamilton Park, Harding Park, Headwaters Community Park, Leno Park, Morgan Boyle Park, Ozark Park, Richmond Green (4), Town Park Unlit Senior Slo-Pitch: Helmkey Park, Russell Tilt Park Lit Junior Softball: Ozark Park	1 ULE : 4,500
Lit Senior Hardball	4		
Lit Senior Slo-Pitch	12		
Unlit Senior Slo-Pitch	2		
Lit Junior Softball	1	Unlit Junior Softball: Bayview Hill Park, Bradstock Park (3), Brickworks Park, Carrville Park, Chapman Park, Don Head Park (2), Harrington Park, Mary Dawson Park, Pine Farm Park, Pleasantville Park, Richvale Athletic Field (4), Ritter Park, Russell Farm Park (2) <i>Supply excludes non-permitted ball diamonds</i>	
Unlit Junior Softball	20		
Cricket Fields	0	-	-

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Facility Type	Supply	Location(s)	Current Service Level
Basketball and Multi-use Courts	54	Multi-Use Court: David Hamilton Park*, Flood Farmstead Park*, Lake Wilcox Park (2)*, Philips Ridge Park*, Rouge Crest Park*	1 : 4,000
Multi-Use	6	Full Court: Artisan Park, Bayview Hill Park, Dove Park, Dovestone Park, Dr. James Langstaff Community Park, Grovewood Park, Harrington Park, King's College Park (2), Leno Park, Mary Dawson Park, Mount Pleasant Park, Newberry Park, Oak Ridges Lions Club Park, Ozark Park, Richmond Green (4), Ritter Park, Rocking Horse Ranch, Silver Stream Park, William Bond Park, William Neal Community Park	
Full	24		
Half/Irregular	24	Half/Irregular: Baif Park, Bridgeview Park, Cordave Parkette, Crosby Park, Eyer Homestead Park, Fontainbleu Park, French Royalist Park, Fulton Parkette, Grace Lawrence Parkette, Grovewood Park, Harding Park, Headwaters Community Park, Hillsvie Park, Larrat Lea Park, Macleod'S Landing Park, Pine Farm Park, Red Maple Parkette, Redstone Park, Russell Farm Park, Springbrook Park (2), Sweet Grass Hill Park, Unity Park (2) *multi-use court (basketball, ball hockey, etc.)	
Tennis Courts	81	Lit Club: Crosby Park (6), David Hamilton Park (6) Lit Public: Bayview Hill Park (5), Brickworks Park (3), , French Royalist Park (3), Grovewood Park (3), Headwaters Community Park (3), Morgan Boyle Park (2), Mount Pleasant Park (4), Newberry Park (4), Silver Stream Park (4), Stavert Park (3), Tannery Park (2), Town Park (3)* Unlit Public: Fontainbleu Park (2), Hunter's Point Park (2), Larratt Lea Park (2), MacLeod's Landing Park (4), Oak Ridges Lions Park, Ozark Park (2), Pine Farm Park, Raccoon Park (2), Rocking Horse Ranch (2), Russell Farm Park (4), William Harrison Park (3), Willow Grove Park (2) <i>Two courts at Town Park have lines for pickleball</i>	1 : 2,600
Lit Club	12		
Lit Public	39		
Unlit Public	30		
Pickleball Courts (Dedicated)	2	Kings College Park (2)	1 : 107,000
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	9	Bradstock Park, David Hamilton Park, Dorothy Price Park, Dove Park, Hughy Park, Lake Wilcox Park, Laurentian Park, Rocking Horse Ranch, Toll Bar Park	1 : 23,800
Splash Pads	15	Bridgeview Park, Crosby Park, David Hamilton Park, Dr. James Langstaff Community Park, Grovewood Park, Lake Wilcox Park, Morgan Boyle Park, Newberry Park, Oak Ridges Lions Park, Richmond Green, Richvale Athletic Field, Rouge Crest Park, Russell Tilt Park, Silver Stream Park, William Neal Park	1 : 14,300
Skateboard Park	2	Lake Wilcox Park, Richmond Green	1 : 107,000
Playgrounds	125 Locations	Refer to Section 5.5.9 for locations	1 : 1,700
Outdoor Skating Rinks	4	Crosby Park, Lake Wilcox Park, Mill Pond Park, Richmond Green	1 : 53,500
Off-Leash Dog Areas	2	Phyllis Rawlinson Park, Tower Hill Dog Park (Sageon Trail)	1: 107,000
Community Allotment Gardens	1	Phyllis Rawlinson Park	1 : 214,000
Outdoor Bocce Courts	5	Grist Mill Park (2), Ozark Park (2), Richvale Athletic Field (1)	1 : 42,800

Note: Current provision based on a population estimate of 214,000 residents. Lit artificial turf fields and lit natural grass fields/diamonds are considered to be equivalent to 2.0 and 1.5 unlit natural fields/diamonds (ULE), respectively. Service levels are rounded to the nearest 100.

5.5.1 Rectangular Fields

Supply

The City has 52 permitted rectangular fields in Richmond Hill including (Figure 29):

- 3 lit artificial turf fields;
- 10 lit senior fields;
- 10 unlit senior fields; and
- 29 Unlit junior/mini fields.

The City’s physical field supply translates into a service level of one per 4,100 residents. As a best practice, however, an equivalency factor is applied to lit fields because they can accommodate greater capacity during the evening. Lit natural grass fields are considered to be equivalent to 1.5 unlit fields, while lit artificial turf fields are equivalent to 2.0 unlit fields given that they also offer extended play periods during the shoulder seasons. Applying this approach to Richmond Hill results in an effective supply of 60 unlit rectangular fields and a service level of one per 3,600 residents, which is the second lowest service level compared to benchmark municipalities.

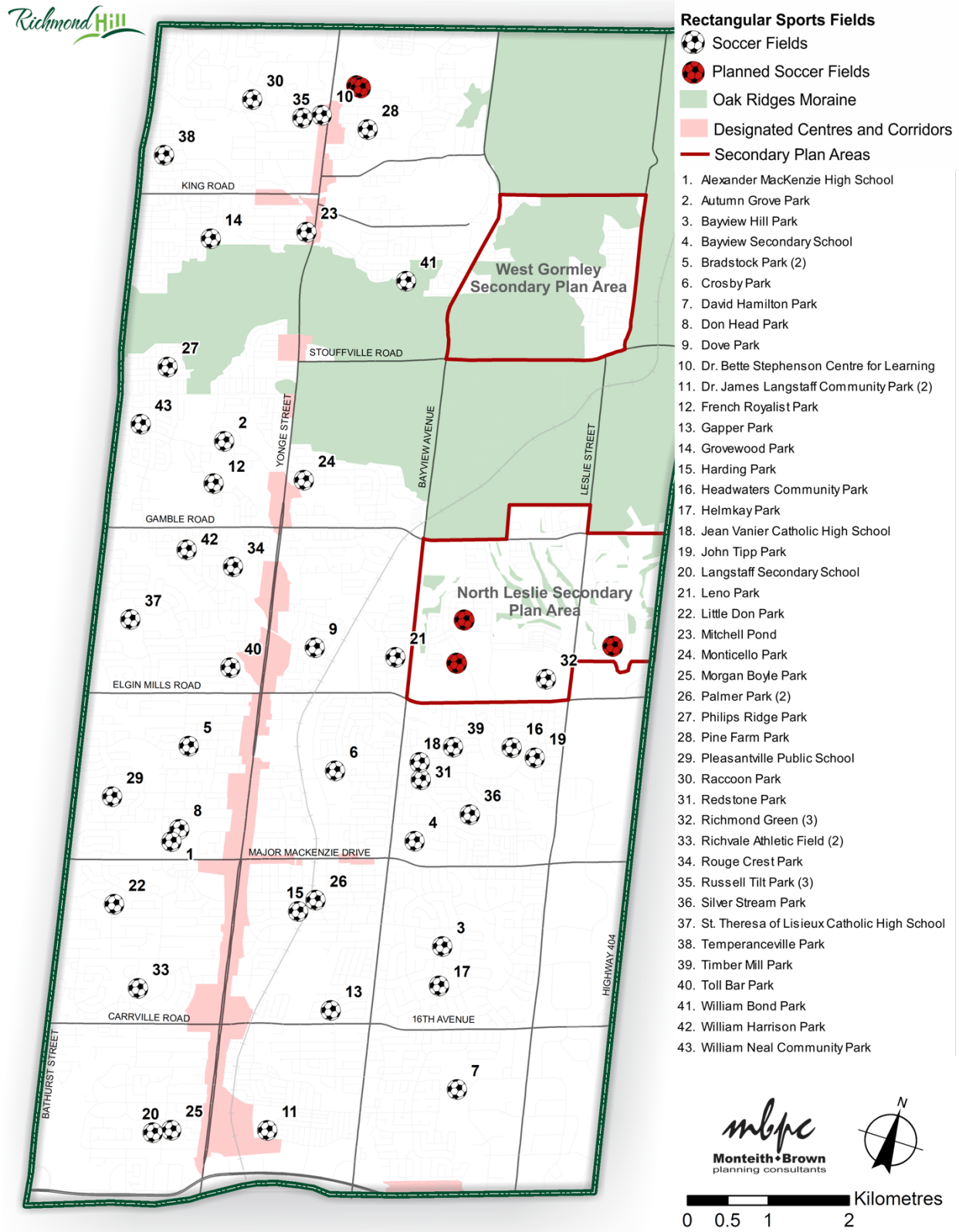
Table 27: Service Level Comparison, Rectangular Fields

Rectangular Fields	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply (ULE)	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	93	1 : 2,100	1 field per 100 youth players
Vaughan	324,000	146	1 : 2,200	1 field per 80 youth players
Markham	347,000	130	1 : 2,700	1 field per 85 players
Burlington	183,000	54	1 : 3,400	n/a
Richmond Hill	214,000	60	1 : 3,600	1 field per 4,300 residents
Brampton	614,000	158	1 : 3,900	1 field per 75 players
Average	313,000	107	1 : 3,000	

Note: Permitted field supply is shown; lit artificial and natural turf fields are considered to be equivalent to 2.0 and 1.5 unlit fields, respectively.

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Figure 29: Distribution of Rectangular Fields

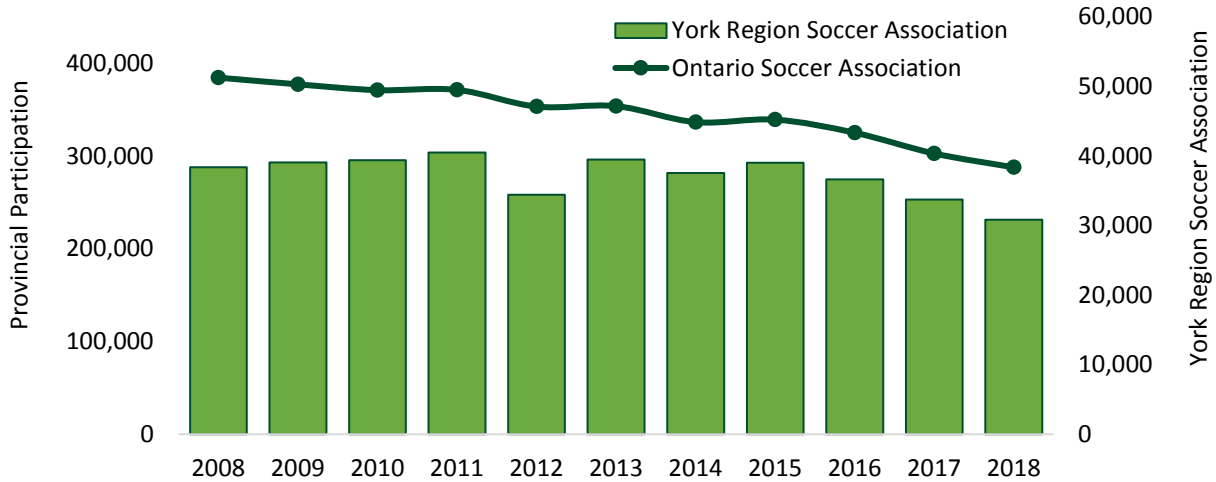


Rectangular Field Trends

Soccer Trends

Registrations in Ontario Soccer’s affiliated organizations have been declining for well over a decade. In 2018, Ontario Soccer reported approximately 287,000 players which is 25% below registrations from 10 years prior. The regional soccer affiliate that covers Richmond Hill is the York Region Soccer Association, which mirrored the provincial decline with 25% fewer players compared to 2008.³²

Figure 30: Provincial and Regional Participation in Minor Soccer, 2008 to 2018



Source: Ontario Soccer Association Annual General Meeting Reports.

Ontario Soccer’s declining registrations are driven by factors such as aging demographic trends, growing competition from other sports and activities, and the emergence of elite soccer clubs and academies that are not affiliated with provincial governing body. Despite declining participation trends, soccer continues to be a popular sport due to its worldwide appeal, high fitness quotient, and relatively low cost to participate. The popularity of the sport drives the high demand of soccer fields in most municipalities.

Since Ontario Soccer adopted its Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) model, organizations have been evolving the delivery of their programs. With less emphasis on scoring and winning, LTPD focuses on improved coaching, fewer games, more ball time, and skill development. New standards specific to each age group were developed, which included varying coaching styles, number of players per team, playing time, field sizes, and other variables. Some of these new standards have a direct impact on the provision of soccer fields, particularly with respect to standards for field sizes and the number of players per team, which has influenced the demand for field time.

Football Trends

Football is a sport whose participation rates have been characterized by cyclical popularity. It is generally played by minor age groups under the age of 20, although football is a popular spectator sport for NFL, CFL and smaller leagues (including varsity). Greater concerns over head injuries have also been a limiting growth factor, although some groups have introduced flag football among younger age groups, which is a non-contact form of the sport.

Football organizations are often challenged in securing field access largely due to certain soccer fields being “protected” from cleat damage that can occur in the fall, although artificial turf fields can help to mitigate field damage by shifting use away from grass fields. For this reason, football groups tend to appreciate the quality of synthetic surfaces and value these fields’ resilience to inclement weather that can occur in the spring and fall.

³² Ontario Soccer Association. Annual General Meeting Reports

Ultimate Frisbee Trends

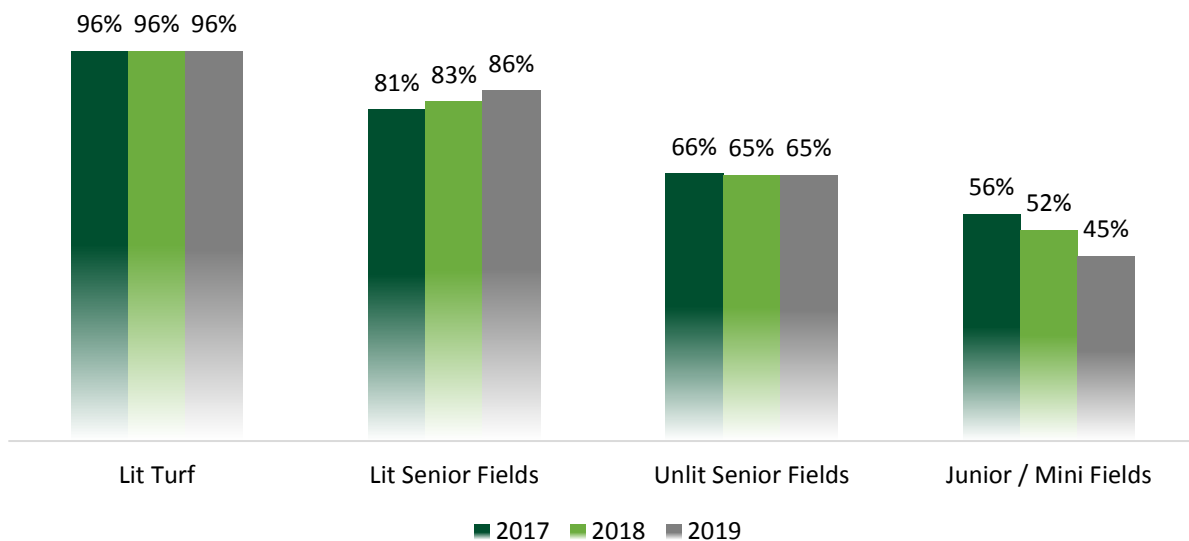
Ultimate Frisbee is a non-contact sport that emerged in the 1990s. While it continues to be a niche sport, it has experienced surging popularity, particularly among young adults (including social clubs). As a result, the sport has been recognized by international sporting organizations including the International World Games Association and the International Olympic Committee. Ultimate Frisbee is currently being considered by the International Olympic Committee to be added to future Olympic Games.³³ The popularity of the sport is partly driven by the low cost to participate as well as the sport attracting players from other field sports who bring transferable skills to the game.³⁴ The Richmond Hill Ultimate Club is the City’s local organization, although the group primarily plays outdoors in Markham and in Aurora during the winter season.

Utilization Profile

City-wide utilization of Richmond Hill’s rectangular fields declined from 71% to 69% between 2017 and 2019. During this time, the City’s higher order fields had strong levels of utilization. Lit artificial turf fields were generally considered to be fully utilized at 96% capacity, while use of lit senior fields increased from 81% to 86%. Recognizing demand for lit fields, the City developed a new field at David Hamilton Park, which was available for use in 2019.

By contrast, all other rectangular field types had declining utilization levels. Use of unlit senior fields declined marginally by one percent to 66%, while use of junior/mini fields waned from 56% to 45%. The variation in usage by field type suggests that there is a surplus of fields or that user groups have a stronger preference for high quality lit artificial turf and senior fields compared to unlit senior and junior/mini fields. It is noted that some unlit senior and junior/mini fields in Richmond Hill may not offer the amenities that are desired by users, which may include factors such as field size, turf quality, supporting amenities (e.g., parking), or the fact that single field sites limit programmable opportunities.

Figure 31: Summary of Outdoor Rectangular Field Utilization, 2017 to 2019



³³ Ultiworld. 2017. Ultimate’s Olympic Hopes A Bit Brighter After Recent Announcements. Retrieved from <https://ultiworld.com>

³⁴ Blasiak, Nick. 2016. Ultimate Frisbee teams find early success. The Brock Press. Retrieved from <http://www.brockpress.com>

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan assessed rectangular field needs based on the physical supply and recommended a service target of one per 4,300 residents. As mentioned at the beginning of this sub-section, it is an industry best practice to measure rectangular fields based on the unlit equivalent supply given that lit artificial turf and natural grass fields offer more capacity during the season and evenings compared to unlit fields. The ability to maximize the use of the existing field supply is crucial, particularly in GTA municipalities such as Richmond Hill that are experiencing growing land constraints and fewer opportunities to construct new fields to address needs. Thus, it is recommended that the City consider the use of a provision model that recognizes the unlit equivalency factor that is applied to lit artificial turf (2.0 unlit fields) and lit natural grass fields (1.5 unlit fields).

As Richmond Hill currently has a supply of 60 unlit equivalent fields, which translates into a service level of one per 3,600 residents, the City should continue to maintain this level of service to guide needs going forward. This would suggest that Richmond Hill would be required to add 10 unlit equivalent fields to its supply to address future needs. Plans are currently in place to construct six new rectangular fields over the planning period including two at Baif Oak Knoll Park and four at various parks in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area. It is not known whether these fields will be lit artificial turf or lit natural grass fields, although these field types should be strong considerations given that historical usage levels demonstrated that these fields are in high demand.

To address future field needs, opportunities to enhance the use of the existing field supply should also be investigated to improve utilization. Improvements to the City's unlit senior and junior/mini fields should be considered given that the usage profile revealed that these types of fields are underutilized. Improvements that should be explored should include, but not be limited to, converting natural grass fields to artificial turf and adding field lighting, among other amenities that are typically desired by user groups (e.g., parking). Opportunities may also exist to identify underutilized rectangular fields that may be re-purposed to other uses, although re-purposed fields should be re-located to ensure that there is no net decrease in the overall supply. Re-locating fields may allow for an opportunity to create fields that are appropriately sized and with amenities (e.g., lighting, artificial turf, etc.) to respond to user demand.

Preliminary Findings – Rectangular Fields

32. The City should adopt a service level model that recognizes that lit artificial turf and lit natural grass fields offer a greater capacity of play during the shoulder season (for artificial turf fields) and evenings. Therefore, lit artificial turf fields and lit natural grass fields should be considered equivalent to 2.0 and 1.5 unlit fields, respectively. On this basis, Richmond Hill should target an unlit equivalent field service level of one per 3,600 residents, which would require the City to add 10 unlit equivalent fields to its supply by 2031. In consultation with user groups, the following strategy is recommended to address this need:
 - a) Construct six planned rectangular fields including two fields at Baif Oak Knoll Park and four fields at various parks in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area; consideration should be given to lit artificial turf and lit natural grass fields;
 - b) Undertake improvements to existing unlit senior and junior/mini rectangular fields to optimize use including, but not limited to, conversion to lit artificial turf, adding field lighting, and other turf management improvements; and
 - c) Identify underutilized rectangular fields that may be candidates for re-purposing to other in-demand park uses and/or passive areas. Removal of any rectangular fields should be replaced at a location in other park(s) that can support appropriate field sizes and/or existing fields that can accommodate improved amenities (e.g., field lighting, artificial turf, etc.).

5.5.2 Ball Diamonds

Supply

The City permits 39 physical ball diamonds in Richmond Hill consisting of:

- 4 lit senior hardball diamonds;
- 12 lit senior slo-pitch diamonds;
- 2 unlit senior softball diamonds;
- 1 Lit junior softball diamonds; and
- 20 unlit junior softball diamonds.

The supply of physical ball diamonds represents a service level of one per 5,500 residents. It is an industry best practice to apply an equivalency factor to lit ball diamonds to recognize the fact that they can generally accommodate 1.5 times the playing capacity compared to unlit ball diamonds. Applying this approach to Richmond Hill’s supply results in an effective supply of 47.5 unlit ball diamonds and a service level of one per 4,500 residents, which is slightly below the benchmark average.

Table 28: Service Level Comparison, Ball Diamonds

Ball Diamonds	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply (ULE)	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Burlington	183,000	63.0	1 : 2,900	n/a
Oakville	194,000	66.0	1 : 2,900	1 diamond per 5,000 population
Richmond Hill	214,000	47.5	1 : 4,500	1 diamond per 5,500 residents
Markham	347,000	71.0	1 : 4,900	1 diamond per 110 players
Vaughan	324,000	64.0	1 : 5,100	1 diamond per 40 youth players
Brampton	614,000	103.5	1 : 5,900	1 diamond per 100 players
Average	313,000	69.0	1 : 4,400	

Note: Lit ball diamonds are considered to be equivalent to and 1.5 unlit fields.

Ball Diamond Trends

After being considered a sport in decline for the better part of the past two decades, baseball and its variations (including softball, fastball, etc.) are experiencing a resurgence. Baseball Ontario reported nearly 16,000 competitive participants in 2019, which was a growth of 39% compared to 2007, though that figure excludes recreational/house leagues and non-affiliated ball groups (thus actual participation figures are greater).³⁵ Baseball Ontario’s regional affiliate – the York Simcoe Baseball Association – also grew at a higher rate, increasing by 118% during the same period. The renewed interest in ball diamond sports is driven by a number of factors such as a greater focus on skill development, and grassroots programs to engage children and youth at a young age to participate in the sport. The popularity of the Toronto Blue Jays are also a contributing factor. Since Baseball Canada adopted the Long-Term Player Development model, organizations have focused on developing and honing skills and coaching styles, while fostering leadership. Suitable competition formats and facility types are also core components of the Long-Term Athlete Development model, which has implications on ball diamond types and sizes that are required.

³⁵ Baseball Ontario. Annual General Meeting Reports.

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Figure 32: Distribution of Ball Diamonds

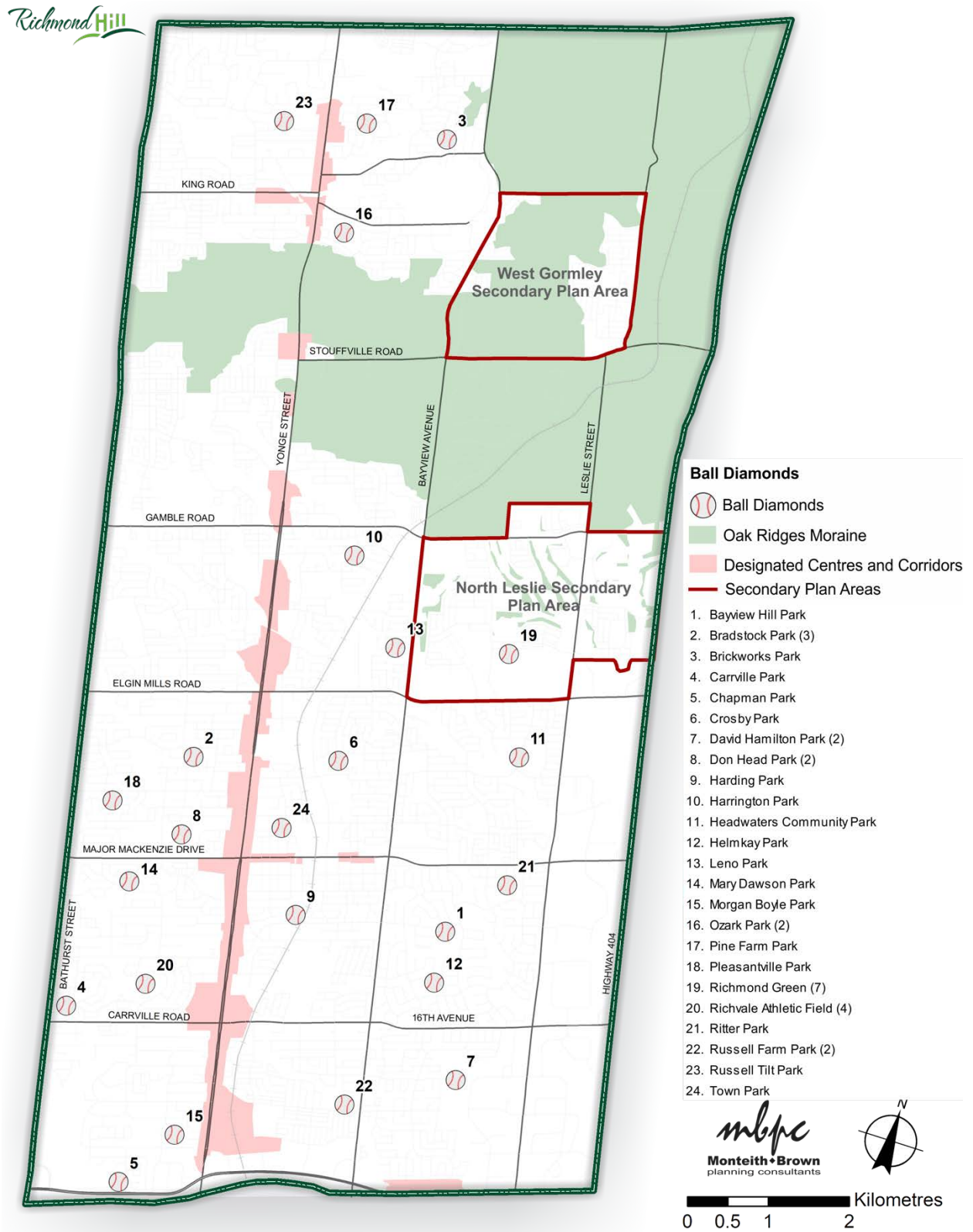
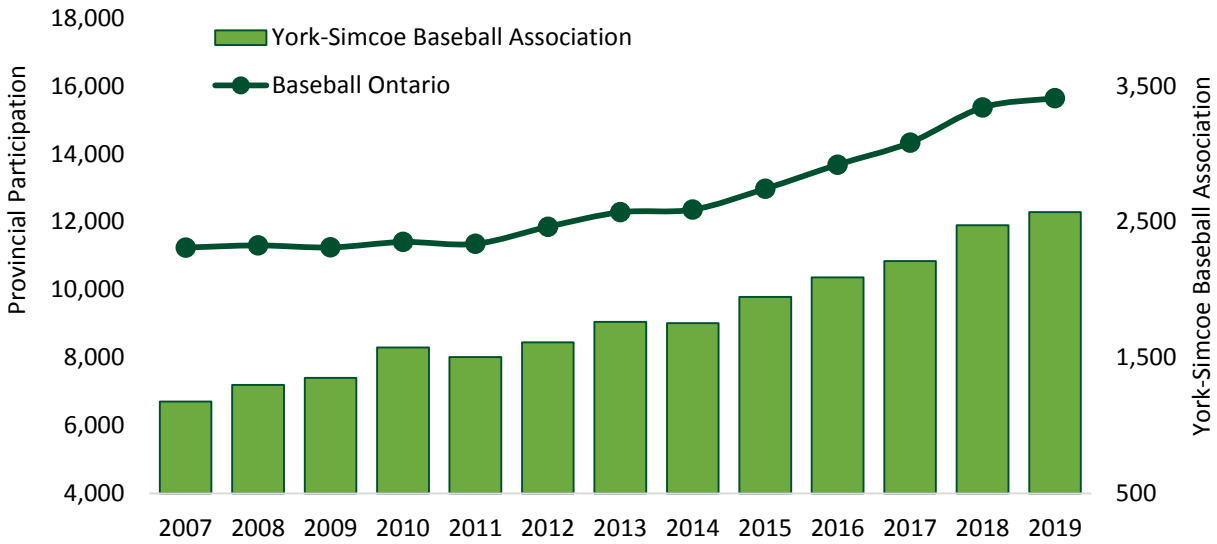


Figure 33: Provincial and Regional Participation in Minor Baseball, 2007 to 2019



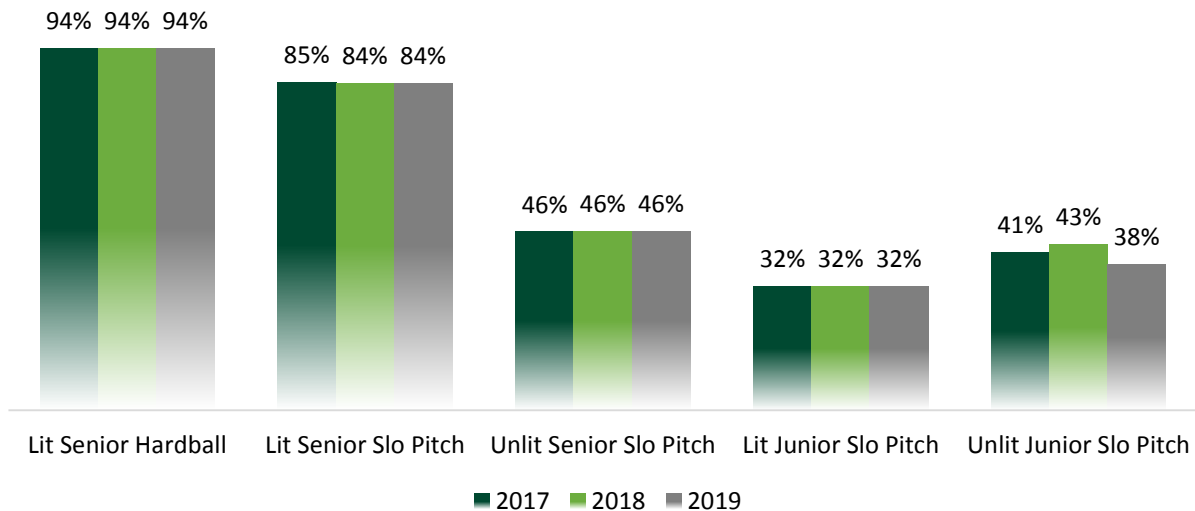
Source: Baseball Ontario Annual General Meeting Reports.

Usage Profile

Between 2017 and 2019, use of the City’s ball diamonds generally remained steady with the system-wide utilization rate declining by one percent to 63%. Lit senior hardball diamonds were in high demand, maintaining a usage rate of 94% during this period, suggesting that these facilities have been under pressure. This level of usage excludes the new lit senior hardball diamond at David Hamilton Park, which had not been constructed but should alleviate some pressures for hardball diamonds. Lit senior slo-pitch diamonds were also well utilized, although usage declined marginally by one percent to 84%.

Use of unlit slo-pitch, lit junior slo-pitch and unlit junior slo-pitch diamonds generally had low utilization levels that ranged between 32% and 46%. These results indicate that there is capacity to accommodate additional usage within the existing supply, recognizing that some locations may not be desirable to users due to diamond sizes and quality, access to amenities, and other factors (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Summary of Ball Diamond Utilization, 2017 to 2019



Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan evaluated ball diamond needs based on the physical supply and recommended a service target of one per 5,500 residents. Similar to rectangular fields, it is an industry best practice to assess ball diamonds based on the unlit equivalent supply to recognize the additional capacity lit diamonds provide during the evenings; lit ball diamonds are generally equivalent to 1.5 unlit diamonds. It is important for Richmond Hill to utilize this approach given that there are limited opportunities in the City to develop new physical ball diamonds to address needs.

With 47.5 unlit equivalent ball diamonds, Richmond Hill is providing a service level of one per 4,500 residents. It is recommended that the City adopt this service level as the target for determining future ball diamond needs over the planning period. Based on this target, Richmond Hill would require 8.5 additional unlit equivalent ball diamonds by 2031. The City does not currently have any plans to develop new ball diamonds due to land constraints, although opportunities should be explored, potentially through new park development or redevelopment of existing parks.

Due to limited opportunities to develop new ball diamonds, an emphasis should be placed on enhancing existing ball diamonds to optimize the use of what is currently available and ensure that they are sized appropriately to respond to user needs. The City should undertake a review of its ball diamond supply to identify candidates for improvements, which may include, but not be limited to, enlarging undersized ball diamonds for senior hardball and slo-pitch, adding lighting, and other enhancements to improve desirability among users. The City may also identify underutilized or non-desirable ball diamonds that can be re-purposed to other park uses. Re-purposed ball diamonds should be replaced at other parks and be designed in a manner that encourages use, including the potential for lighting. Consultation with user groups is encouraged to identify ball diamonds for enhancements, re-purpose and/or re-locating.

Preliminary Findings – Ball Diamonds

33. A service target of one per 4,500 residents is recommended for unlit equivalent ball diamonds, which recognizes that lit ball diamonds offer greater capacity (1.5 unlit ball diamonds) of play during the evenings. This target would require the City to add 8.5 unlit equivalent ball diamonds to its supply by 2031. In consultation with user groups, the following strategy is recommended to address this need:
- a) Construct ball diamonds in new parks or existing parks undergoing redevelopment, with a preference given to lit senior hardball and slo-pitch diamonds;
 - b) Undertake enhancements to existing ball diamonds to encourage use including, but not limited to, enlarging ball diamonds for senior use, adding lighting, and conversion of slo-pitch diamonds for hardball.
 - c) Identify underutilized ball diamonds as possible candidates for re-purposing to other in-demand park uses. Re-purposed ball diamonds should be replaced at parks that can support appropriate ball diamond sizes and amenities that encourage use (e.g., lighting).
-

5.5.3 Cricket Fields

Supply

Richmond Hill does not operate any cricket fields or grounds. Vaughan is the only other benchmark municipality that does not currently provide a cricket field, although they provide a location within a park for cricket practices.

Cricket Fields	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Brampton	614,000	18	1 : 34,100	Based on geography
Burlington	183,000	3	1 : 61,000	Not defined
Markham	347,000	3	1 : 115,700	1 per 75,000 residents
Oakville	194,000	1	1 : 194,000	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	0	-	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	1 per 150,000 residents
Average	313,000	6	1 : 101,200	

Cricket Trends

Cricket is experiencing strong growth in Canada due to immigration from South Asia and the Caribbean where cricket is commonly played; approximately 10% of Richmond Hill's residents are from these areas. Cricket Canada estimates that there are approximately 130,000 players and 820 clubs across the country, with the largest concentration of players residing in southern Ontario.

Cricket is played with a bat and ball between two teams, each composed of 11 players. There are multiple formats/styles of play that vary in duration and rules. At the international level, there are three variations known as Test Cricket, One Day Internationals, and Twenty20 (T20) Internationals. At the community level, playing formats vary considerably with altered rules. Common forms of the played sport are described below:

- Long-format cricket is typically played over an 8-hour period (40 to 50 overs) and is played for competitive purposes.
- Short-format cricket allows the game to be played within a one to four hour period. This is the fastest growing format in Canada, usually in the form of T20/T25 (e.g., 20 to 25 overs).
- Tennis ball / Tape-ball cricket uses a tennis ball or a tennis ball wrapped in tape to add additional weight. Given that a tennis ball is not as hard as a cricket ball, safety equipment is generally not worn.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan did not recommend a service target for cricket pitches. At the time when this plan was prepared, there was no data to determine demand and no known public requests for this facility type. Municipalities experiencing a demand for cricket fields tend to be communities that have a large immigrant population from cricket playing countries. While Richmond Hill boasts a diverse immigrant population, the majority of whom are from countries where cricket is not played. The demand for cricket fields in Richmond Hill appears to be low, which is supported by the fact that there is no local organized cricket club and no requests for this facility type was received through the community survey.

The City should continue to monitor the demand for cricket and consider public requests as they come forward. During the planning period, it is recommended that the City encourage the use of regulation size cricket fields in adjacent municipalities as trends in the sport suggests that community-level cricket is a regional sport and players

are willing to travel to where fields are available. For example, Markham has three cricket fields, which is planned to increase to six fields over the next 10 years. The City should also investigate opportunities to accommodate components of the cricket game (e.g., practices) within Richmond Hill’s supply of rectangular fields or ball diamonds, where capacity is available.

Preliminary Findings – Cricket Fields

- 34. Continue to monitor the demand for cricket and evaluate public requests as they come forward. During the planning period, local cricket demand should be met by encouraging the use of regulation size cricket fields in adjacent municipalities, and/or investigating opportunities to accommodate components of the cricket game (e.g., practices) within Richmond Hill’s rectangular field and ball diamond supply, where capacity is available.

5.5.4 Basketball and Multi-use Courts

Supply

The City provides basketball courts at 54 parks in Richmond Hill, consisting of 24 full courts and 24 half-court or irregular-sized asphalt pads with a single hoop. This supply also includes six multi-use courts such as at Philips Ridge Park and Rouge Crest Park, which feature paint markings to facilitate other activities such as ball hockey. Lake Wilcox Park is the only location that features court lighting. Richmond Hill’s supply of basketball courts results in an existing service level of one per 4,000 residents, which is the highest level of service compared to benchmark municipalities, although this provides a good distribution of courts across the City.

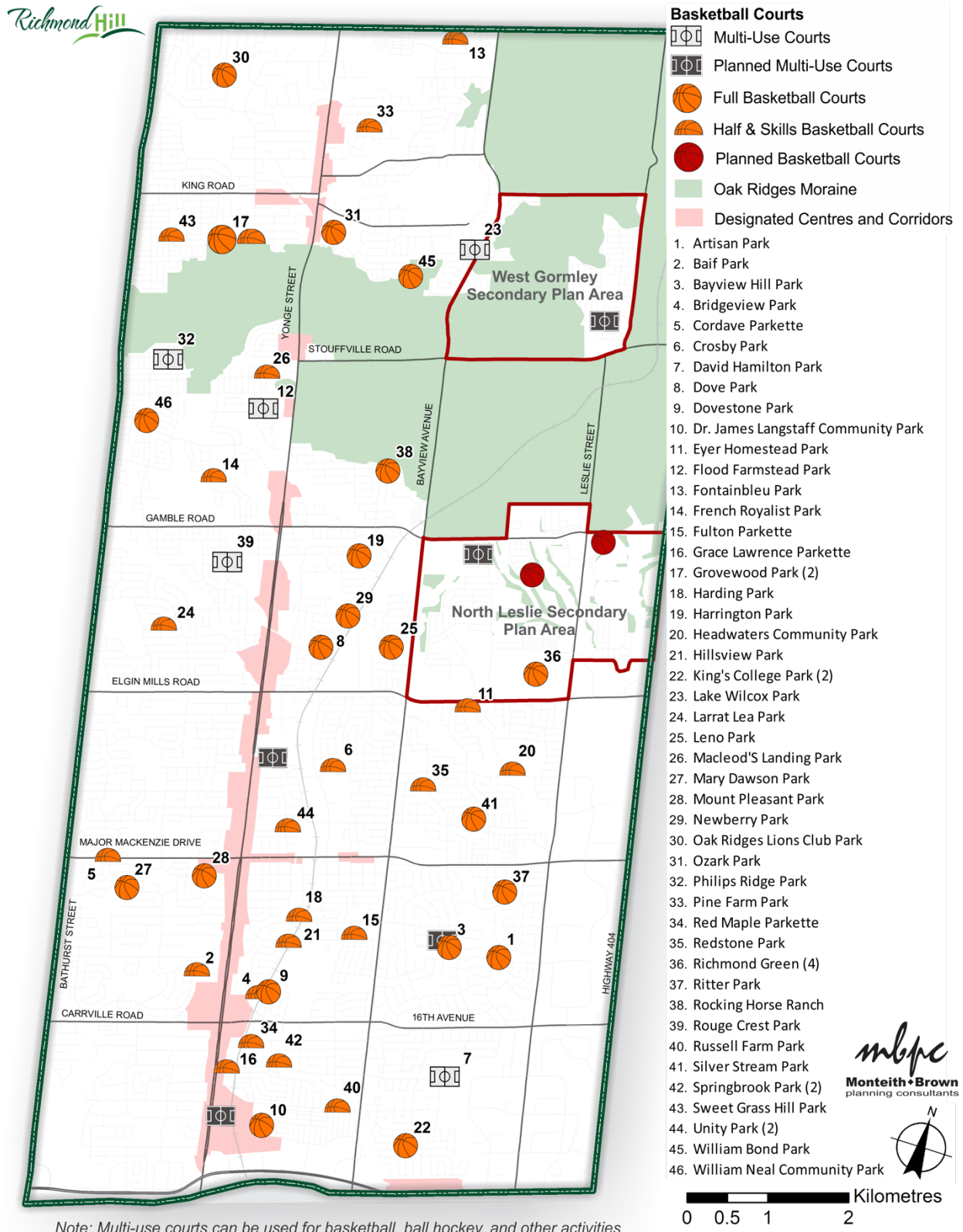
Table 29: Service Level Comparison, Basketball Courts

Basketball Courts	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Richmond Hill	214,000	54	1 : 4,000	1 per 4,500 residents
Vaughan	324,000	75	1 : 4,300	1 per 500 youth
Burlington	183,000	19	1 : 9,600	Not defined
Markham	347,000	34	1 : 10,200	1 hoop per 1,200 youth residents
Oakville	194,000	14	1 : 14,400	1 per 1,500 youth
Brampton	614,000	22	1 : 27,900	1 per 800 to 1,500 youth plus 1 within 800-metres to 1.5km in newly developing residential areas
Average	313,000	36	1 : 11,700	

Notes: includes full, half and multi-use skills courts for basketball, ball hockey and other activities. All municipalities using a youth-based standard identify the age range as 10 to 19 years.

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Figure 35: Distribution of Basketball and Multi-Use Courts



Note: Multi-use courts can be used for basketball, ball hockey, and other activities

Basketball Trends

The Ontario Basketball Association reports that since 2015, the number of affiliated groups have doubled from 484 to 900 teams.³⁶ While these groups have placed pressures on indoor gymnasiums, the popularity of the sport has also driven the demand for outdoor basketball courts. The popularity of basketball can be attributed to factors such as affordability and access to free outdoor basketball courts, as well as its national appeal and the Toronto Raptors championship victory in 2019. Compared to other sports such as hockey, basketball is easy to learn, safe, affordable to play, and can be played with one person or in small groups. Best practices observed across the Province have found that municipalities are trending towards the provision of multi-use courts that facilitate a variety of activities that require a large, hard surface such as basketball, ball hockey, etc.

Outdoor courts are generally rudimentary in design, ranging from simple asphalt to acrylic colour coated surfaces (such as at Rouge Crest Park) with removable equipment such as net posts, boards, and hoops. Certain municipalities, such as Windsor and Clarington, are beginning to employ a unique approach in the renewal of older courts by installing a plastic tiling system above the older surfaces; compared to standard asphalt, these “Flex Court” systems can defer asphalt/concrete resurfacing costs, minimize noise of bouncing balls, absorb physical impacts and reduce stress on the body, as well as offer environmental benefits such as reduced heat radiation and issues with standing water. From a maintenance perspective, the Flex Court system comes with a warranty and requires less intensive maintenance since they do not need to be repainted, while broken tiles are easily replaced.³⁷

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan recommended a service target of one per 4,500 residents for basketball courts. Richmond Hill has managed to provide a level of service that exceeds this target at one per 4,000 residents, which is the highest compared to benchmark municipalities and results in a fairly good distribution of courts across the City (although some gaps do exist). As demonstrated through the service level comparison, benchmark municipalities often utilize youth specific service targets as they tend to be utilized by this segment of the community. However, age-specific population data for Richmond Hill is not presently available.

Based on the 2013 Parks Plan recommended target, Richmond Hill would require 56 basketball courts by 2031, two more than what is currently provided. Over the planning period, the City has identified a number of service gaps and is planning to construct seven new basketball courts across Richmond Hill including Kozak Parkette, Bayview Hill Park and at five other future parks (including one in each of the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas).

Recognizing the target demographic of basketball courts, geographic distribution must be a consideration. Best practices in benchmark municipalities suggests that basketball courts should be provided in the range of approximately 800 to 1,000 metres of residential areas. Utilizing a one-kilometre service area for basketball courts in Richmond Hill reveals that there is generally a strong level of coverage across the City. The most notable gaps where courts are not currently planned to be provided exist in the northeast corner of Bathurst Street and Highway 7, as well as in the southeast corner of Bathurst Street and Elgin Mills Road West.

With seven new basketball courts already in the planning or design stages, together with the two gap areas identified above, there is a need for up to nine basketball courts during the planning period, indicating that the 2013 Parks Plan recommended target should be adjusted. Thus, a service target of one per 4,000 residents should be used, which matches the current service level and would be sufficient to recognize planned locations and address gap areas.

As a best practice moving forward, new or redeveloped courts should be designed to be multi-use to support a variety of activities that require a large, hard surface. The City has already embraced the notion of multi-use courts at a number of locations, which should be used as a guiding template. On a case-by-case basis, consideration

³⁶ Ontario Basketball Association Annual Reports.

³⁷ Flex Court Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.flexcourtcanada.ca>

should be given to other supporting amenities to enhance the playing experience such as the application of colour coatings or Flex Court surfaces and lighting.

Preliminary Findings – Basketball and Multi-use Courts

35. An adjusted service target of one per 4,000 residents should be used to guide basketball court needs, which recognizes the seven new basketball courts currently in the planning or design process, including at Kozak Park, Bayview Hill Park, and five future parks (including one each in the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas), as well as two gap areas identified in the northeast corner of Bathurst Street and Highway 7 and the southeast corner of Bathurst Street and Elgin Mills Road West.
36. As a best practice, new or redeveloped courts should be designed to be multi-use to support a variety of activities that require a large, hard surface (e.g., basketball, ball hockey, etc.). Consideration may also be given to the use of colour coated court or flex surfacing, lighting and other supporting amenities.

5.5.5 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

Supply

The City provides 81 outdoor tennis courts across 27 parks in Richmond Hill (Figure 36). 51 of these courts (at 14 parks) are lit including six club courts at Crosby Park (operated by the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club). The Blackmore Tennis Club also has exclusive use of the six lit tennis courts at David Hamilton Park during designated times, which are also domed during the winter season to facilitate year-round programming. One tennis court at Town Park has lines for pickleball. Richmond Hill’s tennis courts translates into an existing service level of one court per 2,600 residents, which is third highest after Vaughan and Oakville.

Table 30: Service Level Comparison, Tennis Courts

Tennis Courts	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Vaughan	324,000	130	1 : 2,500	1 per 5,000 residents
Oakville	194,000	76	1 : 2,500	1 per 4,000 residents
Richmond Hill	214,000	81	1 : 2,600	1 per 2,700 residents
Markham	347,000	61	1 : 5,700	1 per 5,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	49	1 : 12,500	1 per 10,000 residents
Burlington	183,000	14	1 : 13,000	Not defined
Average	313,000	69	1 : 6,500	

Note: Some tennis courts may also be lined for pickleball such as in Brampton and Burlington.

Two dedicated outdoor pickleball courts are located at Kings College Park, achieving a service level of one dedicated pickleball court per 107,000 residents. This service level improves to one court per 53,500 residents once factoring in the two multi-use court that has pickleball lines at Town Park. Richmond Hill is one of three benchmark municipalities that provides dedicated pickleball courts; the other two communities being Brampton and Markham. It is noted that Markham’s six dedicated pickleball courts are temporary, although planning is underway to construct a permanent outdoor complex with eight pickleball courts. Plans to construct pickleball courts in Oakville are also expected in the near-term while Vaughan is currently completing a Pickleball Study to assess the demand and identify facility provision opportunities. Burlington’s approach is to provide shared/multi-use courts (for tennis and pickleball).

Table 31: Service Level Comparison, Dedicated Pickleball Courts

Dedicated Pickleball Courts	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Markham	347,000	6	1 : 43,000	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	2	1 : 107,000	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	2	1 : 307,000	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	0	-	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	4	1 : 157,300	

Note: Multi-use courts with pickleball lines are excluded. The pickleball court supply in Markham reflects six temporary courts. A permanent complex with eight courts is planned to be constructed in 2022.

Tennis Trends

Research suggests that tennis is experiencing a resurgence over the past several years. Tennis Canada reported that 6.6 million Canadians played tennis at least once in 2018, a growth of more than 23% since 2014. Nearly 3 million Canadians are frequent players – those who play at least once a week during the tennis season – which is twice as many compared to 2014.^{38, 39}

The popularity of tennis can be attributed to a number of factors such as the growing segment of baby boomers that seek social, and to some degree, lower impact activities. There is also a focus on promoting the sport at the grassroots level. Tennis Canada reported that in 2018, more than 200,000 children under the age of 12 were considered frequent tennis players, which was an increase of 40% compared to 2015.⁴⁰ Part of this growth can also be linked to the success of Canadian men and women currently competing on the professional tours, including Bianca Andreescu’s US Open championship win in 2019.

Additionally, the tennis-playing community has been working diligently to generate interest in the sport. In 2017, Tennis Canada hosted Tennis Day across the country, which had activities such as clinics, lessons, exhibitions, and ‘bring a friend’ events. The purpose of Tennis Day was to introduce the sport to people that have never played before and to show them how easy it is to learn the game. Following the event, Tennis Canada indicated that 80% of tennis clubs reported an increase in participation.

Richmond Hill has recognized the growing popularity of tennis and in response, has undertaken a Tennis Strategy (2016) which outlines a tennis facility development strategy (for indoor and outdoor courts), with consideration given to club play (and the preparation of a Community Tennis Club Policy) and potential service delivery models. A Tennis Court Conditions Assessment was also completed in 2018 to identify and prioritize court replacement and/or resurfacing.

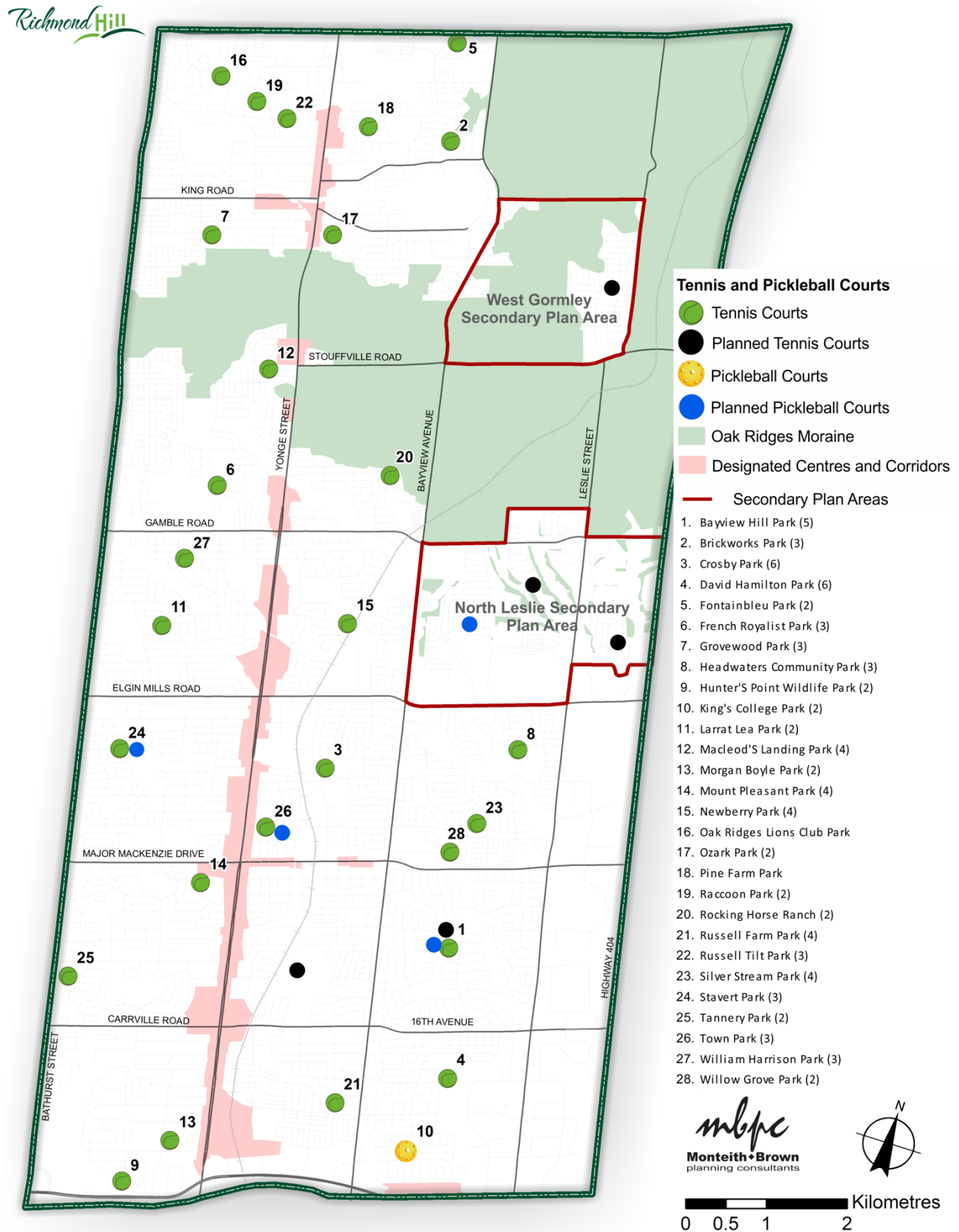
³⁸ Tennis Canada. 2018 Annual Report.

³⁹ Charlton Strategic Research. 2014 Canadian Tennis Brand Health Study.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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Figure 36: Distribution of Tennis and Pickleball Courts



Pickleball Trends

Pickleball is a lower intensity sport that can be played indoors in a gymnasium or outdoors on dedicated or multi-use courts that are shared with tennis. As improved data on utilization and participation levels becomes available, some municipalities have been constructing dedicated pickleball courts with appropriate specifications given that they are smaller in size and have a lower net height compared to tennis. Adults 55+ wishing to remain physically active are driving participation growth in pickleball to levels where it is now one of the fastest growing sports in Canada (although it is recognized that the sport is also attracting younger players). The popularity of pickleball continues to spread across the Province and its prominence is further bolstered by being played at the Ontario 55+ Summer Games.

Pickleball Canada states that the number of players across Canada has grown ten-fold from 6,000 to 60,000 between 2012 and 2018, and the number of members with the governing body now stands at more than 22,000 individuals. Whereas Pickleball Canada recorded fewer than 500 pickleball courts in 2014, the number has increased to more than 2,000 courts nation-wide in 2017.⁴¹ What once was a casual, energetic activity, pickleball has grown in popularity as many adults 55+ (including baby boomers) seek active leisure opportunities along with pickleball organizations also placing a focus on recruiting younger ages to participate as well.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

Richmond Hill's current tennis court service level of one per 2,600 exceeds the recommended target contained in the 2013 Parks Plan (one per 2,700 residents). This target is highest compared to benchmark municipalities (where targets range between one court per 4,000 to 10,000 residents) and was reinforced in the City's 2016 Tennis Strategy. Carrying this target forward would require the City to provide a total of 94 tennis courts by 2031, 13 more courts than what is currently available. This matches the number of planned tennis courts to be located at five parks, which is generally in line with the number of new tennis courts recommended in its Tennis Strategy. Planned tennis courts include:

- 1 court at Bayview Hill Park;
- 4 courts at David Dunlap Observatory;
- 4 courts at two future parks in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area (two courts each); and
- 4 club courts, consistent with the Tennis Strategy, at a community park in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.

The provision of future tennis courts, as well recommended court redevelopments identified in the City's 2018 Tennis Court Conditions Assessment, should reflect the City's current design standards. Consideration should be given to coated court surfacing and lighting in appropriate areas, among other complementary amenities to provide a high-quality playing experience.

A high-level scan of Richmond Hill's existing tennis court supply along with the 13 planned tennis courts illustrates a strong geographic distribution with at least one park in each City block containing tennis. However, actual utilization of public drop-in courts is unknown due to the non-programmed nature of these courts. As a future endeavour, the City may wish to undertake field checks to determine usage during daytime and evening hours as well as weekend and weekday hours to determine the actual levels of usage of these courts with a potential outcome being the identification of courts suitable for multi-use play (e.g., tennis and pickleball) or repurposing underutilized tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts (or another use). The City may benefit from updating its 2016 Tennis Strategy to evaluate the data collected through this process to renew its vision for tennis and pickleball courts in Richmond Hill, including validating the existing service target.

⁴¹ Pickleball Canada. April 2018 Newsletter. p.3

The comparison with benchmark municipalities demonstrated that there is no industry standard for pickleball courts given that the sport is a relatively new (and popular) activity. Pickleball courts are commonly provided on a case-by-case basis in response to demand and requests from the public. As noted above, some communities have retrofitted tennis courts to add pickleball lines to create multi-use courts. The benefit of this approach is that it provides time for the City to gauge demand prior to constructing new facilities and they tend to be more efficient community assets. The City's current approach to addressing pickleball needs is to provide dedicated courts, as has been done at King's College Park with two courts. The City has plans to construct eight additional dedicated pickleball courts by 2031, including four at Town Park, two at Stavert Park and two at Bayview Hill Park. Once these new dedicated pickleball courts are implemented, the City will be achieving a service level of one dedicated pickleball court per 25,300 residents by 2031.

Preliminary Findings – Tennis and Pickleball Courts

37. Undertake a data collection exercise to determine tennis court usage levels during daytime, evening, weekend, and weekday with an intended outcome being the identification of courts suitable for multi-use play (e.g., tennis and pickleball) and/or repurposing of underutilized tennis courts to dedicated pickleball courts to improve overall court utilization. Depending on the outcome of this analysis, the City should update the Tennis Strategy to be a combined Tennis/Pickleball Strategy.
 38. Provide tennis courts at the current service target until such time as the analysis in Recommendation #37 is completed, which will include 13 planned tennis courts at the following parks:
 - a) 1 court at Bayview Hill Park;
 - b) 4 courts at David Dunlap Observatory;
 - c) 4 courts at 2 future parks in the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area (two courts each); and
 - d) 4 club courts, consistent with the Tennis Strategy, at a community park in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.
 39. Subject to change as a result of the recommended Tennis/Pickleball Strategy, initially target a service level of one per 25,300 residents for pickleball courts, provide eight dedicated pickleball courts at the following parks:
 - a) 4 courts at Town Park;
 - b) 2 courts at Stavert Park; and
 - c) 2 court at Bayview Hill Park.
-

5.5.6 Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Supply

Outdoor fitness equipment is currently provided at nine parks, which feature a range of apparatuses that promote exercise and physical activity. This supply yields a service level of one per 23,800 residents, which is the second highest level of service compared to benchmark municipalities.

Table 32: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Outdoor Fitness	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Markham	347,000	20	1 : 17,400	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	9	1 : 23,800	One per block
Vaughan	324,000	4	1 : 81,000	2-kilometre service area
Oakville	194,000	1	1 : 194,000	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	2	1 : 307,000	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	314,167	7	124,600	

Outdoor Fitness Trends

Increasingly, municipalities have been integrating outdoor fitness equipment within parks in response to growing demands for outdoor exercise opportunities. Popular throughout the United States and Europe, Canadian municipalities have begun introducing outdoor fitness equipment that allow people to participate in free outdoor activities and engage people in the public realm.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan recommended a service target of one per major concession block for outdoor fitness equipment. The City has currently planned to build upon its existing supply of outdoor fitness equipment with 10 new locations through park redevelopment projects (including Sunnywood Park and Bayview Hill Park) and future park development along Yonge Street to address needs within centres and corridors, as well as within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas. Full implementation of planned outdoor fitness equipment locations would enhance geographic distribution and work towards the City’s current service target. A visual scan of existing and planned outdoor fitness equipment locations revealed two service gaps in the areas known as Block 19 and Block 24.⁴² Addressing these service gaps would achieve the City’s target of one outdoor fitness equipment location per major block.

Best practices in providing outdoor fitness equipment revealed that there may be additional locations where this facility type may be considered to encourage outdoor physical activity, particularly in or within proximity to areas of intensification. Major parks with other active recreation facilities or along trails may also be suitable locations. On this basis, the City should consider using a service target of one outdoor fitness equipment per major concession block at a minimum, with additional locations to be considered in areas of intensification or to create outdoor fitness circuits between local parks and trails.

⁴² Block 19 includes the area bound by Elgin Mills Road East to the north, Leslie Street to the east, Major Mackenzie Drive East to the south and Bayview Avenue to the west. Block 24 includes the area bound by Major Mackenzie Drive West to the north, Yonge Street to the east, Carrville Road to the south, and Bathurst Street to the west.

Preliminary Findings – Outdoor Fitness Equipment

40. Adjust the current service target to one outdoor fitness equipment per major concession block at a minimum, with additional locations to be considered in areas of intensification or to create outdoor fitness circuits between local parks and trails. On this basis, emphasis should be placed on addressing gap areas within Block 19 and Block 24, in addition to planned outdoor fitness equipment locations at Sunnywood Park, Bayview Park, and future parks along Yonge Street and within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas.

5.5.7 Splash Pads

Supply

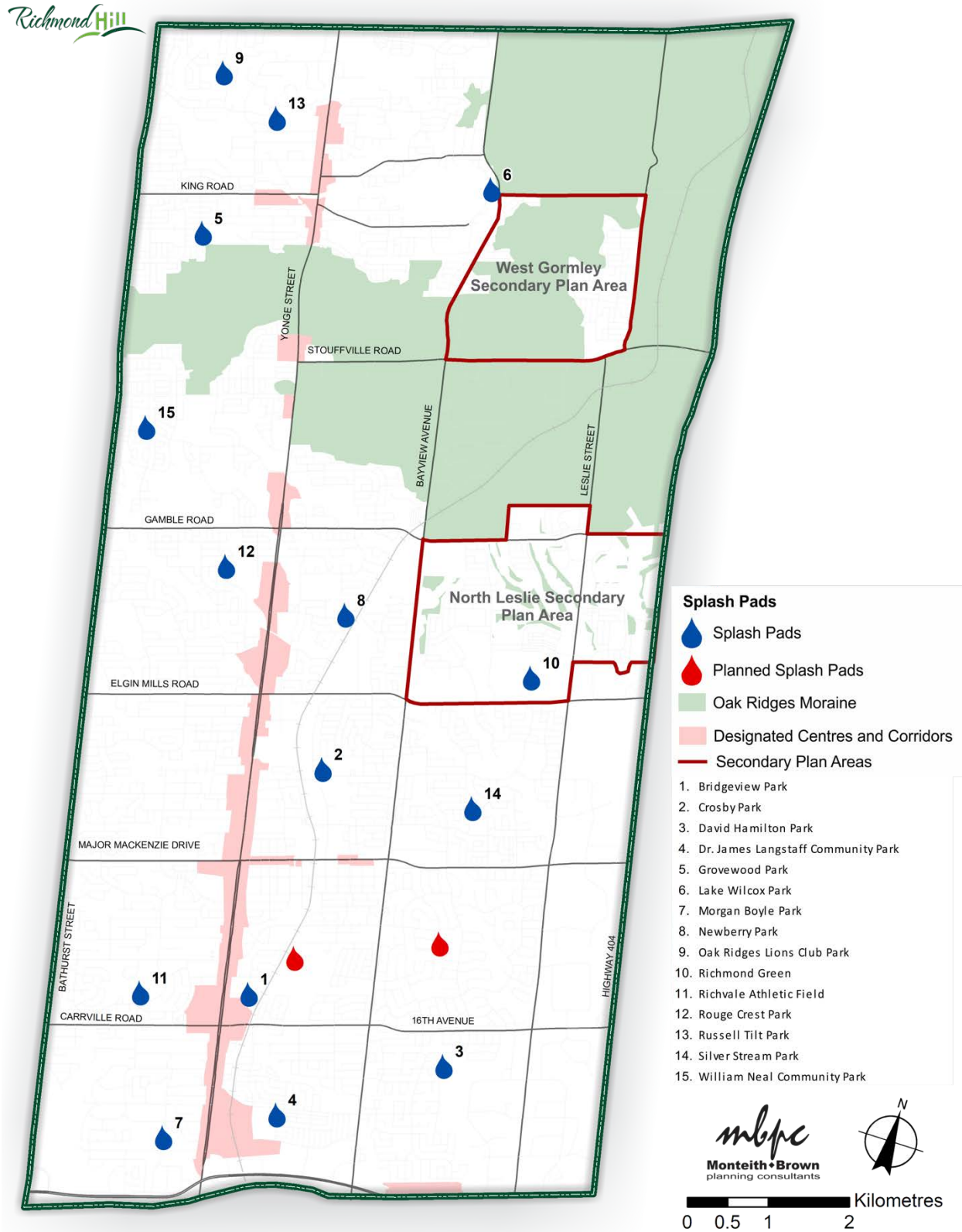
There are 15 splash pads located across Richmond Hill (Figure 37). Each splash pad features a variety of components including spray nozzles, dump buckets, sprinklers, shower head and other amenities, with a concrete or rubberized surface. The City’s splash pad supply results in a service level of one per 14,300 residents, which is higher compared to the benchmark average.

Table 33: Service Level Comparison, Splash Pads

Splash Pads	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	15	1 : 12,900	1-kilometre radius in residential areas
Markham	347,000	26	1 : 13,300	1 per residential block
Richmond Hill	214,000	15	1 : 14,300	1 per 14,000 residents
Vaughan	324,000	17	1 : 19,100	1 per residential block
Burlington	183,000	7	1 : 26,100	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	14	1 : 43,900	1 per 3,000 to 5,000 children (age 0-9)
Average	313,000	15	1 : 21,600	

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Figure 37: Distribution of Splash Pads



Splash Pad Trends

Outdoor aquatic provision models have changed substantially over the past 20 years due to the growing number of indoor pools that have been constructed and aging outdoor pool infrastructure. Many municipalities have shifted to the provision of splash pads as an alternative to outdoor swimming and wading pools since splash pads have proven to be more cost effective to build and operate as they can be integrated into most park settings, are accessible, and do not require intensive staffing as there is no standing water to supervise.

The design of splash pads can vary with different components and spray functions to create unique and engaging experiences. There are three types of splash pads – freshwater (or flow through) systems that drain directly to municipal sewers, recirculating systems that filters, collects, treats and re-uses the splash pad water, and greywater systems that collects splash pad water for other public uses such as irrigating greenspaces and landscapes, as well as watering gardens. The design of freshwater systems is generally the most cost effective to construct when compared to recirculating and greywater systems that require infrastructure for filtering, treating water and storing water, as well as additional costs for purchasing chemicals. While recirculating and greywater systems are beneficial in reducing water consumption, greater oversight is required to ensure that water chemistry is maintained to allow for proper disinfection. Examples of different types of splash pads exists throughout the GTA. For example, splash pads in Pickering use freshwater systems, while the Town of Halton Hills uses recirculating systems.

Splash pads have gained in popularity in recent years, sought after by young families seeking affordable and accessible opportunities to cool down on a hot day. Splash pads tend to be located at major community parks as they serve multiple neighbourhoods and are complementary to other on-site amenities such as parking and playgrounds. Locating splash pads adjacent to an indoor civic facility such as a community centre as the City has done at Dr. James Langstaff Community Park, Richmond Green, and Richvale Athletic Park also provides users with access to washrooms and offers potential cross-programming opportunities.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

With a current service level of one per 14,300 residents for splash pads, Richmond Hill is slightly undersupplied based on the recommended target contained in the 2013 Parks Plan (one per 14,000 residents). Each benchmark municipality utilizes a different approach to defining levels of service for splash pads, such as total population, target age groups, and spatial distribution.

The City has currently planned two future splash pads to be located at Bayview Hill Park and David Dunlap Observatory Park. Recognizing that the geographic distribution of splash pads must be considered to ensure that users have reasonable access to these types of facilities, particularly young families with children, a visual scan of existing splash pad location suggests that there is also a service gap in the emerging West Gormley Secondary Plan Area. Adding three new splash pads in Richmond Hill would translate into a service level of one per 14,000 residents by 2031, matching the current recommended target.

In addition to traditional style splash pads, there is merit in augmenting these amenities with small-scale spray features within planned intensification areas along Yonge Street to serve current and future residents within this area. In comparable municipalities experiencing intensification, spray features can be incorporated into intensification areas as part of water fountains, public art, etc.

Preliminary Findings – Splash Pads

41. Maintain the service target for splash pads one per 14,000 residents and provide three new splash pads. Two future splash pads are planned for Bayview Hill Park and David Dunlap Observatory Park and a third splash pad should be located in the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area.
42. Small-scale spray features (e.g., spray posts, water fountains, public art, etc.) should be established in strategic locations where there is planned residential intensification, such as within the City’s centres and corridors.

5.5.8 Skateboard and Bike Parks

Supply

There are two locations in Richmond Hill for skateboarding, biking, and other wheeled action sports. Richmond Hill’s newest major skateboard park is located at Lake Wilcox Park, which was completed in 2019. This location features concrete forms with bowls, ramps, rails, and stairs. A second major skateboard park is located at Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park, which features a number of modular skateboard components. The City’s supply of skateboard parks translates into a service level of one per 107,000 residents, which is the lowest compared to all other benchmark municipalities.

Table 34: Service Level Comparison, Skateboard Parks

Skateboard Parks	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Burlington	183,000	15	1 : 12,200	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	9	1 : 36,000	1 per 3,500 youth (age 10-19)
Markham	347,000	6	1 : 57,800	1 park per 5,000 youth (age 10-19)
Brampton	614,000	10	1 : 61,400	1 per 5,000 youth (age 10-19)
Oakville	194,000	3	1 : 64,700	1 'major' skate park per 5,000 youth (age 10-19)
Richmond Hill	214,000	2	1 : 107,000	1 per 60,000 residents
Average	313,000	8	1 : 56,500	

Skateboard and Bike Trends

Skateboard and bike parks are now considered to be a core recreation facility in most municipalities across Ontario, recognized for their ability to provide children and teens (and even younger adults) with a positive place to partake in physical and social activity. While historically associated with negative youth behaviour, skateboarding (together with other wheeled action sports such as biking and in-line skating) has become mainstream. Skateboarding in particular was intended to be introduced as part of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic) for the first time lending further credibility to the sport. This has the potential to drive interest and participation in skateboarding even higher which in turn could lead to greater demands for future spaces for skateboarding and related action sports. Skateboard parks are opportunities through which to encourage greater physical activity among children and youth – particularly since a number of wheeled action sports are affordable and can be pursued as part of ‘hanging out’ with friends.

Skateboard parks take many forms and formats depending upon their intended type of use, skill level, and fit within a park and its surrounding land uses. Often times, they are designed to facilitate other wheeled action sports such as two-wheeled scooters, in-line skaters, etc. Facilities dedicated solely to skateboarders tend to be

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provided where their design budgets are not conducive to more intensive wear and tear caused by bikes, though most municipal skateboard parks are intended for the multitude of action sports that exist.

The design and scale of skateboard parks may also vary from concrete forms featuring bowls and stairs – such as at Lake Wilcox Park – to modular components (that may be movable and/or temporary) such as at Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park. While the City’s skateboard parks are located at destination parks that serve a broad geographic area, many municipalities have integrated skateboard features within neighbourhood parks to help improve geographic distribution for a demographic that usually relies on active transportation rather than cars to reach destinations, and can be placed where novice to intermediate skill levels can practice and build confidence before using the major skateboard parks. Neighbourhood serving parks that integrate ‘skate spots’ with only one or two elements – such as a rail and/or a grind box to practice skateboard tricks – in a small area of the park can appeal young children learning to skateboard or bike.

In alignment with urban design and/or urban art objectives, some municipalities have constructed ‘plaza style’ skateparks that mimic a civic streetscape by integrating tree planter boxes, stairs and rails, curbs, etc. The scale of plaza style skateparks can be large or small making them suited to both major and minor skateparks, and also lend themselves well to areas of intensification and other built-up areas where parkettes or urban parks are more common.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

Richmond Hill is currently providing a service level of one per 107,000 residents for skateboard and bike parks, which is much lower than the recommended target contained in the 2013 Parks Plan (one per 60,000 residents) as well as compared to benchmark municipalities. To achieve the current recommended target, Richmond Hill would require a total of four skateboard parks by 2031 to serve a projected population of 253,000, which is two more than what is currently provided. The City has currently identified that a new skateboard park is planned at a future park within the Yonge Street and 16th Avenue Key Development Area, which would create a location in the south end of Richmond Hill to serve surrounding users, including residents within the intensification area.

In determining a location for the second skateboard park, geographic distribution should be considered given the target demographic who use these types of facilities. Benchmark municipalities such as Markham have utilized a two-kilometre service area to identify gap areas. Using this approach, a gap area exists on the west side of the City in the area along Yonge Street, north of Major Mackenzie Drive and south of Gamble Road. Where possible, future locations should be designed as major skateboard parks, utilizing a similar template as the venue located at Lake Wilcox Park.

While a total of four major skateboard parks would provide an adequate level of coverage, major skateboard parks are ideally supplemented through the provision of small-scale “skate spots” that provide basic elements in a small area of new and existing parks for the benefit of young children and novice skateboarders learning to skateboard or bike. These venues may be most suitable in neighbourhood level parks, including near areas of intensification. As noted above, skate spots typically consist of a rail and/or grind box to practice skateboard tricks and are not typically capital intensive to provide in the context of park development/redevelopment budgets.

The importance of a well-designed skateboard park should be recognized to draw users and encourage frequent use. While the new location at Lake Wilcox Park achieves this goal, the skateboard park at the Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park is aging and in need of replacement. The modular skateboard park was constructed at a time when demand for the activity was largely untested. Now that skateboarding (and related wheeled action sports) has demonstrated sustained longevity as a municipal service, there is merit in reinvesting in this location to ensure that it continues to serve users over the long-term. Preference should be given to relocating the skateboard park within Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park given that its current location is not optimal due to the lack of visibility at the current location and the fact that it is used for snow storage during the winter. The development and redevelopment of skateboard parks in Richmond Hill should be guided by public consultation to inform the design process.

Preliminary Findings – Skateboard and Bike Parks

43. Maintaining a service target of one per 60,000 residents results in the need for two new major skateboard parks by 2031. With one skateboard park planned to be located within the Yonge Street and 16th Avenue Key Development Area, a second location should be determined, potentially located in a gap area north of Major Mackenzie Drive West and south of Gamble Road.
44. The City should investigate the provision of small-scale skate spots with basic elements for skateboarding and biking within neighbourhood-level parks or near areas of intensification to augment major skateboard parks and to provide basic elements for young children and novice skateboarders learning to skateboard or bike.
45. A permanent skateboard park should be constructed in a visible location at the Richmond Green Sports Centre & Park to replace the aging modular skateboard components.

5.5.9 Playgrounds

Supply

Playgrounds are provided at 125 parks across Richmond Hill (Figure 38). Some sites have more than one play structure such as Autumn Grove Park, which has junior and senior play components; other locations may have structures such as at Crosby Park that combines junior and senior play features. There are also a number of adventure playgrounds such as Lake Wilcox Park and Oak Ridges Lions Club Park, which encourages play through the use of natural features and materials, as well as topography. Richmond Hill’s supply of playgrounds results in a service level of one playground per 1,700 residents, which is slightly lower compared to the benchmark average.

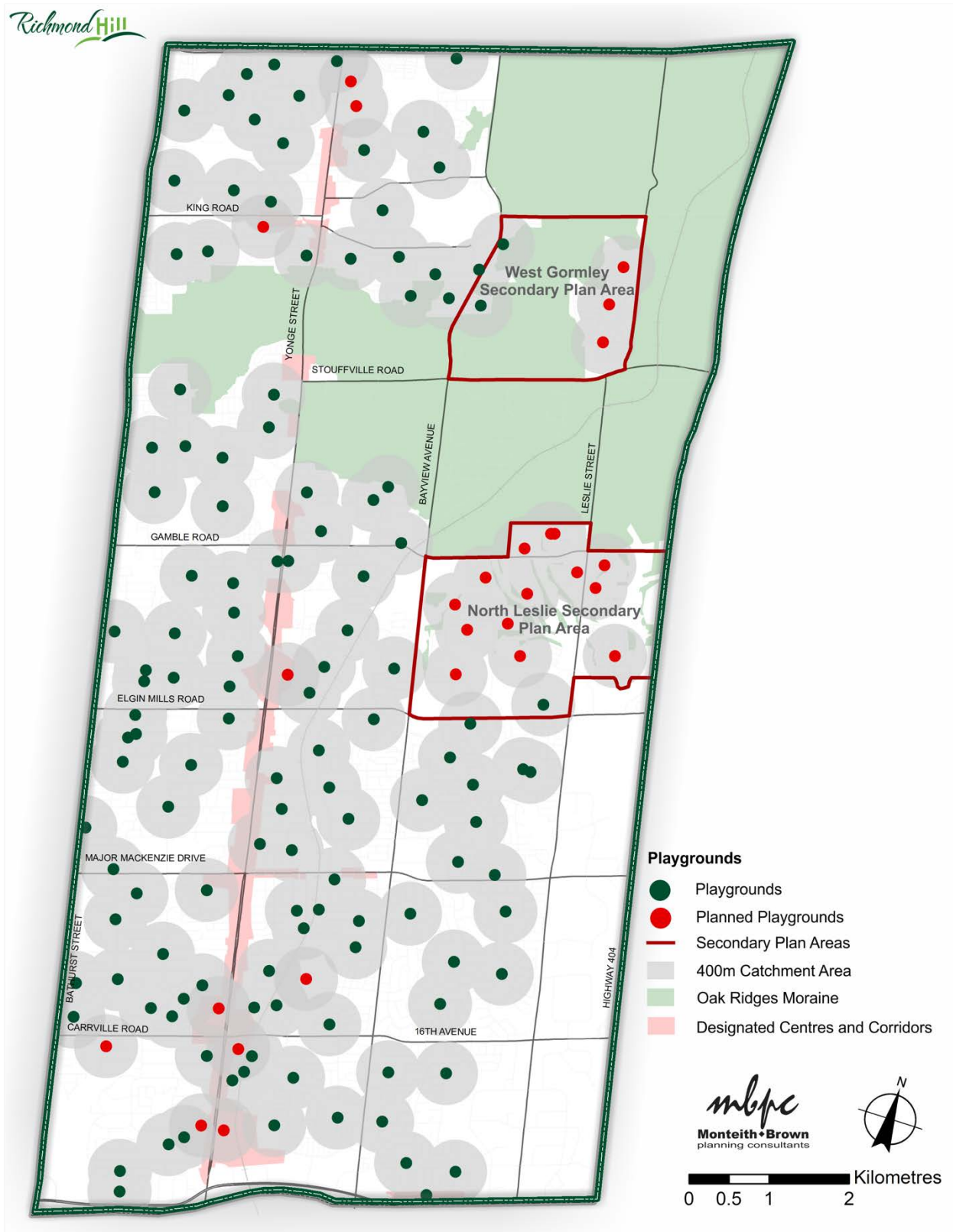
While the City’s playgrounds vary in scale and design, each location offers a creative play experience for children in the surrounding neighbourhood. Over the past number of years, the City has made significant efforts to replacing aging playgrounds with new structures that feature accessible components and safety surfacing such as at Morgan Boyle Park and Rouge Crest Park.

Table 35: Service Level Comparison, Playground Locations

Playgrounds Locations	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	128	1 : 1,500	800-metre radius of residents areas (without crossing a major physical barriers)
Burlington	183,000	115	1 : 1,600	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	125	1 : 1,700	400-metres of residential areas (without crossing major physical barriers including regional roads)
Brampton	614,000	334	1 : 1,800	500 to 800 metres of major residential areas (approximately 10-minute walk)
Vaughan	324,000	164	1 : 2,000	500-metres of urban residential areas (without crossing major barriers)
Markham	347,000	155	1 : 2,200	1 per residential block (10- minute walk)
Average	313,000	164	1 : 1,800	

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Figure 38: Distribution of Playgrounds



Playground Trends

Playgrounds can be found in neighbourhood, community and destination parks. They provide amenities that benefit childhood development, foster cognitive development and social skills, and encourage physical activity. Playgrounds are typically provided within walking distance of major residential areas (5-to-10-minute walk), without having to cross major barriers such as arterial roads, highways, railways, and waterbodies. Modern playgrounds are designed to offer creative play experiences and often integrate accessible features, which are more engaging than traditional play sites where features are usually limited to swings, slides and climbing structures. Richmond Hill recognizes the importance of creating unique play structures that draw in users and encourage use such as integrating local stories, features, art and landmarks into the design such as at Rocking Horse Ranch Park, Alias Grace Park and Lake Wilcox Park.

Accessible playgrounds and playground components are becoming standard elements of playground design and Richmond Hill has been redeveloping playgrounds with this in mind. In accordance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard contained in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, the construction of new or redeveloped playgrounds must incorporate accessible playground features. Such requirements include:

- Incorporating accessibility features such as, but not limited to, sensory and active play components for children and caregivers with various disabilities;
- Providing a ground surface that is firm and stable to accommodate users with mobility devices, yet resilient enough to absorb impact for injury prevention in the area around the play equipment;
- Providing sufficient clearance in and around the play space to allow children with various disabilities and their caregivers room to move around the space; and
- Consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and with persons with disabilities prior to designing, building, or redeveloping playgrounds.

As an alternative to the traditional and creative playground model, natural and adventure playgrounds are becoming more popular around the world. Richmond Hill is a leading example of this trend with 18 adventure playgrounds in the City. These playgrounds encourage play and interaction with landscape and natural materials such as wood, logs, ropes, stones, and boulders to allow users to create more daring opportunities. Still designed in compliance with CSA Z614 standards, natural/adventure playgrounds are proven to stimulate greater sensory and imaginative play compared to typical creative structures; research also shows that children’s immune health can benefit from exposure to natural materials. These playgrounds are designed to appear more precarious, which aligns to the concept of “risky play” to encourage children to take more risks through climbing, exploring, moving vigorously, and creating their own activities using their imagination. This style of play is popular in the United Kingdom and USA and is gaining traction in Canada.

Other play-oriented approaches observed in municipalities in Ontario include the addition of large plastic toys within playgrounds (such as play kitchens, dump trucks, tricycles etc.) to capture children’s imaginations and increase their outdoor play time. In Toronto, the City added a simple dirt pile at Trinity Bellwoods Park where children and caregivers alike augment their time at the playground by playing in the sand pile and digging, building, climbing, sliding down, etc. This solution is a simple low cost one to get caregivers and children to stay outside longer and engage in creative play.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

Like other benchmark municipalities, the provision of playgrounds in Richmond Hill are guided by proximity to residential areas. Through the 2013 Parks Plan, Richmond Hill has a target of one playground within 400-metres of residential areas, which is higher compared to benchmark municipalities that provide one playground within 500 to 800-metres of residential areas.

The City's existing supply of playgrounds achieves a strong level of coverage. The current service target reveals that there are major gaps within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas, which will be addressed through 17 playgrounds planned to be located at future parks within these secondary plan areas. Eight playgrounds have also been identified to be located within future or existing parks along key centres and corridors along Yonge Street to serve growing intensification areas. Additionally, a new playground was recently constructed/opened at Private Charles Hill Park and a playground is proposed to be installed at David Dunlap Observatory Park to address existing gap areas.

This strategy would result in 27 new playground locations and further strengthen the City's position in providing a high level of service while ensuring that residents have reasonable access to a playground within walking distance. Based on the current service target; however, minor gap areas exist within established areas such as the northwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive West and Yonge Street, the north side of Major Mackenzie Drive West and Bayview Avenue, the southwest corner of Carrville Road and Yonge Street, and others. A visual scan of these gap areas suggests that there may be limited or no park opportunities to provide additional playgrounds. There is merit in using a service radius of 400 metres (without crossing major barriers such as Regional Roads).

New and redeveloped playgrounds should continue to integrate the City's best practice of incorporating diverse elements such as barrier-free/inclusive designs and natural play features to promote inclusivity and adventure. In keeping with the City's current practice, the provision of natural and adventure playgrounds should also continue to be encouraged prominent locations or within naturalized settings.

While there is no standard for the provision of barrier-free features, new or redevelopment playgrounds should incorporate legislative requirements that new or redeveloped playgrounds include barrier-free components such as ramps, accessible swings, and firm and stable surfaces such as engineered wood fibre. As a best practice, rubberized surfaces are used at higher order parks to enhance the playing experience, which may be considered at key Destination and Community Parks in Richmond Hill. It should be recognized, however, that rubberized surfaces tend to be more costly to maintain and replace, thus it should only be considered at strategic locations.

In line with the City's policies and plans centred upon diversity and inclusion, consideration may need to be given to increasing playground budgets to incorporate a greater range of barrier-free design elements and innovative features that offer more play value to be incorporated into its typical playgrounds. To offset increasing playground budgets, there may be merit in strategically removing playgrounds, particularly in areas where service duplication exists or that are underutilized. Establishing a playground replacement plan may also ensure the playground reinvestment is manageable and that they are renewed in accordance with the manufacturer guidelines (e.g., every 15 to 20 years).

Preliminary Findings – Playgrounds

46. Maintain the current service target to plan for playgrounds to be within 400-metres of residential areas (without crossing major physical barriers including Regional Roads).
 47. Proceed with constructing 27 new playgrounds, including:
 - a) 14 playgrounds in parks within the North Leslie Secondary Plan Area;
 - b) Three playgrounds in parks within the West Gormley Secondary Plan Area;
 - c) Eight playgrounds in parks within or in close proximity to Yonge Street; and
 - d) Two playgrounds at Private Charles Hill Park (recently built/opened) and David Dunlap Observatory Park.
 48. All new or redeveloped playgrounds should contain a range of barrier-free features oriented to inclusion to allow use among children and caregivers with disabilities and special needs such as ramps, accessible swings and firm and stable surfaces (such as engineered wood fibre). Rubberized surfaces should be considered in strategic locations such as Destination and Community Parks to enhance the user experience. Natural and adventure-style playgrounds that incorporate landscapes and natural materials such as wood and ropes should continue to be provided particularly in prominent or naturalized settings to stimulate creative experiences and daring opportunities. A review of playground budgets may need to be considered to ensure that they are suitable and recognize the increased cost of playgrounds that feature barrier-free components and high-quality design.
 49. Establish a playground replacement plan to manage renewal activities and strategically identify playground removal to eliminate service duplication or underutilized sites.
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5.5.10 Outdoor Skating Rinks

Supply

The City operates four outdoor skating rinks in Richmond Hill including the refrigerated skating trail at Richmond Green (lit), two natural waterbody rinks at Lake Wilcox Park and Mill Pond Park (lit), and one natural rink at Crosby Park.

Richmond Hill’s four outdoor skating rinks translates into a service level of one per 53,500 residents, which is the second highest compared to benchmark municipalities. Direct comparisons with other benchmark communities should be viewed cautiously due to a number of factors such as varying rink configurations and fluctuating inventories that are dependent upon whether rinks are operational on a year-to-year basis due to weather conditions and the number of volunteer-maintained rinks. Some of the benchmark communities have refrigerated ice rinks including one in Oakville and Burlington, and five in Vaughan.

Table 36: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Skating Rinks

Outdoor Ice Rinks	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	16	1 : 12,100	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	4	1 : 53,500	1 per 37,000 residents
Brampton	614,000	8	1 : 76,800	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	2	1 : 91,500	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	5	1 : 64,800	Not defined
Markham	347,000	1	1 : 347,000	Not defined
Average	313,000	4	1 : 107,600	

Note: The municipal supply includes one refrigerated rink in Oakville and Burlington, and five refrigerated rinks in Vaughan. Volunteer-run outdoor skating rinks excluded. Availability of outdoor skating rinks may vary year-to-year due to varied weather conditions and other factors.

Outdoor Skating Trends

Recreational outdoor skating has been a Canadian tradition for many generations, although the ability to maintain outdoor rinks has become increasingly difficult due to climate change. Natural ice rinks are the most affordable method to build and maintain given that expenses are largely relegated to water and operational time. Maintenance, however, can be cumbersome when temperatures are near or above the freezing mark during warmer days or weeks. In many municipalities, natural outdoor rinks are maintained by volunteer organizations with the assistance of municipal staff. As an alternative, municipalities may construct refrigerated outdoor rinks (potentially with a roof), although this approach is more costly to build, maintain and operate.

Generally speaking, municipalities across the Province approach the provision of outdoor skating rinks with caution, although some municipalities continue to offer this service. Weather conditions are a principal factor, as well as other variables such as safety and liability, noise, less daylight and access to servicing.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

Richmond Hill's current service level of one per 53,500 residents for outdoor skating rinks is not meeting the recommended target of one per 37,000 residents as identified in the City's 2013 Parks Plan. Richmond Hill is the only community compared to benchmark municipalities that has an established level of service for this facility type. There is currently no evidence to suggest that adjusting the recommended target is warranted and thus, it should be carried forward to guide needs over the planning period.

The recommended target identifies that the City would require three new outdoor skating locations by the end of the planning period. Emphasis should be placed on the provision of artificial ice rinks to maintain consistent skating conditions and a high quality experience for users. During the planning period, the City has two artificial outdoor skating areas planned including a refrigerated outdoor rink at Town Park and a refrigerated skating trail at David Dunlap Observatory Park. The City should evaluate locations for a third outdoor artificial skating area, with consideration given to distribution of existing locations, park type, supporting amenities, and other site factors.

It is noted that some municipalities consider the provision of neighbourhood-based natural outdoor skating rinks in response to public requests. These opportunities improve the distribution of outdoor skating opportunities by providing walkable winter activities, thus alleviating arena pressures; however, they can also be a challenge to provide and maintain due to the variation in winter weather. Examples in other municipalities suggest that neighbourhood-level outdoor skating rinks are best provided by volunteers that would be responsible for day-to-day operations such as flooding and snow clearing, while the municipality play a supporting role (e.g., initial setup and take down).

There is merit in investigating options for the provision of community and neighbourhood-level skating opportunities. This review should take into consideration the type of outdoor skating rink (e.g., artificial rink, portable refrigeration kits/systems, natural rink kids, etc.), supporting amenities, associated costs, and operational resources. Depending on the park classification, the City should identify an appropriate service level model to be implemented as demand warrants. This will provide the City with a model to respond to public requests, as well as to inform new park development and park revitalization and master plans.

Preliminary Findings – Outdoor Skating Rinks

50. Continuing to maintain a service target of one per 37,000 residents resulting in the need for Richmond Hill to provide three new outdoor skating rinks. Emphasis should be placed on providing refrigerated outdoor skating rinks. The City currently has two locations planned including a refrigerated rink at Town Park and a refrigerated skating trail at David Dunlap Observatory Park. The City should evaluate locations for a third refrigerated outdoor skating rink, taking into consideration the distribution of existing locations, park type, supporting amenities and other site factors.
 51. City staff should undertake an investigation to review the options and standards for community and neighbourhood ice applications (e.g., artificial rinks, portable refrigeration kits/systems, natural rink kids, etc.). This review should identify supporting amenities, associated costs, and operational resources. Based on the park classification, identify the appropriate application and standard to be applied as demand warrants. These standards can then be applied to new parks, park revitalization and park master plans projects as they are undertaken to supplement demand for outdoor skating areas given the changing climate and the fact that the artificial outdoor skating rinks planned will likely be phased in over the long-term.
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5.5.11 Off-Leash Dog Areas

Supply

Richmond Hill provides two off-leash dog areas, although they are not located in typical City parks. The City’s first off-leash dog area was constructed at Tower Hill Park (Saigeon Trail), which opened in 2009 and is located along the Saigeon Trail system. Richmond Hill’s second off-leash dog area was constructed in 2012 at Phyllis Rawlinson Park, which is the largest park in the Oak Ridges Moraine that also contains a variety of passive amenities. Both sites offer parking, seating, and designated areas for small and large dogs. This supply translates into a service level of one per 107,000 residents, which is the third highest compared to benchmark municipalities.

Table 37: Service Level Comparison, Off-leash Dog Areas

Off-Leash Dog Areas	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Oakville	194,000	6	1 : 32,300	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	3	1 : 61,000	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	2	1 : 107,000	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	4	1 : 153,500	Not defined
Markham	347,000	2	1 : 173,500	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	1	1 : 324,000	One per quadrant
Average	313,000	3	1 : 141,900	

Off-Leash Dog Area Trends

With by-laws regulating the use of leashes, off-leash dog areas provide owners an opportunity to exercise and socialize with their dogs in a controlled area. Off-leash dog areas should not be viewed strictly for pets as best practices suggest that they are also beneficial for residents and community interaction among those who share a common interest. Off-leash dog areas have proven to be very successful, particularly in highly urbanized communities that tend to have several such facilities as opportunities for dogs to run freely may be limited. For many municipalities, off-leash dog areas are managed by an affiliated organization to act as park stewards, such as the Richmond Hill K9 Klub who works with the City to operate the two locations.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

As demonstrated through the service level comparison with benchmark municipalities, there is no industry standard guiding the provision of off-leash dog areas. They tend to be provided to respond to public demand and if there are willing community organizations open to taking on responsibilities to assist with day-to-day maintenance and operations. The 2013 Parks Plan recommended that the City undertake a review of its Off Leash Dog Area Policy prior to providing additional locations. This policy was reviewed and updated in 2013 which included minimum size criteria for neighbourhood-scale off-leash areas.⁴³

In 2014, the City prepared a staff report investigating the potential closure of Tower Hill Dog Park as it was previously determined that this location would be eliminated following the opening of the off-leash dog area at Phyllis Rawlinson Park. The Tower Hill Dog Park location had also been a subject of concern from surrounding residents due to traffic and noise within the vicinity. An investigation by City staff found that the two dog areas were very popular amenities, drawing up to and over 5,000 visitors per month (the Tower Hill Dog Park is the most popular location). The staff report outlined facility provision options for Council to consider which included a multi- or single-facility model. Council decided that a multi-facility model would best serve the needs of residents in Richmond Hill and due to the popularity, it was recommended that the Tower Hill Dog Park remain open and that

⁴³ City of Richmond Hill. Staff Report (SRPRS.14.018). Request for direction: Tower Hill Off Leash Area. 2017.

the City investigate the potential for two additional off-leash dog areas to respond to demand and relieve pressure from existing locations.

To date, the City has yet to establish two new off-leash dog areas, although one is planned to be located in the south area of Richmond Hill. Preliminary sites the City is considering include the hydro corridor along Highway 7 between Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue, or Webster Park. Both of these potential locations would serve to address the needs of dog owners living in the general area, particularly given that these locations are within close proximity to the Yonge Street intensification corridor. The City's staff report also identified a second future off-leash dog area should be located within the Oak Ridges area, although a site has not yet been defined.

Since staff's 2014 report, there is evidence which suggests that additional off-leash dog parks should be considered. The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated a growth in dog pet ownership as Provincial restrictions and lockdown measures have required residents to remain at home. Richmond Hill has also placed a greater emphasis on population growth within the City's centres and corridors. These two factors are likely to drive the demand for off-leash dog parks over the planning period. With this in mind, a service target of one per 40,000 residents should be adopted for off-leash dog parks. This would require the City to establish two additional off-leash dog areas over and above the two locations that are planned in Richmond Hill's south end and the Oak Ridges area. The City should evaluate potential opportunities for two new off-leash areas within establish areas, particularly within proximity to areas of intensification, such as within existing parks or along trails. This approach will ensure that there is an adequate distribution of off-leash dog areas across the City and respond to the needs of dog owners living in intensification areas where private outdoor space is limited or may not have transportation access to existing and planned locations.

Preliminary Findings – Off-Leash Dog Areas

52. A service target of one per 40,000 residents for off-leash dog areas would require the City to add four new additional off-leash dog areas, which should be met through the following approach:
- a) Construct the planned off-leash dog area in the south end.
 - b) Construct the planned off-leash dog area in the Oak Ridges Area.
 - c) Construct two off-leash dog areas within proximity of planned centres and corridors such as in an existing park or along trails.

5.5.12 Community Allotment Gardens

Supply

There are two types of community gardens in Richmond Hill. Community allotment gardens are individual plots of land that can be rented by the public, while collective gardens are areas that are maintained by a group of gardeners or a committee.

The City currently provides one community allotment garden at Phyllis Rawlinson Park that can be rented by the public which represents a service level of one per 214,000 residents. This is on the lower end of the spectrum compared to benchmark municipalities due to the fact that Richmond Hill and Markham only provide one community allotment garden. However, it is noted that there are non-municipal organizations that provide community allotment gardening opportunities in Richmond Hill and Markham such as at religious institutions.

Complementary to Richmond Hill's community allotment garden, the City also has seven collective gardens that are publicly owned but are maintained by community organizations. Due to the variability of collective gardens in benchmark municipalities, a comparison was not completed.

Table 38: Service Level Comparison, Community Allotment Gardens

Community Allotment Gardens	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Burlington	183,000	5	1 : 36,600	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	4	1 : 48,500	Not defined
Vaughan	324,000	5	1 : 64,800	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	6	1 : 102,300	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	1	1 : 214,000	Not defined
Markham	347,000	1	1 : 347,000	Not defined
Average	313,000	4	1 : 135,600	

Note: Markham has multiple community gardens, only one is municipally owned.

Community Allotment Garden Trends

Community allotment gardens have become popular outdoor amenities, particularly in highly urbanized areas where residents may not have access to personal gardening space. The popularity of community allotment gardens is driven by a number of factors such as the emphasis on social justice and food security, healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and providing a healthy and sustainable food source. Research conducted in diverse communities reveal that community allotment gardens also allow residents to cultivate, preserve and prepare cultural produce.⁴⁴ Municipalities experiencing intensification have also seen a growing demand for community allotment gardens as residents have limited or no personal space for gardening. Moreover, the social interaction and horticultural educational opportunities are also part of the appeal of community allotment gardens.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan did not recommend a service target for community allotment gardens, although it recommended that the City establish a policy to guide the development of new community allotment gardens to respond to future requests. As demonstrated through the service level comparison with benchmark municipalities, there is no industry standard guiding the provision of community allotment gardens. As a best practice, these amenities tend to be provided based on qualitative factors such as public demand, willingness of established organizations interested in assisting with day-to-day maintenance and operations and availability of suitable sites (e.g., infrastructure, soil conditions, etc.).

Over the past number of years, the City has experienced pressures for additional community allotment garden plots that can be rented by the public. In a staff report prepared in 2017, the City reported that there was a waitlist of 68 interested residents and to alleviate pressures and address demand, the City recommended one centrally located community allotment garden developed, as well as up to four new collective gardens. A community garden policy was also developed to assist with facilitating the development of community gardens in Richmond Hill, which includes guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the City and partners, maintenance standards, and more.

To date, the new collective gardens have been established (for a total of seven). The second community allotment has not yet been implemented, although one is planned to be located in the City’s south end at Bridgeview Park, which is expected to be developed in the near-term as part of a park revitalization initiative. With the existing community garden in the north end, the second location in the south end, Richmond Hill offers a good geographic distribution of community gardening opportunities. Locating a community garden at Bridgeview Park would also

⁴⁴ Baker, L. (2004). Tending cultural landscapes and food citizenship in Toronto’s community gardens. *Geographical Review* 94, no. 3:305-325.

serve current and future residents living within intensification centres and corridors along Yonge Street. This should assist in meeting the pent-up demand for access to a community garden by those on the City’s waiting list.

Consistent with the current approach, the provision of collective gardens should continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as the City receives requests from established community organizations.

Preliminary Findings – Community Allotment Gardens

- 53. Proceed with the establishment of a second community allotment garden at Bridgeview Park to strengthen the provision of community gardens in the City with north and south locations resulting in a provision level of one community garden per 107,000 people by 2031.
- 54. Continue to evaluate the merit of additional collective gardens on a case-by-case basis based on waiting lists, requests and distributional access to the community as proposals come forward from established community organizations.

5.5.13 Outdoor Bocce Courts

Supply

Richmond Hill currently provides five outdoor bocce courts at three locations including Grist Mill Park (2), Ozark Park (2) and Richvale Athletic Field (1). This supply results in a service level of one outdoor bocce court per 42,800 residents. Vaughan is the only other benchmark community that provides outdoor bocce courts.

Table 39: Service Level Comparison, Outdoor Bocce Courts

Outdoor Bocce Courts	Approximate Population	Municipal Supply	Service Level	Recommended Service Level
Vaughan	324,000	59	1 : 5,500	Not defined
Richmond Hill	214,000	5	1 : 42,800	Not defined
Burlington	183,000	0	-	Not defined
Markham	347,000	0	-	Not defined
Oakville	194,000	0	-	Not defined
Brampton	614,000	0	-	Not defined
Average	313,000	32	1 : 24,100	

Outdoor Bocce Trends

Like indoor bocce, outdoor bocce is generally played by adults 55+ and the Italian-Canadian community. There are currently no trends that suggest that there is an increase in youth participation. Decommissioning and re-purposing outdoor bocce courts has been the trend observed over the past decade. Since Richmond Hill completed its 2013 Parks Plan, the City’s supply of outdoor bocce courts has been reduced from eight to five courts. Similarly, Oakville removed its only outdoor bocce court location due to low use.

Preliminary Needs Assessment

The 2013 Parks Plan did not recommend a service target for outdoor bocce courts. Similar to benchmark municipalities, outdoor bocce courts are provided in response to demonstrated demand. However, the use of outdoor bocce courts has traditionally been low. At this time there is no evidence that suggests that there will be a

need for addition outdoor bocce courts. Recognizing that bocce is considered to be a social sport that is played in groups, consideration should be given to monitoring the use of the five existing outdoor bocce courts, particularly at Richvale Athletic Field, given that it is the only location with only one bocce court.

Preliminary Findings – Outdoor Bocce Courts

55. Maintain the existing supply of five outdoor bocce courts and consider additional locations subject to demand. Monitor the use of the five existing outdoor bocce courts, particularly at Richvale Athletic Field, where there is currently only one court.
-

5.5.14 Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

There are a number of other outdoor recreation facilities that the City currently provides, or may have an interest in providing; however, these amenities tend to be specialized facilities that do not have accepted service targets. Provision of such amenities are based on many factors including public requests, demonstrated demand, available resources, partnership opportunities, and other factors. Given that the City does not currently have service targets for the following facility types, the need for these amenities will be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

Outdoor Disc Golf

Disc golf is a sport in which players throw a flying disc on a course consisting of between nine and 18 targets (or baskets). Disc golf is a century old game that originated in Canada in the early 1900s that is now played across the world. It has been gaining in popularity in recent times as an increasing number of young adults have been taking up the sport. The governing body for the sport is the Professional Disc Golf Association, which reported a total of 150,000 professional and amateur members in 2021.⁴⁵ Interest in the sport continues to grow as people continue to seek casual and active outdoor physical activities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Richmond Hill does not currently have an outdoor disc golf course, there have been some requests for this type of amenity. There are disc golf courses in benchmark communities such as in Brampton and Oakville, as well as in Toronto. Opportunities to provide this type of amenity in Richmond Hill should be explored as needed, particularly if there is a willing partner to assist with providing space, facilitating league play, or other capacity.

Outdoor Lawn Bowling

An outdoor lawn bowling green with an associated clubhouse is located at Town Park, representing a service level of one per 214,000 residents. The green is used by the Richmond Hill Lawn Bowling Club, which is a long-standing group that has existed for over 100 years. The sport is popular among adults 55+, although there is evidence of it being played by youth. Overall participation among affiliated clubs has remained stable. Lawn bowling is largely provided by community-based clubs and is generally not considered to be a core municipal service in most municipalities. In recent times, clubs have been challenged with maintaining membership levels with some folding completely and others seeking ways to attract new members. The Richmond Hill Lawn Bowling Club is welcoming of people who are interested in learning to play as it offers free opportunities to try the sport. The Club also offers a Learn to Lawn Bowl program for new members and a variety of leagues, lessons and events are held throughout the season for its members.

Ropes Challenge Course

Co-located with the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre, Richmond Hill's Ropes Challenge Course is a unique outdoor recreation amenity. It is offered through City programming or through rentals and includes five high and 17 low

⁴⁵ Sports Illustrated. 2021. Paige Pierce Is Taking Disc Golf To the Moon. Retrieved from <https://www.si.com/>

rope elements as well as a climbing wall. The ropes challenge course is an excellent opportunity for physical activity, team building exercises, and personal challenges.

As identified in Section 5.4.7, the associated Eyer Wideman Youth Centre has been underutilized for some time as youth tend to prefer integrated youth space within multi-use community centres. As a result, it was identified that the City cease operations of the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre and alternative uses of the building/site be explored. Without the support of indoor space, continued use of the ropes challenge course in its present location may be impacted. Opportunities to relocate the ropes challenge course should be investigated, with preference given to a park with established youth amenities. Phyllis Rawlinson Park may be a suitable candidate given the availability of amenities that currently exist and its focus on outdoor programming.

Sand Volleyball Courts

Richmond Hill provides four sand volleyball courts at Lake Wilcox Park, which translates into a service level of one per 53,500 residents. Sand volleyball has become a popular warm weather activity in many communities across the Province, particularly in waterfront communities or municipalities with large bodies of water. Sand volleyball is popular among youth and young adults seeking activities that combine physical activity and socializing with others; the low cost to participate is also an appealing factor. In some communities, sand volleyball courts can be utilized for delivering programming and league play (as Richmond Hill does) or if they are competition quality, they may be ideal for hosting competitive or recreational volleyball tournaments.

Toboggan Hills

While Richmond Hill does not currently provide a designated location for tobogganing, there are locations that have been known to be used for tobogganing by residents. Staff investigated the merits of tobogganing hills in 2017 when the City was approached by a third-party to create a berm at Phyllis Rawlinson Park that could be used for tobogganing. Some municipalities have been cautious with formally designating toboggan hills due to concerns regarding safety and liability; however, research conducted by the City in a staff report (SRPRS.17.093) found that the risk can be minimized through design and maintenance.⁴⁶ Council supported the proposal for creating a berm at Phyllis Rawlinson Park for tobogganing; however, this facility has not yet been implemented.

Water Activities

Richmond Hill is fortunate to have access to Lake Wilcox, a unique natural feature in the north portion of the City. Located within the Oak Ridges Moraine, Lake Wilcox is a habitat for a variety of wildlife and fish. Since 2005, the City has been working in collaboration with the Toronto Region Conservation Authority on the Lake Wilcox Habitat Enhancement Project to improve the water quality and aquatic habitats. Due to the current conditions, use of Lake Wilcox is limited to fishing (in designated locations), water activities (e.g., paddle boarding) and human-powered boating (e.g., canoeing, kayaking, etc.); swimming is prohibited. Lake Wilcox also functions as an important outdoor space to deliver community programs led by the City and community organizations.

Over the past 10 years, the City has been guided by the Lake Wilcox Park Master Plan, which identifies the long-term vision for the destination park, which includes opportunities to enhance the public enjoyment of Lake Wilcox, such as the suspended pedestrian boardwalk. A key user of Lake Wilcox is the Richmond Hill Canoe Club, which was established in 1991 to serve the interests of recreational and competitive paddlers in York Region. The group's membership fluctuates between 60 and 80 members, although the number of individual program participants tends to double when accounting for non-members. Programs offered by the club include canoe kids, adult introduction, lifesaving instruction, swimming lessons, dragon boating, a school program, non-competitive paddling, racing development, stand-up paddle board instruction, and a St. Andrew Duke of Edinburgh program. Additionally, a summer camp program is offered, which typically draws approximately 100 participants.

⁴⁶ City of Richmond Hill. Staff report (SRPRS.17.093) Proposal for a potential toboggan hill at Phyllis Rawlinson Park. 2017.

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The group uses a Clubhouse located at Lake Wilcox and has identified a number of concerns associated with the facility that impact the ability to expand the scope of their programs and services, as well as to accommodate persons with disabilities. Facility constraints include the lack of running water and key services such as washrooms and change rooms (including gender neutral). The lack of storage and winter training space was also identified. These issues have been previously documented and as a result, Council has directed staff to investigate opportunities to redevelop the canoe club facility, with consideration given to potential public private partnership opportunities.⁴⁷ The Canoe Club is open to working collaboratively with the City towards the potential for a future facility replacement. This matter will be investigated further as part of the PRC Plans, together with other potential water activity needs.

Preliminary Findings – Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities

56. Public requests for specialized recreation facilities that are not within the core mandate of the City should be supported by demonstrated demand, available resources, partnership opportunities, and other factors.
 57. Investigate opportunities to relocate the ropes challenge course at the Eyer Wideman Youth Centre to another location with established youth amenities and outdoor programming potential, such as Phyllis Rawlinson Park
 58. Work collaboratively with the Richmond Hill Canoe Club to establish a future vision for canoeing on Lake Wilcox, which may include consideration for a public private partnership for the replacement and continued operation of the canoe club facility and associated programming opportunities.
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⁴⁷ City of Richmond Hill. Council Motion regarding the Richmond Hill Canoe Club (C#4-19 By-law 149-19). 2019.

6.0

Cultural Opportunities

This section explores the benefits of cultural planning in the community, notable studies that have been completed to date, key trends in the sector, and highlights the cultural resources and assets found in Richmond Hill.

6.1 Cultural Plan

Cultural Planning is recognized by Richmond Hill as the cornerstone to the development of a vibrant community. The 2011 Cultural Plan was guided by the community's desire to be a place where people can come together to celebrate natural and cultural diversity, where creativity is fostered and ideas exchanged, and where the arts are appreciated.

The goal of the Cultural Plan was to ensure that the texture, voices and memories of the community are firmly integrated into the City's physical and recreational planning, as well as its long-term economic objectives. The Cultural Plan also provided a shared vision of the needs, aspirations and priorities related to cultural development, cultural infrastructure and cultural planning in Richmond Hill over a 10-year time horizon. To that end, primary considerations for the refresh of the Cultural Plan remains the same as in 2011:

- Engaging community and stakeholders in a broad and ongoing discussion of culture and cultural planning in Richmond Hill;
- Heightening local awareness and increasing community support and recognition of the importance of arts and culture to Richmond Hill's prosperity and the community's livability;
- Improving access to information on cultural resources and activities in Richmond Hill for residents, visitors, businesses, and organizations;
- Increasing the stability and sustainability of Richmond Hill's arts and cultural organizations and fostering collaboration across a wide cross-section of cultural groups and activities; and
- Understanding and addressing gaps in services and cultural facilities that reflect both Richmond Hill's geography and its cultural diversity.

Notable achievements from the 2011 Cultural Plan include:

- Strengthened approach to festival and events planning.
- Implemented the cultural leadership Council (CLS) that is meeting regularly and overseeing the implementation of the Cultural Plan's recommendations.
- Strengthened and expanded youth engagement in culture by engaging four youth representatives in Cultural Leadership Council meetings and connecting with the York Region Arts Council
- Developed and implemented policies supporting cultural initiatives such as the Public Art Policy.
- Museum Feasibility Study was completed

6.2 Defining Culture

Richmond Hill's Cultural Plan defines culture as the *“expression and celebration of the values and aspiration of a community. This is done through all manner of human activities that characterize a community and its people and shape its unique sense of place. It includes the sharing of ideas; learning through individual and locally authentic community expression in the fine, visual, literary, media, material and performing arts; heritage and the shared experiences of history.”*

6.3 Benefits of Cultural Planning

Cultural planning is instrumental in improving social outcomes for individuals and communities. Supporting and fostering culture in a community has a direct correlation in providing benefits to communities and individuals through health, social capital, economic growth, and city development. In particular, cultural planning can:

Improve individual health, both physically and mentally. Multiple studies have shown that artistic and cultural programming have provided therapeutic health benefits mostly gained through social interaction and personal skills development which can boost confidence and self-esteem and indirect physical benefits such as physical activity through movement such as dancing.

Improve community social capital. Communities that support the arts and culture sector see greater levels of social relationships and networks that unite people from diverse backgrounds and social levels through a shared experience, ultimately facilitating the growth of volunteering, community pride, and participation in political processes.

Improve economic growth. Culture is a key element to making cities a destination in which individuals want to work, live, and invest. Activities such as music festivals and art festivals can attract new people to a city, help forge an identity for a community and generate economic wealth for businesses and individuals.

Improve city building. Civic administrations that acknowledge and plan arts and cultural needs find better ways to connect people and places, leading to a better and more sustainable quality of life for its residents.

6.4 Preliminary Guiding Principles

The following preliminary guiding principles are identified to be tested and ultimately inform the development of the cultural component of the Recreation and Culture Master Plan.

- a) Growth and development are managed in a way that encourages the vibrancy of Richmond Hill's art and culture sector and preserves the unique sense of belonging and friendliness making the community a great place to live.
- b) Culture and creative industries are integral to planning for sustainability, alongside other social, economic and environmental considerations.
- c) Richmond Hill's diversity is a source of strength and the City is committed to values of inclusion.
- d) Cultural programs and activities are responsive and relevant to all parts of the community and through all phases of life.
- e) The City values and supports strong local and regional cultural organizations working together toward shared goals.

6.5 Studies that Support Cultural Planning in Richmond Hill

6.5.1 Richmond Hill Public Library Strategic Plan

The Richmond Hill Public Library Strategic Plan recognizes that the library system as a key creative cultural asset with a significant potential to contribute to the cultural sector. The library functions as a critical connection to all segments of the community and with the City's population, which is rapidly growing and diversifying, the ability to engage and respond to the needs of residents has never been more important.

The Strategic Plan envisions the library as a key connector and catalyst of conversations and knowledge exchange in the community focused on educational opportunities. It emphasizes four strategies: strengthening connections; contributing vibrant spaces; enriching choices; and reinforcing capabilities. In the 2018 Strategic Plan Report Card, the following achievements were made between 2013 and 2017 across these strategies:

- **Strengthening Connections:** deepened engagement with the resident and business community and vulnerable populations, including underprivileged youth and newcomers via community events, festivals and newcomer service hub. Moreover, key partnerships were advanced, including neighbouring libraries to expand borrowing privileges across the region, Richmond Hill Board of Trade, York Region District School Board, YMCA Early Years, among others.
- **Contributing Vibrant Spaces:** Planned and positioned library services where residents, businesses and community groups are. Created co-sharing spaces and co-mingling permanent and temporary engagement points in the library to encourage people to come to the physical location. Moreover, a virtual facilities plan was developed, and library's website reshaped as a virtual space and service.
- **Enriching Choices:** Delivered skill development programs to help prepare talent at various ages and stages of their lives to pursue educational, career and personal interests in the realities of the 21st century.
- **Reinforcing Capabilities:** Reshaped and transformed library service model by engaging in meaningful community relationships and/or service interactions with residents in different places and contexts.

6.5.2 Economic Development Strategy Update

The 2010 Economic Development Strategy and the subsequent update to the Strategy and Action Plan were guided by the Town's Strategic Plan, which recognized the Economic Development Strategy as central to better market Richmond Hill.

The vision for the Economic Development Strategy Update remains the same as in 2010:

"Sustained economic growth built on innovation, investment, entrepreneurship, creativity and quality of place."

The Information and Culture sector is an economic engine and one of the fastest-growing sectors of Richmond Hill's economy. The Economic Development Strategy Update reports that the creative sector makes up more than half of the City's workforce. Well-established businesses (e.g., Firefly Books, Cosmo Music, the Fairchild Group, Jesmar Communications, Kenilworth Media, iSign Media, Rogers TV) are involved in internet solutions and books media and visual arts and design. Richmond Hill supports the creative sector through various means including:

- Providing one-on-one consultation with existing and start-up businesses, as well as networking events and professional development opportunities to help companies scale up and grow.
- Richmond Hill hosts Creativity Connected Creative Industries Symposium every year to explore the uniqueness of York Region's creative businesses and talent and to bring together creative minds to exchange and share information about the sector. Moreover, the city recognizes the uniqueness of York Region's creative businesses and talent by hosting the Creativity Connected Awards every year.

6.5.3 Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts Strategic Business Review and Core Service Review

The Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts (RHCPA) is a community theatre opened to the public in 2009. The RHCPA operates under the mandate of delivering community-based theatre programming with a subsidy of no more than 1% on the tax rate. Since its inception, the RHCPA has required a tax support budget to supplement revenues generated from performances and sponsorships. Efforts to increase revenues to limit reliance on tax support funding has been a challenging task.

In 2015, the City completed a Strategic Business Review of the RHCPA (prepared by Novita Interpares) which aimed to eliminate any impediments to future success and to set a course of action over a five year period (2015-2020). The Strategic Business Review established seven goals with recommendations that enhanced how services were delivered at the RHCPA. The following goals were identified and recommended for implementation:

- a) Develop guiding policies
- b) Develop a new programming model
- c) Revise the management priorities
- d) Re-define the relationship to community
- e) Re-define and expand concepts of market
- f) Improve financial management tools
- g) Review and develop various procedures and practices

Staff implemented the majority of recommendations provided in the Strategic Business Review which led to the completion of a Core Service Review of the RHCPA in 2021. The Core Service Review concluded a series of recommendations that aim to align staff expertise, introduce operational savings, preserving the theatre expertise and maintaining the community cultural benefit to Richmond Hill. Short term recommendations noted included improving policies and procedures that align with Recreation and Culture applications as well as improving cohesion with City Divisions such as IT, Communications, and Finance. This would support a movement of positions within the RHCPA to be aligned with expertise within Recreation and Culture. The Core Service Review noted two ongoing implementation recommendations related to developing a fiscally sustainable program and continuing the RHCPA successful sponsorship program.

6.5.4 Festival and Events Strategy Staff Report SRPRC.10.14

The Festival and Events Strategy is a policy framework that guides municipal decision-making and is aligned with the City's Strategic Plan and Cultural Plan.

Vision Statement

"The Town of Richmond Hill facilitates and supports the delivery of vibrant and sustainable festivals and events that engage the community in event leadership, and enhance the quality of life for its residents and the community at large."

Key recommendations that have relevance to the PRC Plans include (but are not limited to):

- Adopt an event management model that supports, and gives preference to community led, municipally supported festivals and events.
- Shift the responsibility for planning and delivering large fundraising events to community-led organizing committees.
- Develop and implement an Event Evaluation Framework that ties the allocation of City resources to an event's alignment with municipal goals and objectives.

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- Develop a business plan that engages the community in the creation and delivery of a Signature Event for Richmond Hill.
- Ensure that all municipal, Mayor and Council, and community events and festivals are in accordance with the Council Event Policy and current Service Level Agreements.

6.5.5 Community Cultural Grant Program

The Community and Cultural grant program was a recommendation of the 2011 Cultural Plan. In February 2015, Council approved the Community and Cultural Grant Program (amalgamated the Mayors Endowment Fund for the Arts and the City's Community Grant Program) with an annual funding allocation of \$65,000. The purpose of the program was to provide project funding to community and cultural organizations, as well as individual artists whose projects support a more vibrant Richmond Hill through the delivery of programs, services or activities. Applications were eligible to receive a grant to fund 50% of a project, up to a maximum of \$5,000. Between 2016 and 2019, an average of \$2,200 was allocated to 87 applicants.

On January 22, 2020, the 2020 Community and Cultural Grant program was not approved by Council and was not renewed in 2021.

Key recommendations that have relevance to the PRC Plans include (but are not limited to):

- Examine the Community and Cultural Grant Program and determine if a grant program is needed for the cultural sector in Richmond Hill.

6.5.6 Public Art Policy

The 2012 Public Art Policy was created to guide the development of a public art program in Richmond Hill, to make public art a priority in the City's continued growth and development, and to maintain public art as a valuable asset to the community.

The Public Art Policy commits Richmond Hill to creating and maintaining a productive and innovative public art program that:

- Creates beautiful, interesting spaces that become iconic in the City;
- Reflects the diversity of the community;
- Instills a sense of local pride;
- Continue to develop a positive civic identity, reflect the City's values and character attributes;
- Provide educational experiences to both students and those outside of a formal study structure;
- Increase cultural tourism; and
- Contribute to the unique cultural heritage of the City, and ensure the conservation of this heritage.

In addition, the Public Art Policy also indicated three funding requirements, each of which have relevance to the PRC Plans. The three funding requirements include:

- a. Capital funding as established in the 2010 Official Plan Section 3.4.1.9 where the City shall require the dedication of 1% of the capital budget of all regional and municipal buildings greater than 500 m² to public art. The Public Art Policy also requests that the City broaden the percent of public art policy to apply to public real improvement projects.

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- b. Encouraging private development funding of public art by making public art a requirement of significant private sector developments and using Section 37 of the Planning Act to secure public art.
- c. Maintenance funding to ensure that existing public art is well maintained and conserved, regardless if the art has been commissioned or donated. The Public Art Policy requests that the City budgets 10% of the cost of the public art be held for maintenance and conservation purposes.

Key recommendations that have relevance to the PRC Plans include (but are not limited to):

- Examine the Public Art Program and determine if the funding requirements are appropriately supporting the outcomes of the Public Art Policy.
- Examine if the Community Benefits Charge funds can bolster Public Art in Richmond Hill.

6.6 Cultural Planning Trends

6.6.1 Culture in the City Planning Context

The term “culture” is frequently misused and misinterpreted. Arriving to a consensus on the definition of “culture” in any context is a challenge, let alone within a field as multilayered as city planning. As a result, municipal decision-makers and planners find themselves regularly and often unwittingly making choices and setting actionable policies based on their cultural point of view and impacting the culture and cultures within their communities with little to no awareness of its meaning or the positive or negative implications of the actions. As such, city plans and policies impact the culture of its communities in virtually every planning arena, including, but certainly not limited to, recreation, transportation, housing, urban design, and the formal arts and culture sector.

The latest literature in cultural planning and in cultural plans points to defining “culture” as activities that harness the assets of a community; celebrate the unique resources, such as heritage properties, natural assets, and community spirit; revitalize cores; honour and respect the unique contributions of artists and artisans; create diverse and safe neighbourhoods; raise the bar for urban design; and protect public spaces. In addition, cultural plans over the previous decade have encouraged professionals and individuals within the arts and culture sector to lead informed conversations about culture (employed as cultural planners or added to municipal committees), what it means, how it changes, and, importantly, whose cultures should be included or have been excluded in the planning process.

In Richmond Hill, the Cultural Leadership Council that was created in 2012 was designed to provide a connection from Cultural Services to the community and to gather public input on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Cultural Plan. The purpose of the Cultural Leadership Council was to build a collaborative working relationship between the community, businesses and the City. The members of the Cultural Leadership Council were representatives from Richmond Hill’s arts and cultural community groups, creative business industries, artists, youth and diverse citizen members that were able to provide input and advice to Richmond Hill staff on the effective implementation of the Cultural Plan recommendations.

As population growth results in greater diversity and intensified development, continuing to leverage the Cultural Leadership Council and identifying ways to involve the group in municipal decision-making will help to ensure that culture is a key element of the City’s growth and development. Cities today are increasingly turning to these advisors to understand how their actions would impact equality and to inform how design and programming would impact different people and communities.

6.6.2 Living Heritage

As communities diversify and cultures are shared across the globe, there has been a move toward gathering, protecting and featuring intangible heritage elements. Intangible heritage includes many aspects of a community’s culture that are not represented by traditional physical artifacts, buildings or monuments such as: storytelling, skill

sharing and knowledge building. Often these intangibles are created, transmitted and maintained organically by a community without a realization that they are explicitly maintaining culture and heritage.

Rapidly changing demographics in many communities have pushed organizations and groups to document these intangibles for future generations as well as for cross-cultural learning and understanding. Many heritage groups, museums and galleries are using technologies to collect, archive and exhibit their local intangible heritage assets. With the changing demographics in Richmond Hill, it is increasingly important to expand the definition of heritage beyond a Canadian-only focus to one that is encompassing of diverse histories of the new populations that call Richmond Hill home. Celebrating living heritage and intangible heritage should be reflective of Richmond Hill's current and future demographics.

6.6.3 Racial Equity in the Cultural Sector and in City Planning

Changing demographics and increased diversity in many communities and neighbourhoods will impact the cultural sector. There has been growing recognition in Canada of the lack of diversity in mainstream arts, culture and heritage experiences and also in the make-up of administrations, instructors, presenters and creators of arts, culture and heritage. 'Traditional' arts and culture representation will need to expand to incorporate and exhibit new forms of art for a wider community, ensuring racial equity in the arts is more than just tokenism. Institutions and funding bodies are also identifying barriers faced by equity-seeking creatives and addressing ways to improve racial equity in the arts. According to a study completed by Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC) in 2020; Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists are the highest underrepresented within Canadian cultural institutions both as presenting artists, and within management, executive positions, and boards.

With an already diverse population living in Richmond Hill, it is also important that any community engagement concerning the development of the city have participatory practices in place, in particular when it results in any culture related impacts. This includes learning how to cooperate, to negotiate, and to compromise, and how to do so constructively and effectively with all of Richmond Hill's cultures.

6.6.4 Digital Technology, Civic Engagement and Creative Industries

Digital technologies are impacting the arts and culture sector in new ways, including increased participation and consumption of arts, culture and heritage. Digital technologies are increasing the amount of information available for participants to access when they want to, during their own time and immediately at their fingertips. This access has also dramatically affected cultural industries in the way they work, market and run their businesses. With technology now abundant and universal, it extends to all areas of social life, work and civic experiences.

Digital technologies however also change at a fast pace. Artists and other cultural producers are often at the leading edge of using these technologies in their artworks to invigorate exhibitions, installations and to engage the public at events and activities, but not every group or organization is able to adapt so quickly, in particular non-profit community groups that are largely operated and run by volunteers. It is impossible to predict what the future will bring in terms of technology but supporting these vital community groups in the use of digital technologies will support them in providing cultural experiences. Richmond Hill and York Region's economic development plans both currently take steps towards identifying digital strategies that will support organizations and businesses in delivering digital goods (and experiences).

6.6.5 Real Estate Pressure

Over the last few years, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal have experienced an increasing demand for spaces with real estate pressure resulting in increased land values and the displacement of arts and cultural activities as a direct impact.⁴⁸ In each of these communities several studio spaces in industrial or employment zones have either closed or are under threat of displacement due to increases in property tax and rent, competition with higher-value land uses, and development pressure. These cities are not alone. The World Cities Culture Forum has also

⁴⁸ City of Vancouver, Making Space for Arts and Culture (2019)

identified this as an issue in major cities and in growing communities throughout the world. For example, London has lost a third of its artists' workspaces and grassroots music venues over the last five years.⁴⁹

In Richmond Hill, real estate pressures continue to push the City towards new development and intensified development, including pressure on historic employment zones and arterials. While these pressures are difficult to suppress it will be important for Richmond Hill to find ways of protecting or appropriately replacing any potential art and culture spaces that currently exist today. These include several of the heritage homes that are currently housing community cultural groups. While these spaces may not all be equipped to support various types of cultural programming and events, the value these spaces bring to Richmond Hill's living heritage is important to preserve.

In response to real estate market pressure, a growing trend in communities across the Greater Toronto Area has been towards retrofitting / use of community hubs and heritage homes (e.g., schools, old barn houses, homes, etc.) Multi-purpose cultural assets have become standard practice in many cultural plans today, in particular spaces that encourage different and complimentary types of activities, which in turn allow for more interaction within the community and provide opportunities for collaboration (e.g., makerspaces).

6.6.6 Tactical Urbanism and Pop-Up Placemaking

Residents and communities often take it on themselves to change, repair or beautify public spaces through a concept known as tactical urbanism. Tactical urbanism is a collection of temporary changes to the built environment to improve local neighbourhoods and community gathering spaces. These changes can vary in cost and size and usually start at the community level as a way to create spaces that are inviting, easy to navigate and offer residents a sense of ownership and communal pride for their public spaces.

A result, tactical urbanism is often the creation of temporary or pop-up initiatives that help to test out concepts or projects in the community. Temporary or pop-up projects that become successful in the community often go on to become more permanent. These projects allow organizers to gather feedback, make changes quickly, build the public's imagination and are a form of creative placemaking.

Pop-up projects and tactical urbanism can help shift perspectives of Richmond Hill being a suburban community to a more urban centre; changes can be tested and made responsive to the immediate environment. Tactical urbanism projects offer a platform where residents can become co-contributors to Richmond Hill's city building efforts and cultural scene

6.6.7 Creative Expressions as Data

Cultural planning projects are typically measured in the value of the return on investment. Without a significant return on investment many of these projects are halted or worst, left to not begin. It is a growing trend in Cultural Plans to acknowledge that decision-makers are not well equipped to approach their decisions by emphasizing observation, creative expression and nuances in diverse cultural traditions. To this effect, several cultural plans have looked to Cultural Report Cards that grade cultural planning projects in addition to the return on investment. These cards include desired outcomes such as, how well did the community perceive the project (not solely on attendance figures but on perceptions) or did the project introduce activities that were not available before.

Richmond Hill's annual cultural report was one of the pioneering reports in Ontario that examined both return on investment and success stories. Continuing to use the report card as a way to showcase creative expression data will support the City's goals of building a successful diverse community.

6.6.8 Funding the Cultural Sector

Richmond Hill has a vibrant arts and culture sector, developed over decades through the dedication of its artists and cultural leaders, and the support of its audiences, philanthropists, volunteers, sponsors and donors. This

⁴⁹ World Cities Culture Forum, worldcitiescultureforum.com

success has been realized, in part, through the significant investments made in the arts and culture sector by the City. The multiple benefits of a vibrant arts and culture sector, including Richmond Hill's reputation, its liveability and its diversified economy, suggests it is in the interest of its residents, businesses and visitors to continue to support a sustainable and resilient arts and culture sector through support for artists and organizations.

Nationally, municipal funding programs have been the most responsive to the needs of the arts and culture sector. Cultural community grants have assisted the arts and culture sector in adapting to the realities and needs of a growing city, particularly where growth is accompanied by underlying problems accelerated by rapid development. Problems such as income disparity, service gaps accentuated by issues of race, equity and inclusion, the inequitable distribution of resources across geography and generations, and the affordability and accessibility of housing and studio space are all major issues for many cultural organizations.

Municipalities cannot ignore these realities, and in lieu of cancelling grants many municipalities are reviewing their funding program models. A recent example would be the City of Toronto. Having reviewed its two cultural community grant programs, Toronto considered how it could more effectively influence the reach of these grants by targeting specific cultural organizations that could trickle down the grants via partnerships with community cultural organizations. This included creating a specific grant to support the major cultural organizations with requirements that they would need to offer up space and use of their facilities to local community cultural organizations; a cultural festivals program that focuses on involving a large amount of local arts and cultural participation as part of the program; the transfer of clients from the Toronto Arts Council to larger regional, provincial, and national art councils; and a new cultural access and development program aimed at providing funding to community organizations who support ableism, diversity and other equity driven agendas to encourage participation in the arts and culture sector.

6.6.9 The Changing Nature of Today's Festivals and Events

Technological changes, together with changing demographics, lifestyles, and interests are impacting the delivery of local festivals and events. The internet and social media have fundamentally changed the way festivals and events are marketed, providing a more effective way to reach target audiences than traditional advertising. Online ticketing is now common across all event sizes (small to large), in addition, online ticketing allows for more information on audiences and the effectiveness of marketing tactics.

Festivals and event goers are also becoming more demanding. They expect more choices, experiences and authentic programming. There is an increasing demand for events that have anything to do with food, wine and craft beer. Additionally, hybrid events – those that broaden the appeal of an event by adding complementary activities either in person or in tandem online – are increasing in number. This helps to grow audiences, give them more ways to spend money, and helps to expand the sponsor pool.

Festivals and event organizers have also pivoted to delivering these experiences through online mediums, directly as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A growing number of events are now offering virtual experiences catered to specific audiences. Events such as virtual tours of museums, online music festivals, and workshops that have continued to provide opportunities for individuals to stay connected to the arts and culture community.

In Richmond Hill, festival and event organizers have followed these trends with several community groups offering experiences through online mediums. Additionally, the City has revamped its Festival and Event Booking process in accordance with best practices from the Province's Reopening Ontario Act. This includes encouraging festival and event organizers to go digital, introduce digital ticketing and double up on experiences where possible.

6.7 Cultural Resources in Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill's cultural ecology is reflective of a changing community both in terms of shifting demographics and infrastructure development. In addition to the growing population, multiculturalism is a defining characteristic of the city and one of its greatest strengths for cultural development and economic well-being. As of 2020, 60% of the population is a visible minority with at least one hundred and twenty-six different languages identified as a mother

tongue language of a Richmond Hill resident.⁵⁰ In addition, Richmond Hill is characterized by an increasing level of talent and investment in the cultural and creative economy, evidenced by the significant number of entrepreneurs and small businesses operations in graphic design services, film and video industries and computer systems design.

Today, Richmond Hill is home to a wide range of recreation and lifestyle assets, including a state-of-the-art Centre for the Performing Arts, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, and a comprehensive system of parks, trails and open spaces. Municipally owned and operated cultural facilities, including the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, Sports Hall of Fame, Richmond Hill's public libraries, the Richmond Hill Heritage Centre, and the Boynton House, point to the continued commitment to cultural programming and activities provided by the City, including an array of programs that appeal to all age groups and abilities.

Richmond Hill's ethnocultural diversity is continuously changing and plays an important role in defining the community's arts and cultural space. As per the 2019 Socio-economic study, Richmond Hill continues to see trends and changes in the ethnic origins of residents over the past 10 years. The City has seen growth in its Chinese and Iranian populations between 2011 and 2016, with a larger proportion of respondents reporting Chinese or Iranian ethnicity than in years prior. Other ethnic origins that comprise a large share of the local population include East Indian, Russian, Italian, and Jewish.

As the community's population becomes increasingly diverse, the City will be required to continually engage residents to understand if their cultural values have changed and whether the cultural resource framework needs to reflect those values. An analysis of programming and facilities needs to be undertaken to reflect the broad cultural diversity that exists in the community.

6.7.1 Richmond Hill Culture Assets

The City of Richmond Hill recognizes the importance of arts and culture to the community. The 2011 Cultural Plan was developed to guide cultural development in the community. The key directions that the Cultural Plan provided were:

- Build on and grow the strong base of cultural assets and cultural programs and services forward;
- Strengthen connections between cultural organizations and cultural industries to address the needs of the broader cultural sector;
- Provide meaningful opportunities to engage diverse communities to ensure sustainability and success in building a culturally vibrant community;
- Develop innovative and imaginative marketing approaches and partnerships between the City, community cultural organizations and creative industries; and
- Create and support neighbourhoods and districts that are culturally vital.

A critical aspect of the 2011 Cultural Plan was the Richmond Hill Cultural Mapping Project (CMP). The project was a foundational piece to understanding the current cultural landscape in Richmond Hill, providing the Cultural Plan with valuable baseline information on the City's current cultural resources. The Richmond Hill Culture Map was developed based on the Provincial Municipal Cultural Planning (MCP) framework.

Figure 39 summarizes the nine categories of Richmond Hill's Cultural Assets and Figure 40 illustrates the distribution of cultural facilities and City-run community spaces that provide cultural programs. While recreational spaces and facilities and natural heritage are part of the cultural resource framework, these assets are elaborated on as part of the parks and recreation components of the planning exercise.

⁵⁰ <https://www.richmondhill.ca>

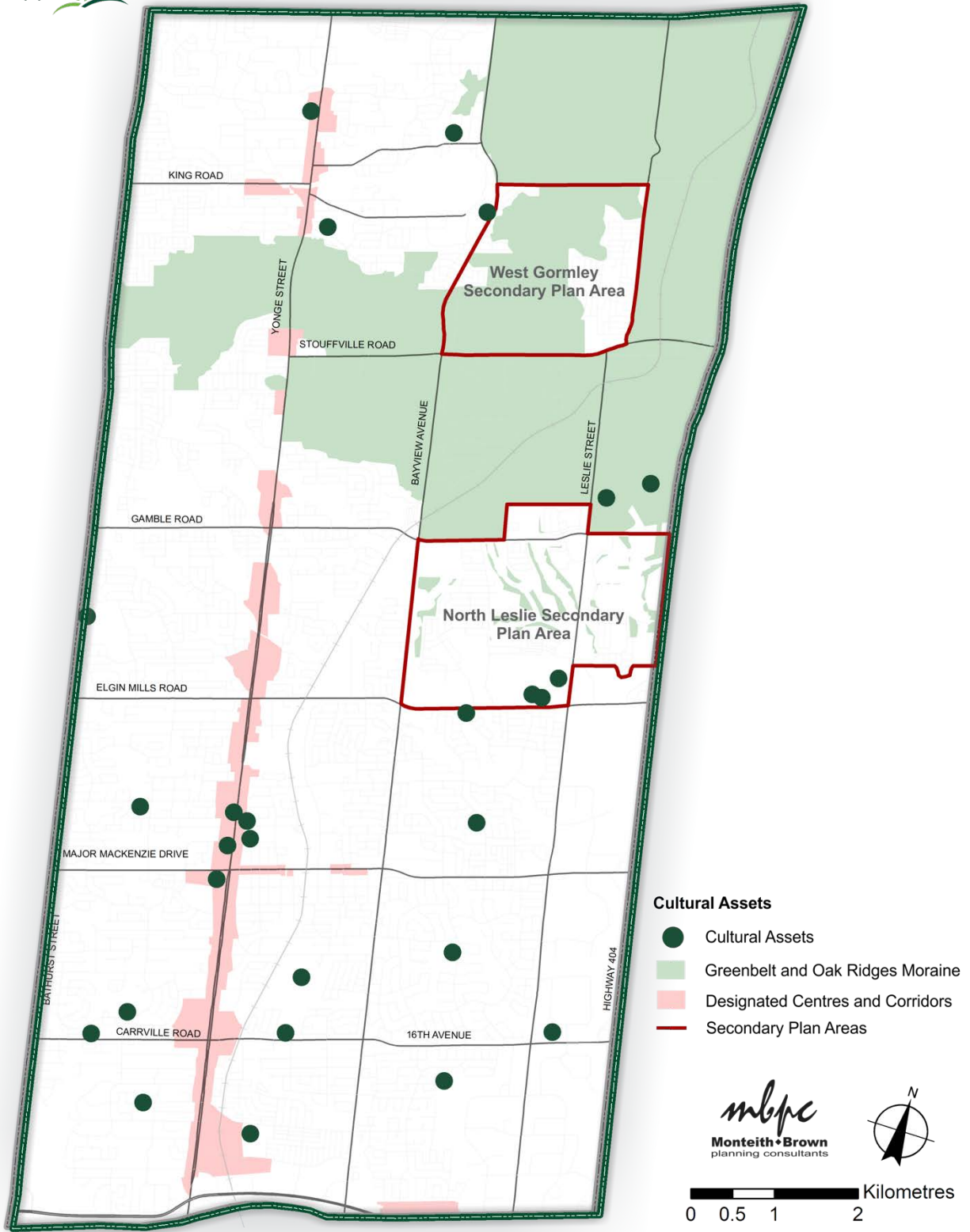
Figure 39: Cultural Resources Framework



- **Creative Cultural Industries:** Businesses and non-profits involved in the creation and distribution of cultural goods or services (e.g., Cosmo Music, Bravo! The Centre for Dance, etc.).
- **Community Cultural Organizations:** Organizations that represent arts, heritage, and ethnocultural interests in the community (e.g., Richmond Hill Historical Society, Richmond Hill Philharmonic Orchestra.).
- **Cultural Facilities:** Buildings and sites that host cultural activity (e.g., Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool, etc.).
- **Festivals and Events:** Annual festivals and events in your community that can include performing arts events, tours of culturally significant places, seasonal celebrations, and many others (e.g., Doors Open, Concerts in the Park, etc.).
- **Independent Artists:** A creator of any art form or discipline that is living or working in Richmond Hill. Disciplines include visual artists, art educators, musicians, performing artists, photographers, and filmmakers.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The management and exhibition of objects, buildings, and sites of historical, cultural, and educational value (e.g., William Graham House, Headford United Church Cemetery, etc.).
- **Natural Heritage:** Natural wonders and areas of environmental and cultural significance (e.g., Crosby Park, Mill Pond Park, etc.).
- **Public Art:** Public art is defined as visual art that exists in the public realm.
- **Intangible Assets:** Intangible assets are types of cultural expression that are not necessarily manifested in physical form. They include stories, oral traditions, customs, place names and ceremonies.

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Figure 40: Richmond Hill Cultural Assets Map



Creative Cultural Industries

The Creative Cultural Industries represents a wide range of cultural businesses engaged in the creation and production of cultural goods or services. As per the 2020 Canadian Business Counts, Richmond Hill is home to 951 industries (3% of total businesses). The proportion of creative cultural industries in Richmond Hill is comparable to rates in York Region and Ontario.

The creative cultural industries continue to grow in the City and include a wide range of enterprises ranging from interior design services, advertising agencies, graphic design services, architectural services, photographic services, fine arts schools and the motion picture and video production. As identified in the 2019 Annual Report on Culture, these industries play an integral role in both the local and regional economies. Workshops and business development support are provided to these creative industries by the Richmond Hill Small Business Enterprise Centre (RHSBEC). The report further identifies that 491 creative industries were mapped on the Richmond Hill Culture Map. The majority of these businesses are concentrated in proximity to the Richmond Hill Centre and the downtown, the Highway 7 corridor in proximity to Beaver Creek Business Park and the Yonge Street Corridor, where there are significant transportation linkages and commercial activity.⁵¹

Film continues to be an important creative enterprise in Richmond Hill. The 2020 Canadian Business Counts reported that approximately 624 film-related businesses were recorded in Richmond Hill across the value chain. These include support services such as interior design, advertising, photography and fine arts school. The City is also home to 40 motion picture and video production firms, eight post-production and other motion picture and video industries and five motion picture and video exhibition enterprises.

In 2019, Richmond Hill issued 26 film permits generating over \$180,000 in direct revenue and additional spending in the community.⁵² Productions in the City include Netflix, Amazon, Sony Studios, Sinking Ship, CBC with filming locations including the David Dunlap Observatory, Bayview Hill Community Centre & Pool, Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool and the Fire and Emergency Services Fire Training Tower. In addition to location attributes, the City is within ACTRA Toronto radius boundaries, as well as NABET 700-M UNIFOR union boundaries. Production companies are also eligible for Provincial and Federal grants and incentives, including Ontario Creates, Ontario Production Services Tax Credit and the Ontario Film & Television Tax Credit.

The City has launched the Richmond Hill Film Story Map, a free web-based interactive GIS application supporting the film industry and attracting filming to Richmond Hill⁵³. The final product takes a user from the beginning (research) to the end (film permit) of the film process in Richmond Hill. It is a compilation of all currently available locations for filming in Richmond Hill.

Community Cultural Organizations

Community-based cultural organizations are essential to the cultural vitality. They typically include craft groups, genealogical societies, book clubs, local food groups, choirs, natural heritage groups, theatre groups, and other cultural organizations. Richmond Hill's community cultural organizations are further categorized into religious organizations, multicultural organizations, cultural heritage organizations, community arts organizations and other (cultural) groups.

Multicultural organizations reflect the diversity of the community and include the Cevaro Cultural Society, Elgin West Italian Seniors Association, Hellenic Club of York Region, Indian Seniors Group and Richmond Hill Italian Social & Bocce Club. RH Mobility are also represented on the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee and support municipal programming for persons with disabilities. Moreover, community cultural organizations appeal to different demographics and interests such as the Dynasty Watercolour Association. Community arts organizations,

⁵¹ 2011 Richmond Hill Cultural Plan

⁵² <https://www.richmondhill.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?FeedId=5988c08a-c0f5-4d51-91e0-9691f68738f4&page=8&newsId=8ca2a9b7-729f-4a65-a5e1-90cc3e564d4f>

⁵³ <https://edac.ca/conferences-awards/marketing-awards/gallery-of-entries/richmond-hill-film-story-map/>

including the Richmond Hill Group of Artists, Richmond Hill Concert Band, and Richmond Hill Philharmonic Orchestra, are key assets that contribute to the cultural climate of the community.

Cultural heritage associations such as Richmond Hill's Historical Society and Richmond Hill's Garden and Horticultural Society showcase the ongoing efforts by the City to preserve Richmond Hill's heritage and to beautify the area.

Cultural Facilities

Performance venues, museums, studio space and built heritage spaces are where many cultural activities take place. In Richmond Hill, cultural facilities are diverse and include City-owned and independently owned and operated facilities such as community centers, museums, libraries and archives, performing arts facilities, religious centers, art galleries and more. Approximately 81 facilities are represented on the Richmond Hill Culture Map. Significant assets in this category include the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, Boynton House Art Exhibition Space, Richmond Hill Heritage Centre, David Dunlap Observatory, and the Richmond Hill Public Library.

Located in the historic downtown area, the Centre for Performing Arts is a 4,000 square metre state-of-the-art cultural facility that features 631 seats and offers a full season of professional entertainment and celebrates the diverse cultures across York Region. The Centre for Performing Arts is also home to Richmond Hill's rich arts community and functions as a major venue for Canadian and international performers.⁵⁴ In 2019, the Centre of Performing Arts hosted a sold-out celebration of its 10th anniversary season. The sense of celebration guided the choices for the 2019/2020 program and focused on the Centre of Performing Arts' greatest hits over the past decade. The events featured everything from rock to country music and included speaker series, musicals and education programs showcasing familiar faces who resonated with the audience in the past. In 2019, the Centre of Performing Arts:

- Hosted 376 events over 343 days
- Issued 101,880 tickets
- Received 100,000+ patrons
- Hosted 10 international film screenings as part of The Reel Thing Film Series
- Hosted 11,620 students attended performances of the Education Program
- Hosted 7 visual art showings

The Performing Arts Centre delivers community-based theatre programming with a subsidy of no more than 1% on the tax rate. Efforts to increase revenues to limit reliance on tax support funding were completed as part of the Core Services Review in 2021.

The Library is another significant cultural institution that supports cultural development in the community. In 2019, both the Library and Richmond Hill partnered to deliver Moonlight Movies and Culture Days. In support of Culture Days, the Central Library served as a community hub with activities offered by local artists and arts organizations to over 1,863 attendees. The Library also supports the Cultural Leadership Council and Richmond Hill's Interdepartmental Culture Team. All four branches of the Library are community hubs that promote inclusive centres for learning and building connections. Key statistics for the Library in 2019 include:

- 1,118,780 in-person visits
- 1,376,180 electronic visits
- 709,116 social media visits
- 2,109,889 collection items borrowed
- 69,763 program attendees

In 2014, the Museum Feasibility Study implementation was continued, moving into the design phase for future Heritage Centre renovations at the Richmond Hill Heritage Centre. The goal of the renovations is to enhance the site for heritage programs, exhibits and events. The Richmond Hill Heritage Centre has been a hub of heritage programming in the community for the last 10 years. The Boynton House, recognized as a historic site designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, is an art exhibition space in Richmond Hill with four display rooms. The site can

⁵⁴ <https://www.rhcentre.ca/About-the-RHCPA.html>

also be rented for art, culture and heritage activities, including exhibitions or sales, heritage displays and art-in-the-garden exhibitions or sales.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural Heritage includes designated heritage properties and significant cultural heritage sites or resources such as railway sites, cemeteries, monuments, plaques, art installations, and murals. Walking tours through heritage areas as also part of this resource.

Richmond Hill's cultural heritage includes heritage buildings, heritage conservation districts and cemeteries. The Richmond Hill Culture Map identifies 364 cultural heritage assets in the community. The majority of assets are clustered along Yonge Street, Bayview Avenue and Leslie Street. Cultural heritage assets are also present in Oak Ridges and Gormley.

Richmond Hill's archaeological record is over 11,000 years old, with its current euro-settlement history dating back to over two hundred years ago when Yonge Street was first carved out of the landscape to serve as a military route.⁵⁵ Recognizing the importance of historic buildings and landscapes to the cultural fabric of the community, the City established the Heritage Richmond Hill Advisory Committee to advise Council on the conservation and management of the City's cultural heritage resources. The Inventory of Cultural Heritage Resources includes properties that have potential cultural heritage interest (listed properties) and those with recognized and confirmed cultural heritage significance (designated properties). In 2019, five heritage grants were awarded for restoration and maintenance. Further, 108 properties were designated heritage properties, while 240 were identified as registered and listed heritage properties.

In 2009, the Gormley Heritage Conservation District came into effect, including the village core of Gormley. The District is intended to preserve, protect and enhance the character of this unique asset within the City of Richmond Hill.⁵⁶

The Richmond Hill Central Public Library, Richmond Hill Heritage Centre, Boynton House and the David Dunlap Observatory are significant cultural heritage assets. The Dunlap Observatory, which is recognized as a National Historic Site, opened in 1935 and was a research centre for the University of Toronto's Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics and a facility for public education and outreach.⁵⁷ As part of its designation as a "property of cultural heritage value or interest," Richmond Hill Council approved a Conservation Management Plan for the property to assess any applications to alter heritage features within the property. The City delivers a variety of programs and camps at this location, as well as permits facility rentals.

Natural Heritage

This resource represents significant natural areas in the City. Assets such as trails, parks, and conservation areas offer rich recreational and community experiences for residents and visitors alike. Richmond Hill's Culture Map, identifies 172 natural heritage assets, including the Oak Ridges Moraine, Bayview Hill Park, Ritter Park, Mill Pond Park, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, and Newberry Park, among others. Trails including the Beaver Woodland, East Humber Trail, Beaufort Trail and Rouge River Headwaters Valley & Trails are significant assets that contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The natural heritage assets would be further defined as part of the Parks Plan Review.

Festivals and Events

Richmond Hill is well-known for its vibrant festivals and events scene. Richmond Hill supports the delivery of vibrant and sustainable festivals and events that enhance the quality of life of its residents, build community pride, and provide opportunities for people to connect and celebrate local culture, heritage, talent and achievements. In

⁵⁵ <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/find-or-learn-about/cultural-heritage-planning.aspx>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/find-or-learn-about/ddo-history.aspx>

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2014, Richmond Hill created a Festivals and Events Strategy that classified events across four categories, namely, local events, community events, signature events and mega-events.

Richmond Hill's Culture Map identifies 36 festivals and events taking place in Richmond Hill every year across six categories as follows: community fairs & events; cultural & heritage tours; multicultural festivals & events; performing arts events & festivals; gallery & studio tours; and film festivals. In 2019, nearly 100,000 people attended Richmond Hill's festivals and events.

Richmond Hill has annual signature events such as Canada Day and Ribfest, which brings between 15,000 to 30,000 attendees to the City every year. Other signature events, such as the Cultural Summit, Studio Tour, Moonlight Movies, Doors Open and Culture Days, serve to connect the community and celebrate local culture, heritage and creativity.⁵⁸ The 2019 Cultural Summit took place at the Centre for the Performing Arts and featured performances by local artists including Jake Charles, Arts Mackenzie, Opera York Children's Chorus, Norman Dance Company, Classical Persian Music and presentation of the Richmond Hill Arts Awards.⁵⁹

In addition to supporting local priorities, signature events provide the community with significant competitive advantage and can act as a tourism draw. As identified in the 2011 Cultural Plan, stronger marketing and promotion of Richmond Hill's festivals and events through online databases or interactive cultural maps can improve tourism potential. The City has profiled significant festivals and events on the municipal website including the Cultural Summit, Doors Open, Ribfest, Concerts in the Park and Moonlight Movies.

An example of a large community event with the potential to grow is the Santa Clause Parade that draws over 20,000 visitors a year, most recently taking place as a drive-through experience at Richmond Green. The Mill Pond Splash is an example of a local event that attracts between 1,500-2,000 visitors annually.

The City is also very supportive of community-led event organizers who deliver vibrant, sustainable and safe festivals and events that engage the community. The City's Festival and Event Booking Flowchart acts as a reference guide to streamline bookings and requirements for hosting festivals and events in the community. In 2019, the City significantly streamlined the application process and integrated Special Event/Street Party, and Parades and Tours into the Festivals and Events Application. The Community Event Planning Guide, Festivals and Events Resource Manual and online Toolkit are updated on an ongoing basis with additional resources and are easily available at the City's website to encourage more uptake and participation among third-party event organizers. The City also has a Special Events Advisory Team available to review and evaluate community-led events in conjunction with community-led event organizers.

An evaluation of the current provision of special events is needed in terms of the benefit of special events, current performance metrics, increasing regularized events to build community and the use of staff to develop Council sponsored events. Determining the best model to serve current and future community-driven needs is appropriate in a diverse community.

Independent Artists

Independent artists are primarily engaged in performing artistic productions, creating artistic and cultural works or productions, or providing technical expertise necessary for these productions. Independent celebrities, such as athletes, engaging in endorsement, speaking, and similar services are included.

2020 Canadian Business Counts identified that Richmond Hill is home to 80 independent artists, including 34 actors, comedians and performers, 24 visual artists and artisans and 22 writers and authors.

⁵⁸ Annual Report on Culture, 2019.

⁵⁹ <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/things-to-do/cultural-summit.aspx>

Public Art

In 2012, Richmond Hill created a Public Art Policy. The Policy defines public art as visual art that exists in the public realm. It can be either outdoors or indoors and builds a visually rich environment. It should be accessible to the community at large and encourage community interaction to foster a sense of local pride and achievement. Richmond Hill encourages diverse expressions of art that reflect the multicultural nature of the City and elicit emotional responses from the viewers. Both permanent and temporary artworks aim to expand knowledge and broaden the understanding of the arts and cultural sector within the City. Public art emphasizes a sense of identity for the City and has visual quality, but can be in any media, including performance and events. There are 28 public art assets in the community, including the Richmond Hill Community Murals, Terry Fox Statue and Old Volunteer Fire Fighter Bell.

In 2019, the Public Art Advisory Council supported the selection of the 2019 Artist in Residence. Each year, the Artist in Residence program provides professional artists with the opportunity to develop a new piece of work with the stated purpose of engaging the community and animating outdoor public spaces. The 2019 Artist in Residence was muralist Cindy Scaife, who created a sculpture series called A Puzzling Habitat. The sculpture series was displayed at Lake Wilcox Park and the Oak Ridges Community Centre & Pool and used the power of art to bring awareness of threatened species found in the community. Six community engagement workshops were held at Lake Wilcox Park and during Culture Days, where families were invited to build their own miniature versions of the Snapping Turtle, Jefferson Salamander and Red-Headed Woodpecker. The Artist in Residence program is on hold due to the COVID-19 Pandemic with plans to be reactivated in 2022. The City does not currently have any dedicated funding for public art.

Intangible Assets

Richmond Hill also recognizes community stories as the City's greatest cultural assets. The City recently developed the Celebrated Stories initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to collect and share the stories that express Richmond Hill's unique identity and sense of place, such as the short-film projects including Cultural Icons, the Digital Storytelling Project and Richmond Hill: Past, Present, Future. Richmond Hill also recognizes that it has been home to many famous Canadian faces over the years, such as Canadian figure skating icon Elvis Stojko, musicians Jackie Richardson and the Good Brothers, and the comedy troupe Royal Canadian Air Farce.

One out of 11 intangible assets mentioned in Richmond Hill's cultural map directory is the David Dunlap Observatory. The 76.5-hectare property is home to the second-largest reflector telescope in the world and is the first National Historic Site in Richmond Hill. The Observatory continues to be a major centre for education and public outreach related to astronomy. Community members can experience the wonders of astronomy through exciting programs and historical tours.

Preliminary Findings – Richmond Hill Cultural Resources

59. Examine opportunities to leverage local and regional cultural assets and build capacity among volunteer-based organizations by providing training and assistance to strengthen program planning, management and promotion of cultural opportunities on digital mediums or COVID-19 restricted practices.
60. Conduct a review of the impact of the Community and Cultural Grant Program in 2022 in order to make recommendations for potential budget approvals in 2023. The review should examine the three-year period it was active in the community and identify opportunities to improve the program.
61. City departments have an opportunity to inform decision-making and understanding of actions that may impact cultural development in Richmond Hill.
62. Define the role of the City in delivering cultural and recreational services through subsequent stages of the cultural planning process.
63. Explore opportunities to enhance and improve City properties and facilities that house arts and cultural organizations and arts and culture programming, including the use of City-owned historic buildings.
64. Consider funding models that support project-based initiatives that are funded from the City's annual operating budget. Potential models that could be examined include those that require arts and cultural community organizations to integrate programs, events, and activities with other local arts and cultural community organizations or requirements of arts and organizations in sharing space with local arts and cultural community organizations at a reduced cost. Another model for consideration should be the use of the Community Benefits Charges By-law to fund a portion of public art projects.
65. Support City initiatives, area plans, land use planning policies and strategic plans.
66. Increase awareness of and support low-cost access to exhibitions, performances and events, particularly targeting families, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities. This includes assisting these communities in accessing programming online either through the Library or Community Centre computer labs.
67. Share information and contacts with local arts and cultural organizations about existing grants from larger regional, provincial, and national art councils. This may include activities such as supporting awareness of larger regional, provincial and national grants, encouraging joint partnerships for grant applications, and providing content to support applications. Investigate opportunities for sponsorships, business partnerships, etc. (e.g., ArtVest model).
68. Refresh the Festival and Events Strategy to reflect the new service level added to the Recreation & Culture with the addition of Council-led events and the Council Event Policy.
69. Recognize the benefits of special events by increasing the number and frequency of regular events to strengthen community and neighbourhood spirit and utilize City staff to assist with the development and delivery of Council sponsored events. Performance metrics should be developed to measure the success of special events, including attendance numbers and economic impact.
70. Increase awareness of and support low-cost access to exhibitions, performances and events, particularly targeting families, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities. This includes assisting these communities in accessing programming online either through the Library or Community Centre computer labs.

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71. Create a framework that clarifies the in-kind service delivery provided by City Staff to effectively manage Council-led Events and align it in part with the implementation of the Council-approved Member of Council Events Policy and the City's policies, procedures, and by-laws where City Staff and/or resources are requested.
 72. Review and provide recommendations for the Visual Arts Program and Public Art Program.
 73. Direct engagement of the arts and culture community to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and identify how the City can better support these organizations through the recovery process.
 74. Implement the findings of the Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts Review and Implementation Plan to achieve operating efficiencies, improve the theatre experience, and promote and preserve cultural experiences in Richmond Hill.
 75. Undertake a feasibility study to create an arts and cultural district to facilitate the attraction of creative individuals and organizations in a central location (Library/Civic Centre). As a part of this study, opportunities to re-purpose standalone buildings currently being used for arts and cultural purposes should be evaluated, recognizing that some existing spaces may have historical significance that should be preserved.
 76. Investigate potential opportunities to expand for-profit arts and cultural opportunities such as film and production in Richmond Hill, potentially through the promotion of the David Dunlap Observatory and other notable sites and landmarks across the City.
 77. Evaluate the use of the current Public Art Policy and examine the creation of a Public Art Master Plan.
 78. Revisit the recommendations of the Museum Feasibility Study that proposed either an expanded facility in a new or renovated building sufficient in size to accommodate a number of multipurpose spaces for exhibitions and larger programming capacity or a new Heritage Museum and Cultural Centre either at the Library/Civic Centre site or another undeveloped City owned site.
 79. Continue the working group with the Richmond Hill Public Library to identify areas that Recreation and Culture can be integrated into Library facilities and programming.
-

7.0

Programs and Services

A strong parks, recreation and culture system hinges on the strength the Community Services Department and the effectiveness of municipal staff. This section explores the role of the Community Services Department in providing parks, recreation and cultural opportunities in Richmond Hill. This includes a high-level overview of the Divisions that are directly responsible for providing services and current programs and services that are currently being provided.

7.1 Service Delivery Plan

A 2013 Service Delivery Plan was prepared as a companion document to the Recreation Plan to provide guidance with respect to planning and delivering indoor recreation services and identified priorities over the next 10 years. The objectives of the Service Delivery Plan were to:

- Articulate the programs and services that are provided by Richmond Hill and identify utilization rates;
- Assess influences that impact the delivery of services such as demographics; participation rates; trends, promising practices, and public input;
- Evaluate potential partnership opportunities to address service delivery priorities and ensure that a diverse range of choices are available for residents; and
- Identify service delivery priorities and how they can be addressed in a timely and effective manner.

Recommendations contained in the 2013 Service Delivery Plan have largely been completed, or are ongoing best practices that continue to be implemented. Key accomplishments and ongoing efforts include (but are not limited to):

- A Diversity Program and Service Framework.
- Technology such as the City's website is being used to maximize awareness about the recreation opportunities that are available in Richmond Hill.
- Continually seek partnership to share resources, roles and responsibilities to deliver community services.
- Undertake customer satisfaction surveys to identify areas for improvement and resource allocation.
- Training and professional development programs were developed to foster skill development.

7.2 Community Services Department

Parks, recreation and culture services in Richmond Hill are delivered by the Community Services Department, which is comprised of four divisions. Of relevance to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Plans is the Recreation & Culture Division, which oversees all matters and community services related to facility operations (including community centres and arenas), aquatics and fitness, general programs, arts, culture, heritage, and event services. At present, the **vision** for the Recreation & Culture Division tells the story of how recreation and culture in Richmond Hill will be viewed in the future, and in turn what the City and its community partners will strive towards achieving. The Division's vision is expressed below.

We envision a community in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation and culture experiences that foster:

- Individual well-being
- Community well-being
- The well-being of our natural and built environments

The Division's current **mission** is an internal statement that guides the day-to-day activities of City staff through the execution of their various roles and responsibilities associated with providing recreation and culture services. The Division's mission statement is stated below.

Essential to quality of life, The Richmond Hill Recreation & Culture Division – as a partner with the community – encourages all residents to embrace active and healthy lifestyles by providing high quality and inclusive services, programs and facilities.

The Division's current values advance the City's role in recreation and culture. They are defined as the following

Be as inclusive as possible. Our programs and services will be accessible to those where affordability is an issue, be barrier and hate free, accommodate special needs, promote gender equity and identity and include activities that value and incorporate diversity in age, culture, race, ethnicity, language and sexual orientation.

Provide satisfying, positive experiences. Residents should expect that their contact with our staff and facilities and participation in programs and services be enjoyable. Staff will take pride in their high-caliber work being admired and appreciated.

Practice community development and build community capacity. We will recognize the strengths of Richmond Hill's communities and assist them in meeting their recreation and culture needs. We will enable communities to form partnerships, create their own solutions and achieve greater self-sufficiency.

Ensure prompt, clear and open communication. We will use a variety of means to provide information to residents and obtain and respond to feedback in a timely manner. We will promote awareness and greater use of our programs, services and facilities.

Acknowledge staff as a vital resource. Our recruitment, training, development, evaluation and recognition initiatives will enhance staff's capacity to achieve our goals and directions. Training and development will be an important means of improving customer service.

Foster volunteerism. Volunteers are a valuable human resource. We will value the active involvement of community members in our service delivery. We will value the input and support of our community advisory committees and councils.

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Revitalize and forge new partnerships. To accomplish our goals, we will work creatively with community groups, businesses, elected officials, school boards, non-governmental agencies and professional associations.

Secure the necessary resources. To deliver on our priorities, we will maximize and optimize available funding. We will foster entrepreneurial thinking, save money through creative approaches, and seek revenues from additional sources to support and enhance programs and services.

Pursue sustainability. Our actions will integrate environmental, social, economic and fiscal perspectives. Our outlook will be long-term, with an eye on both present and future generations.

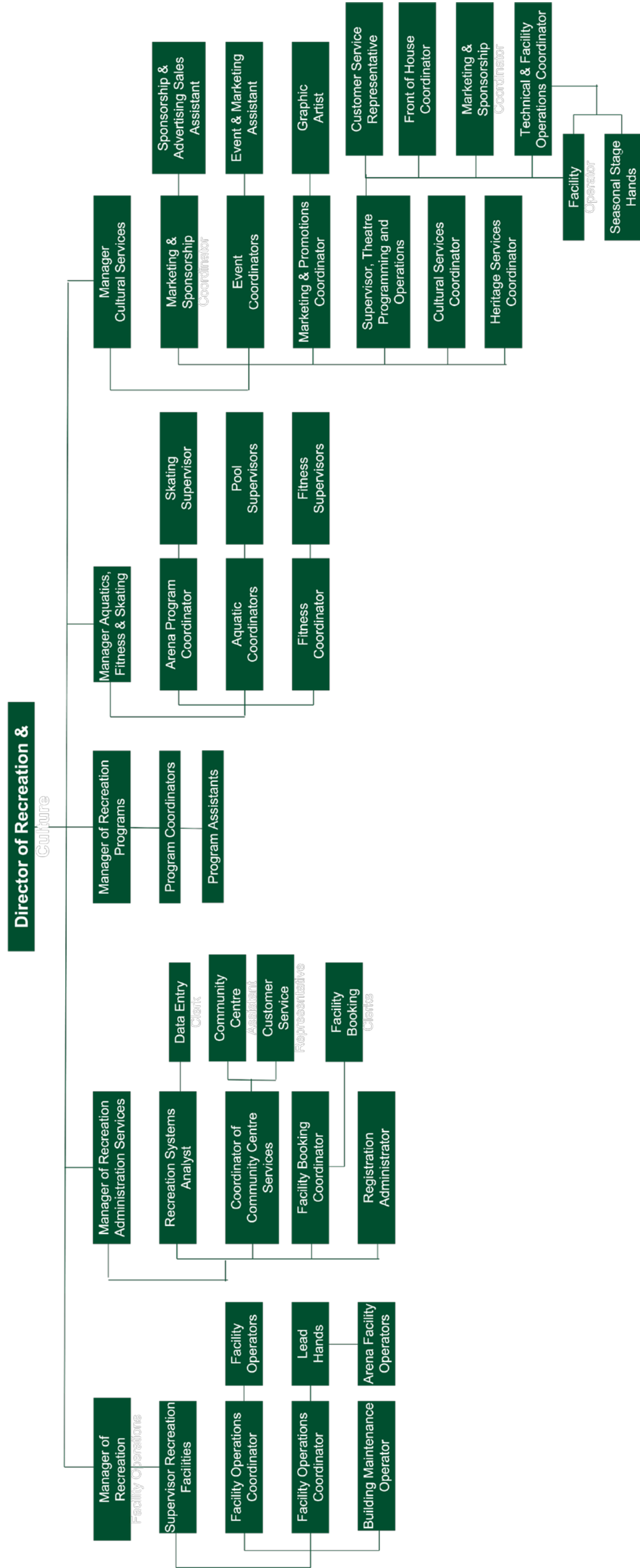
Emphasize effectiveness and impact. We will set and accomplish objectives, work with high standards, and foster innovation in the field. As we measure progress, we will give increasing emphasis to those aspects of performance that truly matter; customer service quality; and community impact.

Ensure optimum risk management. We will keep our facilities in a state of good repair, and offer programs that are safe and welcoming.

Lead in the field of municipal recreation and culture. We will investigate and implement new ways of service delivery to become more effective and efficient, and share our experiences with others. The City of Richmond Hill will be seen as a model for other communities.

The organizational structure for the Recreation & Culture Division is illustrated in Figure 41. The City's organizational structure for this division has recently changed where some positions have been combined and others are unfilled. Continued implementation of the recently revised organizational structure will remain a key focus. The refined structure is aligned with the needs of a changing community and has created efficiencies by serving like functions and users/user groups within staff units. Reemphasizing a strong Divisional culture, creating learning opportunities and a review of current practices will best serve residents now and into the future.

Figure 41: Recreation & Culture Division Organizational Structure, as of November 2021



7.3 Service Delivery Trends

7.3.1 Increasing Rates of Physical Inactivity

The 2020 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth in Canada rated overall physical activity a “D+,” which is a marginal increase from the “D-” rating from the last four years,⁶⁰ suggesting that there has been a minimal increase in physical activity levels. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends that children and youth get an average of 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and 150 minutes per week for adults.^{61,62} However, research suggests that very few people are meeting these requirements.

These statistics suggest that there is a long way to go towards improving physical activity levels. Research found that to increase physical activity levels among children and youth, parents must also be physically active. Children and youth are more likely to be physically active if they spend more time outside or are enrolled in organized sports, leagues, and lessons.⁶³

Richmond Hill has been a leader in promoting physical activity levels in the Region by raising awareness about all the parks, recreation and cultural opportunities that are available in the City, including no to low-cost activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has also been one of many municipalities that offered a range of virtual programs and promoted activities that residents can do at home to stay active.

7.3.2 Lack of Free Time

A lack of free time is commonly identified as the number one barrier to participating in physical activity. Municipalities are often faced with the challenge of overcoming this barrier from a service delivery perspective, as it is a societal issue that communities have limited ability to directly influence. There are, however, solutions that can be implemented to mitigate the impacts of the time crunch and competition from sedentary activities. Some municipalities have practiced extended hours of operation to allow residents to participate at times that are most suited for their needs.

Providing more unstructured programs can also facilitate opportunities to participate as casual drop-in activities are often highly desirable, driving the need for indoor and outdoor spaces that facilitate unstructured or drop-in activities. People with busy schedules are increasingly seeking spontaneous, non-programmed forms of activities that fit into their schedules. Richmond Hill has recognized the need to provide residents with a variety of opportunities to participate by offering a range of parks, recreation and culture activities during different days and times during the week, as well as a variety of drop-in activities.

The City also offers many outdoor recreation facilities oriented towards unstructured play and passive activities that residents can participate in at their own convenience, such as open green spaces, hard surface courts, outdoor fitness, playgrounds and more. Additionally, Richmond Hill boasts an extensive active transportation network to meet the unstructured recreational needs of residents and visitors, including nearly 150 kilometres of trails, over 100 kilometres of bike routes, and an extensive sidewalk network.

⁶⁰ ParticipACTION. 2020 ParticipACTION report card on physical activity for children and youth. Retrieved from <https://participaction.com>.

⁶¹ CSEP. Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth. Retrieved from <http://www.csep.ca>

⁶² CSEP. Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18 to 64. Retrieved from <http://www.csep.ca>

⁶³ Statistics Canada. 2017. Ten years of measuring physical activity - what have we learned? Retrieved from <https://www.statcan.gc.ca>

7.3.3 Persons with Disabilities

The 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability recorded one in five Canadians aged 15 years and over - amounting to 6.2 million individuals - as having one or more disabilities relating to physical, sensory, cognitive or mental health. The survey found that the prevalence of disability increases with age, as well as persons with more severe disabilities and lone parents / persons living alone as being more likely to be living in poverty.⁶⁴ As the average age of Canadians continues to increase, so can the number of persons living with disabilities. While there is no data that quantifies how many Richmond Hill residents live with a disability, applying the national proportion to the local population suggests that there could be over 44,000 people in the community that have one or more disability.

Accessibility-related barriers affect persons with disabilities from achieving the benefits of participating in parks, recreation and cultural activities, as well as other aspects of daily life. Since play is essential for physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, it is extremely important to engage persons with disabilities within the recreation, sport, arts and culture, and parks service spectrum. Doing so can provide such individuals with opportunities to bolster quality of life and health outcomes. For example, the Canadian Survey on Disability found that a mental health-related disability accounted for 60% of youth with a disability; access to the outdoors along with exposure to recreation and the arts has been shown to have therapeutic effects on a person's mental state and mitigate anxiety, illustrating the importance of such services. Similarly, exercise and cognitive stimulation afforded through recreation and culture can mitigate the onset of chronic conditions associated with aging such as limited mobility and dementia.

As articulated in the City's Accessibility Policy, "Richmond Hill is committed to providing equal access to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and independence." The Community Services Department provides a number of programs and services that have been adapted for persons with disabilities. There are also community organizations such as RH Mobility who are dedicated to removing participation barriers. This organization is governed by a volunteer board of directors and is funded through a local Bingo and through a percentage of the fine revenues for persons parking in spots designated for persons with disabilities. Richmond Hill approved a by-law that allots the funds generated through these infractions. RH Mobility currently focuses on three program streams:

- **Subsidized Gym Memberships** – RH Mobility offers subsidized gym memberships for persons with disabilities living in Richmond Hill. The cost is \$35.00 to the participant for a 6-month duration. The studio membership includes pool access. 40 residents have become fitness members through this initiative. The association also works with City staff to develop new programs and services for persons with disabilities.
- **Funds Accessible Gym Equipment** – RH Mobility has contributed accessible gym equipment at the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre which has encouraged full access for persons with disabilities. Other contributions in community centres have included change tables, lifts, and water wheelchairs. These efforts have assisted residents in gaining fuller access in public spaces.
- **Assistive Devices** – The Assistive Devices Program provides eligible recipients the opportunity to purchase assistive devices that can ease access and mobility including but not limited to ramps, tub transfer benches, wheelchairs, grab bars, cushions etc. 60 residents have received grants for assistive devices over the last 2 years. Residents are also asking if they can donate assistive devices to others within Richmond Hill, but storage is unavailable at this point.

⁶⁴ Statistics Canada. November 2018. Canadian Survey on Disability: A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017.

According to RH Mobility, the organization is constantly researching ways that they can provide a greater range of services to persons with disabilities and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with other organizations and the City to share their work, improve ongoing communications and work better together. They would also like to formalize their liaison with Richmond Hill to address ongoing accessibility issues within community centres and community spaces.

This is a promising practice in that the development and sustainability of a charitable organization of this nature is a significant undertaking and the work is a clear partnership between the City and the volunteer community to ensure that all residents are intentionally included.

7.3.4 Female Participation in Recreation and Sport

In a 2020 report by Canadian Women in Sport in partnership with the Canadian Tire Jumpstart, it found that sport participation among girls (age six to 18) is much lower than boys in the same age group. It also found that girls experience a significant drop out rate by late adolescence. One in three girls leave sport as compared to one in 10 boys. Among the barriers cited, girls stated low levels of confidence, low body image, lack of skills and feeling unwelcomed in a sport environment.

To bolster participation among girls, the Federal government established a goal of achieving equity in sport participation by the year 2035. Participation in parks, recreation and sport activities provide females and those who identify as females, encouragement, confidence, physical activity and skill mastery. These benefits are immeasurable and transfer to other facets of life including future employment opportunities and overall health and wellness.

Every effort must be made to understand specific needs and ensure that females and those who identify as females have every opportunity to participate so that there is comfort in being active throughout one's lifespan. Municipalities and other recreation and sport providers have been instrumental in providing leadership opportunities, gender related sport leagues, and supporting local engagement opportunities. Initial efforts to assess participation would include an audit of female participation in recreation, sport and other activities. The true measure of success will be to demonstrate that there is equitable participation between and amongst genders.

7.3.5 Use of Technology

The age of digital transformation has revolutionized every industry in multiple ways through its very definition of "the realignment of or investment in new technology, business models, and processes to drive value for customers and employees". In parks, recreation and culture, these changes are being brought about by the growing demand to deliver holistic, outcome driven programming and services that meet the diverse needs of the community. The integrated application of technology in service delivery can assist in enhancing client experience beyond the walls of community facilities; engaging a wider segment of the population; and enabling staff to make informed decisions on the current needs and demands of the community. Whereas digital use can be targeted towards personalized services inside facilities, technology can also be used to connect and engage with individuals during their daily routine using social networks, programs, and services. Current trends towards the external application of technology in parks, recreation and culture can include the following:

- **Expanded Service Delivery:** The use of web, mobile, and cloud-based platforms can help users integrate programs, services, and products in their daily lives. At present, Richmond Hill's website is a well-utilized resource for the promotion and coordination of parks, recreation and culture opportunities, together with the Community Recreation Guide and ActiveRH.ca.
- **Wearable Technology:** The rapid emergence of wearable technologies has resulted in new ways that individuals are able to track their activity, performance, and progress regarding their health and wellness.
- **Interactive and Immersive Fitness:** The development of virtual reality technologies has been combined with fitness activities to create entertaining, diverse, and functional workouts for people of all ages.

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- **Virtual Programming:** Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, municipalities, including Richmond Hill, began offering virtual recreation programs aimed at keeping residents active and engaged.
- **Connecting with Nature:** Mobile applications that centre around the outdoors have been developed that take advantage of GPS and network capabilities on mobile phones. Geocaching and mobile applications such as Strava (a social fitness network) encourage outdoor collaboration and socialization with others.
- **Social Networks:** Social networking apps such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Tik Tok have enabled the proliferation of content and communities geared towards health and wellness. Content creators can create and share posts that can inspire, influence, and deliver recreational experiences, while simultaneously connecting with audiences in “real time” via Instagram Stories or Facebook Live. The City uses various social media tools that have a combined total of 25,000 followers, providing Richmond Hill and community organizations with an outlet to market City facilities, events, programs, and services to a broad market of users.
- **Activating Parks Community Spaces:** The use of technology in parks and community spaces has evolved how users interact with these spaces. For example, the integration of Wi-Fi and state-of-the-art technology within community facilities has created programming opportunities (e.g., virtual reality) and further bolstered the range of amenities offered to facility users. The use of technology can be used in other areas of the recreation and culture landscape such as integrating musical systems within playgrounds, and LED park/sports field lighting.

7.3.6 Volunteerism

Volunteers are essential to the operation and delivery of high-quality programs and services where communities rely heavily on their assistance. Statistics Canada estimates that 47% of Canadians over the age of 15 volunteer,⁶⁵ but experiences in many communities suggest that groups still struggle to find enough volunteers. This may be because one-third (34%) of all volunteer hours were contributed by 5% of total volunteers.

Research found that youth represent the smallest proportion of volunteers, resulting in the need to engage these individuals early on to improve the likelihood of retaining volunteers in the future. The volunteer requirement to graduate high school has shown some promise to attract youth in volunteering, though success is largely measured by whether youth continue to volunteer beyond the 40 hours of required community service. However, one of the most common barriers to youth volunteering is a lack of free time. More youth lead structured lives with school, sports and cultural activities, coupled with increasingly more employed youth resulting in the inability to make long-term commitments to volunteering. Other barriers identified are that youth are unable to find opportunities or they are unsure of how to get involved with volunteering, suggesting that there is a gap in communication between organizations and the community.

Seniors currently represent the most active volunteer group; however, it is anticipated that this group will soon move on from the volunteer workforce, resulting in greater pressures on the delivery of services and negatively impacting program capacity. This gap in the volunteer base opens opportunities to attract new volunteers, particularly among youth and the baby boomer generation as they move through the mature stage of their lifecycle.

Richmond Hill recognizes that volunteers are valuable community assets that make community programs, services and events possible. A strong volunteer base is also necessary for many of the City’s special events and other programs. The City maintains an online volunteer database that tracks residents who are interested in volunteering for City-led opportunities and provides a place where residents can find information about what volunteer opportunities are available. There are nearly 2,000 volunteers in the City’s database who have participated in at least one shift, including 1,600 youth (aged 14 to 17), 200 adults (age 18 to 54) and 120 adults

⁶⁵ Statistics Canada. 2012. Volunteering in Canada. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca>.

aged 55+. In an effort to assist community stakeholder groups to a greater extent, the City should consider extending the listing of volunteer opportunities to volunteer positions needed within affiliated community groups.

7.3.7 Serving All Ages, Abilities and Backgrounds

Inclusion and access are key goals for municipal leisure departments. To ensure access for all, the following barriers to participation should be considered and addressed: economic (e.g., costs associated with participation); information (e.g., knowledge and information sharing about available opportunities); geographic (e.g., equitable distribution of facilities and services), and inclusivity (e.g., ensuring all participants feel welcomed and supported).

The City's has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that parks, recreation and cultural opportunities are inclusive of all residents through a number of initiatives. Richmond Hill is proud to offer a range of recreation and cultural programs for all abilities, including adapted programs that have been designed specifically for persons with disabilities. New or redeveloped parks are also designed with accessibility in mind. Crosby Park is recognized as Richmond Hill's first accessible park, which features one of Ontario's largest inclusive play structures. Other park features include way-finding signage, sensory garden, wider trails, and more. Lake Wilcox Park was also designed to meet AODA requirements. A number of accessibility initiatives have also been identified in the City's current 2018-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (many of which are completed or ongoing) including (but not limited to) park revitalization projects at Westview Parkette, David Hamilton Park, David Dunlap Observatory, and other outdoor spaces, as well as facility projects such as the Ed Sackfield Arena & Fitness Centre expansion.

Specific efforts have been made internally to develop and sustain a welcoming and engaging workplace to ensure that internal mechanisms, policies, and practices are free from bias and create a productive and inclusive work culture and environment. While the policies and practices to include persons experiencing low income and persons with disabilities are well implemented; reaching out to diverse populations in Richmond Hill will require more intentional efforts to ensure that all recreation programs, services and spaces are truly inclusive and respect one's background.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion best practices within municipal recreation departments include:

Policy Development and Refinement – A diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy recognises that residents come from different backgrounds and may have differing needs. A policy will articulate this in its purpose and will indicate what the City and staff will do to be more inclusive. A review of all existing policies as to their language and intent will also apply an equity lens.

A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan – The development of an overall plan for a City the size of Richmond Hill is appropriate especially with a vastly diverse population. The principles of equity have been challenged from the naming of programs in Recreation Services in the past – the names of some programs were interpreted as exclusive. A fulsome approach to engagement, to determine strengths and gaps will provide the department with a targeted and more thoughtful approach.

Listen – Many municipalities have Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plans that engage and listen to underrepresented people and the organizations that support them to best understand what policy and practise approaches will best include them. The development of a community-based committee that is made up of underrepresented peoples will respect differences and work toward a culture of creating a strong sense of belonging. Richmond Hill has a staff committee in Recreation and Culture which strives to build and sustain a respectful and welcoming and safe culture within the work teams.

Audit the Use of Public Spaces – it is most important to the success of diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts to fully understand who is using public spaces, who feels safe, and what supports, and amenities are needed to enhance this use. However, it is more important to understand who is not utilizing public spaces in identifying and addressing barriers to participation.

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An Equity Lens – As programs and services are developed and reviewed, it is important to ask three questions to address equity principles in a highly diverse community. These queries include:

1. What diverse groups were consulted as the program/service/policy was under development or under review?
2. What were the results of this engagement effort and how did it change the implementation and delivery?
3. What diverse groups were generally attracted to the program and what did the evaluation efforts indicate?

Respecting Intersectionality – Intersectionality speaks to the way that people identify which is often as many different identities. One person might identify as gender diverse, experiencing low income and Indigenous while another person might identify as a transgendered person with a disability. Respecting the notion of intersectionality prompts staff to better understand language, terms, varying needs, that one size does not fit all and most importantly to create welcoming and safe spaces and programs for all.

Committee, Staff and Volunteer Representation – Ensuring that committees represent the residents they serve lends to employing diverse and enriched opinions in decision making. This should be a policy at the corporate and political level to blend with the skills and competencies needed to provide services in a diverse community.

Go to Where People Are – Government offices can often be intimidating to certain segments of the population. An effective approach to engaging populations is to go where they are in terms of places of faith, and support organizations etc. This may be considered a safer space and may garner more meaningful inputs into policy, plan and program development.

Staff Development and Training – The effort to train and develop staff around the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion will result in the skills and competencies needed to refine and creating programs and services that serve a diverse population.

Measure Success – Understanding Richmond Hill's baseline participation data and information will help to identify gaps and specific diversity, inclusion and equity goals. Comparing the number of persons with disabilities to recreation participation numbers will be telling as well as the number of persons experiencing low income in the City as compared to the number of residents receiving subsidies. All efforts should be made to achieve similar participation percentages as the general population.

The City of Richmond Hill has recently created a **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee** to create the policies and practises necessary to reach out and include all residents. A representative from the Community Services Department can create synergies and support efforts to increase participation in the most public facing departments.

7.3.8 Partnership Opportunities

Collaborations with private and non-profit organizations are becoming increasingly common in Ontario municipalities. Partnerships offer several benefits such as the sharing of costs and responsibilities, as well as economies of scale and shared expertise as each party works together to achieve a common goal. Community access to schools (especially gymnasiums) is also encouraged, although formal agreements between municipalities and school boards are becoming less common in many jurisdictions.

Richmond Hill routinely develops relationships with external organizations for a variety of purposes. The most common of these relationships are with external service delivery organizations that are developed through the implementation of the City's Program Partnership Procedure. The Procedure outlines the principles that apply to the relationship between the City and its partner, the processes for utilizing the Procedure's various tools, templates and resources, revenue implications of the arrangement, signing authority as well as roles and responsibilities of the partner and various City staff. The Procedure and its supporting documents are comprehensive and offer specific direction for developing relationships through which programs are delivered by non-municipal personnel.⁶⁶

Richmond Hill's Guide to Partnerships complements the Program Procedure by focusing on relationships between the City and external entities interested in partnering on an endeavour involving asset delivery, asset management, exclusive use of a publicly owned facility or the delivery of for-profit services (or quasi for-profit services) involving municipal assets. The processes and guidelines presented in the Guide are applicable to arrangements that may involve capital investment or reinvestment in a facility while in other cases it may simply be of a "more commercial enterprise" than is generally covered by the City's Program Partnership Procedure.⁶⁷

7.4 Programs and Services

7.4.1 General Overview

Richmond Hill has continuously emphasized the value of recreation and the need to get as many people engaged and active as possible. There is a clear understanding of the benefits that active community engagement has on individuals, families, and the community. The City uses multiple methods to engage residents in active, knowledge-based, and creative pursuits with a goal to provide a wide variety of opportunities that appeal to different interests to attract the greatest number of residents.

Getting the service mix right is a critical endeavor for any municipality, particularly for one providing community services. Understanding the participation preferences and recreational interests for each age group and anticipating the needs of a culturally diverse community takes an effort to meet with varying groups to undertake adjustments and pivot to respond to ever changing needs. One approach to understand the effectiveness of the program mix is to measure the participation and fill rates to determine capacity rates of the various programs to determine programs that are in demand or those that are under-attended. Further measures involve measuring customer satisfaction levels to identify and address program and service improvements with the goal of increasing participation year over year.

It is vital to offer programs that are welcoming of segments of the community regardless of age, ability, background, orientation, gender and income to provide a well-rounded range of opportunities. This ensures that all residents have an opportunity to participate in programs to broaden their horizons, learn or hone skills, achieve a level of mastery, or socialize with others in a public space. Learning in a safe and enjoyable environment often leads to many social, physical and psychological benefits that contribute to higher quality of life and overall community wellbeing.

⁶⁶ A Guide to Partnerships Town of Richmond Hill 2016

⁶⁷ Ibid

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Richmond Hill’s Recreation & Culture Division provides programs using two delivery models. The first is direct program delivery where activities are provided by municipal staff (such as aquatics). The second approach uses a community development model where programs are provided by a community organization with the City support. This community development model seeks to build capacity within the community to offer specialized programming such as STEAM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics). All opportunities are jointly advertised, promoted and registered for in a seamless manner – and there is a revenue sharing/cost avoidance benefit to the City. Table 40 summarizes all programs that are offered, program capacity and registration.

Table 40: Summary of Registered Programs provided by the City of Richmond Hill, 2017 to 2019

	2017	2018	2019	Change
Number of Programs Offered	14,400	14,300	12,000	-16%
Total Program Capacity	89,400	81,700	77,300	-14%
Total Number of Registrants	64,800	60,600	59,900	-8%
Total Fill Rate	72%	74%	77%	+5%

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100.

Observations

Range of Programs – The City offers a wide range of program opportunities for all age groups including active, general interest, performing and visual arts, STEAM, skating and swimming and various events and workshops. The approach to broaden opportunities to the community through partnership arrangements is a leading-edge approach – the delineation and registration of these opportunities is seamless to the public.

Meeting Fill-Rate Targets – Typical fill rates (e.g., the percentage of registrants as compared to the number of spaces available) are targeted between 75% and 80% of program availability. This target was being met in 2019 – the last full year of direct program offerings prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pandemic research suggests that residents may not register to the extent that they have in the past and as a result, it may be years before participation rates return to historical levels. Staff will need to evaluate these assumptions with the public before preparing the program mix and schedules.

The number of registrants has decreased – Between 2017 and 2019, program registration declined by 5,000 registrants (8%). This a common trend in direct programming levels in municipalities across Ontario. In an ongoing effort to be more efficient, staff have reduced the number of programs being offered by 2,400 (-16%) annually to achieve targeted fill rates and cost savings. The results of the Pandemic will show further decline and a very gradual return to pre COVID-19 registration levels. Registering in City offered, and third party provided programs is a long-held approach in Richmond Hill and further analysis is required to understand current preferences and as to whether modifications to directly offered programs and services is required. Modifications may include shorter terms in the number of weeks programs are offered or a change to workshop type opportunities, a blend of online and in persons programming methods etc.

7.4.2 Membership Utilization

Richmond Hill offers a range of membership opportunities for residents who prefer to participate at times that work for their personal schedule and to utilize municipal services as their schedule permits. This approach responds to national trends as more Canadians have expressed an interest in non-structured, drop-in opportunities. Table 41 summarizes the type of memberships offered; the number of memberships sold per annum as well as the average number of pass swipes per member during the year. This data illustrates participation patterns year over year, the growth or decline of memberships per membership type and any observations that will serve to articulate the current state. Note there are no limits in terms of memberships sold as the capacity within facilities has been able to accommodate the use of memberships.

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Table 41: Summary of Recreation Memberships Sold and Used, 2018 to 2019

Membership Type	Memberships Sold	2018		2019		
		Annual Uses	Average Use Per Member	Memberships Sold	Annual Uses	Average Use Per Member
55+ Memberships	1,600	38,000	24	1,600	43,900	27
Bocce	100	1,100	11	100	400	4
Fitness Class	500	32,000	64	600	35,000	58
Fitness Plus	500	40,100	80	500	71,000	142
Fitness Studio	2,700	136,000	50	2,600	115,100	44
Lawn Bowling	200	3,500	18	200	3,300	17
Swimming	1,600	112,100	70	1,500	112,900	75
Skating	16	n/a	n/a	28	n/a	n/a
Teen	200	3,000	15	300	3,300	11
Total	7,400	365,800	50	7,400	384,900	52

Note: Rounded to the nearest 100.

Observations

Capacities Have Not Been Determined – Understanding the fill rates for membership driven opportunities is not possible because the capacity of memberships has not been determined. This is a difficult calculation as the frequency of using memberships varies and overcrowding or having to wait to gain access has not been experienced. Determining the average number of uses per member and the capacity at various facilities would provide greater insight into membership fill rates.

Membership Sales are Increasing – Overall sales of memberships have remained stable between 2018 and 2019. Increases in membership sales were seen in Fitness Class and Teen memberships, while all other membership packages remained stable or experienced a modest decline.

Average Uses – The overall average uses of memberships per week is once per week per member. While this is not the case in swimming, Fitness Plus and Fitness Class memberships also have higher utilization rates. By contrast, bocce members use the courts four times per year, on average. Lawn Bowling is a seasonal activity so it is understandably resting at 17 times per season, on average. Fitness Plus memberships were the most used category in 2019 with an average of 142 uses per member, on average, which is nearly three times per week.

7.4.3 Drop-In and Casual Use Opportunities

Municipalities have responded to the demand for more drop-in and casual use opportunities by increasing the frequency of these opportunities within community spaces. Staff must continue to be nimble to respond to a variety of needs and interests but also monitor utilization patterns to maximize the use of community spaces to make efficient use of staff time and costs.

Richmond Hill provides a menu of opportunities specific to the needs of residents and it is reflective of the activities that are enjoyed by the general population. Continually fine-tuning opportunities and the days and times they are offered is essential and as a general guide, fill rates for drop-in and casual activities should be in the range of 60% to 75%. For example, when there is a lane swim scheduled and the capacity over an hour is 50 swimmers, staff would schedule the opportunity during a day and time when they are likely to draw between 25 and 30 participants. Table 42 summarizes the annual capacity of drop-in programs offered in Richmond Hill, participation levels, and the fill rate.

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Table 42: Summary of Capacity and Utilization of Drop-in Opportunities, 2018 and 2019

Drop-In Programs	2018			2019		
	Capacity	Participation	Fill Rate	Capacity	Participation	Fill Rate
Children	2,300	1,300	57%	2,800	700	25%
Teens	12,400	5,800	47%	13,200	7,000	53%
Adult	38,600	17,800	46%	45,000	24,000	53%
55+	97,700	21,100	22%	103,000	29,600	29%
Aerobics	56,700	14,500	26%	52,300	17,200	33%
Aquafit	63,100	21,600	34%	46,300	21,700	47%
Recreational Skating	65,700	15,600	24%	70,800	14,700	21%
Recreational Swimming	1,120,100	291,200	26%	1,161,300	275,000	24%
Total	1,456,600	388,900	27%	1,494,700	389,900	26%

Note: rounded to the nearest 100.

Observations

Participation in Drop-In Activities has Remained Stable – While there is evidence of increased participation in activities such as adult opportunities, 55+, and aerobics, there have been declining participation in children’s drop-in, recreational skating, and swimming. Overall participation has remained stable. Some effort will need to be taken to increase participation.

Engage Youth – Richmond Hill is a Youth Friendly Community which demonstrates best practices in youth engagement and supporting youth leadership. A review of the dedicated youth spaces indicated that the location of Eyer Wideman Youth Centre requires further deliberations with the youth population and Richmond Hill Youth Action Committee. The high and low ropes courses and the climbing wall is well utilized for camps and other users however the indoor spaces are not well utilized. It would be prudent to examine the potential for the adventure experiences to be moved to a more central location that complement other spaces that appeal to youth (e.g., Phyllis Rawlinson Park).

The continued challenge of reaching youth who are disengaged affects most municipalities in Ontario. Inputs have also centred on better ways of engaging these youth by going to where youth congregate using youth workers with diverse backgrounds.

Swimming Remains a Valued Activity – The most popular drop-in opportunities in Richmond Hill are recreational swimming followed by drop-in opportunities for adults and those over 55+ as well as Aquafit classes. These opportunities made up 90% of the total participation in drop-in activities in 2019.

Aquatic Programming – 26% of the drop-in aquatic opportunities are utilized. In 2019 just under 1.2 million spaces were offered for drop in aquatic opportunities while 275,000 spaces were utilized. A review of aquatic drop-in program opportunities and aquatic programming in general is required to make the most efficient use of the pools, and staff time. The review would complete an analysis of what drop-in and direct programs are duplicated on the same day within proximity, the duration of the opportunities and a schedule that would respect the distance one travels, the support amenities within the facility and offer a blend of opportunities to the public.

Monitoring the Use of Change Rooms and Support Spaces - There is a need to monitor the use of change rooms and/or support spaces when scheduling drop-in opportunities as it may deter members from attending and participating in the future to avoid crowded spaces, particularly post-pandemic. The consideration of change rooms and support spaces (if needed) should be built into the capacity of the program.

Fill Rates are Low – Fill rates of drop-in opportunities are within the 26% to 27% range, which is well below a preferred target. As a best practice, the cost to provide the opportunity should be fully cost recovered for adult uses and to achieve this, participation rates should be bolstered. Staff are encouraged to monitor the utilization and fill rates, determine the frequency of offerings as well as cost recovery levels for adult opportunities, and consider marketing strategies as a first level of analysis to increase fill rates.

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Older Adult and Senior Spaces – A portion of all dedicated older adult spaces are often programmed and governed by older adult/senior’s clubs offering their own programs. These clubs rent space at a significantly reduced fee (50% subsidy) through the City. There are other clubs that are facilitated by Richmond Hill staff and have membership fees attached to participation. Older adults/seniors will travel to different clubs and a blended rate for City offered locations may serve this age group to attend the activities of their choice in the locations of their choice.

Harmonized Drop-In Fees – Currently the drop-in fees for aquatics, fitness, public skate, public swim etc. are all different and typically reflect the cost to deliver the program/service, accounts for cost recovery levels, and considers the fees charged by surrounding municipalities and service providers. To encourage residents to try new recreational opportunities and increase participation, the development of a blended fee could meet this goal. A blended fee could also provide a “Try It” punch card for several opportunities and enhance participation in recreation.

Test Importance and Satisfaction Levels - Another important method of program evaluations for all age groupings is to assess the importance of these programs and the satisfaction levels of various users. If a program is important with low satisfaction levels – improvements should be made. If there is a program that is of low importance and low satisfaction – revision, if not program elimination, or a change in format should be considered.

7.4.4 Maximizing the use of Facilities, Programs and Recreation Opportunities

Creating efficiencies in the delivery of parks, recreation and cultural opportunities respects publicly funded services in providing the appropriate level of service at the most fiscally responsive fee. Currently, all programs and services are articulated in terms of the service level which is provided to the public. Confirming levels of service results in identifying the cost to provide the service, the allocation of staff and equipment and is used to identify improvements in both efficiencies and effectiveness measure (user satisfaction). This brings the aim to continually improve services full circle. Baseline policies require review from time to time to ensure that they too are most responsive to public needs.

- a) **Field Allocation Policy** – There is a need to address the Field Allocation Policy in terms of the allocation criteria (currently last year’s allocation versus an allocation per player age and level criteria) as well as the allocation for non for profit versus for profit groups at a minimum. Determining prime and non-prime times for fields and facilities on a seasonal basis (example prime time during the winter for ice surfaces is evening and weekends however during the summer it is during the day for hockey schools etc. This will allow equitable allocation for all field user groups.
- b) **Community Affiliation Policy** – The review of the Community Affiliation policy is needed to review any additional supports that are needed for new groups forming in a diverse community and will address any other identified gaps.

Performance Metrics – A review of the current performance targets to assess user satisfaction levels in evaluating the effectiveness of the delivery/enabling of programs and services. The review is necessary to increase satisfaction levels.

Preliminary Findings – Programs and Services

80. The identified need to collaborate with community and regional partners to increase physical activity levels and reinforce the awareness and benefits of being physically active. Specific emphasis should be made to offer and promote family centred physical activity opportunities.
 81. Greater and intentional efforts are needed to increase the participation of diverse and underrepresented populations in all recreation and sport opportunities in Richmond Hill. Engaging diverse and underrepresented populations to collectively work on the following efforts including but not limited to:
 - a) Align all efforts with the principles and work efforts of the Corporate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee;
 - b) The development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Practice Manual for Community Services, including acceptable and unacceptable terms to be used in the workplace;
 - c) A review of existing policies and practices to ensure that they have welcoming language;
 - d) The confirmation of an Equity Lens as a tool in the development of new programs and services as well as the review of existing services;
 - e) The identification of diverse, underrepresented and marginalized populations in Richmond Hill and what efforts are being taken to better engage/include them;
 - f) Creating and supporting safe and welcoming spaces for a diverse community;
 - g) Representation of staff, volunteers and committee members that reflects the community that they serve;
 - h) A comprehensive professional development and training plan; and
 - i) The development of performance metrics that will identify the changes in the program and service mix and an increase in participation as a result of the DEI Plan.
 82. Confirm if target fill rates between 75% and 80% capacity for registered programs and 60% and 75% for drop-in programs are appropriate. It should also be recognized that participation rates may not return to historic levels over the short term due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 83. Evaluate the advantages of determining a harmonized rate for all drop-in activities and promote a “try it” initiative to encourage residents to try out all drop in opportunities.
 84. Undertake an Aquatic Programming Review – to eliminate duplication to maximize fill rates within all registered and drop-in programs and services
 85. Study the impacts of the trend to participate in drop in versus registered programs as well as the return to regularized operations considering COVID-19.
 86. Review the programs and services offered to youth and work to increase participation by relocating programs and opportunities where needed and developing approaches to reach disengaged youth.
 87. Work to determine the participation rate of older adults in directly offered opportunities and those opportunities offered through older adult clubs. Work with self-governing clubs to determine any
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apparent challenges in service delivery and evaluate the impact of dedicating staff time to work with and support older adult clubs operating in City spaces as per standard quality assurance guidelines.

88. Work to meet the Federal Government's goal of gender equity in sport by 2035. Conduct a review of current participation rates in sport and recreation and provide continued and long-term opportunities to collaborate with girls, women and gender diverse people to create a sense of belonging and develop supportive programs and initiatives. Engage the Canadian Women in Sport organization to audit existing policies, participation rates and approaches in determining priorities.
 89. Audit the use of fields (soccer) to determine how well booked fields are being utilized.
 90. Undertake a review and update of key policies with specific regard to:
 - a) The Field Allocation Policy to address gaps in terms of allocation criteria (currently last year's allocation versus an allocation per player age and level OSA criteria) as well as allocation for not for profit versus for profit groups. Determine prime and non-prime times for fields and facilities on a seasonal basis. For example, prime time use during the winter skating season is evening and weekends; however, during the summer it is during the day for hockey schools.
 - b) The Community Affiliation Policy to ensure that it supports the formation of new groups in a diverse community and addresses other identified gaps.
 91. Set targets for user satisfaction levels and other metrics in evaluating the effectiveness of the delivery/enabling of Recreation Services.
 92. Continued implementation of the recently revised organizational structure will remain a key focus. The refined structure is aligned with the needs of a changing community and has created efficiencies by serving like functions and users/user groups within staff units. Reemphasizing a strong Divisional culture, creating learning opportunities and a review of current practices will best serve residents now and into the future.
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8.0

Community Survey Summary

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1. Please indicate the change in your level of participation in the following, during the COVID-19 pandemic:

	Decreased		No change		Increased		Don't Know		Answered
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Parks, Trails and Open Space	282	24%	285	25%	569	49%	18	2%	1,154
Outdoor Recreation Facilities	393	34%	351	30%	245	21%	170	15%	1,159
Recreation Activities/Programs	613	54%	279	24%	152	13%	98	9%	1,142
Indoor Recreation Facilities	702	61%	234	20%	123	11%	93	8%	1,152
Arts and Cultural Activities/Programs	567	49%	278	24%	116	10%	185	16%	1,146
Arts and Cultural Facilities	536	46%	282	24%	107	9%	231	20%	1,156

2. Please select any of the following parks and recreation activities and/or facilities that you or anyone in your household has participated in at City parks or recreation facilities, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. By participation, we mean situations where you or a member of your household actively participate (excluding attending or watching), either at home or in public. Select all that apply.

	#	%
Enjoying parks and open spaces	717	62%
Walking or hiking for leisure	545	47%
Swimming (recreational)	425	37%
Cycling or mountain biking	407	35%
Aerobics, yoga, fitness, or weight-training	383	33%
Running or jogging	374	32%
Use of playground equipment	370	32%
Ice skating, hockey, ringette, figure skating	341	29%
Basketball	328	28%
Swimming (instructional or aquafit)	320	28%
Use of splash pad	305	26%
Picnicking	287	25%
Dog walking (on or off leash)	260	22%
Tennis – indoor or outdoor	260	22%
Outdoor soccer	225	19%
Registered preschool (0-5) or children's (6-12) programs	223	19%
Registered adult (18-54) programs (e.g., sports, fitness, general interest, etc.)	216	19%
Baseball or softball (or other forms)	186	16%
Skateboarding/bike park	178	15%
Drop-in programs	172	15%
Registered seniors (55+) programs (e.g., luncheons, cards, special interest courses, etc.)	166	14%
Indoor soccer	126	11%
Registered teen (13-17) programs (e.g., sports, fitness, general interest, etc.)	120	10%
Canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding or other paddle activities	109	9%
Volleyball – indoor or outdoor	85	7%

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	#	%
Pickleball	81	7%
Cricket	64	6%
Football or rugby	39	3%
Bocce – indoor or outdoor	28	2%
Other (please specify)	41	4%
Answered question	1,156	

3. What is your level of satisfaction with the City’s parks and City-run recreation opportunities for the following age groups?

	Not at all satisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very Satisfied		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Young children (ages 0 to 5)	26	3%	64	9%	127	17%	339	45%	195	26%	751
Children (ages 6 to 12)	25	3%	83	11%	141	18%	348	45%	182	23%	779
Teens (ages 13 to 17)	38	6%	76	11%	152	23%	264	39%	144	21%	674
Adults (ages 18 to 54)	32	3%	105	11%	189	21%	391	43%	198	22%	915
Adults (ages 55+)	44	6%	90	12%	180	23%	304	39%	164	21%	782
Families	36	4%	92	10%	200	22%	368	41%	194	22%	890

4. As Richmond Hill intensifies, more residents and workers will be living and/or working in the City’s growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7), which currently contain limited parks and urban open spaces to facilitate participation. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? Select one only.

	#	%
Parks and urban open spaces are as important along the City’s growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings as they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods	545	49%
Parks and urban open spaces are more important along the City’s growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings than they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods	493	44%
Parks and urban open spaces are less important along the City’s growing centres and corridors (i.e. Yonge Street, Highway 7) where most dwellings are in high-rise buildings than they are in the surrounding neighbourhoods	69	6%
Answered question	1,109	

5. If you and/or members of your household are not able to use parks and/or participate in recreation activities as often as you would like prior to COVID-19, please indicate why. Select up to three (3) responses.

	#	%
Lack of desired facilities or programs	386	34%

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	#	%
Lack of personal time / too busy	344	30%
Program not offered at a convenient time	329	29%
No barriers – we can participate as often as we would like	312	27%
Lack of money / too expensive	150	13%
Lack of information	146	13%
Unaware of opportunities	126	11%
Lack of parks in my neighbourhood	109	10%
Lack of transportation / facility too far away	108	9%
Language / cultural barrier	95	8%
Accessibility / disability / age	82	7%
Lack of child care	82	7%
Too difficult / unsure of how to register	49	4%
Other (please specify)	80	7%
Answered question	1,147	

6. Please select any of the following arts and cultural activities or programs that you or anyone in your household has attended or participated in prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Select all that apply.

	#	%
Use a library	713	64%
Attend a festival or event (e.g., Canada Day, Cultural Event, etc.)	593	53%
Attend the theatre to see a play or live performance	522	47%
Visited a museum	363	33%
Visited an art gallery	333	30%
Music	312	28%
Dance	231	21%
Crafts	205	18%
Painting	182	16%
Cooking	140	13%
Drama	110	10%
Other (please specify)	29	3%
Answered question	1,114	

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7. What is your level of satisfaction with the arts and cultural opportunities offered by the City for the following age groups?

	Not at all satisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very Satisfied		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Young children (ages 0 to 5)	27	4%	55	8%	149	22%	296	43%	156	23%	683
Children (ages 6 to 12)	19	3%	84	12%	159	23%	297	42%	145	21%	704
Teens (ages 13 to 17)	24	4%	89	14%	178	28%	204	33%	130	21%	625
Adults (ages 18 to 54)	36	4%	82	10%	216	26%	346	41%	156	19%	836
Adults (ages 55+)	39	5%	86	12%	194	26%	278	38%	143	19%	740
Families	30	4%	89	11%	195	24%	333	41%	159	20%	806

8. In the future, how would you like to participate in festivals, events, and cultural programs in Richmond Hill? Select all that apply.

	#	%
Concert or other music programs at multiple parks	570	51%
Shorter duration in-person festivals and events (e.g., 1 day or less)	426	38%
Longer duration in-person festivals and events (e.g., 2 or more days)	401	36%
Same in-person festival and event offerings as before (status quo)	382	34%
Festivals and events spread out over multiple days with limited admission	370	33%
Drive-in / drive-through festivals and events	344	31%
Limiting the number of attendees at festivals and events	280	25%
Virtual festivals and events	165	15%
Don't know	49	4%
Other (please specify)	21	2%
Answered question	1,110	

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9. If you and/or members of your household are not able to participate in arts and cultural activities as often as you would like prior to COVID-19, please indicate why. Select up to three responses.

	#	%
Lack of personal time / too busy	361	32%
Lack of desired facilities or programs	300	27%
No barriers – we can participate as often as we would like	291	26%
Program not offered at a convenient time	275	25%
Unaware of opportunities	194	17%
Lack of information	170	15%
Lack of money / too expensive	158	14%
Lack of transportation / facility too far away	101	9%
Language / cultural barrier	89	8%
Lack of child care	83	7%
Accessibility / disability / age	62	6%
Too difficult / unsure of how to register	31	3%
Other (please specify)	47	4%
Answered question	1,114	

10. How often did you or members of your household use or participate in the following park, trails, and open spaces prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Never		Once every 6 months		Once a month		3 to 5 times a month		Once a week		3 to 5 times a week		Daily		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Paved multi-use trails	21	2%	46	4%	105	10%	155	15%	215	20%	338	32%	186	17%	1,066
Natural parks and open spaces	24	2%	66	6%	148	14%	162	15%	269	26%	232	22%	152	14%	1,053
Unpaved natural trails	54	5%	76	7%	145	14%	154	15%	251	24%	238	23%	107	10%	1,025
Community gardens	131	15%	85	10%	117	13%	115	13%	188	21%	159	18%	98	11%	893
Outdoor skating rinks	183	21%	158	18%	121	14%	130	15%	149	17%	99	11%	45	5%	885
Off-leash dog parks	289	38%	42	5%	66	9%	82	11%	115	15%	99	13%	74	10%	767

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11. How often did you or members of your household use or participate in the following indoor recreation activities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Never		Once every 6 months		Once a month		3 to 5 times a month		Once a week		3 to 5 times a week		Daily		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Swimming pool - indoors	100	11%	102	11%	128	13%	146	15%	254	27%	176	18%	46	5%	952
Fitness centres	227	27%	47	6%	72	8%	97	11%	155	18%	181	21%	75	9%	854
Arenas	159	18%	114	13%	110	12%	112	13%	178	20%	157	18%	66	7%	896
Gymnasiums	233	29%	47	6%	75	9%	101	13%	153	19%	145	18%	51	6%	805
Seniors' centres or dedicated space	264	35%	39	5%	65	9%	84	11%	141	19%	116	15%	42	6%	751
Tennis courts - indoor	265	32%	56	7%	82	10%	112	14%	162	20%	111	13%	37	4%	825
Indoor artificial turf fields	263	36%	38	5%	63	9%	94	13%	128	17%	89	12%	58	8%	733
Youth-oriented spaces (e.g., youth rooms)	252	36%	38	5%	65	9%	81	11%	133	19%	105	15%	32	5%	706
Community halls or banquet rooms	254	31%	129	16%	83	10%	89	11%	125	15%	98	12%	41	5%	819

12. How often did you or members of your household use or participate in the following outdoor recreation activities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Never		Once every 6 months		Once a month		3 to 5 times a month		Once a week		3 to 5 times a week		Daily		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Playgrounds	123	13%	64	7%	99	11%	116	13%	191	21%	216	24%	104	11%	913
Outdoor fitness equipment	214	25%	58	7%	86	10%	92	11%	158	18%	149	17%	106	12%	863
Splash pads	171	20%	69	8%	120	14%	131	15%	170	20%	146	17%	56	6%	863
Outdoor soccer fields	213	25%	60	7%	93	11%	126	15%	188	22%	147	17%	35	4%	862
Outdoor basketball courts	199	23%	83	10%	110	13%	131	15%	163	19%	136	16%	43	5%	865
Tennis court - outdoors	210	24%	93	11%	121	14%	121	14%	155	18%	120	14%	44	5%	864
Swimming pool - outdoors	265	33%	48	6%	84	11%	87	11%	155	19%	124	16%	33	4%	796
Skateboard and BMX parks	283	36%	53	7%	88	11%	98	12%	140	18%	90	11%	41	5%	793
Baseball or softball diamonds	287	36%	49	6%	81	10%	109	14%	148	19%	95	12%	30	4%	799
Pickleball courts - outdoor	323	42%	32	4%	64	8%	83	11%	120	16%	91	12%	54	7%	767
Cricket pitches	364	48%	31	4%	53	7%	82	11%	130	17%	73	10%	26	3%	759

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13. How often did you or members of your household use the following arts and cultural facilities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Never		Once every 6 months		Once a month		3 to 5 times a month		Once a week		3 to 5 times a week		Daily		Answered #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Use a library	46	5%	118	12%	216	22%	192	19%	240	24%	152	15%	38	4%	1,002
Music	201	23%	168	20%	115	13%	112	13%	109	13%	101	12%	52	6%	858
Attend a festival or event	93	10%	316	33%	213	22%	101	11%	121	13%	78	8%	30	3%	952
Attend the theatre to see a play or live performance	127	13%	308	33%	156	16%	119	13%	122	13%	74	8%	40	4%	946
Cooking	303	40%	66	9%	57	7%	99	13%	80	10%	81	11%	77	10%	763
Dance	285	35%	110	13%	78	9%	95	12%	116	14%	76	9%	65	8%	825
Painting	292	37%	86	11%	85	11%	86	11%	116	15%	79	10%	40	5%	784
Crafts	274	34%	111	14%	93	12%	95	12%	111	14%	83	10%	31	4%	798
Visited a museum	191	22%	272	31%	102	11%	98	11%	116	13%	87	10%	21	2%	887
Drama	312	40%	77	10%	83	11%	73	9%	119	15%	84	11%	32	4%	780
Visited an art gallery	200	23%	252	29%	119	14%	106	12%	108	12%	68	8%	26	3%	879

14. If you had one wish for one thing the City could do to further improve parks, recreation, and/or culture services in Richmond Hill, what would it be?

Responses have not been presented but the input received have been considered as a part of the PRC Plans.

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15. How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

	#	# of Persons in Sample	%
1	37	37	4%
2	149	298	15%
3	210	630	21%
4	343	1372	34%
5	151	755	15%
6	73	438	7%
7	25	175	2%
8	9	72	1%
9	5	45	0%
10	6	60	1%
11	2	22	0%
12	0	0	0%
13	1	13	0%
14	0	0	0%
15+	3	45	0%
Answered question	1,014		100%

16. Please indicate the total number of persons within your household that fall into the following age categories.

	# of persons	%
Under 10 years	793	15%
10 - 19 years	871	16%
20 - 34 years	938	18%
35 - 54 years	1,383	26%
55 - 69 years	827	16%
70 years and over	482	9%
Total persons	5,294	
Answered question	1,038	

17. How long have you lived in Richmond Hill?

	#	%
Less than 1 year	73	7%
1 to 4 years	216	21%
5 to 9 years	162	16%
10 years or more	556	54%
Don't know	14	1%
Answered question	1,021	100%

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18. What is the primary language spoken in your household?

	#	%
English	699	68%
Cantonese/Mandarin	191	19%
Russian	33	3%
Persian/Farsi	22	2%
Prefer not to Answer	16	2%
Italian	10	1%
Punjabi	7	1%
Other (please specify)	51	5%
Answered question	1,031	100%

19. What is your preferred method to learn about the parks, recreation and cultural opportunities in Richmond Hill? Select all that apply.

	#	%
Direct email / e-blasts	541	54%
Community recreation guide	473	47%
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	464	47%
City's website (RichmondHill.ca)	450	45%
Word-of-mouth	246	25%
Community centre or library bulletin boards	231	23%
Radio	117	12%
Don't know	3	0%
Other (please specify)	41	4%
Answered question	997	253%

20. What type of dwelling do you live in?

	#	%
Single Detached Dwelling	556	54%
Condominium / apartment	151	15%
Semi-Detached Dwelling	150	15%
Townhouse	143	14%
Don't Know / Prefer not to Respond	26	3%
Answered question	1,026	100%

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21. What are the first three digits of your postal code?

	#	%
L4C	291	28%
L4E	277	27%
L4B	168	16%
L4S	141	14%
Don't Know / Prefer not to Respond	127	12%
Other (please specify)	24	2%
Answered question	1,030	100%