



# Parks Plan

Better Choice for People at Play

June 2, 2022



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# Chapter 1 Introduction



Lake Wilcox Park

## 1.0 Introduction

As an integral part of the public realm, municipal parks are vital components of complete communities that enhance the quality of life in Richmond Hill. Parks provide enjoyable spaces that support healthy lifestyles, offer opportunities to connect and socialize, enhance the economic value of surrounding properties, contribute to environmental protection and larger climate change goals, and help to create vibrant neighbourhoods. Parks also serve as principal sites for sports fields and courts, playgrounds, splash pads, and numerous other types of recreational facilities, which enable participation in organized outdoor sports, and provide opportunities for less formal, unstructured physical activity.

Over the past decades, Richmond Hill has been successful in acquiring the lands to plan and develop an exceptional park system well-suited to the suburban communities that dominated the City's landscape. As the City continues to urbanize, much of its future growth will take the form of higher density development along a series of centres and corridors as identified in the City's Official Plan. As Richmond Hill continues to become a great and more densely populated city, park planning is evolving to focus not only on the quantity of municipal parks and the facilities in them, to also focus on improving the quality and usefulness of the existing and future municipal park system. Particularly, how the park system connects to the larger Greenway System, the streetscape and the trail system, to enhance residents day to day lives by providing additional shade, improved opportunities to move around the City, and access to both park and open spaces. By doing this, the entire city can become greener and more park-like and connected for people on foot and on bicycle. The elements of the municipal park system that serve as green links between areas will play a vital role in helping to make the City feel like a seamless whole. As the City continues to intensify, municipal parks will continue to represent a critical piece of Richmond Hill's physical landscape by functioning as key social, physical, mental health, and environmental connection points.

Council's Strategic Priorities (2020-22) identify the Parks Plan as one of the major projects intended to recognize the critical balance between economic development and environmental stewardship under the "Balancing Growth and Green" priority. Stewardship of green spaces such as parks together with longer-term sustainability planning and climate action initiatives associated with parks and the facilities within and around them aid the City in balancing growth and green.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Parks Plan

The purpose of the Parks Plan is to provide direction for the planning and development of Richmond Hill's municipal park system. The four main goals of the Parks Plan are as follows:

1. Understand the park and outdoor recreation facility needs of Richmond Hill's population now and in the future.
2. 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. Determine parkland needs in relation to the planned City structure.
4. Establish an Urban Open Space System to provide a framework for connecting new parks and enhanced streetscapes within the intensification and infill areas to existing and planned trails and open spaces within the City's larger Greenway System.

The planning horizon for the Parks Plan anticipates growth through to 2031. A review and/or update of the Plan is expected to occur every 10 years.

It is important to note that not all green spaces in the City are considered "parks" within the context of this Plan. The Parks Plan deals with **active parkland**, which refers to municipally-owned lands that are suitable for development or the installation of built recreational amenities such as sports fields and courts, playgrounds, splash pads, and other recreational facilities and may be used for both organized and unorganized activities. Certain parks within Richmond Hill also contain or are located adjacent to **open space** lands. Open space lands contribute to the broader natural environment system and include municipal and non-municipal lands 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. While certain portions of open space lands can be used for passive recreational activities like trails, other open space 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, the directions outlined in the Urban Open Space System aim to improve connectivity and resident's opportunities to enjoy open spaces in proximity to the City's intensification and infill areas.

## 1.2 Planning Process

The planning process followed to develop the Parks Plan is summarized below:

- Stage 1: Background Research (Spring 2021 to Summer 2021)
- Stage 2: Community engagement and preparation of Key Directions Report (Summer 2021 to Winter 2022)
- Stage 3: Preparation of Draft Parks Plan and Draft Recreation and Culture Plan, along with consultation on the Draft Plans (Spring 2022)
- Stage 4: Preparation of Final Parks Plan, Final Recreation and Culture Plan, and Phased Costing Strategy (targeting Summer 2022)

The Parks Plan process reflects the City's commitment to community engagement and evidence-based park planning. The community engagement strategy for the Plan comprised a range of communication methods to provide residents, user groups, representatives of the land development industry, and staff with opportunities for input and participation. A community survey was undertaken over a three-week period between mid-June and early July 2021 to collect input on a variety of topics related to parks, recreation, and culture including local participation preferences and barriers, usage frequency and satisfaction levels. The survey was hosted online through a third-party website (Survey Monkey) and hardcopies were made available as an alternative format. The survey was promoted through a variety of means including the City's website, social media, QR code signs in various parks, on LED signs in front of various community centres, an e-blast, and word-of-mouth. Key informant interviews and stakeholder input meetings (including with BILD and TRCA) were also undertaken.

The background research, community engagement, and key directions for the Parks Plan were conducted together with the Recreation Plan and Culture Plan using an integrated lifecycle approach. This approach will ensure the planning, design/construction, and maintenance/operational aspects of the facilities and programs outlined in the Plans account for all costs from project inception through to construction/program formulation, and operation/maintenance. The findings and results of this background work were endorsed by Council in a Key Directions Report on March 9, 2022.

## 1.3 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles form the foundation of the Parks Plan. These principles will guide the work of City Council, City staff, and other stakeholders as the Plan is implemented.

### **Expand the parks system to continue to create a livable, diverse Richmond Hill**

Municipal parks are essential components of a growing, complete community. Creating new parks and revitalizing older parks to support growth and address gaps will help to ensure the parks system supports the needs of a livable, diverse city. A variety of park typologies will need to be implemented in the City's intensification areas to connect residents to the larger existing parks and Greenway System outside the centres and corridors, and to provide residents living in the neighbourhood with opportunities to experience the new parks, shopping, and entertainment opportunities in the centres and corridors. Planning for Richmond Hill's future park system must maximize all opportunities to provide healthy outdoor recreation experiences, along with maintaining and creating a sense of place for the residents of today and tomorrow. Existing parkland should not be sold or developed for other purposes.

### **Improve the function of existing parks**

As the City intensifies, more residents will begin to use parks outside of their immediate neighbourhood when they wish to have a unique experience, are visiting family or friends, or to participate in organized sports. For the existing park system to be flexible and robust enough to accommodate this increased usage, existing parks will need to be revitalized to promote community cohesion, sustainability and climate change goals, and health and wellbeing through active living, access to nature, and the provision of spaces for rest, relaxation, and leisure.

### **Connect parks and enhanced streetscapes to trails and the larger Greenway System**

Parks provide respite from the dense urban condition and act as urban design focal points, which not only beautify, but also provide for a sense of place and community identity. By both physically and visually connecting parks and enhanced streetscapes to trails and the larger Greenway System in a continuous Urban Open Space System, people living throughout Richmond Hill can have equitable access to parks and open spaces. The City may also be able to leverage partnership opportunities to use other open spaces, private laneways, or to aid with removing fences or other barriers so that people can seamlessly navigate to and through the parks and Urban Open Space System to reach destinations.

### **Design for flexible, multi-use parks that support year-round use for all**

Flexible designs and innovative detailing help parks and facilities to better adapt to shifting needs and meet a wider variety of uses over the course of a year and a park's lifecycle. As the City continues to grow, ensuring park facilities cater to multiple needs and desires across all four seasons will be key. For example, a splash pad or volleyball court could be designed to be an ice rink in the winter, washrooms could be designed to be accessible across all four seasons, lighting could be installed at certain courts and fields to extend the useful play period, and

passive spaces for unstructured or self-directed play or leisure activities could be provided. Smaller facilities or pilot projects can also be undertaken to test new or emerging trends before investing substantial capital dollars.

## 1.4 Plan Organization

The Parks Plan is organized into seven chapters as follows:

**Chapter 1.0** provides an introduction to the Parks Plan and defines the purpose of the Plan, the background research and consultation used to inform the Plan, and the Plan's organization.

**Chapter 2.0** presents the planning context for the Parks Plan in terms of:

- the City's broader strategic policy direction and framework,
- anticipated growth in Richmond Hill,
- key socio-demographic trends with potential to influence future park and recreation facility needs, and
- recreation and leisure trends being experienced in the City and across the broader region.

**Chapter 3.0** provides an overview of the existing municipal park system in Richmond Hill, with an emphasis on the role and function of the various types of parks in the inventory.

**Chapter 4.0** summarizes the City's stock of outdoor recreation facilities and makes recommendations for the future provision of these facilities.

**Chapter 5.0** summarizes the City's future parkland needs in terms of park typology.

**Chapter 6.0** sets out a vision for an Urban Open Space System that provides the framework for connecting new parks and enhanced streetscapes within the intensification and infill areas to existing and planned trails and open spaces within the City's larger Greenway System.

**Chapter 7.0** recommends a series of implementation tools that will be used to realize the parkland and outdoor recreation facility needs outlined in this Plan.

## Chapter 2 Richmond Hill's Park Planning Context



*Russell Farm Park*

## 2.0 Richmond Hill's Park Planning Context

A comprehensive understanding of the needs, character, and evolution of Richmond Hill's community is essential for successful long-term planning of the park system. This chapter sets the stage for the Parks Plan by describing the overall planning context within which the Parks Plan has been developed. It begins with an overview of the strategic policy framework for the Parks Plan as set out in the City's Strategic Priorities (2020-2022) and Official Plan, including anticipated population growth and the overall land-use planning framework for accommodating this growth within the planned City structure. Demographic characteristics of Richmond Hill, which directly impact the provision of parks and recreation facilities, are summarized. Finally, key recreation and leisure trends expected to influence the planning and provision of parks services in Richmond Hill over the coming years are discussed.

A more detailed outline of the policy framework, population growth, demographics, and recreation and leisure trends, which provide the planning context for the Parks Plan is contained within the Key Directions Report and the Background and Preliminary Needs Assessment Report which were received by Council on March 9, 2022.

## 2.1 Policy Framework

### Council Strategic Priorities (2020-2022)

Council's Strategic Priorities for 2020 to 2022 provide a roadmap for Richmond Hill's emergence 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. Four strategic priority areas are identified, namely:

- Balancing Growth and Green;
- Fiscal Responsibility;
- Strong Sense of Belonging; and
- Getting Around the City.

The Parks Plan is identified as a major project intended to implement Council's strategic priority of "Balancing Growth and Green". Stewardship of green spaces such as parks together with longer-term sustainability planning and climate action initiatives associated with parks and the facilities within and around them aid the City in balancing growth and green.

### Official Plan

The City's Official Plan provides the overarching policy direction for land-use planning in Richmond Hill over the next 20 years. The Official Plan defines parks as spaces that help build complete communities, support connectivity and mobility within neighbourhoods, create special places for people, provide economic benefits, and enhance the environment. The Official Plan vision for parkland and recreational services focuses on:

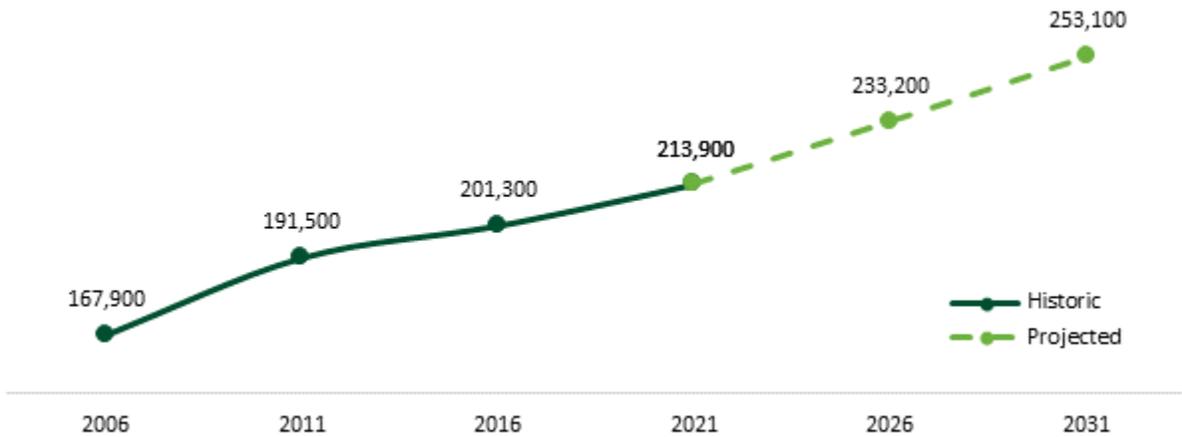
- Providing safe and accessible parks and recreation services.
- Providing parks and recreation services in a manner that presents residents with choice, and meets the general interests and needs of a diverse population.
- Celebrating and building upon the legacy of existing parks and open spaces in the City while addressing the challenges of changing growth patterns, current strategic direction (reflecting the physical, social and economic needs of residents and businesses), and a more urban community.
- Integrating parks and trails with the urban open space system as a component of the City's overall Greenway System and creating stronger connections to/between parks, neighbourhoods, and natural areas.
- Contributing to the creation of a more vibrant and interesting community through park planning and design.
- Enhancing the function of parks as focal points and landmarks within the community.
- Involving the community in the design of parks and the planning of recreation services.
- Developing new parks and revitalizing old parks in a fiscally responsible manner.

## 2.2 Richmond Hill’s Population and Planned Growth

### Population Growth and the City Structure

While Richmond Hill experienced substantial growth during the 1990s and early 2000s, recent population growth has slowed, but will likely resume shortly given the announcements related to the Yonge subway extension to Richmond Hill Centre. Over the horizon of this Plan, Richmond Hill’s population is expected to grow by over 39,000 residents (or 18%), reaching a population of 253,000 by 2031 as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: Richmond Hill’s Historical and Projected Population Growth (2006-2031)**



Note: Population includes a census undercount of 3.2%.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and the City of Richmond Hill. 2021.

Over the next 10 years, future population growth within Richmond Hill is expected to occur in a number of areas. The City is expected to continue 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 even 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. During the planning period, these intensification and infill areas are expected to accommodate approximately 20,000 residents. Notably, the Downtown Local Centre, North Yonge Street Corridor, Richmond Hill Centre and the Yonge and Carrville/16th Key Development Area are each planned to accommodate 5,000 residents by 2031.

The City’s remaining greenfield lands, located within the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan Areas, are expected to accommodate approximately 15,100 and 4,600 additional residents by 2031, respectively. These two Secondary Plans account for the City’s remaining designated greenfield areas.

It is the Policy of Council that:

1. The acquisition of new parks and the redevelopment of existing parks will consider the locations of population growth within the City.
2. The City will monitor the provision of parkland as it relates to population growth within the planned City structure.
3. The development of local area planning policies may further inform the amount, type and location of parkland within the planned City structure.

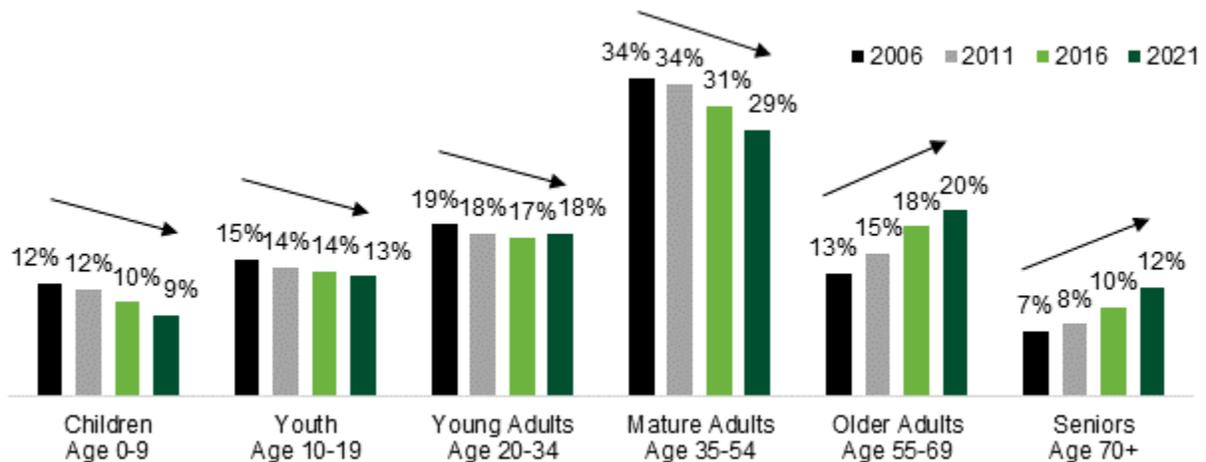
## 2.3 Richmond Hill’s Demographics

Changes to the City’s community composition, together with evolving interests and participation preferences, along with the need to ensure financial sustainability using an integrated lifecycle approach have been assessed and help to inform the future demands for parks and outdoor recreation services outlined in this Plan. Key demographic characteristics most likely to impact the City’s provision of parks and outdoor recreation facilities are:

### Age

Age is perhaps the demographic characteristic that is most useful in helping to predict the recreation and leisure preferences of a population given that different age groups use parks in different ways and tend to demand different types of recreational facilities. While the 35-54 age group remains the largest in the City, Richmond Hill’s population continues to age with the adults aged 55+ group continuing to account for a larger proportion of the overall population. While this suggests that the City will face pressure for parks 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.

**Figure 2.2: Population Growth by Age Group, City of Richmond Hill, 2006 to 2021**



Source: Statistics Canada 2006 – 2021 Census.

### 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, although this trend appears to be shifting as a result of the work from home arrangements many workplaces have begun adopting during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The City will continue to monitor changes to park usage resulting from these new work from home arrangements, along with the historic trends of the large commuter population placing pressures on prime-time activities and those that can be self-scheduled depending on one’s availability continue.

## **Cultural Diversity**

Richmond Hill is a culturally diverse community with the largest visible minority group being 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. The design of parks and the facilities within them will need to be flexible and adaptable to these demands.

## 2.4 Recreational and Leisure Trends

The trends expected to have a significant impact on Richmond Hill's provision of parks and outdoor recreation facilities in the next 10 years are identified below.

### Focus on Health and Well-being

Despite the fact that the average lifespan of Canadians is increasing, there is a growing number of overweight and obese Canadians. Additionally, much of the Baby Boomer generation, which accounts for a significant proportion of the population, has or will soon reach retirement age, and is looking for opportunities to remain healthy and active and to connect socially within their community. These demographic trends and others are contributing to a broad awareness of the benefits to pursuing an active lifestyle as well as a demand for a variety of recreational services.

### Flexibility and Convenience

Limited free time has been identified as a major barrier to participation for youth and adults, largely due to busy schedules and socioeconomic circumstances. With evolving households, variable schedules and multiple personal and work-related commitments, many residents increasingly favour self-scheduled or unstructured activities. A park system that meets the needs of the community will be one that offers a range of options for how and when residents participate, as well as one that includes a variety of options easily accessible from home, school or work.

### Choice and Inclusivity

An emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility has become a trend amongst park and recreation service providers nation-wide. This trend is being realized from a variety of different perspectives. More active, older adults are demanding options that meet their needs, youth continue to be interested in 'extreme' action-based sports and residents of different ethnic backgrounds seek options that are specific to their cultures. Accessibility options need to be balanced across the parks system. The trend highlights the need to offer options and choice for everybody.

It is the Policy of Council that:

1. The City will monitor demographic, recreation and leisure trends and focus both land acquisition, and park development, park revitalization and park repair and replacement to accommodate emerging needs.
2. The City will investigate the potential for additional fully accessible or barrier-free parks or park facilities to increase inclusivity and access within Richmond Hill.

## Chapter 3 The Existing Park System



*Richvale Athletic Field*

### 3.0 Existing Park System

This chapter provides an overview of the existing municipal park system in Richmond Hill. The first section summarizes the role and function of the various types of parks in the City's parkland inventory. The second section summarizes existing per capita parkland provision levels and explains how these provision levels will be impacted by the City's anticipated future growth.

It is important to keep in mind that the park system includes **active parkland**, those lands owned by the municipality, which are suitable for active, outdoor recreational use. Certain parks within Richmond Hill also contain or are located adjacent to open space lands, which contribute to the City's broader Greenway System. **Open space lands** generally refer to sites with no to low development potential and are primarily designated for environmental protection, stormwater management facilities or lands owned by other agencies or organizations. While certain portions of open space lands can be used for passive recreational activities like trails, other open space 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 are not included in the park system, the directions outlined in the Urban Open Space System aim to improve connectivity and resident's opportunities to experience open spaces in proximity to the City's intensification and infill areas.

### 3.1 Parks Classification

The City's existing park system is depicted on Figure 3.1. The system contains a total of approximately 358 hectares of land (August 2021 data), which is classified into the following five different park types:

#### 1. Destination Parks

There are five Destination Parks within the City's park system – Mill Pond Park, David Dunlap Observatory Park, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, Lake Wilcox Park, and Richmond Green Park – which are classified separately because they have a distinct City-wide function. These Destination Parks vary considerably in terms of the recreational opportunities they provide, but are similar in that they contain features and facilities not found anywhere else in the City. Destination Parks attract visitors from across the City and beyond because of their unique four-season attractions and because they are typically used as the sites for large events and celebrations. Most Destination Parks contain an active parkland component as well as open space lands, including stormwater management facilities and natural heritage/environmental lands. Only the active parkland component of Destination Parks contributes to the City's overall parkland provision level.

#### 2. Community Parks

Community Parks function as hubs where residents can meet, interact and engage in a wide variety of recreational activities. In most cases Community Parks are co-located with indoor recreation facilities (i.e., community centres, arenas or pools), and contain permitted sports fields (e.g., senior ball diamonds and soccer fields) with lighting and associated parking space, picnic and passive recreational areas, and a mixture of smaller recreational facilities (e.g., playgrounds, sports courts, splash pads). Community Parks directly serve residents living within a long walk or a short drive and are also used by residents across the City who participate in organized sports or recreational programming. Some types of outdoor recreation facilities located in Community Parks are not available at smaller Neighbourhood Parks (e.g. lit senior sports fields, splash pads).

#### 3. Neighbourhood Parks

Neighbourhood Parks have a myriad of roles, but their primary function is to provide play areas, recreational opportunities and outdoor greenspace close to homes. Neighbourhood Parks provide spaces for people to walk their dogs, offer views of nature from front porches and kitchen windows, are places where local parents meet and watch their children play, contain sports fields used for house league and pick-up games, and are sites for sports courts used by youth and adults alike.

There are two types of Neighbourhood Parks within the City's inventory:

- a. Local Parks - Contain a variety of active recreation facilities as well as passive recreational space, and,
- b. Parkettes - Are typically smaller in size than Local Parks, and often contain no active recreation facilities other than a playground. The main roles of Parkettes are primarily related to urban design (e.g., Parkettes provide visual relief from adjacent built forms, create views, enhance neighbourhood aesthetics and help to give places a unique identity).

#### 4. Linear Parks

Characterized by a linear, rather than compact configuration, Linear Parks facilitate safe and comfortable pedestrian and cycling connections between parks and other community destinations such as commercial and retail areas, public transit nodes, civic spaces, and schools. Recreation or culture nodes positioned along the length of Linear Parks provide play and cultural opportunities and can include public art, outdoor fitness equipment, linear playground equipment, splash spots or skate spots, small off-leash dog areas, community gardens, and seating. In some cases, Linear Parks can also act as a physical, green separation between abutting land uses.

Linear Parks encourage physical activity by facilitating active transportation options that reduce distances between destination points. When located effectively within a neighbourhood, Linear Parks provide residents with an opportunity to get some physical exercise while going about their daily activities. At the City scale, Linear Parks contribute to the provision of active transportation commuter routes and the overall pedestrian and cycling network.

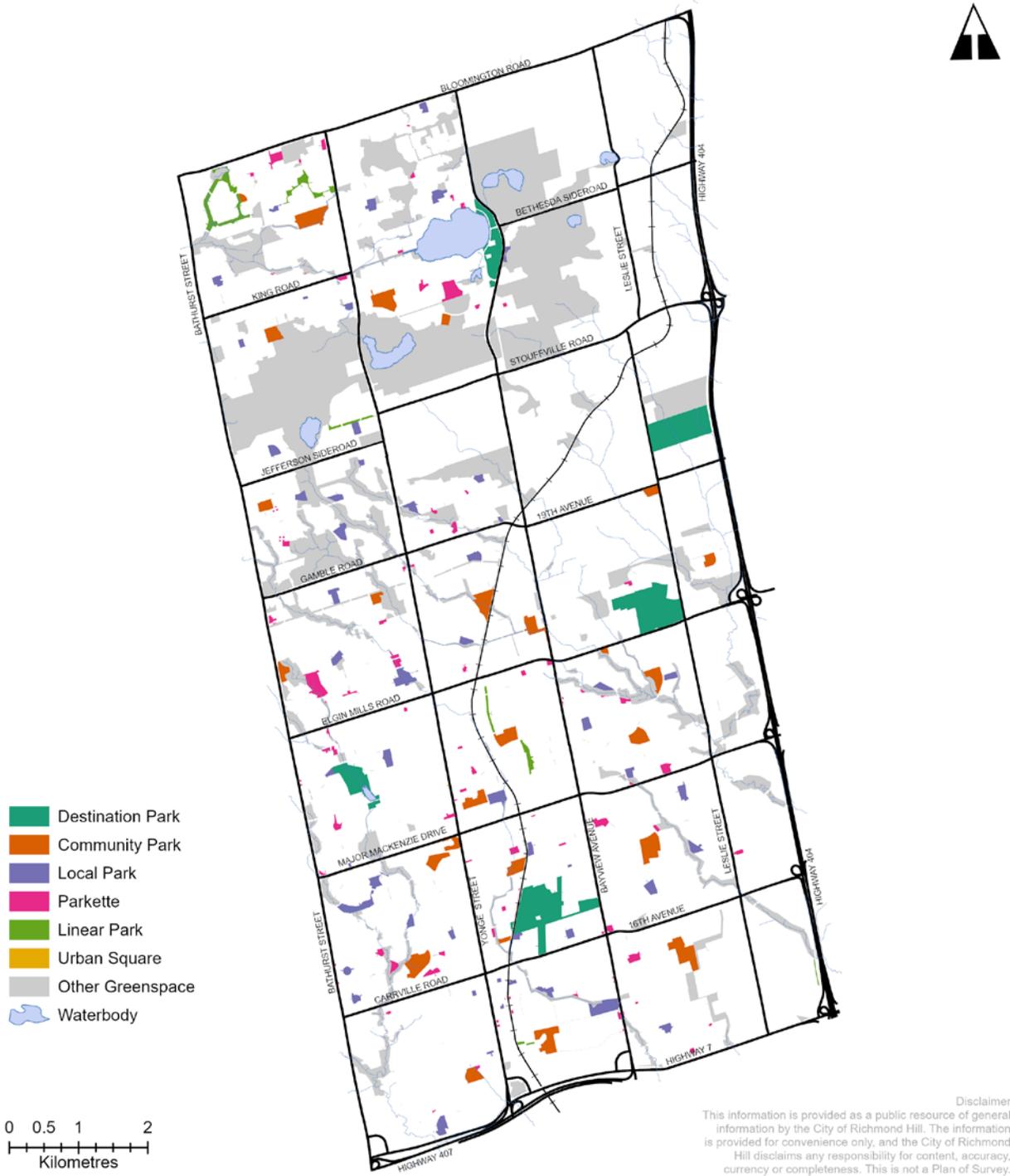
#### 5. Urban Squares

Urban Squares serve people living in and visiting the intensification areas (centres and corridors) in which they are situated. The target users of urban squares include not only local residents, but also people working, shopping, dining, and attending appointments or business functions nearby.

Flexibility in size, location and design of Urban Squares is of particular importance to ensuring that Urban Squares help to realize key urban design goals in densely populated areas. Traditionally associated with bustling, established city centres, Urban Squares are primarily suited to mixed-use areas supporting a high level of pedestrian activity. In these areas, squares are necessary to provide spaces where people can converge and interact naturally, relax and take respite from the bustle of an intensely used commercial area, and stage functions and celebrations.

Unlike other park types, Urban Squares can contain a significant amount of hardscaping (i.e., constructed surfaces and detailed landscape elements). While comfort of use is important to all park types, the design of Urban Squares specifically focuses on provision of flexible seating, shade and shelter from wind and rain. Decorative design elements such as gardens, water features and public art are classic elements of Urban Squares, which are enjoyed by visitors to the square as well as people passing by. A critical key to place-making, Urban Squares give a place an identity and act as landmarks at which people arrange to meet, or reference when giving directions.

Figure 3.1: Park Classification



### 3.2 Impact of Growth on the Existing Park System

As shown on Figure 3.1, the City has a relatively even geographic distribution of parks, owing greatly to a lengthy era of low-density greenfield development which saw similar population densities spread equally across the City.

Figure 3.2 shows the existing (2021) per capita parkland provision by traffic zone within the City. The provision rates by traffic zone help to understand the parkland provision rate within smaller geographic areas, showing there are certain inequities in parkland distribution across the City. Currently, Richmond Hill has an overall average parkland provision level of 15.6 square metres per person (or a population-based parkland provision level of 1.56 hectares for every 1,000 people in the City).

The City is forecasted to grow from a 2021 population of 214,000 (rounded) people to a population of 253,000 (rounded) people in 2031.

Figure 3.3 shows the impact of anticipated population growth on the City's existing park system by traffic zone in 2031, should the City be successful in adding the parkland that has been planned through approved or emerging Secondary Plans, existing *Planning Act* approvals, and/or in the North Leslie Master Park Agreement. In this scenario, the City's overall average parkland provision level of 15.6 square metres per person (or a population-based parkland provision level of 1.56 hectares for every 1,000 people in the City) would fall to 14.8 square metres per person (or a population-based parkland provision level of 1.48 hectares for every 1,000 people in the City). As can be seen by comparing Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, the following growth areas will experience a greater decline in the amount of parkland provided per person by 2031:

- Areas adjacent to the growing Yonge Street corridor, specifically the areas located between the Bernard KDA and Richmond Hill Centre with the exception of the area adjacent to Town Park and Unity Park and the areas adjacent to the new parkland planned to be provided by the Hillcrest Mall lands;
- The proposed new Local Centre areas where growth is being directed through the OP Update including the north-east quadrant of Bathurst Street and Highway 7 and the north-east quadrant of Leslie Street and Highway 7.

These emerging and new mixed-use neighbourhoods are predominantly along the centres and corridors and were not originally planned to include parkland like the City's historic subdivision areas were. As can be seen on Figure 3.3, if no additional parkland is acquired in these areas, many will fall well below the current average parkland provided per person across the City. For example, certain portions of the Yonge Street corridor will be less than half the average of 15.6 square metres per person.

When parkland provision levels fall, the demands on parks become more intense. With lower provision rates, a greater number of people are using the same amount of park space and, as a result, there is more rapid wear and tear on facilities and increased needs associated with park maintenance. Additionally, as the population using a park increases, the intrinsic value of the park itself – which is rooted in the perception and ideal that parks are spacious open green areas with adequate room for sports and leisure activities, picnics and relaxation – is impacted.

Richmond Hill residents have come to enjoy the parkland provision level they currently experience, but this provision level is reflective of the City's historical acquisition of parkland at a rate of 5% of the area of greenfield/suburban development sites. The Ontario *Planning Act* permits use of an alternative dedication rate of 1 hectare for every 300 dwelling units in medium and high-density development scenarios. Medium and high-density development is anticipated to comprise the majority of the City's growth over the horizon of this Plan. The alternative dedication rate converts to a City-wide hectares per 1,000 people dedication rate of between approximately 1.08 hectares per 1,000 people and 1.10 hectares per 1,000 people (assuming 3.08 Persons Per Unit in 2021 and 3.01 Persons Per Unit in 2031 per the City's 2021 Growth Forecast). As such, the existing City-wide parkland provision rate of 1.56 hectares per 1,000 people will decrease over the horizon of this Plan given the constraints imposed by the *Planning Act's* alternative dedication rate, and the fact that the small size of most medium and high-density development sites necessitates the City seeking cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication rather than taking land. Just as intensification will impact the amount of traffic on roads, intensification will also impact the amount of people in parks. A decrease in Richmond Hill's per capita parkland provision level can be expected to result from more compact urban forms, but every effort should be made to minimize the extent of the impact on the park user.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will collect parkland at a rate that will minimize impacts to the City's per capita parkland provision levels.

Figure 3.2: Impact of Growth (Current)

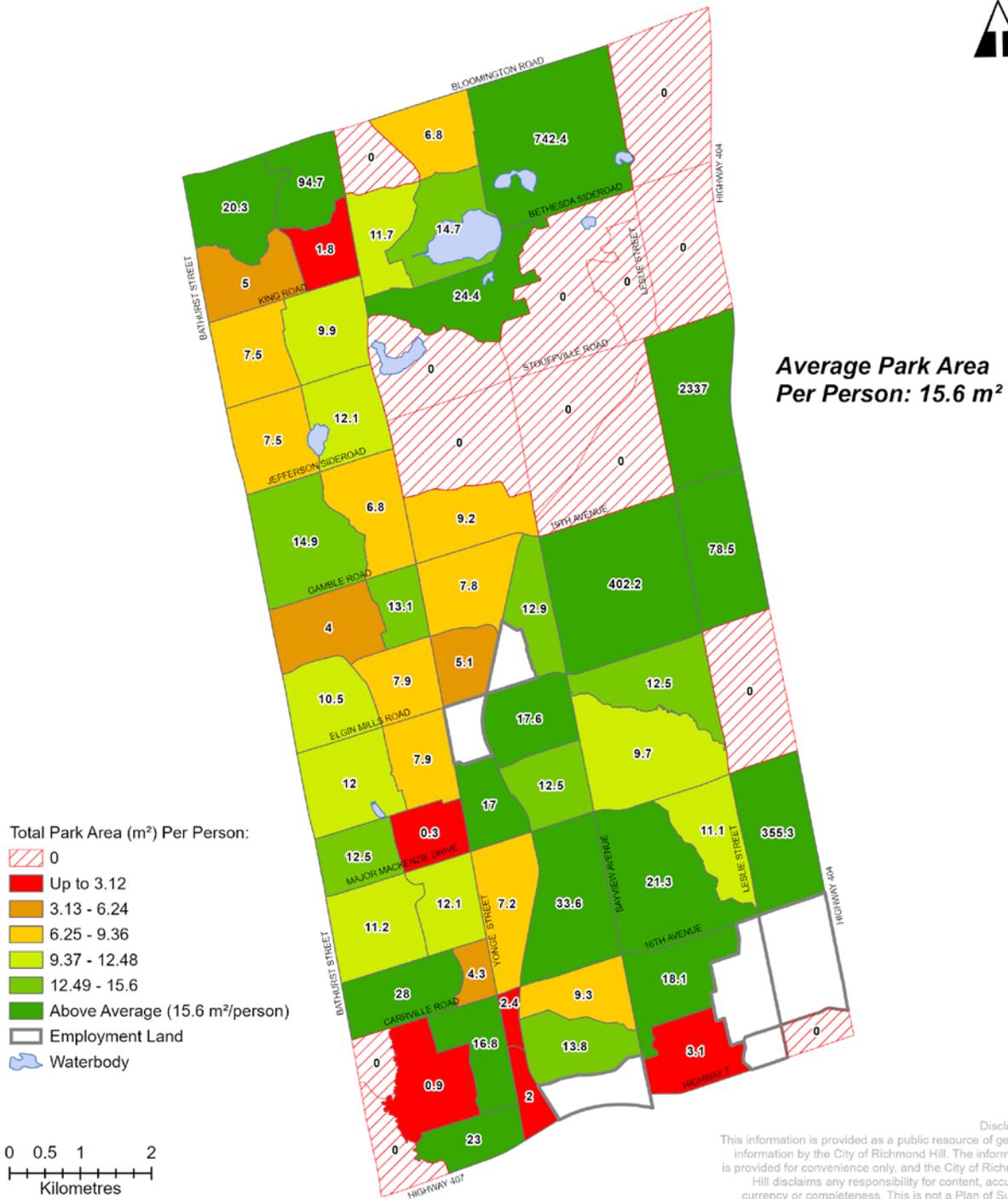
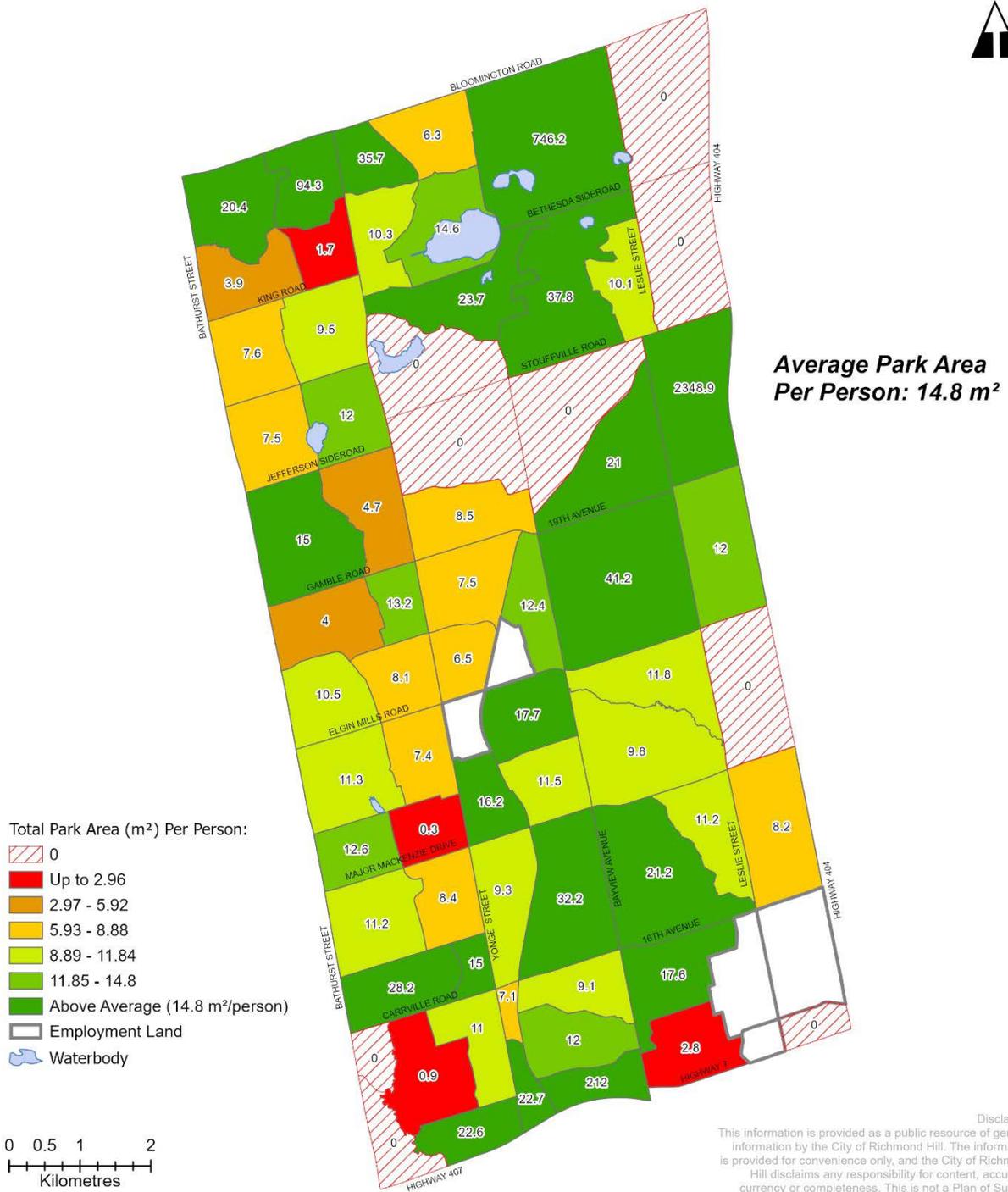


Figure 3.3: Impact of Growth (Future to 2031)



## Chapter 4 Outdoor Recreation Facilities



*Richmond Green Sports Centre and Park*

## 4.0 Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Richmond Hill provides a wide range of outdoor recreation facilities within its municipal park system. The section below outlines future directions for these facilities to keep pace with growth and changing demographics and trends.

### 4.1 Soccer Fields

Soccer is one of the City's most popular organized sports. The City's current inventory includes 44 soccer fields, including 3 senior lit artificial turf soccer fields and 10 senior lit soccer fields. This equates to 52 unlit equivalent (ULE) soccer fields, recognizing 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 and are therefore considered equivalent to 2.0 and 1.5 unlit fields, respectively. Given the larger recreational trends for soccer, it is recommended that the City maintain the current provision level of 1 ULE field per 4,100 residents.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City continue to monitor the supply and demand of soccer fields and should demand continue at current levels, the City will plan to construct or partner with others to facilitate access to 10 additional unlit equivalent soccer fields.
2. Given the City's on-going space constraints for large new soccer fields, consideration should be given to providing lit artificial turf and lit natural grass fields, where appropriate, as lit artificial turf fields and lit natural grass fields offer a greater capacity of play during the shoulder season (for artificial turf fields) and evenings, and can therefore be considered equivalent to 2.0 and 1.5 unlit fields, respectively.
3. An investigation of improvements that could be made to existing unlit senior and junior/mini soccer fields to optimize use be undertaken including, but not limited to:
  - a. Conversion to lit artificial turf, adding field lighting, and other turf management improvements;
  - b. Identifying underutilized fields that may be candidates for re-purposing to other in-demand park uses and/or passive areas.
4. Removal of any existing underused/undersized fields should aim to be replaced at a location in other park(s) that can support appropriate soccer field sizes and/or through improved amenities (e.g., field lighting, artificial turf) at existing soccer fields.

## 4.2 Baseball Diamonds

The City currently provides a total of 38 baseball diamonds, including 4 lit senior hardball fields and 12 lit senior slow pitch fields (or 46 ULE diamonds recognizing that lit ball diamonds generally accommodate 1.5 times the playing capacity compared to unlit ball diamonds.) This equates to a provision level of 1 ULE diamond per 4,600 residents. After being a sport in decline for the better part of two decades, baseball and its variations (i.e. softball, fastball) are experiencing a resurgence. As a result, maintaining the provision level of 1 diamond per 4,600 residents is appropriate. Given the City's age structure, baseball diamond demand for adult slo-pitch will continue to grow. Increasing the proportion of lit, senior diamonds in the City's inventory to accommodate night play for a commuter workforce will be essential, along with bringing existing diamonds up to current standards, particularly regarding size and configuration.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City continue to monitor the supply and demand of baseball fields and should demand continue at current levels, the City will plan to construct or partner with others to facilitate access to 9 additional unlit equivalent baseball fields.
2. The following strategy will be used to address this need:
  - a. Construct ball diamonds in new parks or existing parks undergoing revitalization, 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, irrigation or drainage, completing field upgrades, 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).

### 4.3 Tennis and Pickleball Courts

The City currently provides a total of 81 tennis courts, of which 51 courts are lit and of these lit courts, 25 courts have colour-coated surfacing providing enhanced play within 6 concession blocks. Of the 51 lit tennis courts, six (6) are designated as club courts at Crosby Park (managed by the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club) to serve central Richmond Hill, and six (6) are designated as club courts at David Hamilton Park (managed by the Blackmore Tennis Club) to serve south Richmond Hill. The club courts at David Hamilton are also domed during the winter season to facilitate year-round programming. Current provision levels are 1 court per 2,600 residents.

Two (2) 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 tennis courts that have been re-lined to facilitate both tennis and pickleball play at Town Park.

The popularity of tennis and pickleball 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. Richmond Hill's Tennis Strategy (2016) 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. A Tennis Court Conditions Assessment was completed in 2018 to identify and prioritize court replacement and/or resurfacing.

Based on recreation trends and demographic analyses, tennis and pickleball will continue to be popular in Richmond Hill and given the City's land constraints, it will be important for the City to determine which types of courts are best suited to the parks with existing or planned court space. A provision rate of 1 tennis court per 2,700 residents will be maintained until a tennis court usage analysis is undertaken. A provision rate for pickleball may be established following this analysis.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City continue to monitor the supply and demand of tennis courts and should demand continue at current levels, the City will plan to construct 13 new tennis courts.
2. The City will undertake a data collection exercise to determine tennis court usage levels during daytime, evening, weekend, and weekdays with an intended outcome being the identification of courts suitable to be re-lined for both 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 will consider updating the Tennis Strategy to be a combined Tennis/Pickleball Strategy. A provision rate for dedicated pickleball courts may be established following the completion of the tennis court usage analysis
3. The proportion of colour-coated to regular asphalt courts in the inventory will be increased, by providing colour-coated courts at a minimum of one park (preferably a Community Park or a Destination Park) in each concession block.
4. In advance of the usage analysis, the City will continue to monitor the supply and demand of pickleball courts and should demand continue, the City will plan to construct dedicated pickleball courts, preferably at Community or Destination Parks, and the City may establish temporary/seasonal “pop-up” pickleball courts in Community or Destination Parks where there are limited impacts to adjacent residential lots, or re-line existing tennis courts to facilitate both tennis and pickleball, subject to community consultation.
5. The City will investigate the location, design and construction of a multi-court pickleball hub or hubs that provides an opportunity to be covered with an air-supported structure to facilitate year-round play.

## 4.4 Basketball and Multi-Sport Courts

The City currently provides basketball or multi-sport courts at 46 parks in Richmond Hill, consisting of 24 full courts, 24 half-court or irregular-sized asphalt pads with a single hoop, and 5 multi-sport courts. Lake Wilcox Park is the only location that features court lighting. The current provision levels equal 1 court per 4,000 residents. The current provision level will be maintained with an effort focusing on providing an even geographic distribution of full courts to meet this demand.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City continue to monitor the supply and demand of basketball and multi-sport courts and should demand continue at current levels, the City will plan to construct basketball or multi-sport courts at 9 additional parks.
2. The City will distribute full courts throughout the City equitably and in appropriate locations, such as near community centres.
3. Consideration should be given to designing new or redeveloped basketball courts to be multi-sport courts, where demand warrants, to support a variety of activities that require a large, hard surface (e.g., basketball, ball hockey). Consideration may also be given to the use of colour-coated court or flex surfacing, lighting and other supporting amenities.

## 4.5 Splash Pads

The City currently provides 15 splash pads at a per capita provision rate of 1 per 14,300 residents. Richmond Hill offers splash pads to provide an accessible and cost effective way for residents to cool down outside in the summer months. All splash pads are well used during the summer months. Demand for splash pads is anticipated to continue and observation shows that they are used by a range of age groups. As the City intensifies, splash pad facilities could be supplemented with small-scale splash spots or spray features within planned intensification areas.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will plan to construct 3 new splash pads to achieve a provision level of 1 splash pad per 14,000 residents.
2. Small-scale splash spots (e.g., features such as spray posts, water fountains, misting features) may be established in strategic locations where there is planned residential intensification, such as within the City's centres and corridors.
3. As part of the City's climate change efforts, water conserving splash pad systems will be considered in an effort to decrease water usage.

## 4.6 Playgrounds

Playgrounds continue to act as the neighbourhood backbone of outdoor recreation in Richmond Hill. Accessible playgrounds and playgrounds with barrier-free components are becoming standard elements of playground design and Richmond Hill has been redeveloping playgrounds with this in mind. 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. The key to the success of playgrounds is the ability to locate them within a 400 metre walking distance of a user's place of residence. New and redeveloped playgrounds should continue to integrate the City's best practice of incorporating diverse elements such as barrier-free/inclusive designs, with natural or adventure play features being directed to larger, more heavily used parks to promote inclusivity and adventure. The City currently provides play structures in 127 parks for a per capita provision rate of 1 playground per 1,700 residents.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. Playgrounds will be provided within walking distance (400 metres) of residential properties.
2. All new or redeveloped playgrounds will be designed to meet accessibility (AODA) standards. The City will plan to construct 2 additional playgrounds with barrier-free features, one to serve north Richmond Hill, and one to serve south Richmond Hill, to provide a more even distribution of barrier-free playground features given those that currently serve central Richmond Hill at Crosby Park. Destination or Community Parks should be considered that include existing parking.
3. Natural and adventure-style playgrounds that incorporate landscapes and natural materials such as wood and ropes should be directed to Destination and Community Parks with consideration in Local Parks adjacent to naturalized settings to stimulate creative experiences and adventure.
4. Establishment of a playground replacement plan be considered to manage renewal activities and strategically identify playground removal opportunities to eliminate service duplication or underutilized sites.

## 4.7 Outdoor Fitness Equipment

The City currently has outdoor fitness equipment installed in nine parks. Integrating outdoor fitness equipment within parks responds to growing demands for outdoor exercise opportunities, allowing residents to participate in outdoor fitness and engage in the public realm. Best practices in providing outdoor fitness equipment revealed that this facility type should be considered in additional locations to encourage outdoor physical activity, particularly in or within proximity to areas of intensification. Community or Destination Parks with other active recreation facilities or along trails may also be suitable locations.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. Outdoor fitness equipment will be installed at one park in each of the City's major concession blocks.
2. Additional locations for smaller outdoor fitness stations may be considered in areas of intensification, particularly within Linear Parks or to create outdoor fitness circuits between Local Parks and trails.

## 4.8 Community Allotment Gardens and Collective Gardens

Community allotment gardens provide an opportunity for both environmental stewardship and active participation in facilitating community led production of fresh, local food. 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 with plots that can be rented by the public which represents a service level of one per 214,000 residents. 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.

Over the past number of years, the City has experienced pressures for additional community allotment garden plots that can be rented by the public. As the City continues to intensify, demand for community allotment gardens is expected to continue as new residents living in higher density units will 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 and collective gardens.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will plan to provide a second community allotment garden at a park in south Richmond Hill in close proximity to the centres and corridors to strengthen the geographic distribution of community allotment gardens in the City with a north and south location resulting in a provision level of one community allotment garden per 125,500 people.
2. Continue to evaluate the merits of additional collective gardens on a case-by-case basis based on waiting list requests and distributional access to the community as proposals come forward from established community groups or new community groups working together with an appointed Community Garden Coordinator.

## 4.9 Skateboard/BMX Facilities

The City currently has two skateboard and BMX facilities located in Richmond Green and Lake Wilcox Park. Both facilities appear to be well used. Now that skateboarding (and related wheeled action sports) has demonstrated sustained longevity as a municipal service, there is merit in reinvesting in additional locations to provide an adequate level of coverage across the City, and to consider supplementing the provision of these larger facilities through the provision of small-scale “skate spots” that provide basic elements for the benefit of young children and novice skateboarders learning to skateboard or bike.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City continue to monitor the supply and demand of skateboard/BMX facilities and should demand continue at current levels, the City will plan to construct 2 additional skateboard/BMX facilities to achieve a service target of 1 skateboard/BMX facility per 60,000 residents.
2. The City may investigate the provision of small-scale skate spots with basic elements for skateboarding and biking within Community Parks or near areas of intensification in Linear Parks or Local Parks where these facilities are compatible with surrounding uses to augment major skateboard parks and to provide basic elements for young children and novice skateboarders learning to skateboard or bike.
3. As part of the planned revitalization of Richmond Green, consideration should be given through the Master Plan process to replace the existing aging modular skateboard components and place the facility in a more visible location of the park.

## 4.10 Off Leash Dog Areas

The City currently has two off leash dog areas – one in the open space south of Tower Hill Road, and one in Phyllis Rawlinson Park. 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. While finding appropriate sites for off leash facilities is a challenge, demand for these facilities is expected to remain high. The City will need to ensure that there is an adequate distribution of off-leash dog areas across Richmond Hill as the City intensifies, including evaluating areas that could serve the needs of dog owners living in intensification areas where private outdoor space is limited. Off-leash dog areas often become social activators in more urban areas, providing benefits for residents and community interaction among those who share a common interest, along with providing a space for pets to exercise and socialize.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will plan to achieve a service target of one off-leash dog area per 40,000 residents by planning to add four additional off-leash dog areas, which should be met through the following approach:
  - a. Plan to construct an off-leash dog area in the south part of the City;
  - b. Plan to construct an off-leash dog area in the Oak Ridges area;
  - c. Evaluate potential opportunities for two smaller off-leash dog areas within proximity of planned centres and corridors as part of an existing park revitalization project or along an existing or new trail.

## 4.11 Permitted Picnic Areas

The City currently provides permits for picnics with gatherings of over 25 people in its parks. Picnic shelter capacity ranges from 16 to 120 persons. Facility booking staff indicate that demand for picnic permits within these shelters exceeds supply on many summer weekends. Picnicking continues to be popular amongst various ethnic groups and apartment dwellers who do not have backyards. In light of Richmond Hill's growing cultural diversity and increasing amount of high density development, demand for picnic areas with shelters will continue.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will plan an area or areas within parks to facilitate room for both larger and smaller picnic gatherings, which may include a series of picnic shelters across more than one park.

## 4.12 Outdoor Skating Areas

The City currently maintains three outdoor skating areas. The Lake Wilcox and Mill Pond skating areas, which are located on natural water bodies, and the Richmond Green Skate Trail, which is artificially cooled and highly used throughout the winter season. Demand for outdoor skating is forecast to continue, with additional need to consider artificially cooled skating surfaces given the changing climate.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will plan to provide three additional artificially cooled skating areas, taking into consideration the distribution of existing locations, park type, supporting amenities and other site factors, with preference given to placing these facilities in Community or Destination Parks.
2. The City 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 kits, etc.). This review should identify supporting amenities, associated costs, and operational resources. Based on the park classification, the investigation should 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.

## 4.13 Bocce Courts

The City 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. At this time, there is no evidence that suggests that there will be a need for additional 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.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City will maintain the existing supply of five outdoor bocce courts and monitor the use of the five existing outdoor bocce courts, particularly at Richvale Athletic Field, where there is currently only one court.

## 4.14 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, that are considered to be specialized facilities for which service targets are difficult to establish. Provision of such facilities should be considered based on a number of factors including public requests, demonstrated demand, available resources, and partnership opportunities. Given that the City does not currently have service targets for these facility types, the need for these facilities or the need to relocate these facilities will be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. Public requests for other recreation facilities should be supported by demonstrated demand, available resources, partnership opportunities, and other factors (i.e. disc golf, outdoor lawn bowling, BMX/dirt bike jump track, beach volleyball facilities, table tennis, archery, arboretums, forest bathing trails).
2. The City will investigate the feasibility of providing an officially sanctioned toboggan/tubing hill.
3. The City will 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.
4. When the existing ropes challenge course located at Eyer Wideman Youth Centre reaches end of life, opportunities will be investigated to relocate this facility to another location, preferably a park with established youth amenities and outdoor programming potential.
5. The City will continue to 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.

## Chapter 5 Parkland Needs



*Cordave Parkette*

## 5.0 Parkland Needs

Over the past decades, Richmond Hill has been successful in acquiring the lands to plan and develop an exceptional park system well-suited to the suburban communities that dominated the City's landscape. As the City continues to urbanize, much of its future growth will take the form of higher density development along a series of centres and corridors as identified in the City's Official Plan.

As Richmond Hill continues to become a great and more densely populated city, park planning is evolving to focus not only on the quantity of municipal parks and the facilities in them, but to also focus on improving the quality and connectedness of the existing and future municipal park system. Particularly, how the park system connects to the larger Greenway System, the streetscape and the trail system, to enhance residents day to day lives. By doing this, the entire city can become more park-like and connected for people on foot and on bicycle, allowing more people to access parks, trails and other parts of the City outside of their immediate neighbourhood.

The needs outlined in this chapter are premised upon the idea that residents across the City use all of the City's different types of parks, regardless of the development form (i.e., suburban vs more urban) of the area in which they live. The unique facilities in Destination Parks are an obvious draw for people across the City, and residents of all ages are likely to use a number of different Community Parks to participate in organized sports, to take part in recreation programs or to visit splash pads. While residents tend to use the Neighbourhood Parks that are closest to their homes, they all use Neighbourhood Parks whether they live in suburban neighbourhoods or in the more urban centres and corridors. Neighbourhood Parks are important to compact urban areas in particular as spaces for residents to walk their dogs, to connect with their neighbours, for passive enjoyment such as picnicking, to improve mental well-being and neighbourhood identity, and as spaces for outdoor playgrounds and recreation facilities close to where people live. Urban Squares and Linear Parks will be used by residents across the City as they visit the more urban, mixed-use centres and corridors for employment, commercial, entertainment and retail purposes.

It is important to note that this chapter of the Parks Plan seeks to establish parkland acquisition needs, which are only one component of overall park needs. Revitalization, repair and replacement of parks is the second component of overall park needs. These particular needs are discussed in Chapter 6.0.

## 5.1 Parkland Needs Analysis Methodology

The needs analysis outlined in this Plan carries forward the same methodology used to prepare the needs established in the 2013 Parks Plan, namely:

1. Residents across the City will use all different park types regardless of the type of dwelling they live in or the type of neighbourhood they live in.
2. Private greenspace exists in both suburban neighbourhoods (in the form of backyards) and in the urban context (in the form of private greenroofs, balconies and landscaped outdoor spaces on podiums and around buildings). In both development contexts there is need for publicly accessible, municipal parkland.
3. Since each park type has a different role/function, the appropriate needs analysis for each park type will also be different.

Assumptions 1 and 2 above together lead to the conclusion that all types of development in the City should share in the provision of parks equally on a per capita basis. Assumption 3 requires that the analysis for each different park type be undertaken by selecting the most appropriate type of needs analysis from a menu of possible types of analyses. The different types of analyses used to determine the City's future parkland needs are as follows:

1. **Functional Analysis** – Is the existing parks inventory functioning as intended and are there any areas of the City where there are gaps?
2. **Population Service Level Analysis** – How much parkland is appropriate to serve residents on a per capita basis (i.e., how many hectares of parkland does the City need for every 1000 people)?
3. **Distribution Analysis** – Can all of the residents in the City walk to a park within less than 400 metres / 5 minutes from their home?
4. **Recreation Facility Needs Analysis** – How much parkland does the City need in order to meet service level targets for specific types of recreation facilities?
5. **Concept Plan Analysis** – In some areas of the City a planning concept has been endorsed or approved by Council. How much parkland does the City need to acquire to implement these plans?

The following sections summarize the needs analysis for each different park type, including identifying the parkland secured through existing development approvals in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas.

The needs summarized in this chapter reflect the need for “raw” land only. Revitalization, repair and replacement must also be incorporated into consideration of park needs and are addressed in Chapter 6.0.

## 5.2 Destination Parks

### 5.2.1 Existing Inventory

Destination Parks have a total area of approximately 160 hectares of which 106 hectares is active parkland. This includes the lands re-classified for active parkland uses through the Council approved David Dunlap Observatory Master Plan (2016). Existing Destination Parks are shown on Figure 3.1.

### 5.2.2 Needs Analysis

A **function-based** analysis was used to review the City's needs for Destination Parks. The City's five Destination Parks include the following diverse features:

- a historic core natural area park with cultural amenities in Mill Pond Park,
- a highly programmed athletic complex in Richmond Green Park,
- a rural environment eco-park in Phyllis Rawlinson Park,
- a lake-based multi-use park in Lake Wilcox Park, and
- a cultural heritage park that showcases the rich scientific history of the site as well as the unique urban area natural environment at David Dunlap Observatory Park.

A deficiency/opportunity continues to exist to provide a central area civic space with opportunities for public gatherings, concerts/performances, and festivals, as well as formal and informal recreation. This civic gathering function is one that does not currently exist in Richmond Hill and is both needed and desirable.

#### New Destination Park

##### ***Civic Gathering Space***

The Official Plan Key Directions acknowledge the significant land holding the City has located at the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive West and Yonge Street. Over the past decade, City Council has contemplated establishing a City Hall at this location, which is adjacent to the central library and near the wave pool. However, more recently, Council determined that a new City Hall may not be prudent and directed staff to consider alternative means to address a civic presence for the subject lands. Through the Official Plan update process, consideration is being given to how these strategically located lands could be used. One of the considerations is to provide a large public open space to host city events, and connect with the wave pool and central library. While this direction requires further consultation, this civic gathering function is one that does not currently exist in Richmond Hill and is both needed and desirable for a growing City.

***Park Typology Need: 6.0 hectares*** (Note: could be accommodated through the re-classification of the existing Mount Pleasant Community Park, The Wave Pool lands (Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre) and a portion of the Central Library lands).

Expansions to Existing Destination Parks

Minor expansions to Lake Wilcox Park are in process through the acquisition of the parking lot lands adjacent to the Canoe Club and are intended to regularize the boundary of this park.

***Land Requirement: 1.26 hectares***

**Total Destination Park Land Need = 1.26 ha**

Note that should the 6.0 hectare park typology need associated with creating a Destination Park that serves a civic gathering space function be realized, the lands currently classified as Community Park (i.e. Mount Pleasant Park, The Wave Pool lands (Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre), and the lands to the east of the Central Library) would need to be reclassified into the Destination Park category. Should this be the case, these lands should be planned to serve both a Community Park and Destination Park function for the surrounding neighbourhood.

**It is the policy of Council that:**

1. The City will acquire approximately 1.26 hectares of new parkland for Destination Park purposes at Lake Wilcox Park.
2. The City may convert the Mount Pleasant Community Park, including The Wave Pool lands (Lois Hancey Aquatic Centre) and the lands to the east of the Central Library lands into a Destination Park to establish a new civic gathering space at the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street. Should this be the case, this park will be planned to serve both a Community Park and Destination Park function for the surrounding neighbourhood.

## 5.3 Community Parks

### 5.3.1 Existing Inventory

Community Parks are parks that provide one or more facilities that draw a significant proportion of users from beyond walking distance (i.e. lit sports fields, splash pads, and/or indoor recreational facilities). The City currently operates 24 Community Parks with a total, combined area of 111 ha.

The City's existing Community Parks range in size from 0.7 hectares (Eyer Homestead Park) to just over 8 hectares (David Hamilton Park) with the average Community Park being approximately 4 hectares in size. On average, each Community Park has a service radius of approximately 1.3 kilometres around the park. Existing Community Parks are shown on Figure 3.1.

### 5.3.2 Needs Analysis

Community Parks are large parks with a variety of facility types, which provide opportunities for an entire family to engage in the activity of their choice. Ideally, one should not have to traverse the City to access a splash pad, lit playing field or picnic area. Therefore, Community Parks should be distributed equitably across the City. Accordingly, a **distribution** analysis was undertaken to understand future needs for Community Parks.

#### New Community Parks

The last major areas of greenfield development is occurring in the north-east portion of Richmond Hill in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas. New Community Parks will also be needed in the planned intensification areas along Yonge Street at the north-east end of Oak Ridges, and the newly established residential growth areas in the south-east quadrant of Major Mackenzie Drive/Leslie Street, the north-east quadrant of Bathurst Street and Highway 7, and the north-east quadrant of Leslie Street and Highway 7.

This generates not only a demand for future Community Parks but also an opportunity to acquire the land to meet that demand. Some of the future demand for new soccer fields and ball diamonds can be accommodated in these areas.

The following Community Park needs in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas have been secured through the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement and/or Plans of Subdivision:

- i. North Leslie – 2 Community Parks (approximately 5.72 hectares)
- ii. West Gormley – 1 Community Park (approximately 2.81 hectares)

The following new Community Parks will be required based on population growth, development densities and service level provisions elsewhere across the City:

- iii. East Oak Ridges (south-east quadrant of Yonge Street and Bloomington Road) - 1 Community Park
- iv. Major Mackenzie and Leslie Street area (south-east quadrant) – 1 Community Park
- v. Bathurst Street and Highway 7 area (north-east quadrant) – 1 Community Park
- vi. Leslie Street and Highway 7 (north-east quadrant) – 1 Community Park

**Land Requirement: 19.1 hectares** (of which approximately 8.53 hectares has been secured in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas)

New bridge connections to existing Community Parks to serve the growth corridor

There are two new growth areas in the City where the distance to the closest Community Park would be improved for a large number of residents living along the intensifying Yonge Street corridor through the provision of pedestrian bridge connections. These areas are as follows:

- i. North-eastern quadrant of the 16<sup>th</sup> KDA, namely providing a pedestrian bridge connection over the German Mills Creek to Bridgeview Community Park; and
- ii. Eastern quadrant of the Richmond Hill Centre north of High Tech Road, namely providing a pedestrian bridge connection over the CN Rail tracks to Dr. James Langstaff Community Park.

Investigating the provision of a pedestrian bridge connection to these two existing Community Parks would aid in resolving a service gap for the growing Yonge Street corridor. Public-private partnerships could also be an alternative.

**Land Requirement: 0 hectares**

**Total Community Park Land Need = 19.1 hectares**

**It is the policy of Council that:**

1. The City will acquire approximately 19.1 hectares of new parkland for Community Park purposes to create new Community Parks in the North Leslie, West Gormley, East Oak Ridges, south-east quadrant of Major Mackenzie Drive and Leslie Street, north-east quadrant of Bathurst Street and Highway 7, and north-east quadrant of Leslie Street and Highway 7 areas.
2. The City will plan to investigate the provision of a pedestrian bridge connection over the German Mills Creek to enhance access to the outdoor recreational amenities in Bridgeview Community Park for the existing and future residents of the growing 16<sup>th</sup> KDA, along with the provision of a pedestrian bridge connection over the CN Rail tracks to enhance access to the outdoor recreational amenities in Dr. James Langstaff Park Community Park for the existing and future residents of the growing Richmond Hill Centre. Public-private partnerships may also be investigated to provide these pedestrian bridge connections.

## 5.4 Neighbourhood Parks

### 5.4.1 Existing Inventory

The City currently operates 129 Neighbourhood Parks, covering a total land area of 120 hectares. Within the Neighbourhood Park inventory, the City has 51 Local Parks, with an average size of 1.5 hectares. The total area of the City's Local Parks is approximately 84 hectares.

The City's 78 Parkettes account for approximately 36 hectares of the total Neighbourhood Park area. Parkettes have an average size of 0.4 hectares and are currently provided at a service level of 0.16 hectares per 1,000 residents.

### 5.4.2 Needs Analysis

Local Parks and Parkettes are considered separately in the needs analysis because they each have different primary roles/functions.

Since the primary role of Local Parks is to provide parkland and outdoor recreational opportunities within walking distance of residents, the most appropriate type of analysis for Neighbourhood Parks is **distribution-based**. The distribution analysis can be used for the majority of the City; however, in areas where the street network and property fabric have not yet been established, a **concept plan-based** analysis must be used instead.

#### New Local Parks

Local Parks are the fundamental building block of the City's park system, which ensure that residents across the City have access to outdoor recreational facilities (including playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, basketball facilities, mini and junior soccer fields and tennis courts) within walking distance of their homes. As such, the City should continue to acquire Local Parks with the primary goal of providing access to parkland within a 400 metre walking distance of all residences. Figure 5.1 (Walking Distance to Developed or Secured Parkland) identifies the distribution of parks in the City by assessing which residential properties in the City are within a 400 metre (approximately 5 minutes) walking distance from a developed or secured park and was used to identify the following Local Park needs:

- i. 13 Local Parks, for which the location is identified on Figure 6.1 (Urban Open Space System).

The following Local Park needs in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas have been secured through the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement and/or Plans of Subdivision and will be developed to provide residents in these new Secondary Plan areas with access to outdoor recreational facilities within walking distance of their homes over the horizon of this Plan:

- ii. North Leslie (East and West) – 6 Local Parks (approximately 9.93 ha).
- iii. West Gormley – 2 Local Parks (approximately 2.83 ha.).

**Land Requirement: 19.5 hectares** (of which approximately 12.8 ha. has been secured in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas)

Expansions to existing Parkettes

In certain areas of the City experiencing growth, rather than creating new Local Parks, it will be more effective to expand existing Parkettes to serve a Local Park function for the new residents in the area. Based on the **concept plans** from previous planning studies completed for various areas of the centres and corridors, these include:

- i. In the 16<sup>th</sup> KDA, expanding Spruce Avenue Parkette to serve a Local Park function for residents of the south-west quadrant (approximately 0.3ha expansion).
- ii. Along the Local Corridor south of Major Mackenzie, expanding Essex Parkette to serve a Local Park function for residents along this growing corridor (approximately 0.2 ha. expansion).

**Land Requirement: 0.5 hectares**

New Parkettes

The main role/function of parkettes is to provide visual relief, views, and other urban design-related functions within neighbourhoods. It is extremely difficult to determine where parkettes will be needed for these purposes until the road network and property boundaries for an area are specifically defined. An estimate for future Parkette needs is best arrived at through a **population-based service level** assessment, which establishes the following Parkette need:

- i. 0.16 hectares per 1 000 people

A **concept plan-based** analysis was used to identify the following Parkette needs in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas. These Parkette needs have been secured through the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement and/or Plans of Subdivision and will be developed to provide the approximately 19,000 residents in these two new Secondary Plan areas with access to outdoor recreational facilities within walking distance of their homes over the horizon of this Plan:

- ii. North Leslie (East and West) – 6 Parkettes (approximately 2.68 ha)
- iii. West Gormley – 1 Parkette (approximately 0.3 ha)

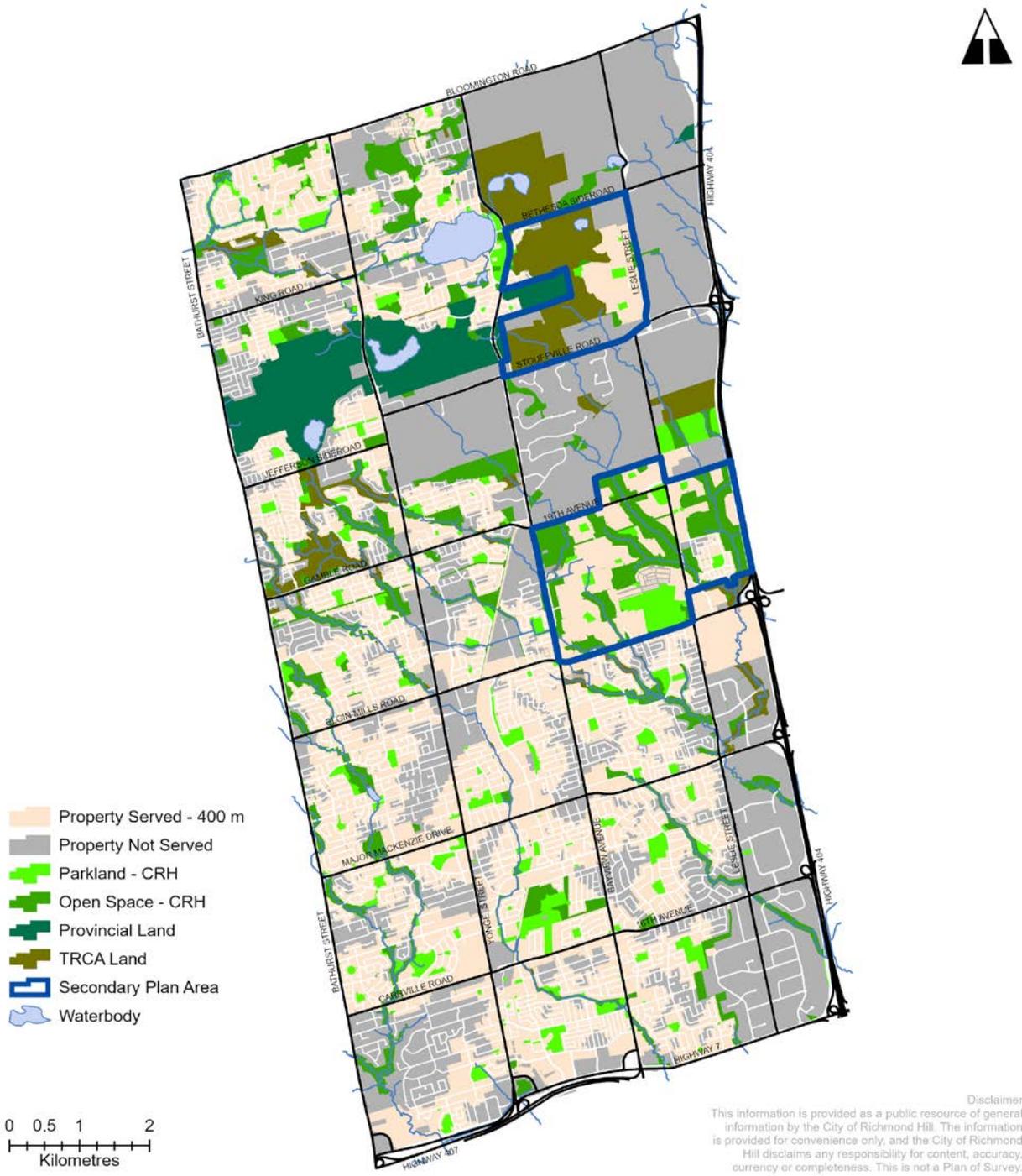
**Land Requirement: 6.1 hectares** (of which approximately 2.98 ha. has been secured in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas)

**Total Neighbourhood Park Land Need = 26.1 hectares**

**It is the policy of Council that:**

1. The City will acquire approximately 26.1 hectares of new parkland for Neighbourhood Park purposes, of which approximately 15.7 hectares has been secured in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas, to create 21 new Local Parks, expand 2 existing Parkettes to serve a Local Park function for the residents in the growing centres and corridors, and to maintain the existing population-based service level for Parkettes.

Figure 5.1: Walking Distance to Developed or Secured Parkland (400 m)



## 5.5 Urban Square and Linear Parks

### 5.5.1 Existing Inventory

Since Urban Squares and Linear Parks are newer parkland classifications, which are identified in the City's Official Plan to meet the needs of more compact, urban areas, the City currently has a limited inventory of both of these park types. Parks within the City's existing inventory, which are considered to be Linear Parks are: the Humber Flats EcoPark, MacLeod's Landing Carriage Way, Newkirk Park, Sussex Park and portions of the Beaufort Trail system. The City currently has only one park that is considered an Urban Square and that is the Theatre Plaza adjacent to the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.

### 5.5.2 Needs Analysis

The City does not have a significant existing service level for either of these park types, therefore needs cannot be estimated using a population-based or distribution-based analysis. The City's need for Urban Squares and Linear Parks can however, be determined using a **concept plan-based** analysis based on the direction for Urban Squares and Linear Parks outlined in the Parks and Open Space Networks of the Bernard KDA Secondary Plan (approved), the 16<sup>th</sup> KDA Concept Plan (endorsed), and the Richmond Hill Centre emerging Secondary Plan (draft) and Transit Oriented Community Plan. The concept plan-based analysis for these areas estimates the total area of new parkland anticipated through the concept plan.

Concept plan analyses revealed the following requirements for Urban Squares and Linear Parks:

- i. Richmond Hill Centre Transit Oriented Community area – 2.4 hectares
- ii. Richmond Hill Centre West side of Yonge Street – 0.75 hectares
- iii. 16th KDA Urban Squares and Linear Parks – 2.91 hectares
- iv. Bernard KDA Linear Parks – 1 hectare

**Land Requirement: 7.1 hectares**

**It is the policy of Council that:**

1. The City will acquire approximately 7.1 hectares of new parkland for Urban Squares and Linear Parks within the intensification areas of the City.

## 5.6 City-wide Parkland Needs

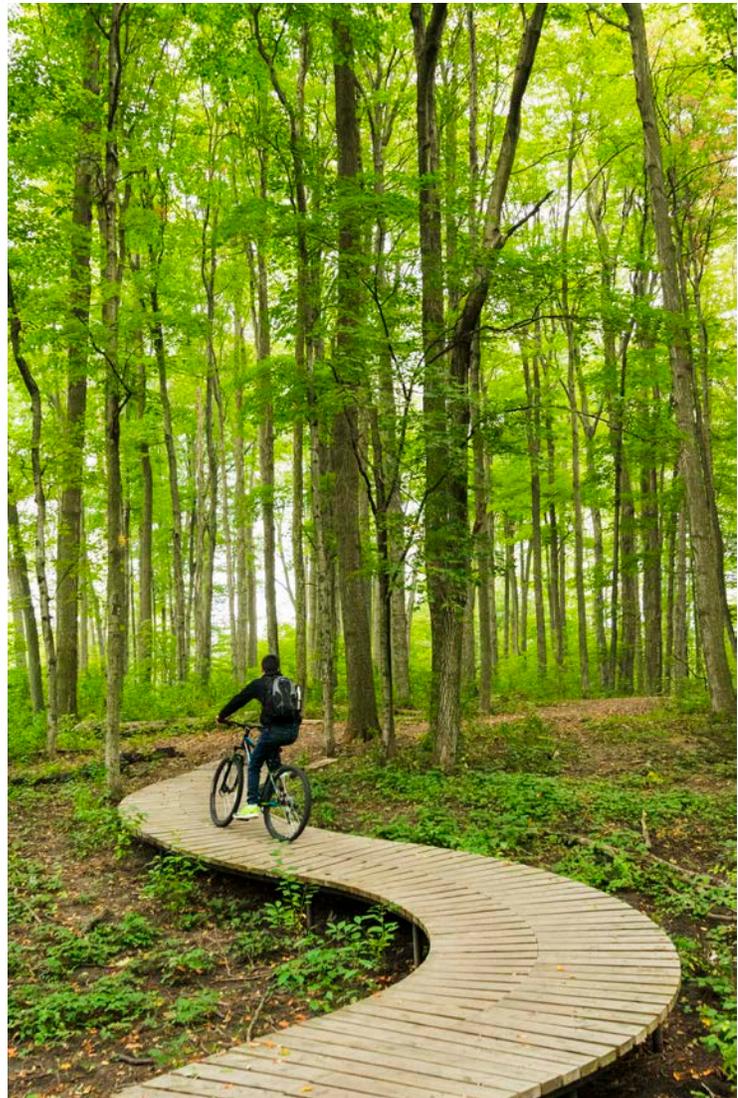
In order to meet Richmond Hill's parkland needs through to 2031, the following parkland will be acquired:

Destination Parks	1.26 hectares
Community Parks	19.1 hectares
Neighbourhood Parks	20 hectares (Local Parks) 6.1 hectares (Parkettes)
Urban & Linear Parks	3.15 hectares (Richmond Hill Centre) 2.91 hectares (16th KDA) 1 hectare (Bernard KDA)
Total Parkland Need:	53.56 hectares
Parkland Secured: (North Leslie, West Gormley)	24.23 hectares
Total Parkland to be Secured to 2031:	29.33 hectares

(based on maintaining the City's 2013 approved parkland provision rate of 1.37 hectares per 1,000 people and a total population growth projection of 39,100 people to 2031)

## Chapter 6

# Improving and Enhancing our Parkland System



*Saigeon Trail (trail segment located north of Tower Hill Road,  
west of Rouge River, south of Meander Park)*

## 6.0 Improving and Enhancing our Park System

The creation of new parks requires more than raw land. The previous chapter identifies how much parkland is required to fulfill the projected need within the City. However, the completion of a needs assessment requires an account of the total cost of creating parks to fulfill the needs of a growing and changing population.

As the City grows, it is important to ensure that new parks and new park facilities are appropriately integrated into the existing park system and land-use fabric, and that they contribute to improving the City's overall resiliency in response to the larger changes affecting the climate. While the Official Plan provides a vision and high-level policy direction for the park system, more specific direction to help to visualize where and how new parks are located in the context of new developments is needed.

The first section of this chapter addresses this need by planning for a connected **Urban Open Space System**. This Urban Open Space System is intended to provide a clear and transparent vision for how the existing and future municipal park system can connect to the larger Greenway System, the streetscape and the trail system, to enhance resident's day to day lives by providing additional shade, improved opportunities to move around the City, and access to both park and open spaces. By enhancing this interconnected Urban Open Space System, park planning can focus on improving the quality and connectedness of the municipal park system. By doing this, the entire city can become more park-like and connected for people on foot and on bicycle, allowing more people to access parks outside of their immediate neighbourhood.

The City also has a responsibility to make sure that individual parks continue to respond to the needs of the people using them. Some of the parks in Richmond Hill were constructed 20 to 30 years ago and have not been significantly renovated since that time. Furthermore, many of these older parks are in neighbourhoods that have undergone significant transformation over the past few decades. When the neighbourhood around a park changes, demands on the park can be expected to change as well. Population increases, for example, result in increased wear and tear on parks and the facilities within them. Demographic shifts can result in under-used facilities or conversely, an unmet demand for facilities that people want to use. The City will need to budget accordingly to **revitalize existing parks** to ensure they maintain the level of quality Richmond Hill residents have come to enjoy. The second section of this chapter sets out a strategy for identifying and prioritizing investments in the City's older parks.

As part of the City's Resilient Richmond Hill project, on November 25, 2020, Council approved the City's Climate Change Framework. One of the actions in the Climate Change Framework is to apply a "**climate change lens**" to City park plans and reviews. The third section of this Chapter focuses on actions that will be undertaken over the horizon of this Plan and beyond to move towards integrating a climate change lens into park planning, design, and maintenance and operational decisions. Initial actions will focus on increasing knowledge, advancing resiliency initiatives in park projects, moving towards an adaptive management approach to monitoring, and collaborating with partners.

## 6.1 Planning for a Connected Urban Open Space System

The Urban Open Space System provides a visualization of how the municipal park system within and adjacent to the growing centres and corridors can move towards a unified interconnected network that serves the public at large. Connectivity is important to the City's residents. Residents believe that parks should be easy to walk to, they should provide connections to other destinations, and they should help link ecological systems. The general public does not always know who owns what in terms of publicly accessible land, but they do experience the gaps and barriers. As the City's centres and corridors urbanize, it is important to identify appropriate connections and linkages to ensure a seamless, and more park-like experience for people on foot and on bicycle. This approach will also allow more people to access parks outside of their immediate neighbourhood as it focuses on making the walking experience more pleasurable. In time, the Urban Open Space System is envisioned to become a central placemaking element for the City's growing centres and corridors.

To create a unified and seamless Urban Open Space System for people travelling on foot and on bicycle, the municipal parks planned to accommodate growth along the centres and corridors and described in Chapter 5 of this Plan are planned to be integrated with the following elements in an interconnected system:

- Greenway linkages;
- Safe crossing opportunities; and
- Streetscape and canopy enhancement opportunities.

These elements are shown on Figure 6.1 and briefly described below:

### Greenway linkages

The City's Greenway System, as described and mapped in the Official Plan, provides a number of green connections both on the Oak Ridges Moraine and south of the Oak Ridges Moraine primarily through the various valleylands running generally in a north-south direction. Many portions of the City's Greenway System already contain pedestrian trail connections, while others have the potential to fill in the gaps to create a continuous trail system. At the time of the preparation of this Plan, planning for an interconnected trail system is on-going as part of the City's emerging Transportation Master Plan project. The Greenway linkages shown as part of the Urban Open Space System are therefore existing trail connections that could benefit from future trail connections or bridge/tunnel connections, as described further below. This Plan recognizes that planning for a municipal park system that connects into the existing and emerging trail system is important for closing the gaps within the larger Regional and inter-regional trail network.

### Safe Crossing Opportunities

Safe crossings allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross certain barriers with lower risk to their safety. Ensuring safe crossings in certain portions of the centres and corridors will allow gaps in the walking distance to existing and future parks to be met. Options to provide safe crossings could include tunnels and bridges, which are often used to connect two sides of a railway corridor or watercourse, or at grade pedestrian crossings, which are often used to cross busy roads mid-block and typically include flashing lights, signage and pavement markings. At the

time of the preparation of this Plan, planning for safe crossings is on-going as part of the City's emerging Transportation Master Plan project.

#### Streetscape and Canopy Enhancement Opportunities

Creating green connections along streetscapes and on City-owned lands adjacent to them helps create visual connections between parks and open spaces, increase canopy coverage, and provide shade for pedestrians. Both streetscapes and the City-owned lands adjacent to them provide an opportunity for canopy enhancements to help guide users towards park or open space nodes outside of the centres and corridors, and to help maintain the City's urban forest in accordance with the approved Urban Forest Management Plan. These new green connections may also provide an opportunity to test new cultivars of trees or shrubs to aid with the City's resiliency efforts.

As the Urban Open Space System is enhanced, the City shall strive to locate and configure new parks in a manner that leverages their benefit to the larger community in accordance with the Official Plan. The following matters will be key to creating a unified, comfortable and connected Urban Open Space System:

- Ensure that the City's centres and corridors are provided with an appropriate mixture of all park types;
- Locate new parks to preserve and enhance views to natural features, heritage buildings and architectural landmarks;
- Minimize shading and wind impacts from new buildings within new and existing parks;
- Site and configure new parks to create a clear distinction between the public and private realm; and
- Site new parks and enhance streetscapes and trails to improve connectivity within the Greenway System where possible.

Figure 6.1: Urban Open Space System



## 6.2 Park Revitalization

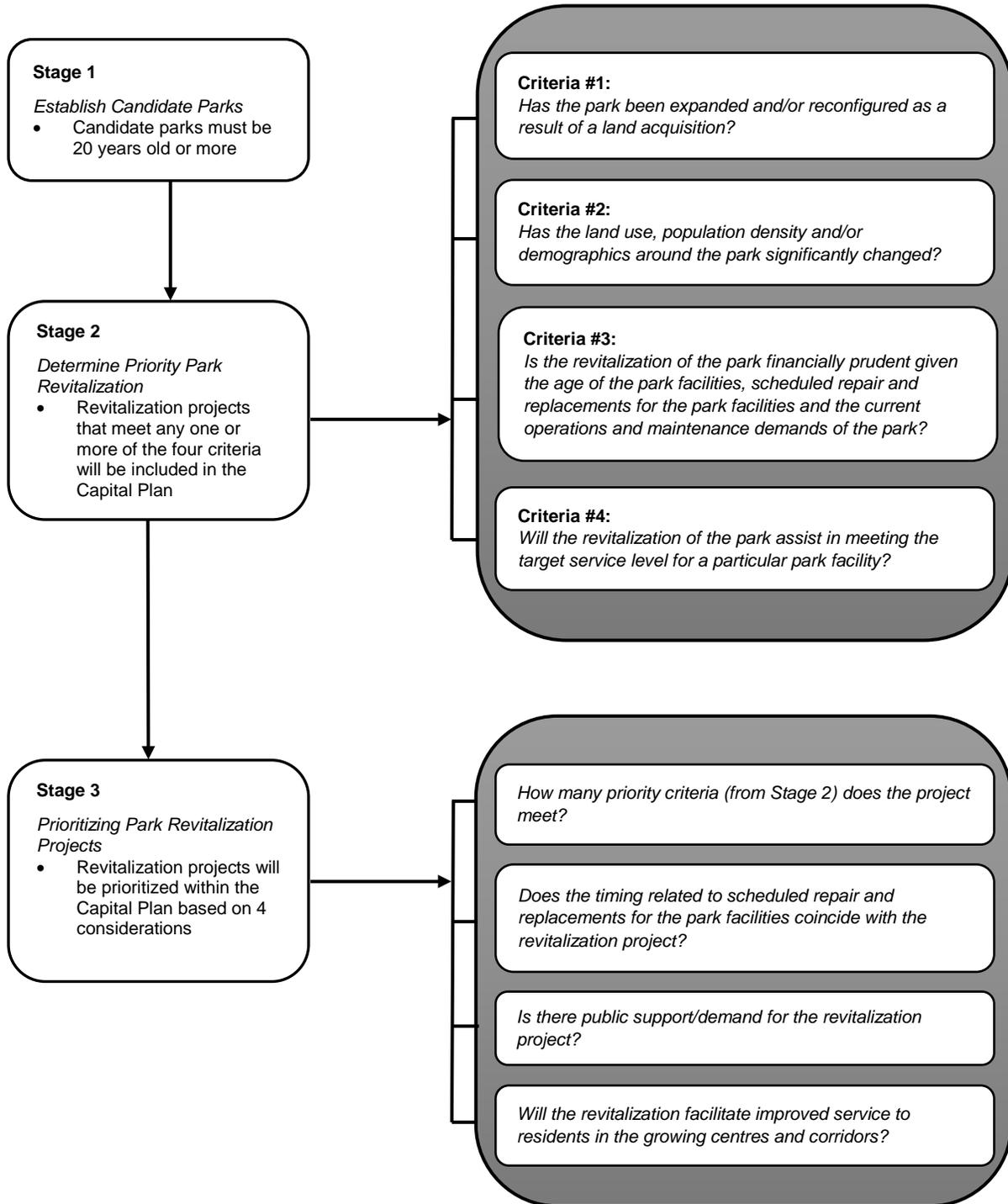
As Richmond Hill evolves it is not only important that the City continues to build new parks to serve its growing population and evolving City Structure, but also that its existing park supply is periodically examined to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate to changing demographics, built form and recreation needs.

Park assets are considered “non-core” assets under the City’s Asset Management Plan. The City is in the process of incorporating park assets into the new Enterprise Asset Management tool which once completed, will be used to guide the prioritization of existing parks for repair and replacement. This tool will also be used as one part of the criteria informing which existing parks within walking distance of the centres and corridors should be prioritized for revitalization.

Park revitalization projects are distinctly different from standard park facility repair and replacement (R&R) projects and new park design and construction projects. Park revitalization projects reinvent parks to meet changing demands, driven by increased population, changing trends or shifting demographics. Park revitalization projects involve a comprehensive redevelopment of an existing park and may include standard facility replacements, changes to facility types within the park, reconfiguration of elements within the park (e.g., changing the location of facilities, re-grading and/or re-alignment of pathways), and/or redesign of passive spaces or inclusion of resiliency elements within the park.

The Urban Open Space System illustrated in Figure 6.1 of this Plan identifies a number of parks within walking distance of the growing centres and corridors that will be formalized in the list of projects within the Capital Plan over the horizon of this Plan. The multi-stage process for prioritizing park revitalization projects is summarized and illustrated in Figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2: Process for identifying the prioritizing Park Revitalization Projects**



It is the Policy of Council that:

1. The City will undertake an annual review, coordinated with the annual Capital Plan process, to determine the priority of park revitalization projects in accordance with the multi-stage process outlined in Figure 6.2.
2. The City will integrate park assets into the Enterprise Asset Management System as part of the on-going implementation of the Council approved Asset Management Plan and utilize this tool to prioritize park repair and replacement projects.

### 6.3 Planning for Resiliency to Climate Change in Parks

The Resilient Richmond Hill program aims to mitigate climate change by lowering the City's greenhouse gas emissions, and to adapt to climate change by preparing for dealing with impacts including extreme weather. Actions taken today can help to make the urban forest and associated ecosystems more resilient to climate change, and will help strengthen the community's efforts to protect, maintain, and enhance quality of life in the City.

Applying a "climate change lens" to the overall planning, design, as well as maintenance and operations of the City's municipal park system provides the opportunity for well-managed green spaces that will be more resilient in the face of a changing climate. The following actions are recommended to ensure that the range of co-benefits and services that the City's parks provide are integrated as a key component of a healthy, sustainable and resilient community.

- **Increase knowledge, skills and adaptive capacity** – investing in training and educational tools will aid in building capacity to ensure City divisions that plan, design, and maintain/operate parks are utilizing best practises to integrate and implement climate change adaptation strategies through their processes. For example, understanding how best to plan or design capital projects to integrate long-lasting materials and low-maintenance, non-invasive plant species requires knowledge building and sharing. Similarly, a multi-disciplinary approach to park planning and design is required to allow for the appropriate use of green infrastructure such as low impact development techniques or permeable pavers and to ensure parks located adjacent to rivers, valleys or affected infrastructure can withstand flooding, capture excess stormwater emanating from public lands, and locate facilities to minimize risks to life and property. Opportunities to host or attend training and educational sessions should be explored to learn from others on best practices and to promote and celebrate progress made.
- **Advancing resiliency initiatives in Park Projects** – planning for and implementing practices that consider the impacts of a changing climate across all phases of park development including planning, design and appropriate maintenance and care can help the municipal park system become more resilient over time. For example, a park master plan can speak to incorporating a water conserving splash pad, the park design can incorporate low-flow and on-demand spray showers to reduce water use and park maintenance staff can be trained on how to care for this amenity. Further, opportunities should be provided to allow for the appropriate use of green infrastructure such as low impact development techniques or permeable pavers and to educate park users on design elements that have been introduced to make the municipal park system more resilient. For example, helping the public to understand that no-mow or naturalization areas in parks are intentional design elements that improve function and resiliency by increasing biodiversity of the natural communities, providing flood attenuation capabilities, and decreasing the amount of water and gasoline used compared to sodded areas. The City has the opportunity to work with existing programming, such as Healthy Yards and the Community Stewardship program to celebrate low maintenance native species as a placemaking element within parks.
- **Monitor, assess and continuously adjust to changing climate conditions** – as the climate changes, the understanding of its impacts on materials, species and ecosystems will continue to evolve. Establishing a continuous adaptive management program will provide the City flexibility to make adjustments to park design standards, management strategies, and investments through a process of monitoring over time. As information and data is

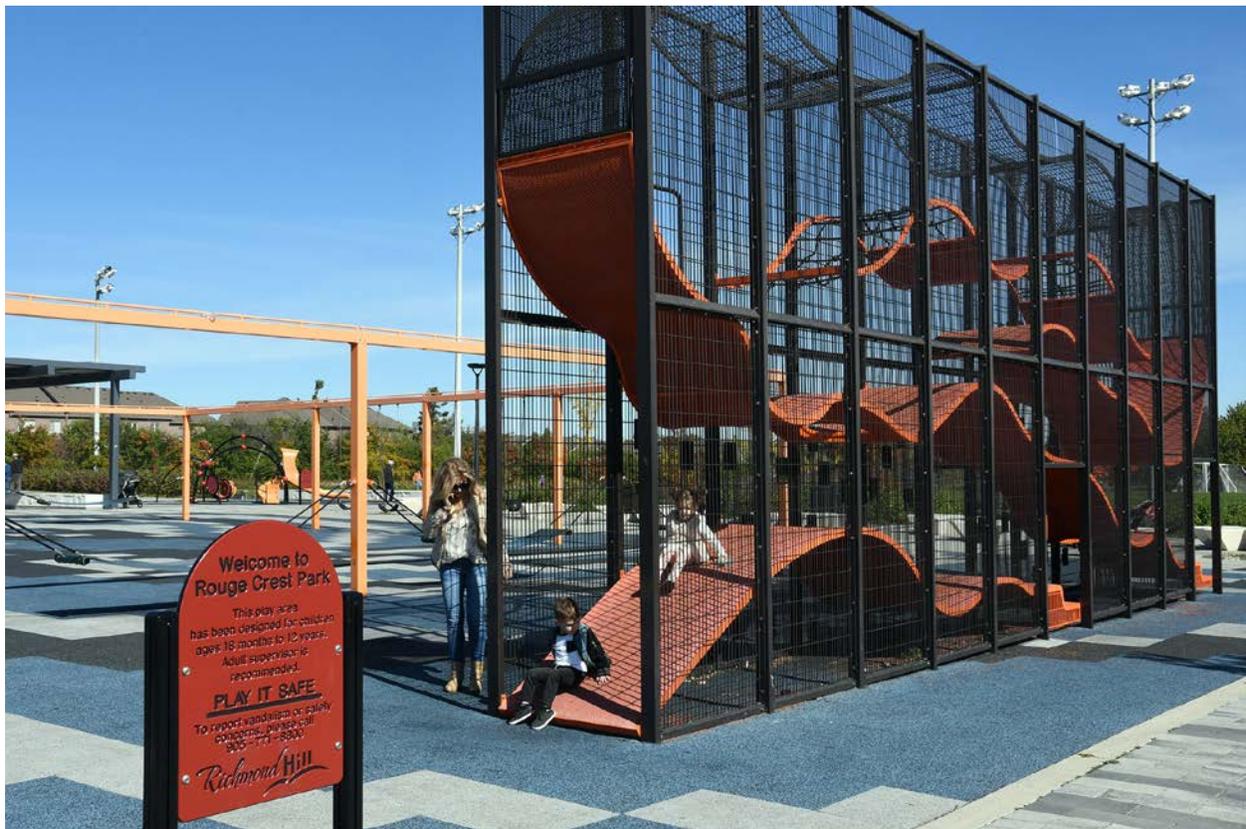
gained through the monitoring process, modified and/or new approaches to design and operations may be needed to respond to the changing climate.

- **Engage and collaborate with partners** – creating awareness around the impact of the public’s daily actions on the resiliency of parks could aid in addressing certain impacts through communications and knowledge sharing. Similarly, incorporating changes to adjacent municipal streetscapes or lands as part of park projects presents an opportunity to enhance plantable areas that lead to municipal parks as they are built, revitalized, or repaired. For example, there are a number of streetscapes running perpendicular to the Yonge Street corridor with potential plantable areas identified through the City’s 2020 Urban Forest Management Plan that could be undertaken as part of park revitalization projects to create green links between the growth corridor and the larger existing parks in the neighbourhood. Enhancing these adjacent municipal streetscapes or lands as part of park projects would have the added benefit of increasing the City’s urban canopy adjacent to the growth areas.

It is the Policy of Council that:

1. A “climate change lens” will be applied across all phases of park development including planning, design and appropriate maintenance and care consisting of the following four initial actions:
  - a. Increase knowledge, skills and adaptive capacity;
  - b. Advancing resiliency initiatives in Park Projects and their adjacent Streetscapes;
  - c. Monitor, assess and continuously adjust to changing climate conditions; and
  - d. Engage and collaborate with partners.
2. As the climate continues to change, the City may reassess these four initial actions to respond to new or evolving climate change opportunities or challenges without an amendment to this Plan.

# Chapter 7 Implementation – Making it all Happen



*Rouge Crest Park*

## 7.0 Implementation – Making it all Happen

Richmond Hill has a number of implementation tools that enable the acquisition of land for park purposes and the funding of park and other recreational purposes where land conveyance is not possible. The *Planning Act* permits a municipality to establish a by-law that enables the municipality to require **parkland dedication**, or payment of **cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication**, as a condition of development under Section 42, Section 51.1 and Section 53.

In the case of Section 42 and Section 51.1, the *Planning Act* establishes limits on the amount a municipality may require as parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication, which are consistent throughout the Province of Ontario. The standard parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu rates are as follows:

- Commercial or Industrial Purposes – 2% of the land/ 2% of the value of the land
- Residential Uses – 5% of the land/ / 5% of the value of the land

The *Planning Act* also provides a municipality with the option of establishing an “Alternative Parkland Rate” for residential uses so long as the municipality has appropriate policies in its Official Plan that speak to the need for parkland, and enable the use of the Alternative Rate, which are as follows:

- Parkland Dedication - 1 hectare of land per 300 dwelling units;
- Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland – the value of 1 hectare of land per 500 dwelling units, or at such lesser rate as may be specified bylaw.

Cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication payments are typically required where the conveyance of land would be too small to provide for a functioning park, the site is not in an area with a defined land need, or the development site is too small in size to achieve a reasonably sized park conveyance. An up to date Parks Plan is required to justify the need to use the Alternative Rate. Richmond Hill has been using the Alternative Rate since the City began intensifying. To continue to use the Alternative Rate, the City must enact a new Parkland Dedication By-law, which is appealable to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

As such, central to implementation efforts related to this Plan will be **updating the Parkland Dedication By-law** in accordance with the statutory deadlines outlined in the *Planning Act*. This By-law provides the City with the ability to request the parkland dedication to support population growth or cash-in-lieu of such parkland dedication to support future land acquisitions or the cost of park and other recreational purposes required over the horizon of this Plan. As was outlined in the Key Directions Report, the City will also need to **update the Development Charges By-law** and consider incorporating certain park-related matters into the forthcoming **Community Benefits Charge Strategy and By-law**, including a credit for privately owned and publicly accessible spaces (POPS) designed and located to the City’s satisfaction. To fully realize the Urban Open Space System outlined in Chapter 6 of this Plan, the City may need to engage in **partnerships**, including with the development industry to consider whether stratified parkland or off-site conveyances are appropriate for a particular context, and with school boards, other public sector and non-profit partners, and the public at large to provide the municipal parks system of the future as the City Structure evolves. Undertaking **pilot projects** such as pop-up parks or multi-use facilities to respond to emerging trends in advance of investing in purpose-built facilities will also become more important. Lastly, to ensure a **lifecycle approach** is applied

across all phases of park development including planning, design and appropriate maintenance and care, an inter-Departmental approach to monitoring park and outdoor recreation needs consistent with the broader vision of this Plan will be required to inform the Capital Plan and Operating Budget. Limited resources will require careful choices.

## 7.1 Parkland Dedication By-law

As set out in the *Planning Act*, a Parkland Dedication By-law establishes the authority to require parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication for the purchase of future parkland, or for park and other recreational purposes. The use of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication to fund the purchase of future parklands or to be used towards park and other recreational purposes is essential to increasing the capacity of existing parks in proximity to the growing centres and corridors and to funding needed capital investments in parks which cannot be funded by other growth-related sources (i.e., Development Charges, Community Benefits Charge). In intensifying areas, revitalizing older parks, as well as adding new levels of service to the City's existing park system (e.g., Urban Squares and Linear Parks), will be just as important to meeting community needs as acquiring new land for parks. The City will need cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication for these purposes in addition to needing land/cash-in-lieu for land acquisition purposes.

The parkland dedication rate required by the City to fulfill its park needs up to the year 2031 consists of both a raw land component (i.e., a parkland need) and an additional cash component (i.e., for costs related to park and other recreational purposes that do not have an alternative growth-related funding source).

### Land Needs:

As summarized in Chapter 5, the City needs to acquire an additional 53.56 hectares of parkland, of which 24.23 hectares has been secured in North Leslie and West Gormley through existing draft approvals and the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement, to maintain its approved parkland service level of 1.37 hectares per 1,000 people to 2031.

### Cash Needs:

In addition to parkland acquisition, the City requires cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds for the following purposes:

- To cover the component of park revitalization projects that cannot be funded from other growth-related sources such as the Development Charges By-law or the forthcoming Community Benefits Charge By-law, including but not limited to the on-going DDO Park Master Plan works, and the forthcoming phased Bayview Hill Revitalization, Town Park Revitalization, and Mill Pond Park Revitalization, along with the future Richmond Green Park Revitalization, Lake Wilcox Canoe Club Precinct, and Phyllis Rawlinson Revitalization.
- To fund the cost of park development and outdoor recreation facility construction associated with service levels and park types that have not been part of the City's previous standards (e.g. the significant cost associated with the construction of Urban Squares).

- To fund interim or “pop up” park projects required to respond to community demand (e.g. projects similar to the proposed seasonal pop-up pickleball court hub at Richmond Green, which is being provided in advance of purpose built pickleball courts to serve the community).

Based on the City’s Capital Plan, historical use of cash-in-lieu, and anticipated future park needs it is estimated that the City will need approximately \$75 million dollars to cover the cash needs described above through to the year 2031.

Based on the current land values outlined in the City’s most recent Land Appraisal Study, the monetary value of total parkland needs (exclusive of the park lands secured through existing planning approvals and the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement), is estimated at \$411 million dollars.

## 7.2 Development Charge By-law and Community Benefits Charge Strategy and By-law

The City’s Development Charges By-law has not been comprehensively updated to reflect the list of park projects in the Capital Plan since 2014. As a result, the By-law does not currently reflect the full funding envelope for outdoor recreational needs that the City could collect through this funding tool. To ensure appropriate funding for the growth-related park needs outlined in this Plan, a Development Charge By-law update is on-going and scheduled to be brought to Council in 2023.

The Official Plan provides policy direction that the City may, in its discretion, secure public access over privately owned public spaces (POPS) by easement or other appropriate mechanism. While POPS do not replace the needs provided in a municipal park system, they are recognized as supplementing the City’s larger placemaking, urban design, or cultural needs as expressed in the Official Plan or Secondary Plans for the growing centres and corridors. The forthcoming Community Benefits Charge Strategy and By-law provides a new funding tool for such matters associated with the growing centres and corridors. As such, where the City in its discretion secures public access over POPS, a Community Benefits Charge credit will be provided.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City update its Park Dedication By-law to continue to utilize the alternate rate as provided for in the *Planning Act*, including consideration of whether a fixed cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication rate should be utilized for ease of administration.
2. The City continues to identify where parkland can be acquired through the development approval process and where the City will need to purchase parkland.
3. The City continue to monitor park and outdoor recreation needs and identify such needs as part of the Capital Plan.

### 7.3 Partnerships, Pilot Projects, and Interim Park Projects

As Richmond Hill continues to urbanize and financial sustainability remains a priority, the City can use a number of creative methods to aid in delivering park and outdoor recreation services to the growing population. Partnerships, pilot projects and interim park projects are methods that can be used to aid in achieving the municipal park system envisioned in this Plan.

#### Partnerships

The Official Plan provides policy direction for the City to consider a number of different types of partnerships as it relates to the provision of and maintenance of parks. These are outlined in more detail below.

##### *Parkland with Stratified Title*

The Official Plan directs that Council may give consideration to the acceptance of parkland for which there is stratified title if it can be demonstrated that the public has a reasonably similar level of access to that of parkland conveyed in fee simple, and that the limited title and the associated physical conditions of the land to be conveyed do not unduly limit the intended role and function of the parkland. The types of parks identified as part of the municipal park system in Chapter 3 of this Plan that fit this description are Linear Parks and Urban Squares, specifically when these types of parks contain more passive facilities.

To date in Richmond Hill, two Linear Parks with stratified title have been accepted which aided in realizing the development of high-rise condominiums in the Richmond Hill Centre by providing adequate space for the required underground parking. When parklands are accepted with stratified title, it creates an on-going partnership with the developer or subsequent condominium corporation related to any on-going or future maintenance of either the facilities below the park, on the park surface itself or above the park, which often creates both short and long-term administrative, financial, risk and maintenance burdens for the municipality. As such, the Parkland Dedication By-law should be updated to make it clear that a reduced parkland dedication rate will be provided for parkland with stratified title as compared to parkland conveyed in fee simple. The City will also encourage the use of encroachment agreements with the landowner of the adjacent stratified title lands to simplify on-going and long-term maintenance requirements.

##### *Off-site Conveyance*

The Official Plan directs that the City may, at its discretion, accept the conveyance of off-site lands in fulfillment of parkland conveyance requirements. The City's existing Parkland Dedication By-law facilitates this type of parkland conveyance. Where development partners wish the City to consider off-site parkland conveyance, the request should be raised at the Pre-Submission stage and guided by the parkland needs outlined in this Plan.

##### *Master Parks Agreements*

Master Parks Agreements can be a helpful tool in coordinating parkland dedication requirements for a specific geography across a number of different landholdings. The

City has used this approach successfully in the North Leslie Secondary Plan area. As the centres and corridors intensify, the City may wish to consider requiring Master Parks Agreements for other new centres.

*Collaboration with school boards*

The Official Plan directs that the City, in co-operation with the School Boards, shall ensure that parks are located adjacent to school sites, wherever possible to help bolster public access to open space. The City has collaborated with school boards to share indoor and outdoor space in a number of instances. The City also has a number of shared use agreements with various school boards. As the City continues to intensify, opportunities to continue working together will be important with consideration being given to the following:

- Understanding if/when surplus school sites are identified where the City may benefit from purchasing them to meet the parkland needs identified in this Plan,
- 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 open space,
- Anticipating that combined activity in co-located areas will be more intensive than in stand-alone park or school sites and designing amenities and budgeting maintenance with this in mind, and
- Maintaining and potentially expanding shared use agreements with school boards.

*Engaging residents and partners in naturalizing and beautifying parks*

The City has a number of stewardship programs to engage the community in the protection of open spaces which are supported by a variety of public sector and non-profit partners. As the City urbanizes, it is expected that residents will continue to seek out these types of meaningful stewardship initiatives that often provide opportunities to combine outdoor physical activities with education, awareness and action related to topics relevant to the local community. Engaging residents by incorporating sustainability and conservation measures into park designs can contribute to the overall greening of the community and showcase leadership in addressing larger environmental issues such as climate change. The City should investigate building on or expanding its existing stewardship partnerships to continue providing these opportunities.

*Park Ambassadors Program*

Prior to 2013, the City ran a Park Ambassadors Program intended to provide a means for volunteer residents to help the City keep parks clean and safe. As Richmond Hill urbanizes, it may be timely for the City to re-evaluate the potential to reinstate this program and request necessary budget through the Operating Budget process if it is determined that such a program is recommended in the future.

Pilot and Interim Park Projects

Pilot projects can be used for a variety of reasons – to respond quickly to emerging demand or trends, to test new technologies or maintenance techniques, to provide programs or facilities without investing in permanent infrastructure, or to bring temporary art or cultural events to a

park space. As the City urbanizes, testing out new ideas to ensure they are viable or investing in small-scale pilots or interim pop-up projects to ensure the community accepts new approaches or ideas to park planning, design, or operations may provide a useful tool to aid the City in adapting to changes in the climate, larger trends in recreation and culture, demographic shifts, or where phased development is proposed.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. The City in its sole discretion may engage in partnerships such as, but not limited to, those outlined in this Plan to provide the municipal park system envisioned.
2. Consideration of pilot or interim park projects shall be explored on an as needed basis in response to changes in the climate, larger trends in recreation and culture, demographic shifts, or where phased development is proposed.

## 7.4 Towards a Lifecycle Approach to Park Planning, Design and Operations

To move towards a lifecycle approach across all phases of park development including planning, design and appropriate maintenance and care, an inter-Departmental approach to monitoring park and outdoor recreation needs consistent with the broader vision of this Plan will be required to inform both the Capital Plan and Operating Budget. As the City intensifies, the parks within it will move away from traditional subdivision-type parks with often-standardized facilities and maintenance regimes, towards a new era of more urban parks that are much more complex to build and maintain and often require unique solutions to provide recreational opportunities for all in much smaller park spaces. More urban parks come at a cost, not only because of intensified usage but also because, similar to maintaining other infrastructure in an urban area, specialized equipment, training and staffing resources are often needed to do so.

As was noted in Chapter 6, the City will integrate park assets into the Enterprise Asset Management System as part of the on-going implementation of Council's approved Asset Management Plan and utilize this tool to prioritize park repair and replacement projects. This information will inform the future Capital Plan. To ensure new parks, revitalized parks, and other existing parks are maintained to the level that residents of Richmond Hill expect, the City will need to revise its park operation needs methodology to best inform future Operating Budget forecasts. This revised methodology will consider applying different factors across the City Structure to account for the increased usage and/or non-standard facilities that parks adjacent to the growing centres and corridors are likely to have as the City continues to urbanize. Such a revised methodology will aid the City in determining when new Operating Budget requests should be sought to support park operations, training or maintenance requirements.

It is the policy of Council that:

1. That the City revise its park operation needs methodology given the intensification planned in certain areas of the City Structure to aid in determining when new Operating Budget requests should be sought to support park operations, training or maintenance requirements.