

# Park Plan



## **Guelph Park Plan: Guiding our future parkland system**

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**February 2022**

Accessible formats available by calling 519-822-1260  
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## Acknowledgement

We are grateful to our local community, community groups, Indigenous peoples and agency partners for their participation in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This Park Plan was built collaboratively in a way that is consistent with our values. We acknowledge the work of our staff and community.

## City of Guelph Territorial Acknowledgement

Guelph is situated on traditional and treaty territories of the Anishinaabek, the Attawandaron and the Haudenosaunee. It is steeped in rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Mixed Ancestry people. By having a territorial acknowledgement, we recognize the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as a treaty partner, through Between the Lakes Treaty No. 3, on whose traditional territory we live and work today.

## Beyond Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgments are crucial in sustaining awareness and remembrance; however, they require action and participation to fulfill a purpose. We each hold responsibility for participating in this process. By taking time to learn about the truths and histories, through self-reflection and building relationships with Indigenous communities, we can begin to heal.

We recognize that strong, mutually beneficial municipal-Indigenous relations is a necessary component of reconciliation and we are committed to supporting this process in the most effective way possible. We will continue to seek out and foster partnerships with Indigenous governments and community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry as we work through the Park Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Our desire to strengthen relationships, engage in meaningful conversations and willingness to learn will inform the implementation of the PRMP and future work plans.

For more information, please see [city's webpage](#).



## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
The Park Plan sets a vision for the future .....	3
A park is meant for recreation.....	3
Vision for the future .....	4
Guelph is growing and changing .....	4
Assessing our park system .....	6
Strategic directions and recommendations .....	7
Financial implications.....	8
Next steps .....	8
<b>Introduction: Setting direction for parks .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Purpose of this report .....	9
How the plan fits with other strategies .....	11
Master planning process.....	13
<b>What we heard from our community.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Park Plan Community Feedback.....	14
Parks and Recreation Master Plan engagement .....	19
Guelph’s Community Plan Year of Listening .....	21
Parkland Dedication Bylaw update (2018) .....	22
<b>Parks are essential to our community .....</b>	<b>23</b>
We are home – creating social connections .....	23
We protect the environment – climate resilient city .....	24
We create value – helping to power our economy.....	25
We feel well – foster good mental health .....	26
We play and explore – encourage physical activity .....	27
We move around freely – active transportation .....	27
<b>Defining the park system .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Parks are different than natural areas .....	28
Definition of parkland .....	32

# Park Plan



- A park continuum ..... 35
- Guelph park continuum..... 36
- Framework: vision for the future ..... 40**
- Building a framework..... 40
- Pillars from our Parks and Recreation Master Plan ..... 41
- Our community now and future ..... 44**
- Guelph now, as a village of 100 people..... 44
- Guelph in the future, we are growing ..... 45
- Planning for our future community members ..... 49
- How our parks and recreation needs are changing ..... 53
- How we expand and fund parkland ..... 59**
- Expanding our park system ..... 59
- Funding park development and operation ..... 62
- Examining our park system..... 64**
- How to assess our park system needs ..... 64
- Access to parkland – the path to our parks ..... 65
- Guelph parks function in a whole system ..... 71
- Meeting outdoor recreation needs in our parks ..... 79
- Planning quality parkland ..... 85
- Our supply of land for parks ..... 88
- Summary of park strategic directions ..... 96**
- Setting clear directions ..... 96
- Prioritizing resources ..... 98
- Park access and provision of strategic directions ..... 100
- Park improvement recommendations ..... 105
- Measuring success ..... 107
- Financial implications..... 108
- Next steps ..... 110
- Appendices ..... 111**
- Appendix A: Municipal Comparator Benchmarks..... 111



## Executive Summary

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### **The Park Plan sets a vision for the future**

Guelph is growing and the way people use parks is changing. It's important we plan Guelph's park system to provide optimal services as our population grows and changes. We will need to use our land more efficiently, expand our park system and reshape our spaces to accommodate outdoor recreation.

The Park Plan is a document that outlines the vision and goals for Guelph's park system. It focuses on our land needs for the future and will:

- Define our park system to understand our existing conditions
- Outline future challenges and opportunities facing our park system
- Set values for an optimal level of service as our community grows and changes
- Develop strategic directions for parkland retention, optimization and expansion

The Park Plan is being completed as a part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) to address time-sensitive legislative changes to the Parkland Dedication Bylaw required before September 2022. The assessment and recommendations in the Park Plan will be integrated and prioritized with other park and recreation recommendations in a final PRMP implementation plan.

### **A park is meant for recreation**

For the purposes of this plan and our policies, parks are areas of land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and connection to nature. The terms 'park' and 'parkland' are used interchangeably in this document to refer to these areas of land. Natural Heritage System (NHS) lands are excluded from policies or strategies relating to parkland as they typically have limited accessibility or opportunities for recreation. We recognize within our existing inventory there are some areas where NHS features or areas overlap existing parks.

Our park system currently has over 400 hectares of parks of all classifications, sizes and shapes. To complement the park system, we offer more than 130 kilometres of trails and own and/or manage close to 850 hectares of NHS. All this land covers close to fifteen percent of the city area and doesn't include all the other publicly accessible land on the parks continuum that may be available for people to enjoy.

## Vision for the future

After listening to our community, we understand our core beliefs and top priorities. Our new vision outlines our desired future:

Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready we need parks that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability respond to a growing and diverse community. We need to connect people to each other, active living and the environment.

We developed the Park Plan to closely align with our Strategic Plan and Community Plan, reflecting and building upon the directions they provide.

Our community engagement process helped us understand our community needs and set direction for the future. We shared information through various platforms and over the course of the PRMP and Park Plan projects over 1,500 people engaged with us. Engagement included over 20 different opportunities to share feedback throughout public events, stakeholder meetings, advisory committees of Council, intercept polling, online engagement, and direct email correspondence.

We also identified pillars for the Park Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan that align to different areas of the Strategic Plan:

- We nurture a healthy and vibrant community
- All people can participate in recreation
- Recreation facilities and parks are welcoming and meaningful places for all
- Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes
- We support the protection, restoration and management of the natural environment
- We work together with our community

## Guelph is growing and changing

Guelph is growing. Our population is forecasted to increase by over 60,000 people by 2051.<sup>1</sup> Guelph is also changing. We are becoming more diverse as we welcome newcomers through immigration and our proportion of older adults is forecasted to increase. The way we are choosing to live will also impact our park system as more people are choosing denser housing types like townhouses and apartments. These changes result in more demand on parks and it changes the way we offer services.

Parks and recreation services are important for our community—they contribute to community health and well-being now and in the future. They are more than

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<sup>1</sup> [Guelph Growth Management Strategy](#)

infrastructure, services and programs. Research has shown they can offer solutions to community issues like declining mental health, inactivity, climate change, economic uncertainty and social isolation.<sup>2</sup>

Over the next thirty years there will be more pressure on the park system as neighbourhoods become denser. There is increasing pressure to provide quality parks and recreation spaces, while also keeping up with local housing needs and infrastructure. New people can bring new life to our park system and change the way we once used our public spaces. We will need new approaches to direct our investment to areas where it is needed most and provide for equity-deserving people in our community.

## How growth will impact the park system

In the future we will need to use land more efficiently, expand our park system and create new spaces to accommodate outdoor recreation. Highlights of impacts of growth on park planning includes:

- Legislated limits to the amount of land we can acquire through development will make it difficult to meet current city-wide targets
- The amount of parkland we provide per person will likely decrease as our current parkland provision target is not sustainable long-term
- We may need different strategies for getting parkland in different areas of the city (e.g., Strategic Growth Areas, Downtown, Built-up Areas, Greenfield areas)
- We will also need to rely on other tools to meet future parkland needs like purchasing land for parks, internal transfers of city-owned land, new partnerships with other agencies or private landowners
- We may need to put more emphasis on quality of parkland and access to parkland than park provision targets
- We are going to be acquiring smaller parks through development and opportunities for larger parks will be limited
- We will need to optimize use of our recreation facilities and provide more multi-functional and multi-generational spaces
- We will need to intensify and reshape existing parks to add more amenities and features to accommodate more people

A growing population using less space leads to parks that see more use. This increased use leads to increased maintenance needs, potential conflicts between users in parks, more recreation needs and can lead to possible deterioration of existing natural areas. It will be important for us to add new parkland and intensify some of our existing parks to respond to growth.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space \(2019\)](#)

## Assessing our park system

When assessing our park system now and for the future, we need to look for an **optimal level of service**—this is the amount and type of service that meets community needs/desires and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. Our optimal level of service is based on these key principles:

- Everyone can access a park within a reasonable walk from their home
- There are a variety of park types with different functions in all areas of the city
- Parks need to accommodate a variety of recreation amenities and programming
- A similar level of service should be provided throughout the city, recognising that urban form or neighbourhood demographics may require a different approach to parkland (e.g., areas of high-density development may have different park needs than areas of single detached homes)

Key points from our assessment of the park system include:

### 92 percent of people live within a ten-minute walk of a park

A successful park system is supported by walkable and wheelable neighbourhoods with safe and comfortable routes to our parks. We used a walking route analysis to determine how many people live within a ten-minute walk of a park—our analysis shows that 92 percent of residents live within a ten-minute walk or 500-800 metres of a park which is higher than the Canadian average at 87 percent.

### We provide about two parking spaces of parkland per person

Many municipalities provide targets for their parkland supply. Targets are set based on the vision, values and goals for the municipality. We are currently providing parkland at rate of 3.1 hectares per 1000 people. This is lower than the target of 3.3 hectares per 1000 people set in 2009, however it is higher than many other comparator municipalities. Since 2009, we have acquired about 45 hectares of parkland. About 65 percent of this was acquired through development, and the remaining 35 percent was acquired through repurposing city lands (Eastview Community Park). This results in parkland growth at a rate of 2.5 hectares of per 1000 people since 2009.

To help understand how much parkland we provide, it can be easier to think about it in terms of land per person. We are currently providing about 31 square meters of park space per person—this is slightly larger in size than two parking spaces (27m<sup>2</sup>) or the area under a medium sized tree canopy.

### Our current parkland provision target is not sustainable

We know we are going to need more parks as we grow, and we know how we grow will impact our ability to expand our park system. We have already planned about

58 hectares of parkland through current development applications or in secondary plan areas. This is a rough estimate that may change as secondary plan areas go through detailed design.

Extrapolating our current provision target of 3.3 hectare per 1000 people to the forecasted population in 2051, we would need to acquire 230 hectares of land. This is 174 hectares of land above the 58 hectares already identified. 230 hectares of land is like adding about 460 football fields throughout the city. Acquiring that much land and balancing our mandated growth targets is likely not achievable. We will need to review and set a new parkland provision target or assess whether a new key performance indicator is a more suitable way to assess land needs for the future. This will require a thorough parkland acquisition strategy and may result in an Official Plan Amendment in the future.

## Strategic directions and recommendations

We built on identified growth trends and our parkland assessment to develop strategic directions and actions to retain, improve, optimize and grow our park system. The Park Plan includes recommendations that will be carried forward to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and integrated into a comprehensive implementation plan. Some highlighted recommendations include:

### Exploring how we prioritize work

We will look for opportunities to improve our park system where the following conditions exist:

- Growth areas where the local population is increasing
- Areas where people can't access a park within a reasonable walk from their home
- We are not meeting local recreation needs or desired service levels
- There are high concentrations of equity-deserving populations
- Existing parks that are working harder to serve more people (e.g., have a higher volume of people using it per hectare or demonstrated higher rate of use)
- Areas where assets require renewal or replacement so that we can provide our intended and desired levels of service

### Park access and provision strategic directions

More residents will mean increased demand on parks and outdoor recreation. We will need to use our land more efficiently, expand our park system and create new spaces to accommodate recreation. These directions will help us to achieve our vision for the future:

- Develop parkland acquisition guidelines for development sites
- Update parkland policies and provision targets in the Official Plan

- Develop strategies for acquiring and intensifying parkland
- Continue to develop partnerships with other agencies and landowners
- Balance parkland needs with impacts of other infrastructure
- Alternative parkland arrangements like strata parkland could be considered in unique circumstances

## Park improvement recommendations

- Increase Indigenous representation in our park system
- All parks should have accessible paths
- Develop a sport and facility development strategy
- Develop a park development manual
- Increase our urban forest canopy and naturalized spaces in parks

To monitor the success of the plan we will collect and manage data about parks as part of a data management program. The program should include key performance indicators to measure and report on the plan’s success.

## Financial implications

This plan primarily addresses our land needs for the next 30 years. The financial impacts of the park plan and estimated costs for land acquisition will be developed and evaluated through future studies and reports to Council. We will need to consider two key factors including:

- We will need to rely on more than parkland dedication to meet our needs, which may include purchasing land with tax dollars, partnerships or alternative arrangements, and
- We need to be strategic about how we plan future parkland to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers.

## Next steps

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will take the recommendations of this plan and develop overall priorities for the Parks Department and the Culture and Recreation Department. To support these priorities, long-term financial and resource strategies will be developed to guide future investment in the park and recreation systems and develop work plans to support the creation of new policies.



## **Introduction: Setting direction for parks**

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### **Purpose of this report**

Our Park Plan helps us set direction for our park system. It is a high-level planning tool that guides how our park system responds to our growing and changing community. Our intent is to provide foundation, determine needs, and set future direction about parkland in our city.

The Park Plan is part of the larger Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP). The assessment and directions of this plan will be integrated and prioritized with other park and recreation strategies in a final PRMP. This plan focuses on our land needs for the future and will:

- Define our park system to understand our existing conditions
- Outline future challenges and opportunities facing our park system
- Demonstrate that parks are important to this community to support revenue tools for park acquisition
- Set values for an optimal level of service as our community grows and changes
- Develop strategic directions for parkland retention, optimization and expansion

We recommend principles and directions that reflect community values and define the services we will offer. Our direction will shape how we provide parks and decisions we make around parkland. We will use the data and policy directions of the City's Growth Strategy to help plan for population growth to 2051. This plan also builds on previous research and planning studied for our Recreation, Parks & Culture Strategic Plans completed in 1997 and 2009.

A Park Plan is needed to ensure we maintain an optimal level of service for parks as we grow—this is the amount and type of service that meets community needs or desires and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. We also need to update our priorities in line with the City's Strategic and Community Plans and to take advantage of new approaches, legislation, trends and guidelines in park planning and development.

Our plan will help us shape future decision making, while also being flexible to our communities' changing needs. It provides a high-level framework that will need more detailed analysis through future policies, projects and initiatives. It also provides background and context for a future update to Guelph's Official Plan Open Space policies.

## Legislated changes required for our Parkland Dedication Bylaw

One way we get land for parks is through development. We use a [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) and [Official Plan policies](#) allowed by [the Ontario Planning Act](#) to require planning and development applications to transfer land to us for parks and public recreation or provide cash-in-lieu of parkland so parks or recreational spaces can be purchased.

The Planning Act, under Section 42<sup>3</sup>, allows municipalities to pass a bylaw to require land or cash-in-lieu as a condition of development or redevelopment for park or other recreational purposes—often referred to as a parkland dedication.

Section 42 outlines standard rates for parkland dedication but allows municipalities to pass 'alternative rates' or caps to help meet local needs. The alternative rate used by the city calculates parkland dedication that can lead to higher land dedication and/or cash-in-lieu of parkland. Guelph's parkland dedication bylaw uses an alternative rate and caps. It was passed in 2019 following a bylaw review and public consultation process.

Changes to legislation under Bill 108, 138 and 197 require municipalities in Ontario, including ours, to enact a 'new' parkland dedication bylaw by September 18, 2022. To support the bylaw and as outlined in Section 42, two things are needed by municipalities:

- Official Plan policies supporting the use of an alternative rate; and
- A Park Plan examining the need for parkland in the city.

Our Official Plan policies enacted in 2017 through OPA 48 support the use of the alternative rate; so, an update to Official Plan park policies is not required. A Park Plan, however, is needed to review parkland needs and determine if the alternative rate is still needed to achieve our parkland goals as we grow.

Please note that Section 42 is not the only way we can acquire parks through development. The Planning Act also allows municipalities to require parkland dedication (land or cash-in-lieu) as a condition of a Plan of Subdivision or Consents under Sections 51.1 and 53. The Province has not made any change to Section 51.1 or 53 legislation, but it is still important to note that there are multiple ways development can grow our park system.

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<sup>3</sup> [Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13, s.42](#)

## How the plan fits with other strategies

Guelph’s corporate vision, mission and values provide the foundation for our Park Plan—setting the tone for how our department works and what we plan to achieve. Our plan is aligned with [Guelph’s Strategic Plan](#) and [Community Plan](#)—plans for Guelph’s future. The Strategic Plan and the corresponding [Action Plan and Performance Measure Framework](#) help guide our priorities and provide clear measures for success.

### Master planning for our future

We use master plans and strategies to help us assess the land and infrastructure we have to support city services today and determine what we’ll need as Guelph grows. We use master plans to guide short-term projects in each neighbourhood so they all work toward achieving our community’s long-term goals.

Master plans look at the whole system, evaluate options and consider a variety of community perspectives to help make better decisions. Master plans also help provide direction so that we can update the city’s [Official Plan](#)—a legal planning document required by the Planning Act that establishes a vision for the future and provides policy direction to manage future land use patterns and growth.

Its important to note that there are different types of master plans. We also use the term master plan to refer to the conceptual design of a park—or park master plan (e.g., Hamill Park Master Plan). This type of master plan is site-specific and are used make sure our parks are functional, aesthetically pleasing and create a sense of community.

**Figure 1 – Plan hierarchy**

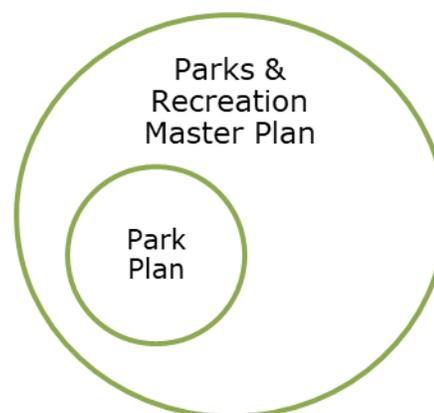


## Relationship to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Our Park Plan is a master plan that provides direction to manage future land needs relating to our park system.

It is a component of the larger Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP), which addresses all our park and recreation system needs including land, infrastructure, indoor facilities, outdoor facilities, services and operation. The Park Plan will be integrated into the broader PRMP so that we can develop overall priorities and long-term financial and resource strategies.

**Figure 2- Relationship of the Park Plan to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan**



## Aligning to other plans and strategies

Our plan is also aligned with a number internal and external guiding documents and strategies that support an overall vision for parks and recreation, including but not limited to:

### City strategies and plans:

- Guelph Trail Master Plan
- Natural Heritage Action Plan
- Urban Forest Management Plan
- Active Transportation Network
- Older Adult Strategy
- Think Youth: Youth Strategy
- Facility Accessibility Design Manual
- River Systems Management Plan
- Guelph’s Stormwater Management Master Plan

### External plans and legislation:

- Planning Act
- Parks for all (CPRA and CPC)
- Framework for Recreation in Canada (ISRC and CPRA)
- Healthy Community Design Baseline Project (WDG Public Health)

## Master planning process

The Park Plan was created over three phases of work. The final phase of work will integrate the strategies and actions of this plan into a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The master planning process was led by a staff working group with assistance from external resources. We used evidence-based research, demographics, benchmarking, community opinion, policy analysis and trends in park planning to better understand our future community needs.

**Figure 3 – Master planning Process**



The first phase of work helped us understand what we have. We completed a detailed inventory of our resources and collected data from many different sources.

In the second phase of work, we analysed our data to understand community needs and our strengths and opportunities. We also compared our services and infrastructure to other similar communities and researched emerging trends in parks and recreation. Our third phase of work is the creation of this Park Plan that addresses park land needs for the future.

This plan reviews trends, benchmarking, inventory, mapping, demographics and policies to develop park strategies and actions that will guide our future work. These strategies will be integrated into a more comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which is the final phase.

We followed an iterative process that validated our research with community and stakeholder input throughout the process. We received some feedback specific to the Park Plan and we also used feedback and data collected as part of the Parkland Dedication Bylaw update and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help guide our process.

To help our analysis and decision-making process, we used the best available information collected through consultation, research, inventory, observation and other data sources.



## What we heard from our community

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Our community engagement process helps us understand our community needs and set direction for the future.

We had an engagement plan that built on the previous work of the Community Plan and Strategic Plans. Wherever possible, we incorporated community feedback data from related city projects or other ongoing initiatives. Specifically, we used the data and feedback collected as part of the ongoing Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Parkland Dedication Bylaw update to help guide our process.

It is important to note that survey or community feedback data is only one source of information that helps paint one picture, but we check this data against other statistically valid sources like our citizen satisfaction survey, public health data and demographic information.

### **Park Plan Community Feedback**

We developed an engagement plan to ensure the Park Plan reflects the opinions of the community. The purpose of engagement activities was to understand community opinions about our parkland needs for the future.

We focused on understanding key themes specific to the Park Plan to help create strategic directions. Using feedback we received through the PRMP and the Parkland Dedication Bylaw review, we asked new questions that dug a little deeper and touched on themes relating to parkland planning and the impact of COVID-19 on future parkland needs.

We also created an engagement plan to meet the Planning Act legislated requirements to consult, specifically (a) school boards; and (b) any other persons or public bodies that the municipality considers appropriate.

### **What we did**

Its important to hear from as many people as possible during engagement and through as many different methods as we can. Recognizing that we built on previous feedback from other related engagement and projects, specifically for this round of engagement we invited input from the public, developers, local school boards, Grand River Conservation Authority, Indigenous governments and community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry.

Specifically for the Park Plan, we invited feedback through:

- An online survey on the city's Have Your Say webpage
- Two community focus groups facilitated by Dr. Rebecca Sutherns
- One developer specific focus group facilitated by Dr. Rebecca Sutherns
- Individual stakeholder meetings with Grand River Conservation Authority, Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board
- Internal stakeholder meetings and engagement with other departments
- Email correspondence from people in our community
- Correspondence and meeting(s) with Indigenous governments
- Virtual Indigenous Sharing Circle as part of an ongoing relationship building initiative with community members of First Nation, Inuit, Métis and mixed Indigenous ancestry

The Park Plan built on previous engagement activities from Phase 1 and 2 of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, including:

- Two online community surveys (June/July and November/December 2019)
- Intercept polling at various city locations (June and November/December 2019)
- A public open house – drop in format (June 20, 2019 – afternoon and evening)
- Brainstorming engagement with over 300 children in grades 2-5 during the city's Local Government Week visits (October 2019)
- Sport user group survey (June-August 2019 and December 2019-January 2020)
- Individual stakeholder meetings with Sport User Groups, Youth Council, Youth Providers Committee, GW Local Immigration Partnership, Upper Grand District School Board, WDG Public Health, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, Yorkland Green Hub
- Internal stakeholder workshops with other municipal departments
- Multiple presentations and discussions with the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Discussion with the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee (May 2021)
- Advertising and correspondence sent to stakeholder groups such as the Youth Council, Immigrant Services, Guelph Neighborhood Support Coalition, local religious and cultural organizations, developers and consultants, local parks and recreation advocates, cycling and trail advocate groups, external partner agencies as well as neighbouring municipalities

## First Nations and Indigenous Engagement

We are currently seeking out and fostering mutually beneficial municipal-Indigenous relationships. We have more to learn about the history of this land and the people who lived here before Guelph was founded. This ongoing work will continue beyond the context of the Park Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

As part of this round engagement, correspondence was sent to Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Grand River Métis Council. Engagement meetings and feedback will continue through the larger Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

We also used feedback we heard through a new relationship building initiative called “Indigenous Sharing Circles” to help inform this plan. The Sharing Circle is part of the city’s work to improve the way we engage with and include Indigenous members of our community in policy and decision making. The goal of the gatherings is to learn, improve relationships and ultimately improve services based on what we learn. The Sharing Circle was not specific engagement for the Park Plan, but concepts we heard will help inform our future work plans as well as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

In the first gathering in January 2022, we heard some things that relate to the Park Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan including:

- Importance of preservation, enhancement and conservation of ecosystems
- Creating indoor and outdoor spaces for Indigenous celebration and gathering
- Recognizing or reinterpreting cultural landmarks and inclusion of art by Indigenous artists in public spaces.

Our desire to strengthen relationships, engage in meaningful conversations and willingness to learn will continue to inform the implementation of the PRMP and ongoing work planning for the Park Department.

**Figure 4 – Photo of the local First Nations, Métis, Mixed Ancestry, Inuit Sacred Fire space located in Royal City Park**



## What we heard

Specifically for the Park Plan, we engaged 426 people and another 482 were informed of the plan. Our engagement plan included four different opportunities to share feedback through virtual focus group meetings, stakeholder meetings, online engagement and direct email correspondence. Detailed summaries of what we heard from each round of engagement can be found on the [project webpage](#).

### **Park development goals**

- Protecting parks and creating new parks were the top ranked park development goals for Guelph by survey and focus group participants
- Upgrading parks was the third highest ranking goal from the survey; focus group participants chose adding new park features in existing parks
- “Plan activities in parks” was the lowest ranking goal by survey and focus group participants

### **Priorities for locating new parks**

- Areas with high population density, areas of high socioeconomic need and areas with few parks were the top three ranked priorities for locating new parks by participants at both focus group sessions

### **Preferred ways for the city to acquire more parks**

- Parkland dedication (land or cash in lieu to buy parks) from developers and home builders was the preferred way for the city to acquire more parks, with an emphasis on acquiring land. Repurposing existing city land was the second preferred option
- Leasing land and purchasing land with tax dollars were the two lowest ranking methods

### **How recent changes due to COVID might affect park planning**

- Parks became extremely important to residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in increased need and usage of parks, trails and greenspaces
- Having easy access to a park was extremely important to ensure they were able to get outside every day
- Many noted that increased usage also means that parks and trails need to be well-maintained
- Having year-round access to washrooms and hand washing stations is important for residents. It was noted that washrooms not only need to be built/provided but also kept unlocked and clean
- More benches, picnic tables and sheltered areas to accommodate outdoor gatherings were requested
- More/different amenities to offer variety for park users are valued.

- Areas for passive recreation activities and space to enjoy the quiet and calm of the outdoors are also important
- Wider paths to allow for safe distancing and spacing out play structures and other features to avoid overcrowding in areas emerged as suggestions
- Several survey participants noted that park planning is long-term and that recent changes should have no impact

### **Creative possibilities to keep parks accessible and enjoyed by all**

- There was a wide range of specific amenities and features that the community would love to see in Guelph parks, including:
  - Disc golf courses, pickleball courts and other sport-specific features
  - Chess boards, ping pong tables and other areas to play games outdoors
  - Outdoor exercise equipment and areas to participate in outdoor exercise activities (i.e. yoga, tai chi)
  - Pizza ovens and barbeques for public use, as well as food carts/trucks and water refill stations
  - More seating and sheltered areas
  - Community gardens and pollinator gardens
  - Nature education and heritage features
  - Art installations, and
  - Water features, such as natural ponds, splashpads and fountains
- People want parks to be accessible for all members of the community. This includes having parks accessible via bus routes, as well as appropriate surfaces and equipment, particularly for those using mobility devices or strollers
- Attract people and visitors to parks by hosting events — markets, craft fairs, concerts, movies etc.
- People want to see trails and parks linked throughout the city
- Creative financing tools and legacy contributions were identified as possible ways to acquire more parkland

Developers also had a range of creative suggestions for Guelph parks:

- Urban squares are a unique way to provide recreational opportunities
- Parks could be built on top of stormwater management tanks, allowing the land to be used for dual purposes
- Incorporate trails and vistas around stormwater ponds
- Use utility corridors for trail connections and recreation opportunities
- Incorporate heritage of the site to tell the history of the city (buildings, signage and trail markers, sculptures)
- Use technology to enhance the experience (i.e. guided tours, connecting trails)

## Parks and Recreation Master Plan engagement

We shared information through various platforms and over the course of the project 1,100 people engaged with us and 700 people reviewed the information but chose not to engage. Engagement included 16 different opportunities to share feedback throughout public events, stakeholder meetings, advisory committees of Council, intercept polling, online engagement, and direct email correspondence.

### Key survey responses about parkland

- 88.2 percent of survey respondents feel that they live close enough to a park and 72.9 percent of people use the park that is closest to them most often.
- For 27.1 percent of people that don't use the park closest to them the popular reasons include: they prefer destination parks, prefer larger parks, go to parks with specific amenities/features, prefer a specific type (natural or sports fields) and prefer parks with more shade.
- Respondents confirmed the top three priorities for the future of our park and open spaces are: 1) connecting parks with trails, sidewalk or greenways, 2) obtain more land for parks in the form of small pocket parks in existing areas, 3) add more trails in existing parks and natural areas.
- Almost half of survey respondents believe that adding or improving trails is the best way to provide recreation in our community to adults, youth and seniors. The other top popular amenities include dog parks, all season rink with boards and a ninja obstacle course/outdoor fitness equipment.

### Key feedback about making our park system better

- Create a healthy community for all, where everyone feels safe and welcome (e.g., all ages, backgrounds, income levels and abilities).
- Invest in aging parks and infrastructure to help balance service levels between new and old parks.
- Create infrastructure to encourage daily exercise, such as on-road cycling, trails, safer streets and high-quality public spaces that are universally accessible.
- Install more low-cost/free park amenities for informal play like disc golf, cross country ski trails, bocce ball, pick-up sports or other similar features.
- Make outdoor recreation facilities multi-purpose and encourage all-season use.
- Provide more washrooms and water fountains in key locations.
- Plant more trees in parks and areas of naturalization to provide shade for users and contribute to other environmental benefits.

## Natural Heritage Advisory Committee

City staff met virtually with the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee on May 13, 2021. Discussion questions were asked of participants:

- Do you agree that the Natural Heritage System has recreational value?
- How should the city connect people to nature?

The following formal comments were provided as part of the meeting minutes:

- Consider including 'biodiversity' in the operational definition of the Guelph Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- We want to ensure that increased impacts to natural areas do not result from natural areas being considered 'parks' and/or part of a 'park continuum'.
- We want to have more naturalized spaces and pollinator gardens in the Open Space System to provide 'transition zones' between parks and natural areas.
- We want to build the appreciation and protection of natural areas through education, including the use of signage, technology, community programs, trail ambassadors, Park Rangers and knowledgeable Staff at parks.

**Figure 5 - Picture of a boardwalk in the Hanlon Creek Conservation Area**



## Guelph’s Community Plan Year of Listening

Guelph’s Community Plan shapes what our city will look like over the next 10 to 20 years. The Plan has six broad themes that express how we want our future to unfold. Many of these themes relate to the importance of parks and recreation in creating a healthy, vibrant and prosperous community.

Guelph residents expressed their specific views on parks in the “Year of Listening” community engagement that was a part of the Community Plan. More than 10,000 community members, visitors and city staff provided input as a part of the extensive community and stakeholder engagement which included over 110 meetings/ workshops.



The community provided the following feedback about our city, our parks and how Guelph should grow. Parks and green spaces were one of three of the most reported topics alongside affordable housing and reliable transit. Residents specifically confirmed:

- Need to protect, expand and animate parks and green spaces, which was distinct feedback from other environmental features
- An emphasis on the need for accessible opportunities that are equitable and barrier-free opportunities
- People want a connected river trail system that encourages outdoor pursuits
- Our park system needs spaces beyond sport fields and programmed needs—we need spaces for social interaction that are integrated into the fabric of neighbourhoods
- Guelph is full of amenities to support health and well-being; therefore, we need amenities that grow as the community grows.
- Mixed-use, complete, walkable and interesting neighbourhoods, and building up not out are preferred
- The personality and vibe of “Guelphiness” is important to protect and promote.

## Parkland Dedication Bylaw update (2018)

We led an engagement focused process from 2017-2019 as part of our Parkland Dedication Bylaw update. The feedback received help shape our current Parkland Dedication Bylaw which was passed by Council in early 2019. Engagement activities took place over three phases of work and included internal stakeholders, external agencies and stakeholders and the general public.

Stakeholder feedback came from a wide range of industries including property developers, real estate professionals, local planners and engineers, institutional representatives, agency stakeholders and the interested public. Key feedback we heard during that process included:

### Essential elements of a successful park system:

- System that is linked through a diversity of spaces and park types
- Active recreation opportunities and all-season programming
- Accessibility and connectivity, specifically access to public transit
- A system that is equitably distributed throughout the city
- Opportunities for community input to animate the park space

### Strengths and opportunities of our park system

- Connected green spaces and trail network
- Existing inventory of large more traditional landscaped parks
- Parks are part of Guelph's identity and attraction
- Nice trail system that is linked to the Natural Heritage System and parks
- Good hierarchy and diversity of park types

### Weaknesses and challenges with our park system or policies

- Deficiencies in land and amenities noted in some existing neighbourhoods
- Reliance on third party providers is problematic to our inventory
- Infill and fragmented development make it difficult to get good sized parks
- Historically accepted woodlots as parkland dedication, policy has changed
- Collecting enough parkland for residents, current and future
- Striking a balance between developer's goals and meeting city's parkland needs
- City needs to ensure that intensifying areas are serviced with quality public spaces and services



## Parks are essential to our community

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Parks are vitally important public services—like roads, sewers, stormwater management or waste collection. Parks are no longer viewed as luxury amenities, but as important city services. Parks are fundamental to quality of life for residents and our parks make Guelph more livable, environmentally resilient and help attract businesses. The focus themes in the Community Plan are a perfect place to start our conversation about why parks are essential. The Community Plan presents a vision for the future that will inform, inspire and guide us as we move forward.

### **We are home – creating social connections**

Parks are a very important part of making everyone in our neighbourhoods feel included. Studies show that quality parks have a direct impact on our sense of community.<sup>4</sup> To “love our neighbourhoods and keep them strong” we need places to create social connections. Loneliness and social isolation have tangible health risks and today about 25-30 percent of Canadians across all age groups report persistent loneliness and social isolation.<sup>5</sup> This is often higher in low-income or newcomer groups.<sup>6</sup> Outdoor spaces like parks and trails can create perfect opportunities for social connection—either through intentional get-togethers (programs, planned meetups or events) or casual meetings.

Casual connections are important for strong and healthy communities—knowing our neighbours, even enough to say hello, is important for our sense of belonging in our community. Casual interaction can make us feel safer, socially connected and reduced feelings of loneliness.<sup>7</sup> Luckily, in Guelph, 90 percent of people describe their neighbourhood as a place where neighbours help each other.<sup>8</sup>

For areas where many people live in apartments, parks become even more important to meeting others in their neighbourhood. A casual hello can be a powerful tool to help facilitate community connections, combat social isolation and create a sense of local pride. Our parks can help us “keep our big, small city vibe” and form part of our social infrastructure.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space \(2019\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Loneliness is a ‘significant issue’ in Canada \(2018\) Dr. Robin Lennox](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Toronto Vital Signs Report, Civic Engagement & Belonging \(2019/20\) Toronto Foundation](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Parks and the creation of social capital \(2019\) Park People](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Wellington County Vital Signs \(2018\) pp9, Guelph Foundation](#)

## **We protect the environment – climate resilient city**

Parks present an opportunity to help build a climate resilient city as we 'prepare for the future.' Parks can help protect against extreme weather events, flooding, intense heat and poor air quality.<sup>9</sup> Parks can also give us places to connect with nature so that we can preserve and protect the Natural Heritage System from human impacts.

The frequency of extreme weather and flooding has increased in recent decades and this trend is forecasted to continue.<sup>[1]</sup> Parks, like other landscaped areas, can help mitigate these weather impacts. There may also be opportunity to integrate 'green infrastructure' projects like rain gardens or bioswales into parks, in existing areas, to help reduce flooding and improve water quality. In our newly planned areas, 'green infrastructure' is integrated and planned for in other areas of the public realm.

Large cities can feel almost 12 degrees hotter than rural areas thanks to the heat island effect.<sup>10</sup> Parks, natural areas and greening projects can help combat this through increasing tree canopies. Shade, found in parks and natural areas, helps absorb heat and act as natural air conditioners. Our [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) helps to ensure a sustainable urban forest that provides environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits as our community continues to grow. Parks provide a perfect opportunity to expand our urban forest canopy. A healthy mix of trees and plants can help Guelph withstand and recover from increasingly severe weather caused by climate change.

Parks can also help us be 'stewards of our resources.' They provide opportunities for people to connect with nature and foster life-long stewardship. People have an inherent desire to connect with nature. Being outdoors can foster an appreciation for biodiversity and help us understand the importance and value of the land we share.<sup>11</sup> The way we integrate our communities into the natural environment is a critical factor in community and environmental well-being. A healthy community is one where we have both intact ecosystems as well as places for people to enjoy nature.

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<sup>9</sup> [As the climate crisis worsens, cities turn to parks \(2019\) National Geographic](#)

<sup>[1]</sup> [Canada's Changing Climate Report \(2019\) Environment and Climate Change](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Climate Atlas of Canada, Urban Heat Island](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Pathway to Stewardship: A Framework for Children and Youth \(2016\)](#)

## **We create value – helping to power our economy**

Our park system can have measurable impacts on our local economy. Parks can have a positive influence on property values, property taxes and tourism. It can also improve the attractiveness of the community to homebuyers and businesses, helping to attract jobs.<sup>12</sup> Parks can help us 'leverage our unique character' and help grow Guelph as a destination.

Studies have shown that homebuyers like homes that are close to parks. Therefore, homes and properties close to parks increase in property value as people are willing to pay more to live close to a park. This in turn increases a city's property tax revenue. The impact of a park on property value has been understood since the 1870s when Frederick Law Olmstead used this premise as justification for investment in New York's Central Park. Research has since quantified the impact showing that homes within 500 feet of a park can increase the value by at least 8 percent or more.<sup>13</sup>

Parks can also help bolster local tourism and lead to increased sales tax from spending by tourists. Larger destination parks can bring people into cities as tourist attractions themselves or they can host festivals, concerts and other events. In 2017 Guelph welcomed 1.7 million visitors: with more than 160,000 visitors enjoying sporting events and almost 50,000 people for festivals. Local Guelph tourism spending accounts for 2,100 local jobs and tourism spending stimulates over \$155 million in sales of goods and services.<sup>14</sup>

There are many other ways that parks provide economic value to cities. Parks offer free or low-cost ways to interact socially, participate in sports or to get physical activity. Each of these ways contributes to a healthy community and reduces overall health care costs. Parks also offer environmental savings by helping to reduce stormwater management costs and reduce air pollution. Overall a good park system is a worthwhile and necessary investment for prosperous cities.

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<sup>12</sup> [Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System \(2009\) Trust for Public Land](#)

<sup>13</sup> [How Much Impact Do Parks Have on Property Values? \(2020\) NPRA](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Guelph Village of 100 people, pp7](#)

## We feel well – foster good mental health

Parks and trails are key types of ‘health infrastructure for the future’ as they provide an enjoyable, convenient and affordable means of exercise and connection to nature. Research shows that parks undeniably contribute to community health and wellbeing. Spending time outdoors and close to nature, even for a short period of time, has been linked with improved mood, concentration and happiness.<sup>15</sup>

One of the first reported studies showing the relationship of green space and health was in 1984 by environmental psychologist Roger Ulrich.<sup>16</sup> The study measured health outcomes of people recovering from surgery at a hospital in Pennsylvania. Patients were studied in two groups: people with beds beside windows looking at trees and people who looked at a brick wall instead. All other things being equal, people who looked out on green space healed, typically, a day faster, had fewer postsurgical complications and needed significantly less pain medication than people who looked at a brick wall instead.

It wasn’t widely understood in 1984 that green space had measurable impacts on healing—Ulrich’s research was ground-breaking. Since then, numerous studies quantifying and studying the effects of green space on human health have been undertaken worldwide. It’s become almost common knowledge that time spent outdoors has a positive impact on our mental health.

Another important consideration is how poor mental health can impact our ability to earn a living, learn, connect to one another and achieve.<sup>17</sup> Parks help us feel well and improve health outcomes for all people. Having parks accessible to everyone, we can provide opportunities to improve mental health, quality of life and reduce health risks.

### COVID-19, parks and mental health

COVID-19 helped many people realize how important parks are to our physical and mental health. We saw our trails and green spaces filled with more people than ever to escape the stress of the pandemic. In a national survey by the Park People, 82 percent of Canadians said that parks became more important to their mental health during COVID-19 and 55 percent of cities surveyed said park use increased during COVID-19.<sup>18</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic also saw sales of bikes, cross country skis, running shoes and other outdoor equipment skyrocket. Many people invested in new equipment and explored park systems in new ways. Experts believe this ‘outdoor boom’ will last for another 5-10 years as people have developed a new love of the outdoors.

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<sup>15</sup> [Go greener, feel better? \(2015\) Landscape and Urban Planning Journal](#)

<sup>16</sup> [A View Through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery \(1984\) R. Ulrich](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Poverty and Mental Illness, Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

<sup>18</sup> [COVID-19 and Parks: Highlights from our national surveys \(2020\) Park People](#)

## **We play and explore – encourage physical activity**

Play fosters good mental and physical health. To ‘play everywhere’ we need a network of outdoor spaces that are inclusive to community interests, abilities and for all seasons. For many community members, leisure and culture are tied to our green spaces.

Parks offer a perfect opportunity to participate in physical recreation—through both programmed (e.g., sports or events) and unprogrammed activities (e.g., walking, playing, using recreation facilities). Physical activity can reduce or prevent health problems and parks can help people get outside and moving for low or no cost at all.<sup>19</sup> For people who are inactive, even small increases in physical activity can bring measurable health benefits.

A recent Canadian study found that the number and total area of parks within a kilometre of a person’s home predicted how likely people were to participate in physical activity.<sup>20</sup> People that have access to parks tend to participate in physical activity more than others as parks support active-friendly environments.<sup>21</sup> Investment in our park system is an investment in our community health.

## **We move around freely – active transportation**

Parks and trails provide a perfect opportunity to incorporate physical activity for low or no cost through active transportation. Pathways in parks typically require less capital investment than other recreation facilities like pools or gyms. Having “abundant trail corridors [to] connect neighbourhoods seamlessly” is important to support active transportation and make it easy to move through our city.

An interesting way to look at park and trail development is to consider the increased health benefits of users and the potential for reduced health care costs. In a recent study that looked at the cost-benefit analysis of physical activity using trails, it was estimated that for each dollar spent on building, maintaining, and using trails, nearly three dollars were realized in reduced health care costs by the trail users due to improvements in their health.<sup>22</sup>

Pathways within parks and connections to parks offer an opportunity to connect to Guelph’s wild and natural spaces.

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<sup>19</sup> [Let's Get Moving \(2018\) Public Health Agency Canada](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Parkland Proximity with Neighborhood and Park-Based Physical Activity \(2009\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> [The Benefits of Parks \(2003\) Trust for Public Land](#)

<sup>22</sup> [A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Physical Activity Using Bike/Pedestrian Trails \(2005\)](#)

## Defining the park system

Defining what is considered a park is a difficult task because there are many definitions and personal opinions. Depending on who you ask or what policy you read, the term parkland can mean a variety of things. Clearly defining 'parkland' is an important part of this report and has an impact on how we plan.

For the purposes of this plan and our policies, parks are areas of land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and connection to nature. The terms 'park' and 'parkland' are used interchangeably to refer to these areas of land.

### Parks are different than natural areas

Most municipalities have policies that differentiate parks from natural areas or other green spaces (stormwater management areas, schools, etc.). Municipalities recognize the importance of Natural Heritage Systems and reserve these spaces for protection of the natural environment. They are excluded from policies or strategies relating to parkland as they typically have limited accessibility or opportunities for recreation. Guelph is no different, our [Official Plan](#) policies distinguish parks separately from the Natural Heritage System and other green spaces.

The Official Plan sets out how we will manage Guelph's future land use patterns and growth that will shape our city in the future. In the Official Plan there are two systems that are important to distinguish: Open Space System (OSS) and Natural Heritage System (NHS). These are distinct systems with different functions, however in many ways they are interconnected and support to each other. The city's NHS policies have been adopted by Council and changes to NHS policies are not being considered through this plan.

**Figure 6 – The OSS and NHS support one another but are distinct systems**

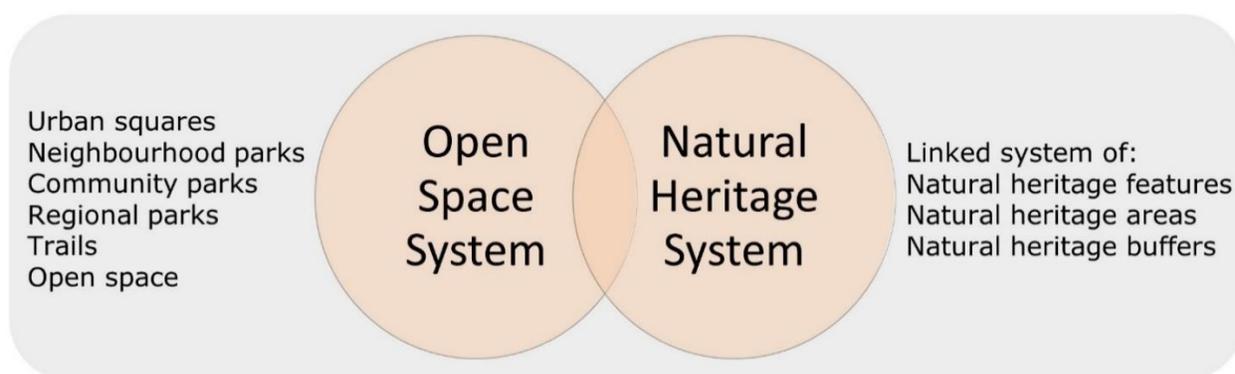


Figure 6 is a conceptual representation of the complex and interconnected relationship between the OSS and the NHS. These two systems are distinct land uses with their own specific policies.

## Open Space System

The Open Space System (OSS) consists of parks, trails and open space areas that are not part of but may be interconnected with or supportive of the NHS.

### **Recreation is the primary function of the OSS**

The OSS's primary function is to provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the community. Recreation is more than sports or engaging in physical activities. It can also include connecting with nature or helping others through volunteering. The definition from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association helps us understand the breadth of recreation:

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.<sup>23</sup>

Planned recreation takes place in the OSS and is supported largely in our park system. There are recreation opportunities provided by other publicly accessible spaces in the city, but other spaces don't provide recreation as a primary function. It's important to preserve space for recreation in our community because it is a vitally important public service and fundamental to quality of life for residents.<sup>24</sup>

### **Recreation is provided through a wide range of park spaces**

A functioning park system is made of different spaces, places, recreation opportunities and characteristics. We offer places for people to play sports, connect with nature, walk, gather with friends and family, participate in events or sit and relax, to name a few. Planning our park system means understanding the wide range of activities we need to provide for and incorporating them into recreation facilities, spaces, amenities or programming.

With limited resources and funding, we have a system that provides amenities and features in an efficient way. We group parks into categories so that we can assess and plan for distribution across the city. Our Official Plan describes four different types of parks: urban squares, neighbourhood parks, community parks and regional parks. Each park type has a slightly different function and offers a different level of service to our community.

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<sup>23</sup> [Framework for Recreation in Canada \(2015\) CPRA](#)

<sup>24</sup> [How Do Leisure Activities Contribute to Subjective Well-Being? \(2011\)](#)

## Natural Heritage System

The Natural Heritage System (NHS) is one of our most valuable assets. It enhances the quality of life within the city by protecting natural features and ecological systems. It is composed of linked natural heritage features and areas and their associated buffers. Its primary function is to protect, maintain and enhance the city’s biological, hydrological and geological functions and to sustain local biodiversity. It is not a focus of this plan, but its important to understand how it relates to our park system as there are number of complementary secondary functions.

**Figure 7 - Complementary functions of the OSS and NHS**

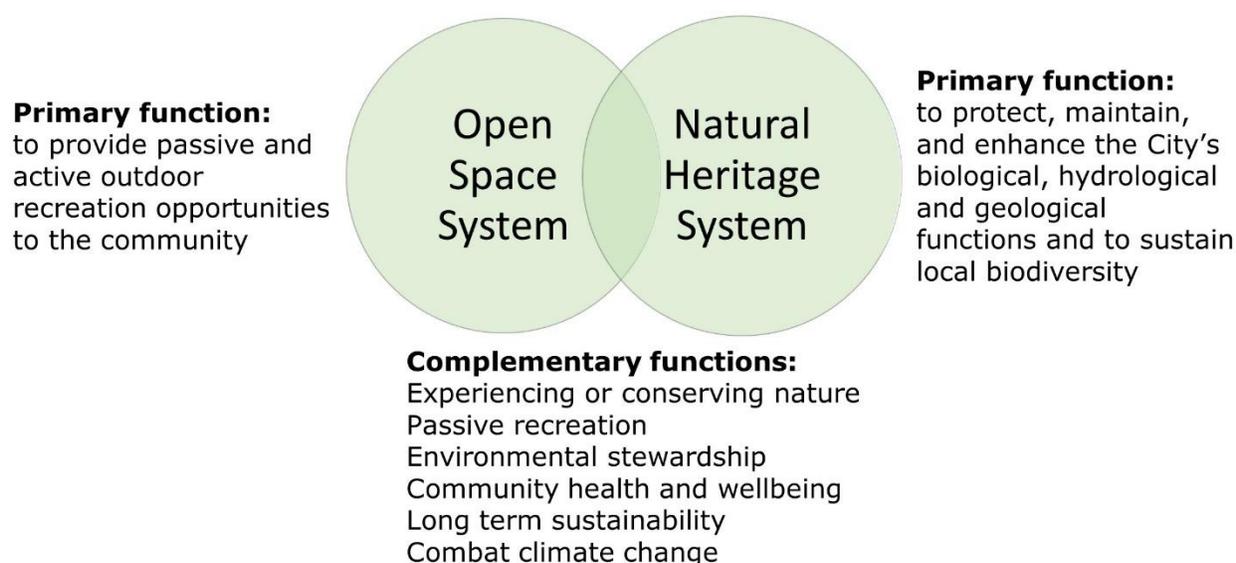


Figure 7 is a conceptual representation of the complex and interconnected relationship between the OSS and the NHS. These two systems are distinct land uses with their own specific policies.

### Recreation opportunities are limited within the NHS

People have an inherent desire to connect with nature. A healthy community is one where we have both intact ecosystems as well as places for people to enjoy nature. Guelph residents and visitors want access to our natural areas, but this isn’t always best for sustaining our local ecosystems. Human use can impact the resources we want to protect in many ways, like adding noise that disrupts wildlife or physical damage such as compaction and vegetation trampling.

Some parts of the NHS may be publicly accessible but is not actively encouraged. Local policies across Ontario have evolved to fully recognize the ecological, hydrological and geological importance of NHS land. Many municipalities are taking

an environment first approach and limiting the use of NHS land for recreation and human enjoyment.

Guelph's Official Plan policies recognize that some passive recreational activities may be compatible with the preservation and protection of natural features of buffers and may be permitted within the NHS. Things like bird watching, snowshoeing, photography, and forest bathing are all considered passive recreational activities and may be permitted but we must demonstrate that they can be done in a way that minimizes impacts to the natural environment.

These passive recreational activities permitted in or adjacent to the Natural Heritage System always require additional consideration. They need to be reviewed and assessed as part of land natural area management plans or Environmental Impact Studies (EIS). The effect(s) of recreation should be manageable through mitigation, with the result being no negative impact to the buffer, area, feature or its function.

### **Parks and NHS lands are often located beside each other**

Throughout Guelph, the OSS and NHS are often found beside each other—like how some of our trails travel through NHS lands or how our parks are found beside natural areas. The OSS and NHS are seen as compatible land uses and there are benefits of locating them beside one another.

Research has shown that contact with nature can lead to improvements in mood, thoughts and overall health. It has also shown that the more biodiverse the space is, the greater the benefits.<sup>25</sup> Having parks and NHS interconnected or co-located helps maximize health and wellness benefits for residents. It can also help conservation and restoration efforts by providing access to nature in a managed and controlled way.

We also know that people want to be close to or 'in' nature as a way to recharge or relax. Managing this desire by locating parks close to natural areas is one way to help keep our ecosystems intact and minimize impacts of human use on the natural environment. If planned correctly, parks can keep people in designated areas and protect sensitive systems contained in the NHS—while also providing the personal benefits of being close to or 'in' nature. Good planning can also introduce residents to natural area stewardship, increase awareness of our natural environment and encourage a sense of ownership over conservation and restoration efforts.

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<sup>25</sup> [Relations between naturalness and restorativeness of urban green spaces \(2013\)](#)

## Definition of parkland

Not all green spaces are considered “parks” within our policies or this plan. Our plan focuses on parkland, which is land set aside primarily for human enjoyment, recreation and connection to nature.

Developing a clear definition of parkland is difficult because parks can serve multiple functions and our criteria, policy and definitions have evolved over time. How we define parkland also impacts what we consider acceptable land to acquire through development - also called parkland dedication. Having a narrow definition for parkland ensures there are spaces in the city that can be developed for recreation. City policies already protect lands for infrastructure and preservation of ecosystems, so it is equally important to ensure land is available for recreation.

Most municipalities narrowly define parks as unencumbered lands secured or owned by the municipality suitable for development of park and recreation infrastructure. We define parkland in a similar way:

- Land that is secured, owned, leased or managed through agreement by the city and is primarily for active or programmed recreation
- A whole parcel with defined boundaries and named a park
- Land suitable for park or recreational development like sport fields, play equipment, urban squares, or plazas
- Land that does not have restrictions, sometimes called encumbrances, like environmental preservation or hazard issues (like floodplains, unstable soils or slopes)—we recognize that within the boundary of some of our existing parks there may be natural heritage areas or features, cultural heritage features or other restrictions that are considered part of the park
- Land that’s acquired by the city through a parkland dedication process or another means (i.e., purchased/ donated/ bequeathed) specifically for public park purposes—recognizing criteria for parkland has evolved over time.

### Some exceptions of parkland in our existing inventory

We recognize that parks can serve multiple functions and our criteria, policy and definitions have evolved over time. We acknowledge that there are some existing parks we inventory as parkland but may not meet the whole definition above. It’s important we continue to recognize these spaces as parks as they have a long history of use as parkland. Some examples include Mitchell Woods, Preservation Park and Crane Park, which are all designated NHS in the Official Plan; or Elmira Park, Joe Veroni Park, and Deerpath Park where a portion of the site contains natural features. Redefining historically defined parks is out of scope for this document and is not being considered at this time.

## Acceptable land for parkland dedication

Our Official Plan policies and Parkland Dedication Bylaw include specific requirements for what is and is not considered acceptable as parkland dedication.

Land that is not acceptable includes:

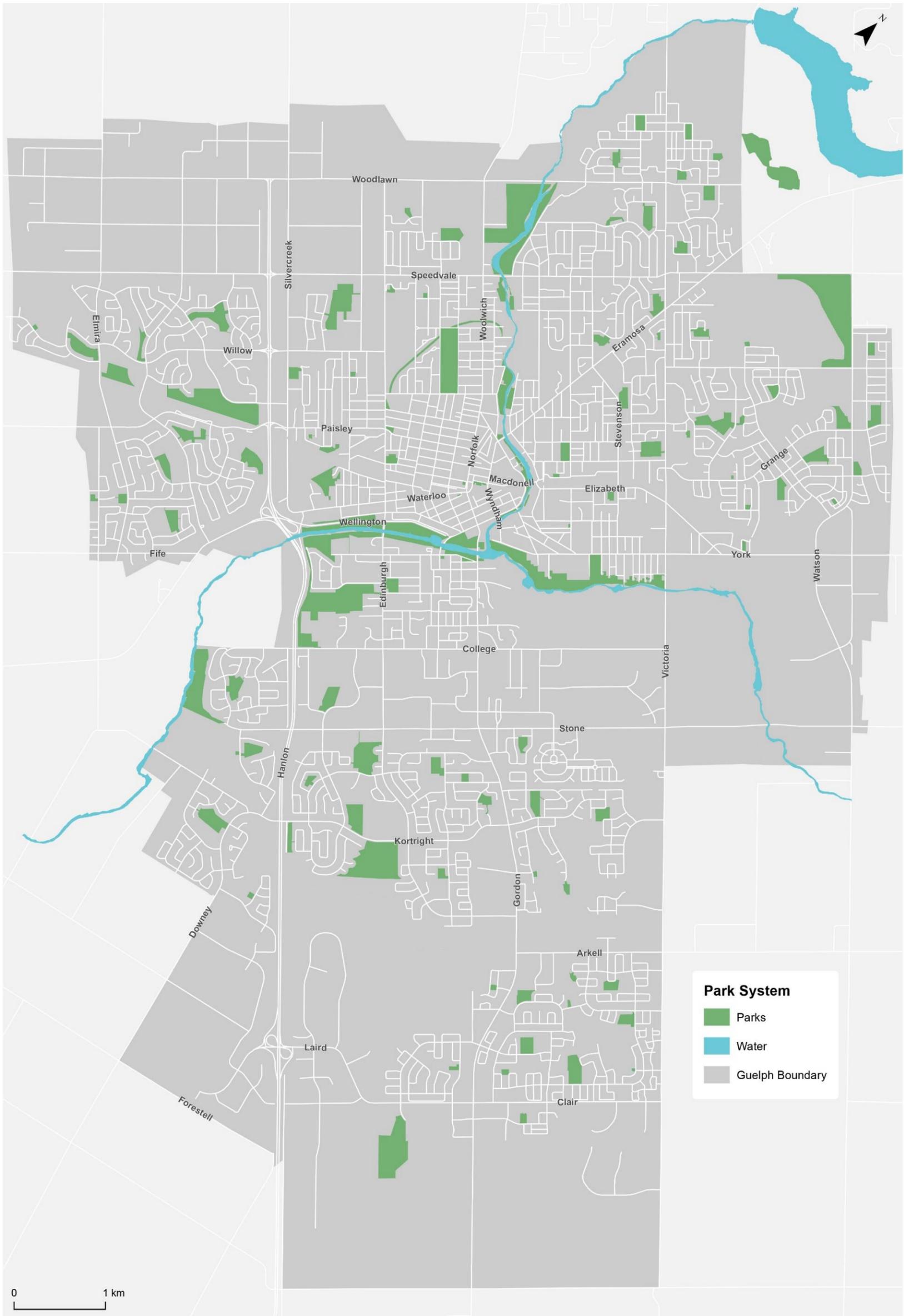
- Land that is identified as part of the city’s Natural Heritage System
- Land that is susceptible to flooding, has poor drainage, erosion issues, extreme slopes or other environmental or physical conditions that would interfere with their potential use as a public park
- Land that is required to accommodate stormwater management facilities, subject to acceptance by the city
- Land that is deemed to be contaminated, subject to acceptance by the city (note that contaminated land shall only be accepted by the City in accordance with the city’s Parkland Dedication Bylaw and ‘Guidelines for Development of Contaminated or Potentially Contaminated Sites’)
- Land that is used or proposed to be used for utility corridors or other infrastructure incompatible with their use as a public park
- Land that is encumbered by easements or other instruments that would unduly restrict or prohibit public use, and
- Land for trails or active transportation purposes

**Figure 8 - Picture of York Road Park**



## Map of Guelph's Park System

**Figure 9 – Guelph's park system map**



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

## A park continuum

There is land in the city that complements our park system but is not considered parkland—we include this other land in what we like to call our ‘park continuum’. The park continuum includes all park-like spaces including parks, NHS land, schools, and many others we discuss in this section.

The park continuum is a helpful way to recognize the importance of other lands that share complementary functions in our community but are not parks. These complementary lands offer similar benefits to our park system and form part of a publicly accessible system of green spaces and contribute to community identity, local character and sense of place. Many of the spaces in the park continuum are also part of our public realm, which are publicly owned spaces that belong to and may be used by everyone.<sup>26</sup>

### Parks for all: an action plan for Canada’s parks community

In ‘Parks for all: an action plan for Canada’s parks community,’ the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Canada Parks Council describe a range of green spaces as the park continuum. The plan says that, “nature—whether for conservation, recreation or sustenance—is the common ground for the parks continuum”.<sup>27</sup> Land reserved for conserving or experiencing nature is considered part of the continuum. The range of park types is wide and includes urban parkettes to national parks to wilderness areas. Each park may have a different function, but with complementary goals of experiencing or conserving nature.

In Guelph, our parks continuum is made up of all outdoor spaces that contribute to human or environmental health, with varying main functions. It’s important to have a term that collectively describes all the green spaces in the city, whether they are considered parks or not. This definition is helpful to understand the range of spaces that help make Guelph a livable and healthy community.

**Figure 10 - Park continuum (human-made, semi-natural, natural)**



<sup>26</sup> [Healthy communities and planning for the public realm \(2016\) OPPI](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Parks for All: An Action Plan \(2017\) Parks Canada](#)

## Guelph park continuum

Our park continuum in Guelph is the land set aside for public outdoor use with a purpose of conserving or experiencing nature. It includes all public outdoor spaces that contribute to the human or environmental health of our community and includes parks as well as the following lands:

### School properties

The public use of school grounds is permitted through Ontario’s [Community use of Schools](#) policy. This policy encourages using schools and school grounds for the mutual benefits of students as well as the local community. The policy says that school-related activities take priority and applies outside of school hours or events.

The city has some joint-use agreements with local school boards—which are in scope for this plan but not part of our inventory of parks. These agreements outline responsibilities related to the maintenance, life cycle or operation of a recreation facility or trails. These are assets that the city maintains on the school board’s behalf, often book them on behalf of local user groups and invest capital funds into maintaining. These amenities represent part of the overall service level the city offers to residents and are not part of the overall park inventory. Some examples include the St. James running track or the sport fields located at Bishop Macdonell Catholic High School.

### Grand River Conservation Authority properties

The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) owns land in the city that is sometimes used for recreation.

Some of these areas are owned by the GRCA but managed through agreement by the city—including Preservation Park, Guelph Lake Sport fields and Silvercreek Park. These properties are included in our park system.

There are also some areas that are owned and managed by the GRCA or other third parties, like Guelph Lake (excluding the sport fields). These areas which are not under agreement with the city are outside the scope of this plan.

### University of Guelph and Arboretum land

The University of Guelph and the Arboretum have their own network of green spaces including outdoor recreation facilities, urban squares and trails. Many of these spaces are publicly accessible, programmed or bookable by residents. The recreation facilities offered by the University supplement the city’s inventory and help fulfill a local need to have some spaces available for advanced sports. The University of Guelph and the Arboretum lands are not a focus of the plan.

## Open spaces, stormwater management ponds and rights-of-way

There are some other green spaces that can also be considered part of the park continuum including open spaces, most stormwater management ponds, stormwater infrastructure and amenity spaces within rights-of-way. These are not a focus of this plan.

## City trails

Parks and trails are considered separate components of the OSS. Although trails located outside of the right-of-way are part of the city's OSS, they are not part of our park system unless they are located within a park. The [Guelph Trail Master Plan](#) is a Council-approved strategy that guides how we plan, design, fund, build and maintain Guelph's trail system. Our trail system helps link the park system together and creates opportunities for active transportation. Trails are not a focus of this plan.

## Natural Heritage System

Guelph's NHS complements the park system. The NHS's main function is to protect, maintain and enhance the Guelph's biological, hydrological and geological functions and to sustain local biodiversity for current and future generations.

The NHS works together with our park system to offer limited but compatible passive recreation and connection to nature. The parks' operations department, namely the Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes division, manages and maintains city-owned NHS. Our [Natural Heritage Action Plan](#) provides direction and guidance for NHS lands in the city, and therefore NHS lands are not a focus of this plan.

## River system

The river system is part of the NHS but is important to specifically note as being part of the park continuum. The Speed and Eramosa Rivers are part of the Grand River Watershed and are designated [Canadian Heritage Rivers](#). Although the primary function of the rivers is to support the complex ecosystems that provide habitat for plants, fish and wildlife, the Canadian Heritage River designation recognizes the secondary function of passive recreation. There are also several parks that are adjacent to the NHS along the river. Making connections to the river and NHS system while also protecting and enhancing the NHS is an important consideration for the park system.

The river system is also especially important to Indigenous people. Guelph is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people today. The merging rivers was a meeting point for Original Peoples and it is important to engage Indigenous people early on when undertaking work in and around the rivers.

## Why all the park continuum is not considered parkland

Having a wide range of spaces for people to experience is important to a healthy community. We recognize that land can have multiple functions and offers a variety of benefits to our community, but some land is not primarily for human enjoyment or recreation, sometimes this is secondary. Therefore, we include all green spaces in our park continuum, but not necessarily our park system.

We differentiate parks from other land to make sure we continue to have dedicated space for recreation. We also recognize that different types of land have different functions in our community. Some land is conveyed to the city, while other land is owned and operated by others. We also differentiate this land because of the tools we have to get the land or the policies, legislation or requirements that govern it.

## Our level of service and park continuum

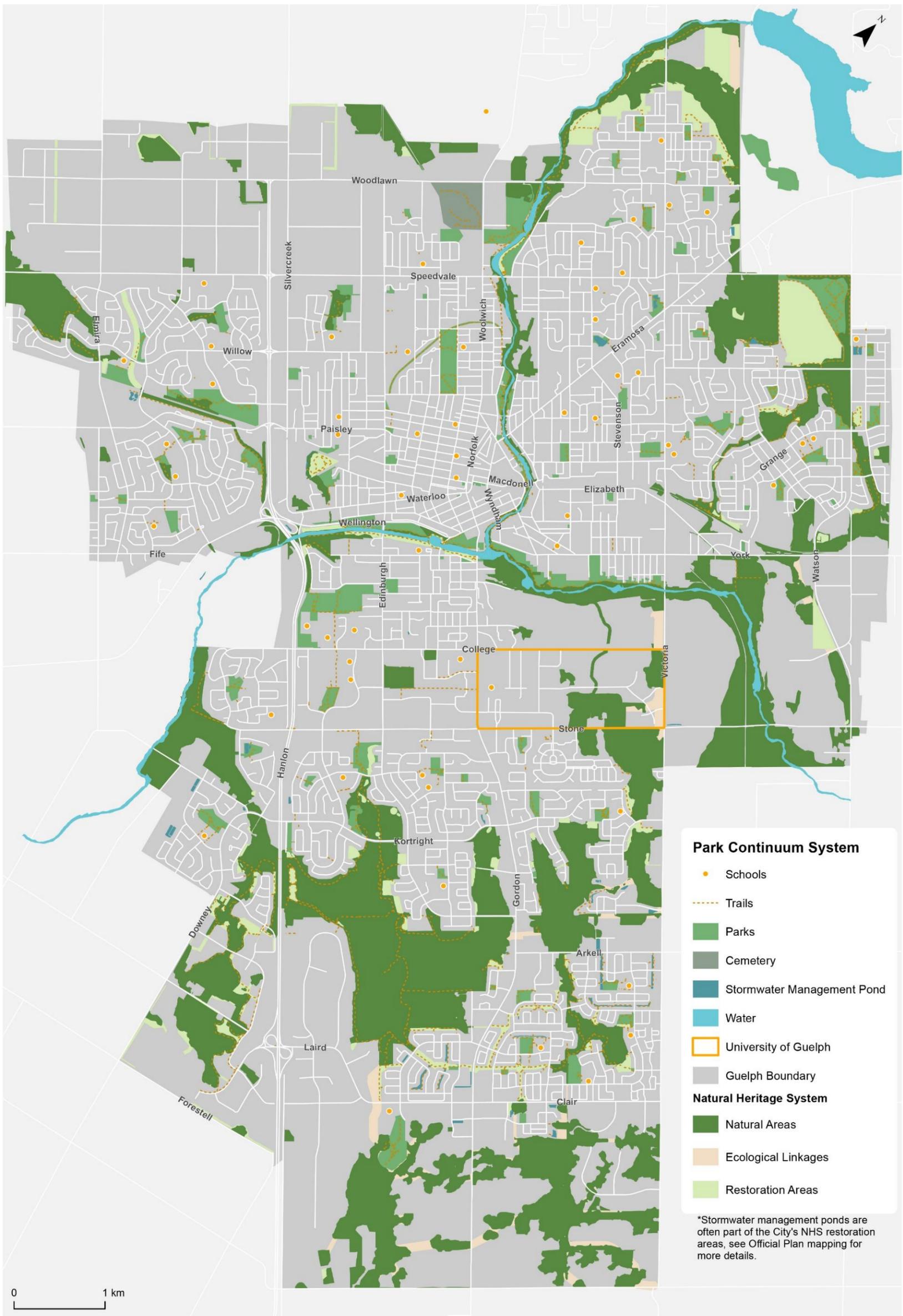
Our level of service is a reasonable and measurable expectation for the type and quality of service we provide to the community. In the case of parks there are several things we can measure to understand our level of service, like the amount of parkland per person, number and quality of our assets and how much money we spend per person on park operation.

When we talk about park level of service, we are referring to our inventory and our park definition, including the exceptions we have noted. We don't include the other land from the park continuum in our level of service assessments.

Our decision-making should recognize that there is other land in the city that can provide similar benefits. Although we can't count this land toward our level of service, we should be able to consider the whole system as we plan for the future.

# Map of Guelph's Park Continuum

## Figure 11 - Guelph park system with other land



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021



## Framework: vision for the future

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### Building a framework

A vision, values and pillars have been developed for our PRMP that also apply to our Park Plan. Our vision and goals will set direction for the future and help us make informed decisions over the next ten years and beyond.

Our framework builds on the priorities and directions of our Strategic Plan and the longer-term vision of the Community Plan and Official Plan. It helps us deliver on each strategic priority in a different way. Within this framework, we have highlighted places where our Park Plan goals support our Strategic Plan priorities.

The city ensures parks and outdoor recreation opportunities exist for all residents. Our community recreation needs will be examined more broadly in the PRMP. For the purposes of this plan we acquire, build, program, and maintain parks for all.

### Our vision for parks

After listening to our community, we understand our core beliefs and top priorities. We took the vision outlined in the Strategic and Community Plans as the foundation for the vision for parks and recreation. Our new vision outlines our desired future:

**Parks and recreation are essential to everyday life in Guelph. To be future-ready we need parks that are sustainable, inclusive, adaptable and have a built-in ability respond to a growing and diverse community. We need to connect people to each other, active living and the environment.**

### Our values

Building on Guelph's corporate values, the Parks and Recreation departments' service delivery is based on these value statements:

- Participation and inclusion of all citizens
- Well maintained parks and facilities
- Effective management and sustainability of resources
- Fairness and equity
- Healthy and engaged community
- Protection of the environment

## Pillars from our Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Our framework includes six pillars that support our vision for parks and recreation. They help provide direction for future action plans and decision-making. The Park Plan pillars align with the Strategic Plan priorities of Building our Future, Sustaining our Future, and Working Together for our Future.

### We nurture a healthy and vibrant community

Parks and outdoor recreation facilities help keep us healthy both physically and mentally. Parks offer an important opportunity to participate in physical recreation—through both programmed and unprogrammed activities. Physical activity can reduce or prevent health problems and parks can help people get outside and moving for low or no cost at all.

Guelph residents feel a sense of stewardship for their parks and feel empowered to contribute towards positive change. For many community members, leisure and culture are tied to our green spaces.



#### **Building our future**

Working to enhance community well-being and safety through direct service and program delivery

### All people can participate in recreation

Guelph residents should feel welcome in our parks with opportunities for recreation for all ages, abilities, backgrounds and genders.

We value inclusion as a corporation, which makes us “stronger for our differences.” There is new awareness about systemic inequity and an increased desire to create equity of opportunity, safety and inclusion for all in our community. We are committed to improving the safety and inclusiveness of our spaces through programming, education, activities, events, and enhanced park design.



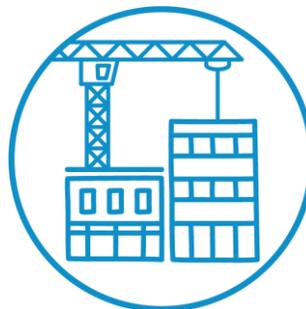
#### **Building our future**

Working to enhance community well-being and safety through direct service and program delivery

## Recreation facilities and parks are welcoming and meaningful places for all people

Parks and recreation facilities are an important part of our public realm. Outdoor spaces like parks and trails can create perfect opportunities for social connection—either through intentional get-togethers or casual meetings. It’s important that everyone feels welcome and that the spaces we provide help facilitate this.

Activated and interesting spaces provide opportunities for social interaction and help differentiate Guelph from other cities. Our parks need to be designed or reshaped to nurture social well-being, provide landmark beauty and offer a safe place where everyone belongs.



### **Building our future**

Working to enhance community well-being and safety through direct service and program delivery

## Infrastructure is maintained, sustainable and responsive to community changes

A functioning park system is made of different spaces, places, recreation opportunities and qualities. This diversity brings with it challenges to providing sustainable operations practices in the future. We will need strong asset management and operation plans that are backed by long-term financial and resource strategies.

As our populations grows, we will also need to reshape our parks and facilities to meet new and emerging needs and service level expectations. We will need to provide an optimal level of service that meets the community needs and desires, is sustainable, affordable and realistic. Meeting current service demands, while updating and expanding our park system will be an opportunity in the future.



### **Building our future**

Managing existing infrastructure

Continuing working to develop new assets that respond to Guelph’s growing and changing social, economic and environmental needs.

## We support the protection, restoration and management of the natural environment

A healthy community is one where we have both intact ecosystems as well as places for people to enjoy nature. We will develop a park system that helps protect our NHS from degradation by offering places for people to connect with nature in our parks. We will also expand our urban forest and look for spaces outside of the NHS to plant more trees to help achieve our goal for 40 percent canopy cover.

Our park system also presents an opportunity to build a climate resilient city. Parks can help protect against the effects of climate change like extreme weather events, flooding, intense heat and poor air quality using green infrastructure and expanding our urban forest.



### Sustaining our future

Protecting the green infrastructure provided by woodlands, wetlands, watercourses and other elements of Guelph’s natural heritage system.

Investing in “green” infrastructure to prepare Guelph for the effects of climate change

Increasing Guelph’s tree canopy

## We work together with our community

We will work with our community to listen, learn and to help improve service delivery and communication. Developing partnerships with local organizations, private partners, schools and residents is important to the work we do. We can develop new spaces or programs through new service-delivery models that would otherwise be unavailable due to financial or resource limitations.

We have an opportunity and responsibility to listen to our community as we grow and improve our park system. There is also an important opportunity be more intentional and take action to address systemic inequalities to help address these issues moving forward.



### Working together for our future

Developing strategic partnerships with stakeholders to improve service delivery

Exploring new funding options, service-delivery models and partnerships to ease taxes for residents and businesses



## Our community now and future

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To plan our park system, we need to understand who is living here and how that might change in the future. New people can bring new life to our park system and change the way we once used our public spaces. Some areas of our city are growing denser, while other areas are being developed for the first time. It is critical we understand the ways our community may grow and change.

### **Guelph now, as a village of 100 people**

Through the Community Plan, we developed an easy-to-understand profile of our community members called [Village of 100 people](#). The infographic-based community profile shows us what Guelph would look like if Guelph was only 100 people. In this village of 100 people, each person represents 1,318 Guelphites based on the 2016 Census data.

#### Key considerations for this plan

- Guelph's population is aging - Guelph's median age is 38.3, in 2011 it was 37.7
- Guelph has more young adults aged 20-24 than many similar, southern Ontario communities
- 77 out of 100 people speak English as their mother tongue—the next top 5 languages spoken at home are Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Italian and French
- People have many different ethnic origins, out of 100 people, 3 people are First Nations, Inuit and or Métis Peoples, 27 are North American (non-First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples), 72 are European, 16 are Asian, 1 is Caribbean, 2 are Latin American, 2 are African, and 1 is Oceanian
- Guelph has a very diverse economy and has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country
- The median household income is \$67,829, yet 11 out of 100 people live in poverty
- 69 percent of people live and work in Guelph (10 percent work downtown) and 31 percent live in Guelph but work outside Guelph
- Guelph is a tourist destination with about 1.7 million visitors yearly; specifically tracked were 163,205 sporting event visitors, 49,757 festival visitors, 38,202 visitors.

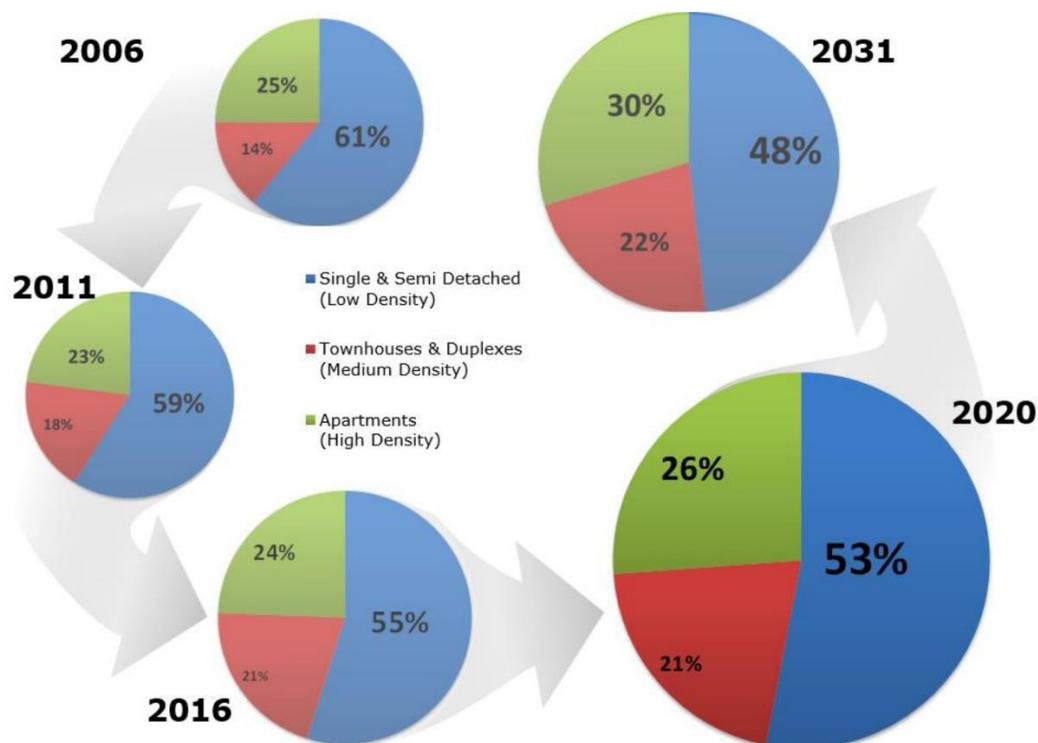
## Guelph in the future, we are growing

Guelph is among the top 20 fastest growing cities in Ontario. Our population is forecasted to increase from 140,000 people to 203,000 by 2051<sup>28</sup>—over 60,000 people. An additional 5,000 people are being planned for through the annexation of the Dolime Quarry lands, bringing the forecast to 208,000 people by 2051. About half of this growth is planned to be accommodated in our existing built-up area through infill development, redevelopment and intensification. More residents will mean increased demand on parks and outdoor recreation. We will need to use our land more efficiently, expand our park system and create new spaces to accommodate sports and outdoor recreation.

### The way people are choosing to live is changing

As we grow more people are choosing to live in medium or high-density housing types like townhouses and apartments. This change to the housing type is an important consideration for the location, types and services we provide in parks and recreation. People choosing to live in more dense areas may seek out parks in different ways than people living in detached homes with private outdoor spaces.

**Figure 12- Guelph housing mix: total housing stock, 2006-2031<sup>29</sup>**

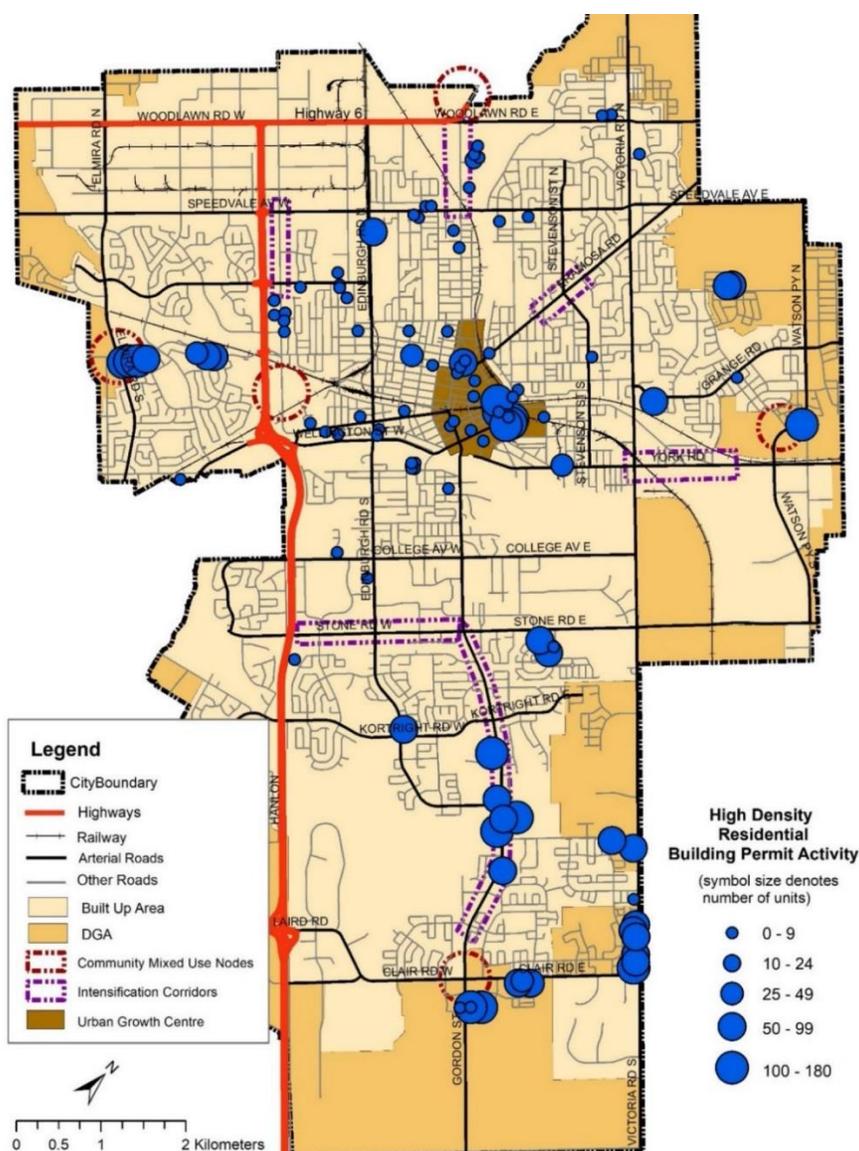


<sup>28</sup> [Guelph Growth Management Strategy](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Growth Management and Affordable Housing Monitoring Report 2020](#)

Over the last decade the share of new developments labelled as high-density has increased substantially. High density housing is typically apartment buildings with 3-10 storeys and density of 100-150 units per hectare. We expect this trend to continue beyond 2031. It's important to understand where these high-density developments are happening as they can have an impact on the services and parks in that area. Since 2009, most of the medium and high-density housing has been in the built-up area. This has been clustered near downtown, near intensification corridors, the University of Guelph or close to highways and major arterial roads where we have transit.

**Figure 13 - Historical High-Density Housing Growth, 2009 to 2019<sup>30</sup>**

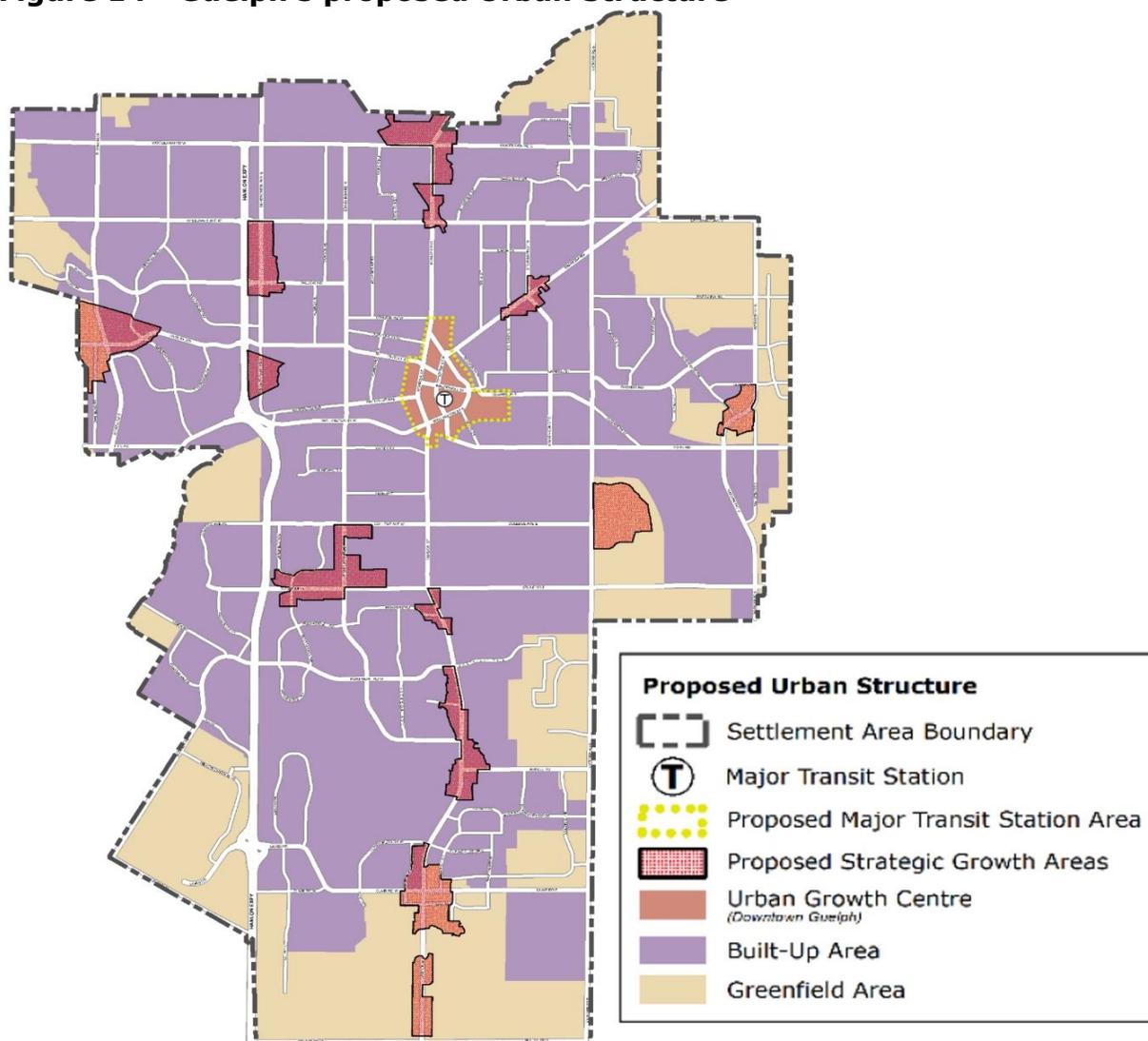


<sup>30</sup> [Shaping Guelph – Housing Analysis and Strategy](#)

## Guelph’s Urban Structure prioritizes areas of growth

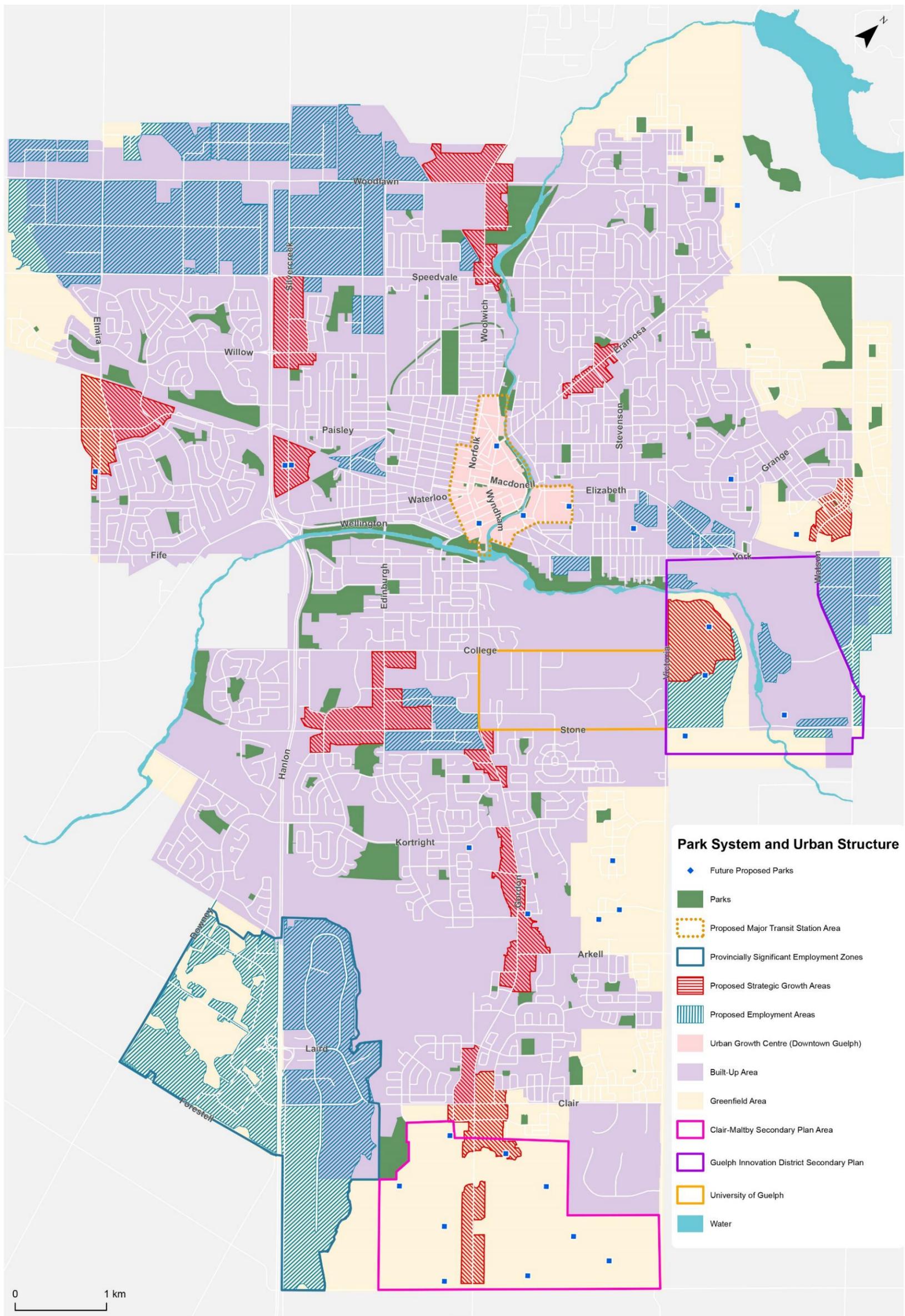
Guelph’s newly proposed urban structure helps prioritize areas of growth— through an Urban Growth Centre (Downtown) and Strategic Growth Areas (shown in red and peach in the map). These areas are intended to be focal points in neighbourhoods and include a mix of uses, intermodal hubs and medium to high density housing. Managing growth and supporting residents’ park and recreation needs will require innovative solutions and strong policy directions. We have included a map showing the urban structure with our existing and planned park system to understand where we might need to acquire parks in areas of growth. This growth data will help staff determine how to plan for future park opportunities.

**Figure 14 - Guelph's proposed Urban Structure<sup>31</sup>**



<sup>31</sup> [Guelph’s proposed Urban Structure map](#)

**Figure 15 - Map of Guelph's Proposed Urban Structure and Park System (note final approval to follow after provincial approval)**



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

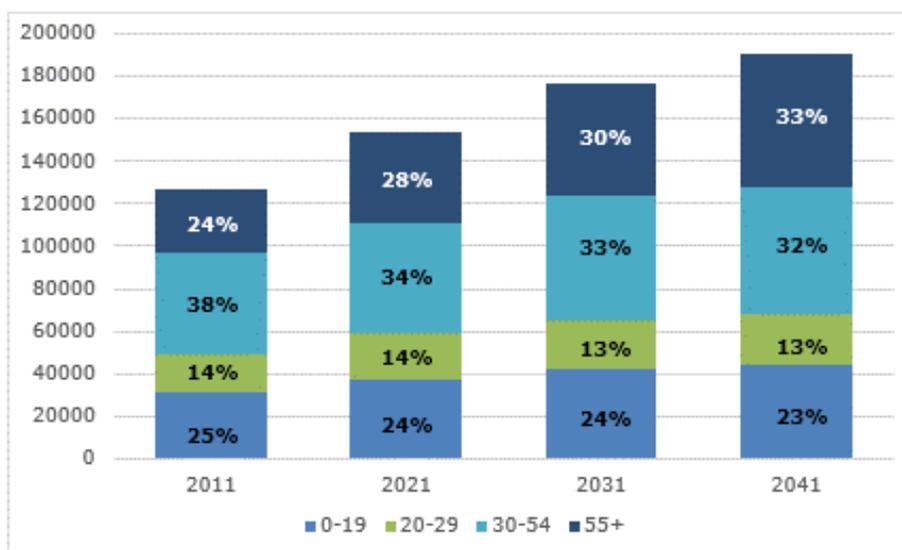
## Planning for our future community members

### Guelph will have a larger population of older adults

It is forecasted that by 2041, Guelph will have more than 62,000 adults aged 55 years and older, representing more than 33 percent of all residents.<sup>32</sup> That trend is forecasted to continue to 2051. The impact of this population shift on the delivery of park and recreation services presents both opportunities and challenges. In some cases, retirees may remain more active for much longer and will have the income, time, and health to participate in leisure activities.

Guelph’s [Older Adult Strategy](#) will continue to be an important guiding document for Guelph to be a place to live and age well.

**Figure 16 - Population forecasts by age group**



### Guelph is going to be more diverse

Ontario received about 44 percent of Canada’s total immigration in 2018/19. Of that total, the Greater Golden Horseshoe area received 88 percent.<sup>33</sup> This pattern of migration and immigration is forecasted to continue to 2051 and is anticipated to be one of the key ways we will grow. Welcoming newcomers to Canada will be an important consideration as we plan for park and recreation amenities, facilities and services. Guelph recently partnered with the Local Immigration Partnership to better understand barriers to recreation for newcomers.

<sup>32</sup> [Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2041, Technical Report](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051, Technical Report](#)

## Planning for equity-deserving people in our community

We need to ensure we are providing park services for equity-deserving people in our community. We recognize that historically, some people or groups have not been well-represented in parks and outdoor recreation planning. We also know that economic, social and environmental conditions have resulted in an uneven distribution of opportunities. There is new awareness about systemic inequity and an increased desire to create equity of opportunity, safety and inclusion for all.

Creating equity in our park system means talking with those most affected about removing systemic barriers to access and participation. All Guelph residents should be able to access and use parks comfortably anywhere in the city. As a municipal government, we have an important opportunity and responsibility to listen, learn and take action to help address these issues. In our parks, we want to make sure we are representing everyone and ensuring we are providing service equitably.

### **Community Plan “We are Community”**

We heard through ongoing conversations about the Community Plan that we need a more ambitious, immediate, and necessary goal related to equity and anti-racism. To develop a goal we consciously unlearned and relearned from those in the community that have the knowledge, expertise and lived experience to change systems. A new section called “We are Community” has been added to the Community Plan to address what we heard.

This new section of the Community Plan speaks of a vision for how Guelph must work as a united community. It also speaks to the importance of building the relationships and trust necessary for the sustained effort required to eradicate the racism and colonialism embedded in our structural systems.

We will continue develop new ways of working together with the community and continually improving our service delivery with what we hear.



## Spatial Analysis

In order start to understand the needs of equity-deserving groups, we mapped areas in the city where they may be located using data from Statistics Canada called the Ontario Marginalization Index (ON-Marg).<sup>34</sup> Mapping and understanding demographic and geographic patterns is complex, sensitive and an evolving task. By mapping data, we can get a sense of geographic differences or inequities in our community.

Our goal with identifying and using this information is to not to single-out areas or populations, but rather to recognize where our park system can be improved. Awareness will help us ask better questions now and in the future. We wish to listen to and acknowledge the voices that need to be heard.

In Guelph, populations likely to be equity-deserving can include:

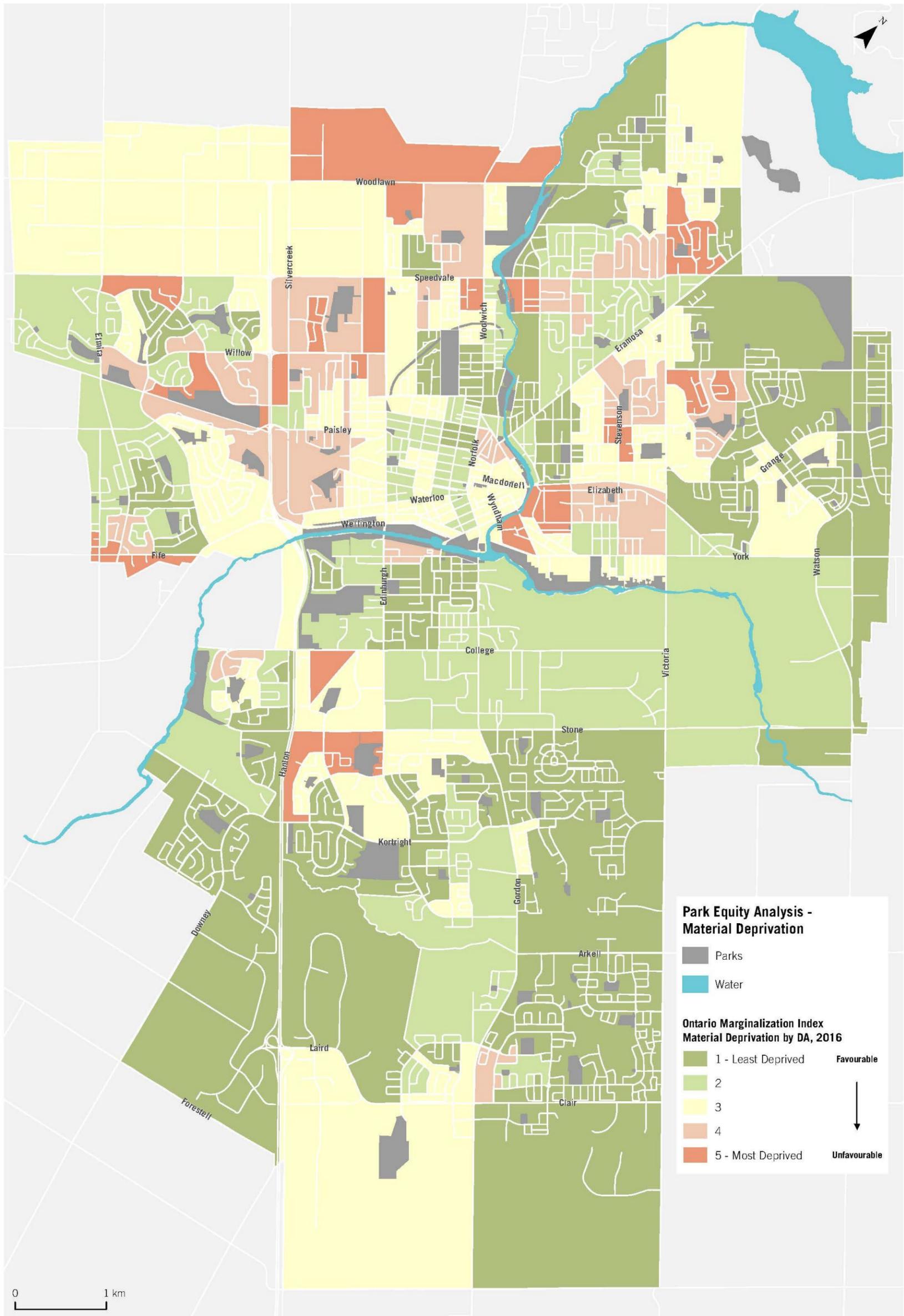
- Visible minorities
- 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- Low-income individuals and families
- Older adults
- Youth and teens
- People with disabilities
- People with different body types
- People who identify as female
- Newcomers
- Renters
- People experiencing homelessness

We value inclusion as a corporation, which makes us “stronger for our differences.” Incorporating equity analysis into decision-making processes is an important step in helping to ensure that services and investments are being planned and implemented in a way that equitably serves our community.

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<sup>34</sup> [2016 Ontario Marginalization Index](#) and [Canadian Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)

**Figure 17 – Park equity analysis – Ontario Marginalization Index, Material Deprivation - 2016**



Data Source: City of Guelph and Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population  
Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

## How our parks and recreation needs are changing

### How we get parkland is going to change as we grow

How we will get parkland in the future is going to change. The way our city is growing is very different than how it was developed in the 1970's and 1980's. Urban sprawling neighbourhoods are being redeveloped into more compact, pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use forms of development.

Our traditional parkland dedication models are becoming less effective at providing parkland in growing areas. Smaller development sites, rising land costs and infill development are resulting in less parkland being acquired. Housing affordability is also a growing concern for many residents. Being able to provide homes for people while also balancing other infrastructure needs like parks, stormwater management facilities and roads is more difficult.

The last few areas of greenfield development in our city, namely the Guelph Innovation District and Clair-Maltby, have been largely planned out. To get adequate parkland in those areas we will need to rely on a variety of tools and strong financial strategies. As our city grows, we need to ensure we continue to provide adequate park spaces to ensure a livable city in the future.

### There will be more emphasis on quality than quantity of parkland

As we add 46 percent of our population to our built-up area, some of our parks are going to have to work harder to service our community. Some parks in the city will see higher use and will need more amenities and different operational practices. We will also need to add or expand parks in these areas or provide better connections to our parks. There will be more emphasis placed on the quality of our parks rather than the quantity of parkland in the future.

Developing strong asset management plans will also be very important. Historically, municipalities made investments to keep up with growth, while delaying investment in maintenance. Some of our assets are nearing the end their useful service life and will need to be replaced. We have a good asset management awareness program, but we will need to look at new funding models to be able to improve our parks in the future. Being able to balance growth and asset management will be important to ensure that as park use intensifies with infill development, parks can be maintained and if required, improved to continue to meet community needs through sustainable decision making.

## Creating climate-resilient cities through green infrastructure

Many cities are looking to their park systems for ways to combat the effects of climate change. As the frequency of flooding, extreme weather, intense heat and poor air quality are increasing, we are looking for opportunities to help manage these effects in new and innovative ways—collectively called green infrastructure. Green infrastructure are vegetative systems and green features or technologies that protect ecosystem functions and contribute to clean air and water.

### Green infrastructure

Green spaces help soak up and filter rainwater rather than it outletting into our rivers and lakes. A trend in park planning is to use the ‘absorbent’ nature of green spaces to help mitigate stormwater in our cities. There may be opportunity to integrate ‘green infrastructure’ projects like rain gardens or bioswales into parks, in existing areas, to help reduce flooding and improve water quality. In our newly planned areas, ‘green infrastructure’ is integrated and planned for in other areas of the public realm.

As green infrastructure is considered for our park spaces, we must ensure that the primary function of parks is upheld. There are also other factors that need to be considered in the decision-making process, including: potential higher maintenance and infrastructure costs, balancing needs of park users, monitoring and evaluation processes. Overall, there should not be a net-loss of recreation function of parkland as new technologies are integrated.

**Figure 18 – A landscaped rain garden in a park**



## Urban forestry and park naturalization

There is a growing trend to include naturalized spaces and increase canopy cover in urban areas. More and more residents are looking to replace grass on private properties and in public spaces with naturalized spaces to support local biodiversity. Also, our [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) sets a goal to increase the city’s canopy cover to 40 percent and parks offer a perfect opportunity. Since the 1990’s we have been working with local community groups to add small pockets and strips of native plants into our park spaces.

Research shows that even small projects can make a difference by adding biodiversity, connecting habitat and creating opportunities for local stewardship.<sup>35</sup> Overall they can help improve ecosystem function and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

When planning small naturalization projects, it is important to keep in mind that we need to preserve opens spaces for park amenities and to allow people to participate in spontaneous physical activities like kite flying, kicking a ball and playing tag. We need to balance tree planting and naturalization projects with the recreation function of parks.

**Figure 19 - Photo of community planting of pollinator species in Eastview Community Park<sup>36</sup>**



<sup>35</sup> <https://ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2020/themes/nature/stories/small-is-mighty>

<sup>36</sup> Photo credit: Victoria MacPhail Co-chair of Pollination Guelph

## Emerging trends and activities in park use

Future direction for our park system is based on evolving trends. As we grow and change, our community will be interested in new activities and may want to use the park system in new ways. Understanding trends and best practices helps us to plan and allocate our resources better in the future. We will need to revisit and engage our community regularly to monitor these trends and respond to evolving interests.

A few examples have been included in the Park Plan. The PRMP will dive deeper into the emerging trends related to park infrastructure and outdoor recreation.

### **People want complete and healthy neighbourhoods**

Parks help keep us grounded to our community and to nature. Being able to access many different types of spaces is essential to our neighbourhoods and the fabric of our city. Residents told us through the Community Plan that we love green, walkable neighbourhoods where we are connected to each other and can continue to live in our own neighbourhoods as we age. We don't want to lose our 'Guelphiness' as our city continues to grow rapidly.<sup>37</sup>

### **We need to be able to use parks in all seasons and times of day**

As people's lives become busier, residents are favouring activities that can be done spontaneously at any time of day. People are participating in organized activities and sports less than before, although, local demand for organized activities is increasing with population growth.

Residents are looking for activities in all seasons and even extending into the evening. Being able to provide more opportunities for winter activities and programming will impact the operation of our parks. Lighting has also become an important consideration for our parks as people are choosing to be active in the evening during winter or shoulder seasons months when the days are shorter.

### **Figure 20 - Riverside Park skate trail**



<sup>37</sup> [Guelph's Community Plan](#)

## **Reshaping parks to make room for more people or new amenities**

As our population grows, especially in our built-up areas, more people will be using our existing parks. We will need to reshape our existing parks to provide more recreation opportunities and new activities for people to enjoy. There is a need to make our spaces multi-functional, flexible and, multi-generational and with equitable use.

Increased use could lead to increased maintenance needs, different operating practices, potential user conflicts and possible deterioration of existing natural areas if not managed sustainably.

We may also need to optimize some of our existing assets or remove them to make more room for emerging sports like cricket or pickleball. Planning for these changes will not be immediate, but we can start to understand the impacts of these facilities as we plan for the future.

## **Our preferences for park amenities and playgrounds are changing**

People are looking to play differently in our parks. As people are looking for more spontaneous activities, they are also looking for infrastructure to support it. Things like food trucks, natural playgrounds, outdoor kitchens, fire pits, ping pong table tennis, dog parks, bocce courts, adventure courses and outdoor fitness equipment are becoming increasingly popular. Some cities are looking to partner with organizations to provide these amenities or provide rental opportunities through libraries. We are also building more accessible and inclusive playgrounds as we life-cycle old infrastructure or build new parks.

**Figure 21 - Natural and accessible playground at Riverside Park**



## **People want to connect with nature**

Stewardship activities and opportunities to interact with nature are becoming increasingly popular. Many residents are requesting naturalized areas in our parks and opportunities to contribute to this themselves. Community gardens, pollinator spaces and stewardship programming are all seeing increases in participation.

## **Park activation is almost as important than as infrastructure needs**

Creating programming and activities in park is important for our community wellbeing. Social isolation and loneliness are growing concerns for Canadians as more people are living alone. Park programming leads to increased park use and all the social and health benefits that come from being outdoors with other people.

**Figure 22 - York Road Park community garden with accessible garden beds**





## How we expand and fund parkland

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Parks will continue to be an important part of our city in the future. The way our city is forecasted to change will impact our park system's accessibility, growth, services and infrastructure. There are a number of policies and tools that guide how we expand, develop and operate our park system.

### Expanding our park system

One way we get land for parks is when development occurs. We use a [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) and [Official Plan policies](#) allowed by [the Ontario Planning Act](#) to require planning and development applications to transfer land to us for parks and public recreation or provide cash-in-lieu of parkland so parks or recreational spaces can be purchased.

We can also get land for parks by purchasing it with parkland dedication funds, purchasing land with tax dollars, repurposing other city-owned land into parkland, or through leasing/partnerships with other agencies and governments.

### Planning Act policies

[The Ontario Planning Act](#) establishes the authority for municipalities to require development or redevelopment to contribute to the park system, either through:

- Transfer of land for parks or other public recreation purposes; or
- Provide payment in lieu of parkland (cash-in-lieu (CIL)).

We call these policies collectively 'parkland dedication'. There are three sections of the Planning Act that refer to collecting land for parks, these are:

- Section 42, which applies to Development or Redevelopment
- Section 51.1, which applies to Plan of Subdivision or Plan of Condominiums, and
- Section 53, which applies to Consent applications

### Section 42 and Parkland Dedication Bylaw

Section 42 policies apply to development or redevelopment that typically happen in the built-up area. The amount of parkland dedication required (land or CIL) is based on the type of development (commercial, industrial, residential) and rates outlined by the Planning Act.

Parkland dedication rates are typically a percent of the development or calculated by the number of residential units proposed. Section 42 allows municipalities discretion on what type of rate and how best to apply these rates through a local bylaw. Each municipality adopts slightly different ways to apply parkland dedication that are specific to their local needs.

[Guelph's Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) uses policies in Section 42 to detail our specific conditions, exemptions, rates and limits for parkland dedication (land or CIL) within the City of Guelph.

For residential development, one of the rates available to municipalities is referred to as the 'alternative rate.' The alternative rate uses the number of dwelling units to calculate parkland dedication instead of calculating it as a percent of the development. The alternative rate can often lead to higher parkland dedication being required of the developer.

Parkland dedication is collected the day before the issuance of a building permit. Typically Guelph's parkland dedication is bylaw is applied to developments or redevelopments that are reviewed through a [Site Plan Application](#) or a [Building Permit Application](#).

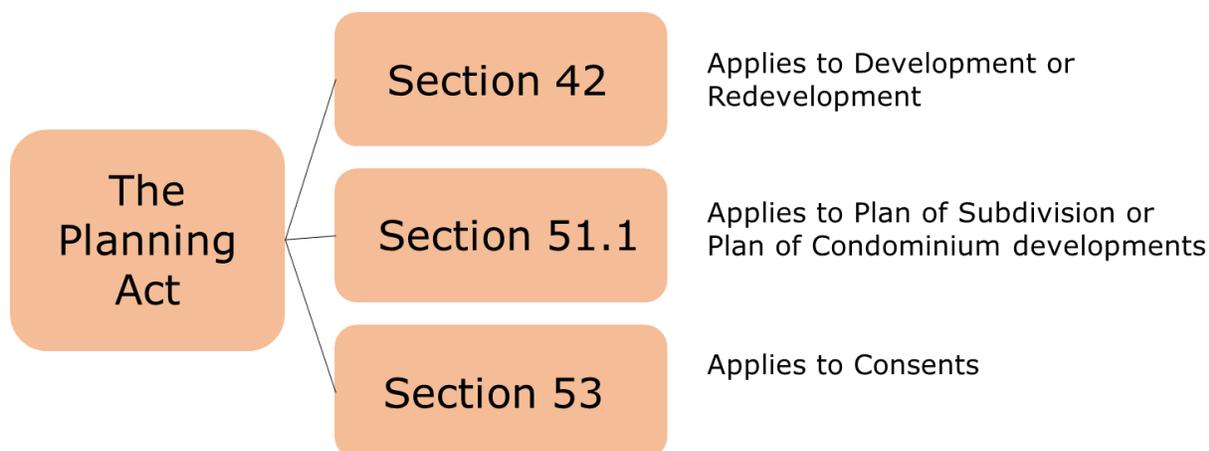
Our Parkland Dedication Bylaw was updated in 2019 following a public consultation process. Changes to legislation by the Province require the city to pass a 'new' Parkland Dedication Bylaw in 2022. We are following the legislated requirements to do this; however, we anticipate our bylaw will likely remain aligned to what we heard from the community, staff and Council at that time.

### **Section 51.1 and 53**

Section 51.1 policies apply to Plan of Subdivision or Plan of Condominiums and Section 53 policies apply to Consents.

Similar to Section 42, the parkland dedication rates in Section 51.1 and 53 are calculated as a percent of the development or calculated by the number of residential units proposed. Guelph's parkland dedication bylaw does not apply to either of these types of planning applications.

**Figure 23 - The Planning Act sections relating to parkland dedication**



### Official Plan policies

To support parkland dedication policies in the Planning Act, municipalities must have parkland dedication policies in their Official Plan.

[Guelph’s Official Plan](#) provides direction for parkland dedication practices and are in line with Planning Act policies. The Official Plan also provides direction on parkland acquisition strategies, the type of land that is acceptable for park purposes, the size of parcel needed for parks and how CIL funds will be used by the municipality.

### Purchase of land for parks

Municipalities can purchase land for parks, using funds from the property tax base, reserves, debt financing or from parkland dedication CIL funds collected through development.

Staff will need to develop prioritization criteria for how best to deploy city resources, including the CIL fund, to acquire new parkland. The funds used to make strategic acquisitions, such as future community parks identified in the Guelph Innovation District Secondary Plan and the Clair Maltby Secondary Plan and the downtown park identified in the Downtown Secondary Plan will need to be assessed. Acquisition strategies should also evaluate how to include highly programmable parks such as new sportsfield parks/complexes to address growing population and changing demographics will need to be included in this criteria. Parkland dedication funds, also known as CIL, are just one tool available to staff to make these strategic acquisitions, and more tools will be needed to meet current service level expectations.

## Internal transfers of city-owned land

Sometimes municipalities own land for purposes other than parkland. Municipalities may repurpose this land for park purposes.

## Leasing and partnerships with other agencies

There are a number of examples where we currently partner with other agencies to provide parkland in Guelph. One example is Silvercreek Park near the skatepark. The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) owns the land, but the city manages this property through agreement with the GRCA. As we grow our park system there may be more opportunities to pursue similar arrangements.

## Funding park development and operation

Park development and operation are funded mostly under operating and capital budgets. Through our budget planning we identify short- and long-term costs that are approved through annual multi-year budget process. A priority of the Strategic Plan is to “develop a long-term financial and resource strategy that is achievable and affordable.”

## Funding new park and infrastructure development

### Growth (development)

Areas of growth are either located in greenfield areas (subdivisions, secondary plans) or in the built-up boundary (redevelopment or infill development). Growth is defined as providing the existing level of service to a larger number of residents. Municipalities in Ontario use Development Charges (DCs) to recover certain costs associated with growth. Developers building houses, subdivisions, shopping centres, industrial parks and other developments are charged DCs which help the city pay for the additional municipal services required—things like parks. Parks in areas of growth are funded primarily by DCs or by in-kind contributions from developers such as donating land.

### City building

City Building is a primarily tax supported funding strategy that that represents enhancements to the city’s existing service levels. In the case of parks, these improved park infrastructure projects are typically in existing areas. These types of projects are funded from primarily from tax supported capital or other sources such as grants. For every dollar invested in City Building projects, there are also increased operating costs which could also increase the tax cost.

The way Guelph is growing is changing. Forty-six percent of our growth is proposed to happen in the built-up area. Smaller, infill development sites will be more

common which means there will be less opportunity for these sites to generate parkland. Often parkland dedication will result in cash in lieu (CIL) rather than actual land being conveyed in the immediate area.

To meet our recreation needs without adding more parkland in these particular areas, we may need to rely on City Building funds or other blended funding models to increase or improve service in our existing parks. Park infrastructure improvements and intensification of our park system is a strategy we will explore to help meet recreation and park needs as a result of growth.

## Funding improvements to existing parks

### **Infrastructure renewal**

To make improvements to our existing trails or to replace park infrastructure at the end of their useful life, we use an infrastructure renewal fund. The city's Infrastructure Renewal Strategy has one main goal, ensuring funding levels are sufficient to meet the maintenance and replacement needs of all city infrastructure.

Infrastructure renewal is replacement and not driven by growth. It is primarily tax funded as part of our Corporate Asset Management Plan.

### **On-going operation, maintenance and repairs**

To keep our parks in good shape or to plough trails in winter this is supported by the city's operating budget. The operating budget is primarily tax supported.

## Additional funding programs

There are a number of private, provincial and federal funding programs that can help with park development. These include things like Ontario Builds, Federal Gas Tax, and Infrastructure Canada.

Funding for improvements and ongoing maintenance could also be funded partially through volunteers and donations, either from individuals or service clubs and park groups.

Although these funding strategies can reduce capital or operating investment, they may result in reallocating staff time or the need for different resources. This could mean we need to hire more staff or provide different resources to complete the work. Working with our community is an important part of the services we provide, and we should pursue these in a sustainable and realistic way.



## Examining our park system

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### How to assess our park system needs

Park system needs are subjective. There isn't a singular scientific method or study that tells us how much parkland a city needs. There also isn't a standard way Canadian or Ontario cities define and measure parkland within their boundaries.<sup>38</sup> This makes the task of assessing our park system needs unique to each individual community. To help this assessment, we used the best available information collected through consultation, research, inventory, observation and other data sources.

When assessing our park system now and for the future, we need to look for an **optimal level of service**—this is the amount and type of service that meets community needs/desires and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. Level of service is typically measured in standards that can be compared to other communities or service level standards set by industry organizations (e.g., Sport Turf Association, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association). Our optimal level of service is based on these key principles:

- Everyone can access a park within a reasonable walk from their home
- There are a variety of park types with different functions in all areas of the city
- Parks need to accommodate a variety of recreation amenities and programming
- A similar level of service should be provided throughout the city, recognising that urban form or neighbourhood demographics may require a different approach to parkland (e.g., areas of high-density development may have different park needs than areas of single detached homes)

We used evidence-based research, demographics, benchmarking, community opinion, policy analysis and trends in park planning to assess:

- Access: how close are parks to people's homes or workplaces
- Equity: are we providing services equitably to all people
- Function: do we have a variety of park types with different functions
- Recreation needs: is there parkland to meet recreation needs and demands
- Quality: are parks in good condition and are they able to deliver the services our community expects
- Quantity: is there enough land to accommodate community needs

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<sup>38</sup> [Green space acquisition and stewardship in Canada \(2004\) Evergreen Foundation](#)

## Access to parkland – the path to our parks

### A successful park system is easily accessed by everyone

A successful park system is supported by walkable and wheelable neighbourhoods with safe and comfortable routes to our parks. Many of our parks are well integrated into our neighbourhoods and are within a reasonable distance of people’s homes and workplaces.

A strategic priority for the city is to “foster easy, accessible movement through trails, paths, roads and corridors to tie the community together.” This falls under the Navigating our Future pillar of the [Strategic Plan](#). Access to our parks ensures that our community can obtain health and wellness benefits that have been demonstrated through research. Our [Transportation Master Plan](#) will also help plan active-transportation friendly neighbourhoods.

Research shows that people that have access to parks tend to participate in physical activity more than others<sup>39</sup> and have a better sense of community.<sup>40</sup> A 2015 study showed that residents living one kilometre away from a green space had higher odds of experiencing stress (close to 50 percent more) than people living closer than 300 metres.<sup>41</sup> Being able to get to a park safely and comfortably is often a good indicator of use.<sup>42</sup>

### All residents should live within a ten-minute walk of a park

Many communities use the ten-minute walk as a measure of good access to parkland—this is typically represented by 500-800 metres. A ten-minute walk is also about a three-minute bicycle ride. The term ‘walk’ is an industry term that means walking, wheeling or other form of human-powered transportation.

Three large park advocacy groups in the United States have started a campaign to improve access to parks for all Americans by pledging that residents should live with a ten-minute walk (about a half-mile) of a park or green space. Our [Official Plan](#) policies also support this but go further to say that the walk should be “unobstructed by major barriers.”



<sup>39</sup> [The Benefits of Parks \(2003\) Trust for Public Land](#)

<sup>40</sup> [The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space \(2019\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Making the case for designing active cities report \(2015\) University of California](#)

<sup>42</sup> [Influence of neighborhood walkability on the frequency of use of greenspace](#)

## Barriers to park access

Guelph is a city of rivers and railways. Although these features provide cultural and recreation opportunities, they can also be major barriers for people to access our parks. Some of these barriers cannot be crossed, while others, like the Hanlon Parkway, are uncomfortable to cross even at designated crossings. Understanding how these major barriers, as well as highways and arterial roads, impact access to parkland is an important consideration for this plan. A major factor in whether people access parks is how safe they feel as they get there.<sup>43</sup> Major barriers for people to be able to get to parks could include:

- Railways
- Watercourses
- Environmental features (e.g. valleys, woodlots)
- Provincial highways
- Arterial roads
- Some collector roads (e.g., 4 lanes or higher speeds)

Planning for how people get to our parks is very important in planning our park system. Areas with lots of barriers may require special strategies or new/expanded parks in order to improve accessibility.

Another important consideration is what infrastructure exists for people to get there. In Guelph 92 percent (505km) of our streets have at least a sidewalk on one side. The remaining 8 percent have no sidewalk at all and are located in industrial areas or developing areas.<sup>44</sup> We also have a robust trail system and active transportation network that is continually improving.

## Paths within parks are important so everyone can enjoy them

Ensuring everyone can access parks should also include providing accessible paths within parks. For many people in our community, without paths into or through our parks the recreation amenities and green spaces are not inclusive. Therefore, providing trails and walking paths in our parks is also an important consideration for our park system. Studies show that parks without trail loops were twice as likely to sit empty.<sup>45</sup>

Through the [Guelph Trail Master Plan](#) we looked at parks in the city that did not have trails or walking paths within them and planned to include them as part of other infrastructure renewal projects. By introducing a new trail, park use increases (especially for older adults) and the benefits of greenspace are more accessible to all people. There are currently 17 parks in Guelph that do not have walking paths, which is about 15 percent of our parks. Our strategy to improve these parks will be to ensure our investment is being directed to where it is needed most, which is addressed in the final section of the Park Plan.

<sup>43</sup> [Influence of neighborhood walkability on the frequency of use of greenspace](#)

<sup>44</sup> [Guelph Transportation Master Plan, storymaps](#)

<sup>45</sup> [The Prevalence and Use of Walking Loops in Neighborhood Parks \(2017\)](#)

## Healthy Community Design Baseline Project by Public Health

Access to parkland and neighbourhood walkability was recently studied by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health in the [Healthy Community Design Baseline Project](#) (HCDBP).

The project states there is a strong connection between health and the built environment and that communities can be planned in ways that promote healthy choices and enhance social well-being. The project collected data to understand how well Guelph’s built environment supports health and to determine resident’s preferences and knowledge of healthy community design.

### Guelph’s walkability is good

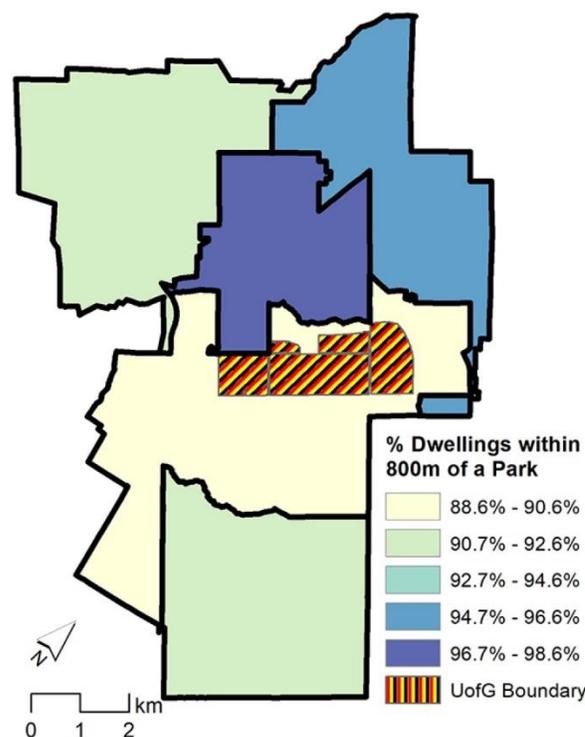
The project showed that Guelph is slightly more walkable than other similar communities. The most walkable area in Guelph is the Older Built-up area and the least walkable areas were South, South-Central, North-East, and North-West close to the edges of the city.

### Majority of residents live within a ten-minute walk to a park

The study showed that residents believe that it’s important to actively travel to parks and green spaces. 66 percent said it’s important and 93 percent said they felt like they could travel actively to parks and green spaces. The good news is that the data showed that 93 percent of people lived within walking distance or 800 metres of a park. In some areas, like the Older Built-up area, almost 99 percent of people lived within walking distance, while other areas like the South-Central area showed that 89 percent of people lived within walking distance of a park.

**Figure 24 – Percent of dwellings within 800 metres to a park<sup>46</sup>**

Assessment Area	Within 800m of Park
North-East	95.4%
North-West	91.4%
Older Built-up Area	98.6%
South	91.7%
South-Central	88.6%



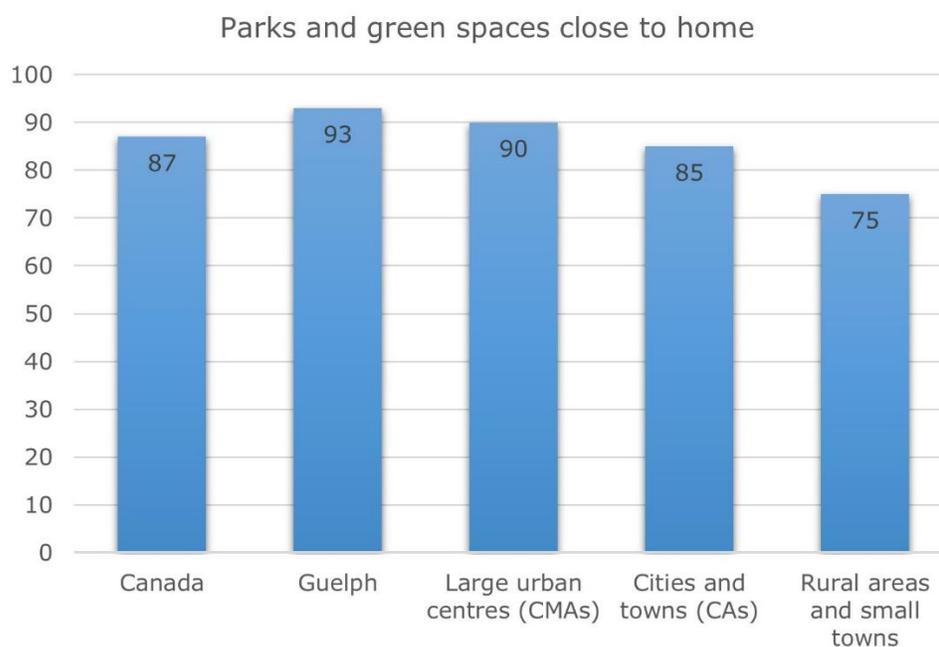
<sup>46</sup> [WDG Healthy Community Design Baseline Project](#)

## Guelph has better access to parks than the Canadian average

Most Canadian households report that they live within a ten-minute walk of a park—overall that 87 percent of Canadians. For large urban centres, typically the higher the density of people, the more likely people reported having a park or green space within walking distance. For cities and towns, which Guelph would be classified as, 85 percent of people reported living within walking distance of a park.

For people living beyond a ten-minute walk, many (39 percent) report still visiting parks in the last year.

**Figure 25 - Proximity to parks and public green spaces across Canada<sup>47</sup>**



## Walkability mapping assessment in our park system

We built on the work of WDG Public Health to better understand the gaps in our park system. We wanted to know which residents do not have access to parkland by mapping the actual walking routes residents take to our parks (using the sidewalk, road and trail network). We identified major barriers to accessing parks to paint a better picture of access and show us where there may be gaps in the system. Our Park Walkability Map in Figure 26 shows areas in the city within 800m walking distance of a park using only safe pedestrian road crossings to travel across any barriers.

<sup>47</sup> [Access and use of parks and green spaces \(2020\) Statistics Canada](#)

Assessing our park system through mapped data, helps us better understand what strategies we may need to make improvements. We used the best available data to create a park walkability map.

## 92 percent of people live within a 10-minute walk of a park

The results of our study showed us we're doing a pretty good job at providing access to parks in Guelph. About 92 percent of people live within a ten-minute walk of a park. Overall, we have good distribution of parks throughout the city.

The areas with the lowest access are Guelph's Designated Greenfield Areas, employment/commercial lands or large areas of NHS. We expect that as the city grows this metric will improve as all areas of the city develop.

There were also some gaps in residential areas:

- South of Speedvale Ave close to the hospital (Delhi Street and Metcalfe Street)
- Close to the intersection of College Ave West and Gordon Street close to the University of Guelph
- Area south of Paisley Road west of Elmira Road (intensification node)



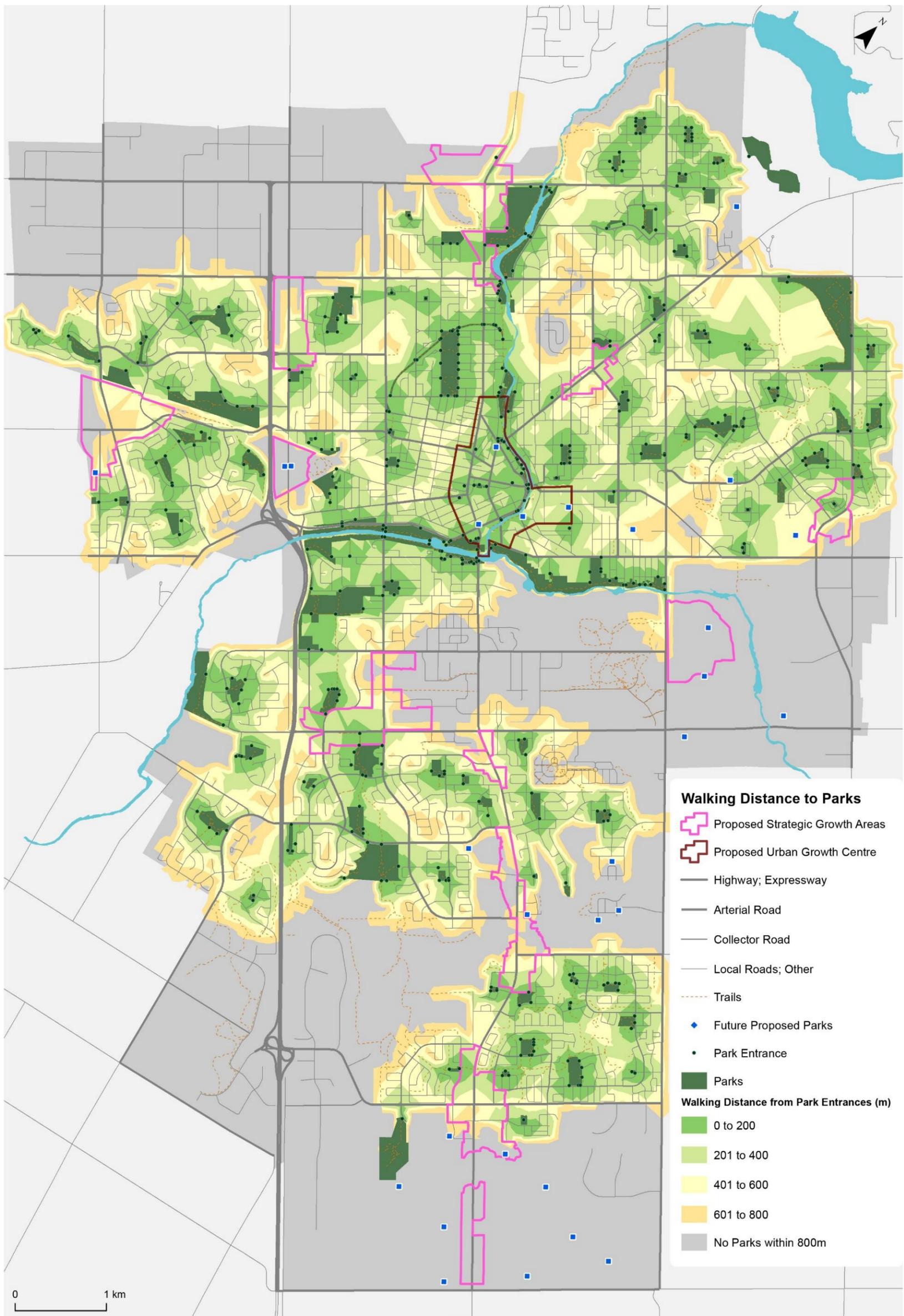
## To address gaps, we need creative and sustainable solutions

Access is a good way to understand if people can easily get to our parks. Before we can think about addressing gaps, we need to understand if addressing these gaps is our highest priority.

Measuring and improving access is more complicated than how far someone has to walk to access a park. It also involves balancing distance, quantity and quality to determine how well people are connected to the park system and if they have access to the right recreation facilities. To help set priorities we need to understand if there are areas of the city where underserved populations require better access and what type of access is most important.

Addressing gaps outside of a development process may be difficult and creative solutions will be required, in particular within built up areas where new park acquisition is difficult or impossible. Developing new sites for parks may mean displacing residential or commercial land that is already being used. We need to pursue sustainable and creative solutions that balance our park needs with our need to provide housing and jobs in our growing city.

**Figure 26 - Park walkability map, showing areas within 800m walking distance of a park**



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

## Guelph parks function in a whole system

A functioning park system is made of different spaces, places, recreation opportunities and qualities or character. Our park system needs places for people to play sports, connect with nature, walk, gather with friends and family, participate in events or quietly sit and relax. The combination of size, function and distribution over Guelph is important in a functioning system.

With limited resources and funding, we need a system that provides amenities and features in an efficient way. Some parks are big and have lots of special or higher quality amenities that draw people from city-wide or beyond, other parks are smaller and offer a few features that draw people from the local neighbourhood. We group parks into categories so that we can assess and plan for distribution across the city.

### Types of parks—our classification system

Our park classification system recognizes many of the different ways people use parks and how to provide recreation amenities across the city. The system is intended to help plan, design, operate and make decisions about our park system. A full range of park types is needed to serve our community and we recognize that parks can't include every amenity people may want—we just don't have the funding, land or resources to do this.

Park types help us define how we develop parks, the types of amenities we put in the park, how we maintain our parks and how people typically access the park. Our [Official Plan](#) policies outline four types of parks: regional parks, community parks, neighbourhood parks and urban squares. This classification system breaks the park system down by who it is intended to serve, size and recreation function.

Our classification system is a forward-looking standard, which means that sometimes an existing park doesn't fit neatly into the park type description. The classification provides guidelines that are used to steer park design and operation in a particular direction. Each park also has unique site characteristics that influence design.

**Figure 27 - Park types organized by how many people they are meant to serve**



## **Neighbourhood parks**

Neighbourhood parks are the building blocks of the park system. Neighbourhood parks are typically smaller, local parks that serve the needs of one neighbourhood. They include play areas, recreation amenities and green spaces that are close to people's homes. They are meant to be easily walked to (500-800m walk) so people can enjoy unorganized, unstructured and spontaneous activities. They typically provide passive areas, low to intermediate sports facilities, informal and formal play areas and may contain natural areas.

## **Urban squares**

Urban squares serve people in intensification areas to help address increased demands for recreation. They are meant to serve both the immediate residents as well as other people visiting the area for shopping dining or appointments. Similar to neighbourhood parks, they are meant to be walkable and are well-suited to mixed use areas with high pedestrian traffic. Urban squares are smaller in scale than neighbourhood parks and provide opportunities for social interaction and passive recreation.

## **Community parks**

Community parks provide specialized amenities that draw people from an area that exceeds a typical walking distance. This often includes a broader community of several neighbourhoods within a geographic area. They are meant to serve residents within a long walk (more than 1 kilometre) or a short bike, car or bus ride. Some residents may travel further in order to participate in organized sports or recreation programming. Since community parks are meant to serve more people, they are often located on arterial or collector roads with access to transit or parking areas. They have amenities to support community celebrations or athletic events that may not be found in smaller neighbourhood parks (like lit sport fields, splash pads or bookable amenities).

## **Regional parks**

Regional parks are some of Guelph's most recognizable parks and are designed to attract residents city-wide and visitors from out of town. These parks are used by residents and visitors for day use, celebration, sports or to commemorate culturally significant places. They are typically large parks but may be smaller if they have a culturally significant feature or a specialized recreation facility. They are intended to be accessed by long walks, public transit or by bike or car ride. They are located on arterial roads and have parking areas.

**Figure 28 - Summary of park types in Guelph**



### Neighbourhood

- Attract residents from the local neighbourhood
- Recreation for unorganized or unstructured activities
- Typically small parks about 1ha but may be smaller
- Examples: Mico Valeriot Park, Cedarvale Park, Clair Park
- Total number: 63



### Urban square

- Attract residents from the neighbourhood in dense areas
- Passive recreation for unorganized or unstructured activities
- Typically small parks about <1ha
- Examples: Trafalgar square, I.O.D.E Fountain park
- Total number: 6



### Community

- Attract people from more than one neighbourhood
- Specialized recreation facilities or programming
- Typically medium parks 7-10 ha but may be smaller
- Examples: Norm Jary Park, Jubilee Park, Peter Misersky Park, St. George's Park
- Total number: 37



### Regional

- Attract local visitors or from the broader region
- Significant attraction or cultural feature
- Typically large parks >25ha but may be smaller
- Examples: Riverside Park, South End Community Park or Marianne Park
- Total number: 13

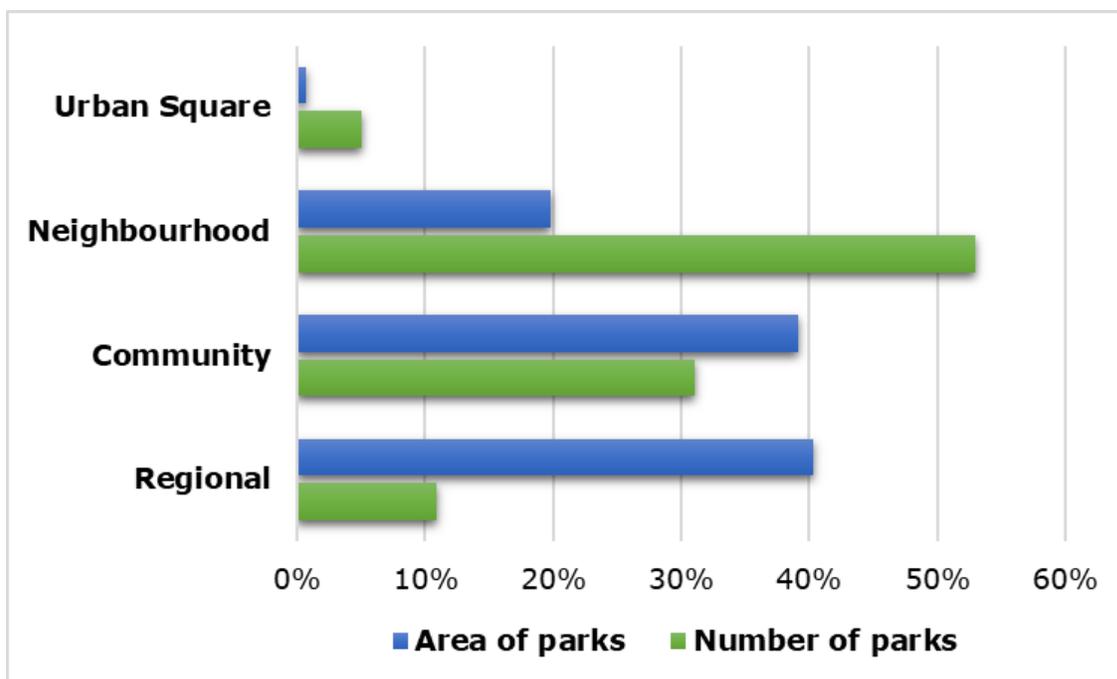
## Park types are distributed across the city

Each park type functions in a whole system. Park distribution is based on two things: everyone should live within a ten-minute walk of any park type; and people may need to or want to travel longer distances to reach more specialized the amenities or features in community or regional parks. We plan our system this way to use our funding, resources and land in an efficient and sustainable way.

The relationship of park type to the number of parks versus the area of the park system is shown below. While half of our parks are neighbourhood parks, they make up only twenty percent of our park system land area. Regional parks make up only eleven percent of our park number, but since they are typically the large parks, they make up forty percent of the park system land area.

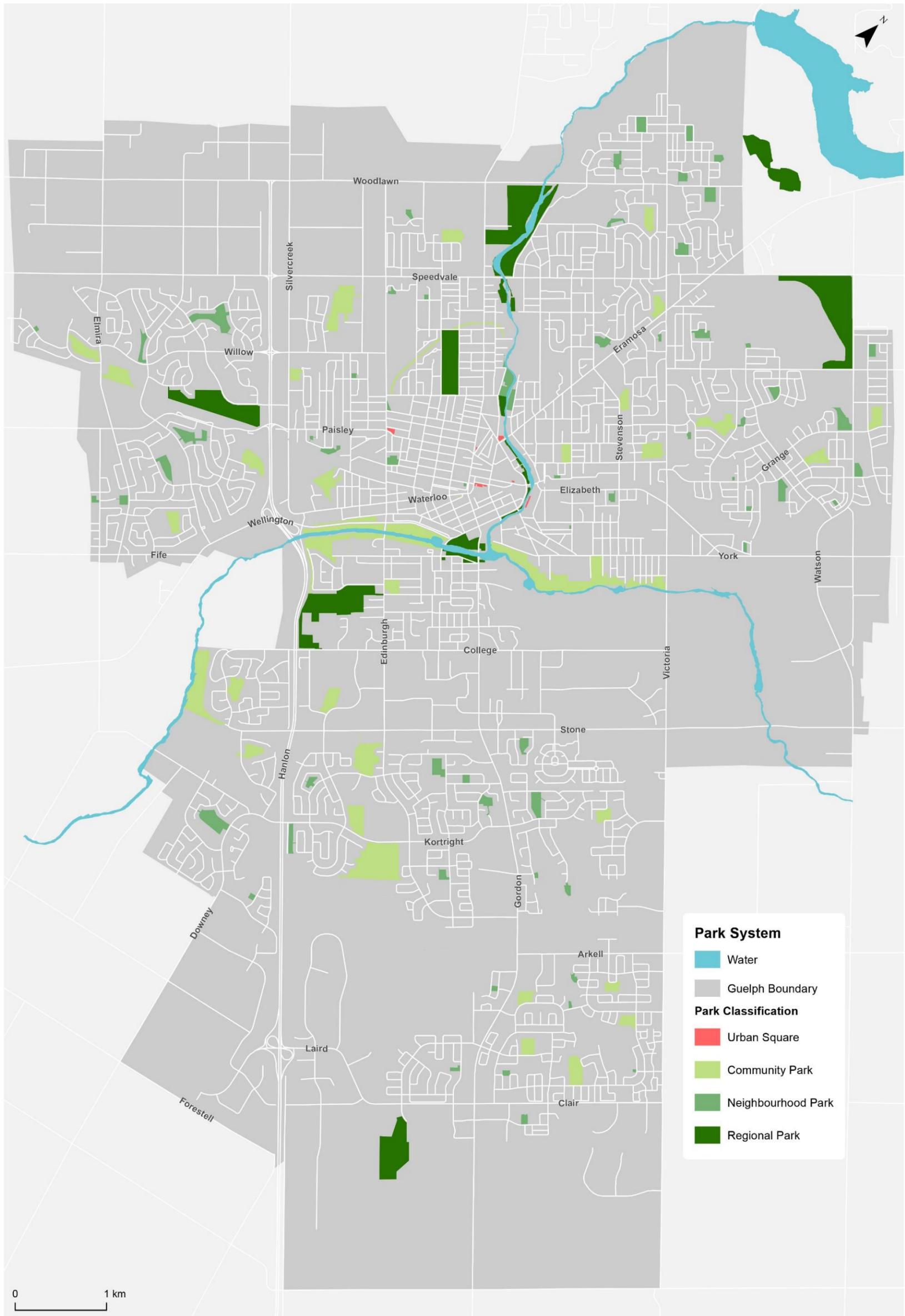
We don't have the land, funding or resources for every park in Guelph to be a regional or community park, therefore we only need a few of those park types. Regional and community parks typically are larger than neighbourhood parks, so even though there are less of them, they make up more of our park system.

**Figure 29 – Our park system breakdown by percent of total park area and number**



Since there are only currently a few areas of intensification in Guelph, there are not that many urban squares and they don't make up a large land area. As we grow, urban squares will become more important to how we meet park needs in intensifying, mixed use areas.

Figure 30 – Guelph’s park system by park classification



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

## We need parks of all sizes and shapes

Our park system is made of parks of all sizes and shapes. The size of a park is usually guided by our classification system. Our largest parks are regional or community parks; and our smallest parks are neighbourhood parks or urban squares. Regional parks have the widest range of sizes since parks with cultural significance can be very small, like John McCrae Memorial Gardens, but draw people from across the city and beyond.

Research has shown that the number of features or the overall attractiveness of the park is actually more important and a better predictor of use than the size of the park.<sup>48</sup> Having a full range of park sizes, functions and amenities that is well distributed across our city is very important to a functioning park system.

### **Our classification system provides size guidelines for future parks**

Size guidelines in our classification system help city staff make decisions about planning, developing, operating and managing our parks. It is a tool to communicate our park expectations and vision to our residents, businesses and developers. The size of a park typically communicates the number or type of amenities that can be found in a park—our largest parks typically have the most amenities or attractions for residents to enjoy. Our largest parks are also the parks that are used the most.

Our classification system is a forward-looking standard, which means that sometimes existing parks don't meet our size guidelines. Existing parks are a product of the urban form, principles of planning and standards at the time of development.

**Table 1 - Comparing existing park sizes to Official Plan guidelines**

Park type	Total No.	Size guideline (hectares)	Parks meeting guideline	Size range (hectares)	Median size (hectares)
Regional Park	13	>25, specialized facility smaller	2/13	0.7 - 32.0	13.3
Community Park	37	10-20, specialized facility smaller	3/37	0.04 - 13.5	2.8
Neighbourhood Park	63	Minimum 1.0	26/63	0.1 - 5.5	1.0

<sup>48</sup> [Association of park size, distance, and features with physical activity in parks](#)

## Acquiring parks that meet size guidelines is difficult

As Guelph grows, our neighbourhoods will be denser, as 46 percent of our new growth is forecasted for existing areas.<sup>49</sup> The challenge with this type of growth is that development sites are typically small and more expensive. Getting parkland in greenfield areas is considerably easier, however municipalities are limited by the rates outlined in the Planning Act or local bylaws. The amount of land that we can acquire is capped at a specific amount based on the density of the site. In many cases we can't get parkland that meets our size guidelines in the Official Plan. Staff will explore other acquisition tools or partnerships to help increase the amount of land we can acquire.

### **Parks need to be big enough for the right recreation facilities**

Many municipalities are looking at how to get parks that are useful to their community, that help maintain existing service levels. When we acquire parks, we look for land that can accommodate recreation features typical for the park type. With smaller sites, it is difficult to maintain our service levels for things like tennis courts, sport fields, diamonds, etc. as they take up a large amounts of space. Many cities also report lots of complaints about park use (e.g., noise, lighting, gatherings and types of users) that can be harder to mitigate on smaller sites.

### **We have been successful in meeting needs on smaller park sites**

In the last few years, we have been successful in acquiring neighbourhood parks that meet our guidelines in greenfield areas and subdivisions. On smaller development sites, it is difficult to get parks that meet our guidelines because we are limited by the rates in the Planning Act, the limit of development and/or the amount of units being proposed by the developer. The nature of development within a built city like Guelph mean these themes are often recurring. Parks like Ellis Creek Park (0.2ha), Cedarvale Park (0.3ha) and Hamill Park (0.2ha) are all smaller than the Official Plan guideline, however we have been successful in developing these parks to the same service level or better than some of our existing neighbourhood parks.

There is no scientific data that says neighbourhood parks should be a specific size, so we rely on comparator data to help determine the correct size. Traditionally other cities have guidelines of neighbourhood parks of about 0.8 hectares or more. Many cities, like Barrie, London, Markham, Vaughan, have also reported that smaller parcels (0.2-0.3ha) have been accepted as parkland dedication. A future review of our park acquisition strategies and Official Plan policies should consider a new approach to park size, focusing on facility-fit and amenity planning. A typical neighbourhood park should contain space for a playground, recreation amenities or sport fields/courts, walking paths, seating areas and multi-use open space areas for spontaneous active uses.

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<sup>49</sup> [Guelph Growth Management Strategy engagement summary](#)

**Figure 31 - Hammill Park Master Plan (0.2 hectares)**



**Figure 32 - Starwood Park (0.25 hectares)**



## Meeting outdoor recreation needs in our parks

An important part of our park system is being able to provide the optimal level of service for outdoor recreation. As our community changes and grows, we will need to continue to provide amenities to support activities people like to do in our parks.

The goal of most parks is to accommodate a wide range of activities. Parks provide spaces for both active and passive recreation as well as planned and spontaneous activities. Being able to balance all community needs is a difficult task. We recognize the pressures on our parks system to be able to meet both market demand for sports as well as being flexible, multi-functional, adaptive spaces that can meet a wide variety of needs.

Planning for specific recreation needs is not a focus of this plan, however it is an important consideration for understanding our parkland needs in the future. Our Parks and Recreation Master Plan will explore this in more detail, including a review of social, economic, and cultural trends as well as best practices affecting outdoor recreation planning. This plan addresses high-level planning related to land needs.

### Informal leisure activities are a growing trend

Passive recreation and individual recreation activities are becoming more important to residents as our lifestyles become busier. More people are choosing outdoor recreation that is informal, spontaneous and condensed.<sup>50</sup> With community awareness that physical recreation and connection with nature can have notable improvements on health and wellbeing, we are seeing more and more people choosing these activities.

In 2020, we saw park use surge as the COVID-19 pandemic left people to find new ways of spending their free time. Parks and informal leisure activities were critical to how people handled the stress of the pandemic.<sup>51</sup> Activities we expect to continue to see to be popular or grow in popularity include:

- Community gardening
- Park greening/naturalization
- Adult programming
- Slacklining/adventure activities
- Playgrounds/natural playgrounds
- Disc golf
- Skateparks/BMX
- Forest bathing
- Dog parks
- Tennis/Pickleball

Most of these activities do not require significant land requirements to fit within our existing park inventory. Our Parks and Recreation Master Plan will determine how to address these needs long-term.

<sup>50</sup> [Trends Affecting the Parks, Recreation and Culture Sector in Canada \(2007\) BCRPA](#)

<sup>51</sup> [Public parks and the pandemic: How park use was affected by COVID-19 policies](#)

## Opportunities for sports is important for an active community

Sports are physical activities that typically involve competition, rules and skill development. Providing places in our park system for people to participate in sports is important for our quality of life and to encourage life-long participation in physical activity. Many Guelphites like to play sports in our parks. Some participate occasionally, while others a part of a team or organization. People participate in sports for fun, health, social interaction and relaxation. 85 percent of Canadians agree that sports build stronger communities.<sup>52</sup>

### **Guelph parks have sport facilities for any level and any stage**

Guelph parks support a diverse mix of opportunities for people to pursue sports at any level and at any stage in life. Among those that participate in sports, 86 percent participate recreationally and 14 percent participate competitively.<sup>53</sup>

Typically, we provide facilities for children and adult recreation, with a few facilities that may accommodate competitive play (e.g., Hastings Stadium and our baseball diamonds). Partner organizations like the University of Guelph and other private providers typically offer facilities for high performance competition or training.

### **25 percent of teens and adults participate in sports**

In Canada, about a quarter of our teen and adult population regularly participate in sports. The most popular Canadian sports are hockey, golf, soccer, running and basketball. Locally, baseball and softball are also very popular sports. The majority of sport participants identify as men (61 percent) and this is even higher for men who have immigrated to Canada (72 percent).<sup>54</sup> Research shows there is a similar trend in kids with Canadian girls participating at a much lower rate than boys.<sup>55</sup> Statistics show that about 1 in 3 girls drop out of sports by their teenage years. Understanding these trends is important for how we plan for and support sports.

The Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) movement seeks to improve the quality of sport and physical activity in Canada. This movement recognizes the importance of sports in creating life-long participation in physical activity. Studies show that participation in sports at an early age helps develop physical literacy—which is “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> [Vital signs: sport and belonging, Community Foundations Canada](#)

<sup>53</sup> [Sports for fun and fitness \(2019\) Statistics Canada](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Sports for fun and fitness \(2019\) Statistics Canada](#)

<sup>55</sup> [The rally report: encouraging action to improve sport for women and girls](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Developing physical literacy: Building a new normal for all Canadians \(2019\) Sport for Life](#)

## **Guelph’s participation numbers are increasing in most sports**

We know that people in Guelph play sports and we will see this trend continue in the future. Some statistics show that participation in sports is seeing an overall decline as people are choosing informal and spontaneous activities. Even though participation in sports overall is trending downward, our population increase is causing local participation numbers to increase. Overall, youth registration rates are decreasing but adult registration rates are increasing. We expect to see a growing demand for all sports in Guelph in the future, specifically we will need:

- Senior/intermediate multi-use fields: registered participants of soccer and multi-use fields has grown 39 percent from 2014-2019, with over 9,500 participants using these fields in 2019.
- Senior/intermediate multi-use fields: lacrosse and rugby registration numbers are following provincial growth trends, with lacrosse growing by 7 percent and rugby growing by 23 percent
- Senior/intermediate baseball or softball diamonds: registered participants of softball and baseball has grown 30 percent from 2014-2019, with over 4,700 participants using diamonds in 2019
- Cricket pitches: registered participants have significantly grown 144 percent since 2018, and cricket is the fastest growing sport in Canada
- Tennis/pickleball courts: Pickleball participation is increasing about 15 percent per year and tennis continues to be a popular local sport
- Basketball courts: Basketball is the fifth most popular Canadian sport and locally we’re seeing requests for courts since initiation of the CEBL Guelph Nighthawks

As we plan our future park system, we will need to continually monitor participation numbers and local market demands. Being able to provide a similar level of service as we grow is necessary to encourage life-long participation in physical activity.

## **We need to optimize our sport field use and plan for new sports**

The Sport Turf Association (STA) has guidelines to efficiently manage fields to maintain quality, playability, safety and reduce overall operation costs. These guidelines classify fields based on their construction and provide guidelines on frequency of maintenance and amount of play time they should see. Most of our fields would be classified as a category 4 and should only be playable for 450 hours. The following table identifies guidelines on use and design criteria for various turf sports fields:

**Table 2 - Sport Turf Association Field Classification Guidelines**

Category	Description	Usage
1	<8 percent silt + clay with sub-surface drainage system, irrigation, and lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90 days/yr</li> <li>• 5 hr/day</li> <li>• 450 hr/season</li> <li>• 2 consecutive days of use</li> </ul>
2	<25 percent silt + clay with sub-surface drainage system, irrigation and lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 110 days/yr</li> <li>• 5 hr/day</li> <li>• 550 hr/season</li> <li>• 3 consecutive days of use</li> </ul>
3	25-35 percent silt + clay with sub-surface drainage system. Irrigation and lights are optional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 140 days/yr</li> <li>• 5 hr/day</li> <li>• 700 hr/season</li> <li>• 4 consecutive days of use</li> </ul>
4	36-45 percent silt + clay with sub-surface drainage system. Irrigation and lights are optional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180 days/yr</li> <li>• 2.5 hr/day</li> <li>• 450 hr/season</li> <li>• 4 consecutive days of use</li> </ul>
5	Made of all types of soil intended for casual use by residents of the neighbourhood. No drainage system, irrigation, or lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 180 days/yr</li> <li>• 2.5 hr/day</li> <li>• 450 hr/season</li> <li>• 5 consecutive days of use</li> </ul>

Our sport fields are booked a lot—we booked more than 42,000 hours for soccer/multi-fields and almost 38,000 hours for diamonds in 2019. These numbers only represent what we can track through bookings and it doesn't include pick-up games, off leash dogs, school sports or events as these are difficult to monitor.

We also book some of our sport fields more than double the Sport Turf Association's guidelines, even though some fields can accommodate more playing time. Our well-used fields are typically at the request of user groups who prefer 'sport parks' with the best amenities like washrooms, parking, lighting, player benches, spectator seating, shaded areas and irrigation.

Although we are technically able to accommodate most of the market demand on our fields now, we need to consider improving the fields' ability to handle more bookable hours. By booking fields more than the STA guidelines we are increasing overall operation costs and jeopardizing field quality. If we were to follow the STA guidelines for all of our fields, we estimate we would need more than 25 soccer/multi-use fields and 30 diamonds worth of playing time to accommodate our existing users. Building this many fields would be very difficult.

There is opportunity to optimize our existing fields and improve the field quality of our well-used fields in addition to constructing new fields for our future needs. In order to optimize our fields, we will need to make strategic capital investment to

increase field quality or park amenities to help balance our use of fields. A few options to consider include:

- Upgrading existing fields to a higher quality turf (per STA guidelines)
- Converting existing fields to artificial fields or partnering with other organizations better suited to provide this field type
- Adding lighting to non-lit fields, provided there is low impact to existing residential areas
- Pursuing new partnerships to provide sport fields on non-city-owned land
- Exploring strategies to optimize under-booked fields to balance impacts across our inventory more effectively

Another challenge for the future will be to meet increasing demands for existing sports and users, while also making room for emerging sports like cricket or lacrosse. We will need to look for innovative solutions to meet future needs or reduce service level in one area to provide for another. New solutions are likely to be complex and require agreements, creative engineering, new booking strategies, optimizing existing fields (e.g., with lighting, upgraded construction, synthetic fields) or new partnerships.

### **Sport facility demands have an impact on our future parkland needs**

How we will provide sports and programmed facilities long term has a big impact on assessing future land needs. Sports fields are among the most intensely used park amenities and require a lot of space.

We need to plan for two things in the future:

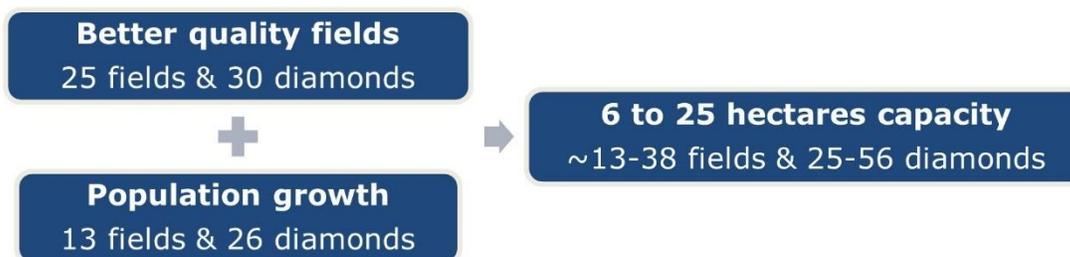
- Trying to meet the STA guidelines for playable hours on our fields, and
- Meeting increasing needs as our population grows.

Using our booking numbers and field playing time guidelines from STA, we estimate we need more than 25 soccer/multi-use fields and 30 diamonds worth of playing time. Looking strictly at population, we are generally growing our sport fields in line with population growth and offering a similar of level of service we provided in 2009. Our user groups report that there is some conflict during prime time, and we need some additional adult baseball diamonds. Overall we are keeping up with market demand for sport fields.

If this we want to continue to offer a similar of level of service as our population increases, we will need to add about 13 soccer/multi-use fields and 26 diamonds by 2051. If we include some new diamonds to help with sport field operation efficiency, we are looking at adding 13-38 soccer/multi-use fields and 25-56 diamonds. This represents approximately six to twenty five hectares of new parkland designated for sports field use alone.

This doesn't include other recreation needs like cricket, tennis and pickleball, basketball or volleyball. Creative strategies and tools to meet this demand will be required.

**Figure 33 – 2051 land capacity needs based on quality and population**



Land available for parks and recreation is generally becoming more difficult to acquire and the opportunities for larger areas of land to accommodate sport fields is even more difficult to find. There is a need to maximize sport field use prior to building more fields. As part of an overall strategy, we need to look at adding lighting, improving the quality of fields, investigating new creative booking, or partnerships with private landowners as potential solutions to this challenge.

To plan for the future, we need to undertake a sport field strategy to determine how to sustainably provide outdoor recreation and sport field opportunities as we grow and change. We will look at strategies to optimize use of our existing fields, intensify use in our existing parks, as well as look at expanding our park system with more community or regional parks. Our strategy needs to include a long-term financial strategy to ensure the recommendations are sustainable and realistic. We also need to consider the impact of optimizing our fields and the potential impacts this intensified use can have on the community and neighbouring properties.

## Planning quality parkland

Through the Community Plan, we heard that people are proud of our parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, trails and green spaces. Through all seasons, parks and recreation are part of everyday life for people of every age and ability.<sup>57</sup>

Parks make our community a pleasant place to live and work. Measuring the quality of our park system is difficult because it can be subjective and community specific. We highlight some key considerations to help guide our future park system improvements and development. A quality park system has these characteristics:

- Good physical condition of the assets in parks and sustainable maintenance practices
- The right amenities and right number of amenities available for people to enjoy
- Accessible, equitable and inclusive to all users
- Attractive, safe and comfortable environment
- Multi-purpose, multi-generational, flexible spaces for a range of activities
- Climate resilient and sustainable

**Figure 34 - Riverside Park new playground**



<sup>57</sup> [Guelph Community Plan](#)

## Making strategic investments to manage our existing parks

Managing park assets responsibly is a priority for us. To 'build our future' we will need to make strategic investments in our park system. Parks that are well cared for are welcoming, promote feelings of safety, encourage community stewardship, and boost civic trust.<sup>58</sup>

A key challenge for the future will be to keep up with our existing services and resident demands, while we also grow our park system. We may need to reshape our existing parks to meet community needs and respond to changing demographics. A key consideration will be to balance recreation needs with the look and feel that people like in our existing parks.

Historically, many municipalities have made capital investments to keep up with growth, while delaying needed investment in maintenance. Being able to balance growth while investing in asset management and maintenance of existing assets will be important for sustainable decision making.

Our asset management plan gives us a clear, detailed picture of our assets, their needs and priorities for future investment. Responsible asset management means inventorying and planning for the entire life of an asset, rather than making short term decisions. Our [2020 Asset Management Plan](#) shows that most of our park assets are in good or fair condition. More work is needed to better understand the levels of service our parks currently provide compared to community expectations. Development of asset lifecycle action plans will aid in the decision making regarding the future of the assets, including replacement when necessary.

**Figure 35 - Guelph's park assets are in fair condition, meaning adequate maintenance and rehabilitation is being performed**



<sup>58</sup> [Five characteristics of high-quality parks \(2021\) Urban Land Institute](#)

The asset management plan also shows that forecasted funding is less than what will be needed to manage our assets. As we plan for the future, we will need to strategically look at new funding options, service-delivery models and community partnerships to close the funding gap—sustainability needs to be a key part of our future decision-making.

Over the last ten years, city staff have done a good job of investing in our park system by implementing a life cycle planning strategy for park assets. Our most popular program is our playground replacement program, which replaces our playgrounds every 18-20 years, dependant on use and state of physical condition. The need to replace a playground may also trigger other needs such as adding new accessible paths, benches, tree planting and more. Often this scope includes accessibility improvements of our park system. By providing accessible paths and other supporting amenities in parks.

This program also presents an opportunity. Through our yearly replacement we can examine park service levels and identify places where we can increase our services or service level based on changing demographics and growth in the area. As part of our financial review in the PRMP, we will look at developing blended funding models and creative solutions to improve asset management, but also make strategic improvements in parks to respond to neighbourhood growth and demographic changes.

## Parks should be universally accessible

Guelph is 'stronger for our differences.' Guelph residents should be able to access and use parks comfortably anywhere in the city, with opportunities for recreation, health and mobility for everyone.

Geographically, some parks in older built-up neighbourhoods are less accessible or do not have features for all people in our community. To make parks universally accessible, we will work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and other stakeholders to identify and address barriers faced by people with disabilities. We adopted the Facility Accessibility Design Manual (FADM) in 2015 with specific information for outdoor recreational spaces owned and operated by the city. The FADM not only meets the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), but in many ways exceeds it to offer more universal design. The design manual adheres to the principles of universal design and recognizes the need to accommodate the broad diversity of people who use facilities.

Our PRMP will address this issue in more detail. Overall, we use our park classification system to help guide park design, level of service and programming.

## Our supply of land for parks

Our park system currently has over 400 hectares of parks of all classifications, sizes and shapes. To complement the park system, we offer more than 130 kilometres of trails and own and/or manage close to 850 hectares of our Natural Heritage System. All this land covers close to fifteen percent of the city area and doesn't include all the other publicly accessible land on the parks continuum that may be available for people to enjoy.

Our parkland is distributed across the city and the amount of land and configuration of parkland varies in each neighbourhood. Guelph was first settled in the 1820's and has slowly grown over two centuries. The amount of parkland per neighbourhood varies based on the planning values of the time and the population densities that were acceptable in the era the neighbourhood was developed.

The supply of parkland is only one factor in our assessment of need. To plan our park system sustainably we need to consider all factors, including access, function, recreation needs, quality and finally quantity. We will need to set priorities based on these assessments to determine where we can make measurable improvements and achieve our optimal level of service.

### Parkland provision: the land we supply per population

Our park provision is the amount of land we supply based on our population. It is a number many municipalities use to help understand their effectiveness of supplying parkland. Park provision is usually shown as the amount of land in hectares per 1000 people (e.g., 1.0ha/1000 people). Our Official Plan currently outlines how much city-wide land we should maintain or encourage for each category of park for the future. Our Official Plan outlines:

- Encourage 1.3 hectares per 1000 people for regional parks
- Maintain 1.3 hectares per 1000 people for community parks
- Maintain 0.7 hectares per 1000 people for neighbourhood parks, and
- We do not provide a target for urban squares.

### Secondary Plan Areas also help plan future parkland provision

In addition to these targets in our Official Plan, the Downtown Secondary Plan outlines a park provision of 1.0 hectares per 1000 people in the downtown area, which takes into consideration the higher density and urban form of that area.

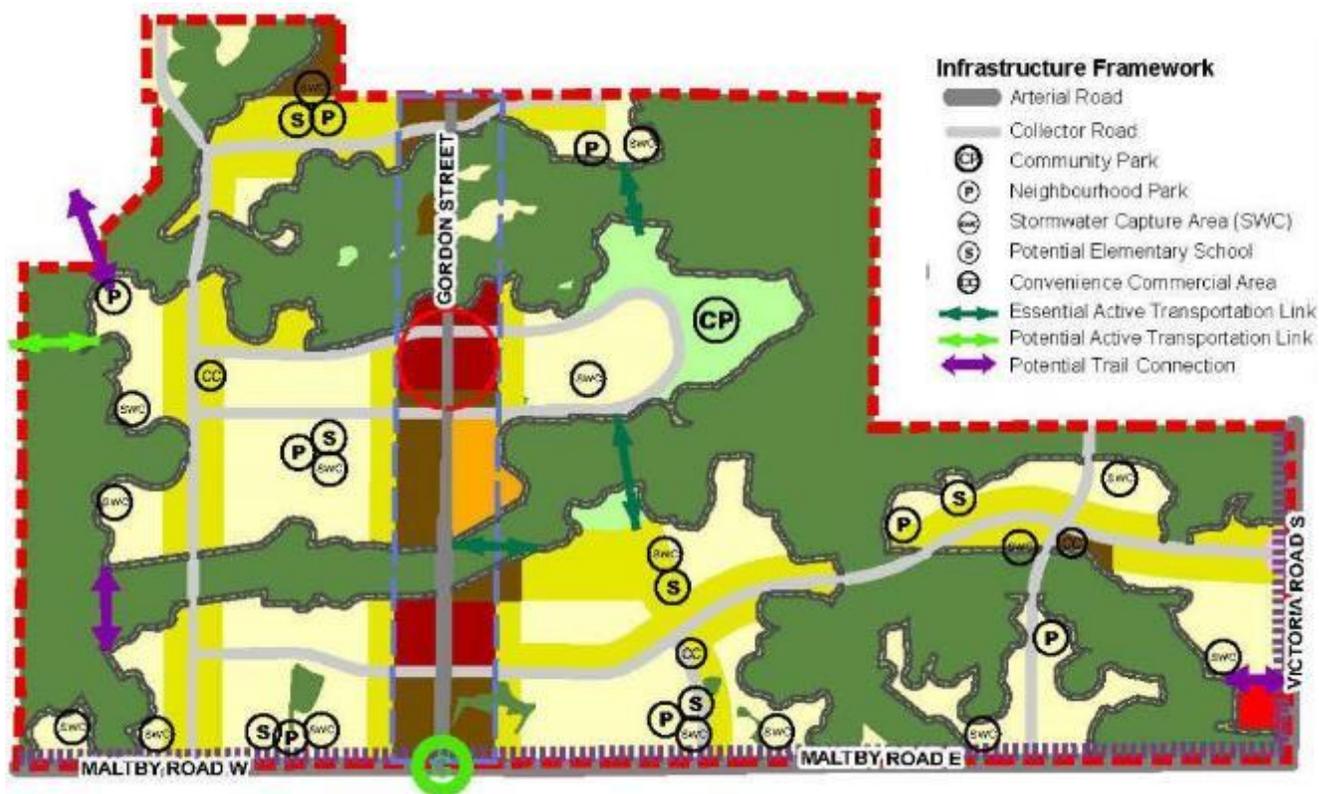
The Guelph Innovation District Secondary Plan (GID) plans to achieve a density target of 75 units per hectare or about 6650 people. Two neighbourhood parks and one community park are identified within the secondary plan area. If we use the size guidelines in the Official Plan, there is a potential for about 12 hectares of parkland to be acquired in that area. This estimation is not exact and may increase or decrease through the block planning or detailed planning stages. Based on these

assumptions and numbers the park provision planned in GID may be about 1.8 hectares per 1000 people.

The Clair Maltby Secondary Plan (CMSP) plans for a population target of 16,000 people and about 35 hectares of parkland (eight neighbourhood parks, one community park and the regional linear park system called the Moraine Ribbon). Based on these numbers, the park provision in this area is about 2.2 hectares per 1000 people. Like GID, this calculation is not exact and may increase or decrease in the detailed planning stages.

The planned parkland in these secondary plan areas will impact city-wide parkland targets. The lower parkland provisions, particularly within the downtown secondary plan and GID secondary plan mean we will need to accommodate parkland in other areas of the city or examine city-wide targets to better balance the different service levels noted within growth areas and secondary plans. Supplying parkland in dense areas is a balancing act, providing more land for parks can result in less people being able to live in the area. This can affect our ability to meet our forecasted growth targets.

**Figure 36 - CMSP draft land use plan showing park locations<sup>59</sup> (June 2021)**



<sup>59</sup> [CMSP Draft Secondary Plan for Community Engagement](#)

## Parkland provision targets vary in each municipality

Many municipalities provide targets for their parkland supply. Some provide a city-wide target, while others provide targets for each park type. Targets are set based on the vision, values and goals for the municipality. Targets also consider how much municipalities can acquire using a variety of tools at their disposal.

One method municipalities use to get land for parks is through parkland dedication as a condition of development (see: [How we grow and fund parkland](#)). The Planning Act outlines a maximum amount that can be taken based on the number of units proposed in the development. We have roughly calculated this to be about 0.9-1.5ha/1000 people (assuming 2.2 people per unit), but this varies based on the development proposal specifics.

The maximum amount that can be acquired through development and parkland dedication is an important consideration for understanding parkland provision. Knowing that we can acquire on average 1.2ha/1000 people through development, means that we must rely on other tools to acquire land, like purchasing land with other funding sources, partnerships or other tools that will need to be developed.

### **Our parkland provision target is higher than other municipalities**

Guelph’s parkland provision target is higher than many municipalities if the provision for regional parks is included. Without regional parks, our target to maintain parkland at 2.0ha/1000 people is in line with other municipal benchmarks. More information about municipal benchmarks is found in Appendix A.

**Table 3 - Park provision benchmark of other municipalities**

City	Provision targets city-wide	Notes
Guelph	3.3 ha/1000 people	Maintain 2.0 ha/1000 people and encourage another 1.3 ha/1000 people
Barrie	2.2 ha/ 1000 people	Maintain provision of useable parkland for recreational purposes at rate of 2.2ha per 1000 population
Halton Hills	2.2 ha/1000 people	1.2ha/1000 people local and 1ha/1000 people not local
Kitchener	2.1 ha/1000 people	Key metric is 9.8 square metres per person (0.98 ha/1000 people)
London	3.0 ha/1000 people	For neighbourhood and district parks
Markham	1.2ha/1000 people	Focus is on walking radius not provision
Ottawa	2.0 ha/1000 people	Target for municipal parks and leisure areas
Richmond Hill	1.6 ha/1000 people	16 square metres per person
Waterloo	3.0 ha/1000 people	Updated from 5.0ha/1000 people in most recent park plan (2021)

## Are we meeting parkland provision targets?

Our Official Plan outlines how much city-wide land we should maintain for each category of park. It also outlines the criteria for what is considered acceptable parkland for the future. These targets were set in 2017 as part of Official Plan Amendment 48 (OPA 48).

We are currently providing 3.1 hectares of parkland per 1000 people based on the forecasted 2020 population of 140,000 people. Our target for parkland is to maintain 2.0 hectares of parkland per 1000 people and encourage 1.3 hectares per 1000 people for regional parks. This totals 3.3 hectares per 1000 people.

To help understand how much that is, it can be easier to think about it in terms of land per person. We are currently providing about 31 square meters of park space per person—this is slightly larger in size than two parking spaces (27m<sup>2</sup>) or the area under a medium sized tree canopy.

**Figure 37 – We provide about 2 parking spaces of parkland per person**



**Table 4 – Supply of parkland compared to our city-wide provision targets**

Park type	Official Plan provision	Current supply	Current Provision*
Regional Park	Encourage 1.3ha/1000 people	152 ha	1.1 ha/ 1000
Community Park	Maintain 1.3ha/1000 people	216 ha	1.5 ha/ 1000
Neighbourhood Park	Maintain 0.7 ha/1000 people	67 ha	0.5ha /1000
Urban Square	No target	3 ha	No target
Total	Maintain 2.0ha/1000 and encourage 1.3ha/1000 people (total 3.3ha/1000 people)	438 ha	3.1 ha/1000

\* Based on a forecasted population of 144,750 people in 2020

## **Our current city-wide supply is slightly below targets set in 2009**

Parkland provision targets are useful to help us monitor how we are providing parkland to a growing population. Our targets set in 2009 were based on our park supply at the time and reasonable assumptions about our rate and type of growth.

Our supply of parkland is a little bit below our targets set in 2009. We are providing a little less parkland for regional and neighbourhood parks than our target but are meeting our target for community parks. In 2009 our provision target for neighbourhood parks was 0.6ha per 1000 people, which was lower than the target of 0.7ha per 1000 people set at that time.

## **We have been expanding our park system as our population grows**

Since 2009, we have acquired about 45 hectares of parkland of all classifications and our population has grown by about 18,000 people. We are acquiring parkland at an average rate of 2.5 hectares per 1000 people.

Since 2009, about 65 percent of our park system growth has been acquired through development. The remaining 35 percent was acquired through repurposing a portion of the old landfill into parkland (Eastview Community Park). Removing Eastview Community Park from the calculations, we are acquiring parkland through development at an average rate of 0.9 hectares per 1000 people.

## **Impact of growth on our park system supply**

Our population is forecasted to increase by over 60,000 people by 2051.<sup>60</sup> We will be growing in new ways and the way people choose to live will change. A growing population using less space leads to parks that see more use. This increased use leads to increased maintenance needs, potential conflicts between users in parks, more recreation needs and can lead to possible deterioration of existing natural areas. It will be important for us to add new parkland and intensify some of our existing parks to respond to growth.

The way we will grow will make it more difficult to get parks. Some key considerations about our ability to acquire land in the future include:

- Smaller development sites will limit opportunities to acquire parks through development and will also make meeting recreation demands more difficult as small parks are not adequate for sport fields or other facilities
- Affordability of land will make it more costly to buy land for parks
- Competing land interests (e.g., stormwater management, infrastructure) will make retaining parkland more difficult
- Greenfield areas are dwindling, limiting options to acquire larger parks
- Providing smaller parks more frequently will result in higher maintenance costs

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<sup>60</sup> [Guelph Growth Management Strategy](#)

## Planning for existing and future generations

We know we are going to need more parks as we grow, and we know how we grow will impact our ability to expand our park system. Therefore, our future land needs will need to be based on determining an optimal level of service—the amount and type of service that the community desires and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. An optimal level of service includes land supply, but also considers all the other important factors affecting our park system.

### Our park provision per person may decrease as we grow

One way to understand our future needs is to extrapolate our provision of 3.3 hectares per 1000 people to the forecasted population in 2051. Using this method, we will need acquire over 230 hectares of land—which is a land area similar in size to the developable portion of the Clair-Maltby Secondary Plan or adding about 460 football fields throughout the city. Acquiring that much land is not achievable without a significant increase in acquisition funding. Adhering to these targets and meeting provincial growth targets could impact built form by increasing density requirements and/or increasing building height requirements.

**Table 5 - Parkland provision to 2051 (based on 3.3 ha/1000 people)**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2031</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>2051</b>
<b>Population<sup>61</sup></b>	144,750	175,000	191,000	203,000*
<b>Supply</b>	438 ha	438 ha	438 ha	438 ha
<b>Provision target (ha per 1000 people)</b>	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3
<b>Parkland required</b>	477 ha	577 ha	630 ha	670 ha
<b>Parkland needed</b>	39 ha	139 ha	192 ha	232 ha

Note: an additional 5,000 people are currently being planned for with the annexation of the Dolime Quarry lands for a total population of 208,000.

We have already planned about 58 hectares of parkland through current development applications or in secondary plan areas. This is a rough estimate that may change as secondary plan areas go through detailed design. We estimate:

- About 10 hectares of parkland identified in current development applications
- GID identifies two neighbourhood parks and one community park (12 hectares)
- CMSP identifies eight neighbourhood parks, one community park and a regional park system call the Moraine Ribbon (about 35 hectares), and
- DSP identifies existing land along the river to be re-purposed as parkland.

To meet our provision of 3.3 hectares per 1000 people, this would mean finding an additional 174 hectares of land on top of the 58 hectares already currently planned. If we only acquired the planned 58 hectares of land, our service level would drop to

<sup>61</sup> [Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051 \(2020\) Hemson Consulting](#)

2.4 hectares per 1000 people or 24 m<sup>2</sup> per person. This is a reduction of close to 30 percent in parkland provision per 1000 people. It would also mean we would be providing slightly less than 2 parking spaces per person by 2051.

### **Using Planning Act alternative rates to meet future demands**

The Planning Act establishes the authority for municipalities to require development or redevelopment to contribute to the park system, either through the transfer of land or CIL. The standard way to calculate parkland dedication is as a percent of the development—this is either 5 percent for residential or 2 percent for commercial or industrial.

For residential development, one of the rates available to municipalities is referred to as the 'alternative rate.' The alternative rate uses the number of dwelling units to calculate parkland dedication instead of calculating it as a percent of the development. The alternative rate can often lead to higher parkland dedication being required of the developer.

The Planning Act allows for a maximum of 1 hectare of land for every 300 dwelling units or the market value of 1 hectare of land for every 500 dwelling units if accepting CIL. Our local bylaw also limits the amount of land or CIL we can require for applications that fall under Section 42 of the Planning Act.

Using the Clair Maltby Secondary Plan as an example, we can see why we need to make use of the alternative rates in the future. The Open Space System Strategy provides for about 35 hectares of parkland that includes 8 neighbourhood parks, 1 community park and a regional park system called the moraine ribbon. The total land area of the secondary plan is 415 hectares and the developable portion less NHS lands is 225 hectares.

The first analysis assumes that parkland would be dedicated at a rate of 5 percent of the total land area. The actual amount would be less as not all areas of the development are residential. Based on the land area of the development, we would only be able to acquire 20.75 hectares of land and would be required to purchase 12.25 hectares.

The second analysis assumes that parkland would be dedicated at 1 hectare for 300 units for all residential units. Based on the target density of development identified in the growth forecast, we could acquire 23.7 hectares and would be required to purchase 9.3 hectares. The amount of land we would be able to acquire could be higher as the commercial portions of the site would also result in parkland dedication. If the area develops at a higher density, a higher level of dedication would be provided for and thus a lower requirement to purchase land.

## Summary of how our park supply will change in the future

More residents will mean increased demand on parks and outdoor recreation. We will need to use our land more efficiently, expand our park system and create new spaces to accommodate outdoor recreation. We expect in the future:

- Legislated limits to the amount of land we can acquire through development will make it difficult to meet current city-wide targets
- Meeting population forecasts in secondary plan areas will make it more difficult to meet city-wide provision targets as we will need to provide more parkland in the built-up area
- The amount of parkland we provide per person will likely decrease as our current parkland provision target is not sustainable long-term
- We may need different strategies for getting parkland in different areas of the city (e.g., Strategic Growth Areas, Downtown, Built-up Area, Greenfield areas)
- We will need to grow our park system through development with the use of the 'alternative rate' in the Planning Act
- We will also need to rely on other tools to meet future parkland needs like purchasing land for parks, internal transfers of city-owned land, new partnerships with other agencies or private landowners
- We may need to put more emphasis on quality of parkland and access to parkland than park provision targets
- We are going to be acquiring smaller parks through development and opportunities for larger parks will be limited
- We will need to optimize use of our recreation facilities and provide more multi-functional and multi-generational spaces
- We will need to intensify and reshape existing parks to add more amenities and features to accommodate more people
- We will need to optimize our sport fields and create new ones to meet current and future demands
- We may need to make strategic acquisitions to meet future recreation needs in the form of new community or regional parks
- We may need to decrease service levels for some recreation facilities to accommodate new ones
- We will have higher maintenance and operation needs as our existing parks will see more use

Finally, long-term financial strategies that are sustainable and realistic will be a very important part of a future strategy. The financial strategy will need to identify funding sources, alternative service delivery models and potential partnerships to meet our optimal level of service.



## Summary of park strategic directions

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Our vision will shape how we develop our park system in the future. There are many competing priorities and diverse needs to be met in our community. We will need creative solutions to provide our optimal level of service.

The following summary of strategic directions and actions will help us develop our park system for the future. They are built on our need to retain, improve, optimize and grow our park system as the community grows.

This plan focuses on our land needs for the future. It also includes some recommendations related to park improvement and park recreation needs. Recommendations of this plan will be carried forward to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) so we can set park and recreation priorities together. Priorities, financial strategies and phasing for these recommendations will be assigned as part of the PRMP. We will ensure our plans are sustainable, affordable and realistic.

### Setting clear directions

Our Park Plan exists as a living and breathing document that provides direction for our future. It was developed based on the best available information at the time. Recognizing that new opportunities and approaches arise, we may make improvements to the directions as we implement our plan. This is consistent with the goal of ensuring our plan is flexible and can respond to changes and new opportunities.

Building on the Strategic Plan, there are some overall directions that are integral to our day-to-day work. These are aligned with our Strategic Plan pillar of 'Working Together for our Future' and includes:

#### Communicate better through clear policies

To support consistent and transparent decision-making we need clear policies. Policies can help us improve how we communicate with residents and clarify the service levels we deliver to our community.

## Enhance decision-making through greater use of data

Using available data and technology more effectively in our day-to-day work we will enhance our understanding of trends, needs and patterns. We will continue to assess, maintain and use park data to support capital and operating practices.

## Develop long-term financial and resource strategies

To ensure our plan is sustainable, affordable and realistic we need to develop long-term financial and resource strategies. Detailed funding strategies will accompany the future PRMP.

## Work together with our community

We will need to continue to pursue partnerships with our local community to efficiently deliver parks and recreation services. This might include exploring new funding options, service-delivery models, programming opportunities and partnerships.

### **A new section of the Community Plan: We are Community**

After 18 months of listening and engaging with the Guelph community, it was identified that the [Community Plan](#) needs an update to focus on anti-racism and discrimination. People in our community identified the goal that everyone should feel a sense of belonging in Guelph. We will continue to listen, unlearn and relearn how we can work toward equity and the permanent elimination of systemic racism in all forms. We will shift from “how we need to work together” to “what we need to do together” to set the community standard for the elimination of systemic racism.

### **Develop meaningful relationships with Indigenous people**

We deeply value the relationships we have started to build with Indigenous governments and community members from First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Mixed Ancestry people. We have more to learn about the history of this land and the people who lived here before Guelph was founded. This ongoing work will continue beyond the context of the Park Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan and will help inform future projects and workplans.

We are also committed to working with Indigenous people on developing staff training to educate and grow our knowledge and understanding of Indigenous values and world views. These values can have a tremendous impact on the design of our public spaces and the way we steward the land.

## Prioritizing resources

There are some areas of the city where we need to make improvements to our park system. We will look for opportunities to use new data to drive more effective engagement and decision making to improve the park system, including consideration for:

- People can't access a park within a reasonable walk from their home
- We are not meeting local recreation needs or desired service levels
- Existing parks that are working harder to serve more people (e.g., have a higher volume of people using it per hectare or demonstrated higher rate of use)
- There are high concentrations of equity-deserving populations
- Growth areas where the local population is increasing
- Areas where assets require renewal or replacement so that we can provide our intended and desired levels of service

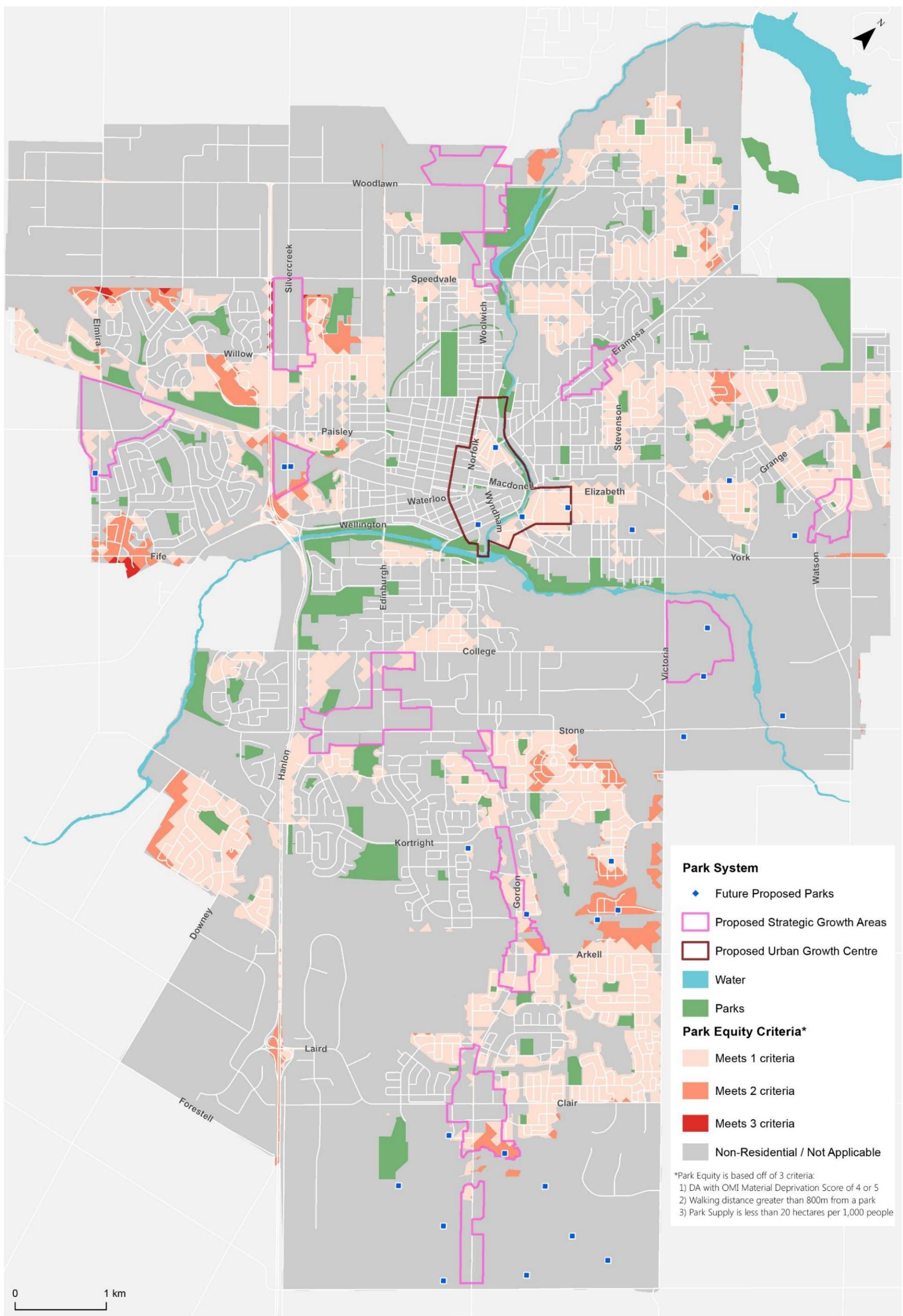
### Areas of potential need map

To help to understand where areas of need might be, we completed a geographic analysis to see if there are areas in the city where we can focus our efforts. We used the Ontario Marginalization Index, population density, urban growth structure and our park walkability data to help us start to understand where these areas might be.

Areas where there is overlap of all three criteria (marginalization, low park access and high population density) are likely to be high on our priority list. Areas where there is one criterion, we may need to look a little closer to understand what needs might not be met and develop strategies to address them. Strategies may be different operational practices, park improvement, partnerships, acquisition or exploration of other opportunities available through the park continuum.

Our map is a starting place to determine where and what type of resources we might need in the future. It can help us prioritize our investment, ask better questions and help to address systemic inequity in our community. This map will be used and analyzed through the future Parks and Recreation Master Plan. We will examine how the integration of increased data mapping, management and analysis will impact staff work capacity to determine if there are resource or staffing impacts in the future

**Figure 38 – Areas of potential need map (overlying Ontario Marginalization Index data, high population density, draft urban growth areas and lower park walkability)**



Data provided by: City of Guelph  
 Map produced by: SSMIC - AIS, November 2021

## **Park access and provision of strategic directions**

More residents will mean increased demand on parks and outdoor recreation. We will need to use our land more efficiently, expand our park system and create new spaces to accommodate recreation. The following are strategic directions to help guide our future decision making and develop clear policies to support our vision for the future. Priorities, resourcing and timing will be addressed through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### **Develop parkland acquisition policies for development sites**

We need to develop clear policies and decision-making criteria for when development sites will be required to convey land or cash-in-lieu. This policy should include a framework to assess parkland needs in a particular area as part of an overall acquisition strategy. The framework should also develop priorities for acquiring parkland. We want to make sure our resources are directed where they are needed most.

### **Update parkland policies and provision targets in the Official Plan**

These recommendations will be addressed by an Official Plan Amendment process using the information provided in this report as background.

### **Review and revise park provision targets**

Park provision targets should be updated to reflect an optimal level of service. This will likely mean our overall provision targets for parks will be reduced or different key performance indicators will be used to determine our service level (e.g., distance to a park vs parkland quantity per capita)

### **Continue to use the 'alternative rate' in the Planning Act**

To meet our future parkland needs, we will need to continue to make use of the alternative rate of 1 hectare for every 300 units for land and 1 hectare for every 500 units for CIL in the Planning Act. These should remain in our Official Plan and Parkland Dedication policies.

### **Revise park size guidelines in the Official Plan**

Acquiring parks that meet our size guidelines in the Official Plan will be more difficult in the future. Smaller development sites and limits to the amount of parkland we can acquire through development, will mean smaller parks. We may also need to purchase smaller lots to help increase supply in certain areas of the city. We will need to revise our policies to allow for smaller park acquisitions.

Smaller parks may not be appropriate for all areas of the city, so we will need to develop different approaches to parkland based on development site size and where in the city the development is taking place (greenfield vs built-up area). We should consider keeping larger park size guidelines in our greenfield areas to help plan for future generations.

### **Update Official Plan criteria for accepting parkland**

Official Plan policies should reflect Parkland Dedication Bylaw criteria for accepting parkland. Land that is acceptable as parkland dedication includes land that:

- Is free of encumbrances except as may be satisfactory to the city (land that is deemed to be contaminated may only be accepted if it's in accordance with 'Guidelines for Development of Contaminated or Potentially Contaminated Sites')
- In a condition satisfactory to the city and in accordance with our development policies and other policies for the acquisition of real property
- Contains adequate street frontage for visibility and safety
- Can be accessed by the means outlined in the Official Plan (e.g., Regional Parks need frontage on an arterial road and accessible by public transit)
- Contains sufficient table land (approximately 80 percent of site) and is well drained, except where the site takes advantage of a specific natural feature (note table land has a maximum grade of 5 percent, but 2 percent preferred).

Land that continues to be not acceptable for parkland dedication include:

- Land that is identified as part of the city's Natural Heritage System
- Land that is susceptible to flooding, have poor drainage, erosion issues, extreme slopes or other environmental or physical conditions that would interfere with potential use as a public park
- Land that is required to accommodate stormwater management facilities, subject to acceptance by the city
- Land that is used or proposed to be used for utility corridors or other infrastructure incompatible with their use as a public park
- Land that is encumbered by easements or other instruments that would unduly restrict or prohibit public use; and
- Land for trails or active transportation purposes.

### **Develop strategies for acquiring and intensifying parkland**

One way of growing our park system is acquiring land through development where development occurs. A variety of factors will likely make this more difficult in the future, therefore we will need to develop other land acquisition strategies or alternative arrangements for meeting park needs. We will need to develop strategies about how we do this and use all the tools we can to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers.

We need to develop a parkland acquisition and intensification strategy to manage our park system as our population grows. It needs to reflect an optimal level of service that meets community expectations and is sustainable, affordable and realistic. The parkland acquisition strategy should:

- Create decision-making criteria for the acquisition or intensification of parkland
- Identify the priority areas for parkland acquisition based on walkability, distribution of parkland, recreational need, and population increase.
- Determine strategies and distribution models to grow parkland in particular areas of the city (e.g., built up area, greenfield areas, strategic growth areas)
- Explore alternative arrangements to meet parkland needs
- Explore potential land acquisitions or partnerships (e.g., Yorklands Green Hub)
- Examine the need for additional staff and resources to support acquisitions or alternative arrangements (e.g., realty specialist to pursue land acquisitions)
- Develop long-term financial strategies to ensure funding is available for acquisitions when needed

### **Land acquisition strategies in the Official Plan**

We will need a land acquisition strategy to help grow our park system. Some strategies in our Official Plan include:

- Conducting further studies to determine which parks have potential for expansion and where such expansion is most desirable
- Acquiring additional land to enlarge existing small parks, where appropriate
- Acquiring vacant infill sites to create new small parks
- Acquiring redundant school properties or parts thereof.

Most of these strategies above requires purchasing land for park purposes. The financial implications of purchasing land in the future can be significant. As part a land acquisition strategy we will need a detailed long-term funding and resources to ensure our approach is sustainable and realistic.

### **Alternative strategies in the Official Plan to meet parkland needs**

There are also several strategies outlined in our Official Plan we can use to meet park needs that require less investment from taxpayers. These strategies rely on exploring different service delivery models or pursuing partnerships, including:

- Improving the quality and usefulness of existing parks through better design
- Encouraging and working with the local School Boards to upgrade the design and development of some of their open space areas
- Developing portions of certain community or regional parks to meet neighbourhood needs, and
- Enhancing connections between park and open space areas.

## Continue to develop partnerships with other public landowners

The city has agreements with other public landowners to use their land for park or recreational purposes—specifically with Grand River Conservation Authority and the Wellington Catholic District School Board. Should these arrangements continue to be mutually beneficial, these agreements should remain intact and be updated on a regular basis. There may be opportunities to pursue additional agreements with these two organizations and others.

## Develop policies to support conversion of surplus land to parkland

On occasion the city owns land that may be considered surplus. Before it is proposed for disposal, it is reviewed by city departments to determine if it can be used for other infrastructure or services.

Decision making criteria should be developed to help determine if the land meets our criteria for parkland. Where surplus land is located in an area of need or the site is large enough to accommodate sport fields, it should be converted to parkland.

## Develop design guidelines for developments beside existing parks

New developments that front onto, or are beside parks, will require special attention to their frontage treatments and site design. We want to ensure that these developments achieve the kind of character, sense of place and pedestrian experience warranted for these important elements of the public realm. Policies about requirements of development fronting/adjacent to parks will also be needed.

## Balance parkland needs with impacts of other infrastructure

Competing land interests will become more frequent in the future. There may be a need and opportunity to allow infrastructure with wide community benefit within our existing parks. For newly planned areas, infrastructure is planned for in separate spaces and not permitted in parks. We will review these infrastructure needs on a case-by-case basis.

### **Stormwater Management Master Plan**

Through the city's Stormwater Management Master Plan, several park sites have been identified to help the city manage existing stormwater and to prepare for the effects of climate change. To permit the dual use of parkland and stormwater management we need to understand how the stormwater infrastructure impacts recreation. The work studying if park sites should be retrofitted with stormwater management assets is currently ongoing and is subject to change.

In many cases stormwater management assets will be located underground. The design of any above or underground assets will need to be integrated creatively and innovatively so the feature does not appear separate from or minimize the recreational function of the land.

### Improve pedestrian crossing of major barriers

There are some places in the city where improved pedestrian crossings of roads, watercourses, or environmental features will help improve park access. Making improvements to these crossings can have an impact on safety, efficiency and connectivity of our park system and trail network. In many cases, crossing these barriers is technically complex and may require significant capital investment and land to solve (e.g., overpasses, underpasses, bridges, etc.).

Road crossing improvements have been identified through the Guelph Trail Master Plan and Transportation Master Plan. The next step will be to study these locations and prioritize them amongst other proactive improvements in the annual review of traffic improvements.

### Strata parkland could be considered in unique circumstances

Some urban centres are considering other innovative tools to help provide parkland in growing, high-density areas called “strata parkland.” Strata parkland is a public park developed above a private infrastructure asset such as a parking garage or storm water infrastructure (public or private). The park space is deeded to the municipality by the property developer and is publicly owned (and typically publicly operated), whereas the underlying infrastructure is maintained by the asset’s private ownership.

### Future considerations

Some municipalities are considering this approach where there is a need to provide land more efficiently in higher density urban areas or where land values are elevated, and available land is constrained. To help create an equitable, clear and transparent approach to decision-making, a framework for evaluating these proposals may be needed in the future.

These alternative parkland models have unique characteristics that can improve the park system and secure parkland in areas of need. It is also very complex and carry significant risk compared to traditional parkland dedication. Where they may be considered, the benefits to Guelph residents must outweigh the risks. Strata parkland may not result in full parkland dedication credits and parkland should be provided above what is required for common-amenity space. Common-amenity space is intended to be outdoor space specifically for residents of the development

to enjoy and while parkland is meant for the entire city to enjoy—there is a need to provide both.

Strata parkland is a tool that the city can add to their acquisition toolbox and use in complex or unique development projects. Staff should continue to evaluate these projects on a case-by-case basis and develop specific criteria framework to evaluate when such an approach would benefit the city and when it would not. As the city has yet to receive any proposals of this nature to date, developing a framework should be considered a long-term action.

### Privately-owned public spaces (POPS)

Similarly, POPS are privately owned spaces that are publicly accessible via legal agreements between the property owner and the municipality. Municipal programming and overall control of these spaces is more limited than traditional table land parks or strata parks. Staff should continue to evaluate these projects on a case-by-case basis and develop specific criteria framework to evaluate when such an approach would benefit the city and when it would not. As the city has yet to receive any proposals of this nature to date, developing a framework should be considered a long-term action.

## Park improvement recommendations

Improvements and intensification of parks will be important for our park system’s future. As we grow in our built-up area some of our parks will see more use than they do currently. We will need a new approach to using our parks more efficiently and accommodating more users.

Recommendations for park improvements and meeting our recreational needs in parks will be addressed in the future Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Some high-level recommendations have been included in this plan as they relate to park access and park provisioning. Further recommendations will be provided in the next phase of work.

### Indigenous people representation in our park system

As parks are developed or renewed, we will look for opportunities to reflect and honour Indigenous culture, the history of the land and the values of Indigenous people. This might include inclusion of interpretive signage, art by Indigenous artists, stewardship partnerships or including specific spaces for Indigenous gathering or use (e.g., Indigenous medicine plantings or community gardens). We will work with Indigenous people to determine how to best to do this.

## All parks should have accessible paths

All parkland should include accessible paths within and leading to park spaces. For many people in our community our parks are not accessible without paths in them. Studies also show that parks without accessible paths are twice as likely to sit empty.<sup>62</sup> The strategy to improve park access will be to direct investment to parks where they are most needed.

## Develop a sports field and facility development strategy

Meeting our long-term sport field needs will be difficult as development sites and the parks we are acquiring are getting smaller. We need a long-term sports field and facility development strategy to:

- Maximize use and expand programming time at existing fields
- Develop use and booking guidelines for sport fields that are aligned with the Sport Turf Association guidelines
- Improve the safety and long-term quality of sport fields
- Develop inventory and design standards based on field type, size and use
- Develop an asset management plan to identify routine maintenance cycles and end-of-life replacement schedule
- Review opportunities in the city to revitalize and upgrade underused fields before building new fields to meet future demand
- Investigate opportunities to add sport fields to underutilized land like stormwater management areas or utility corridors, and
- Investigate opportunities to partner with other public or private landowners, and
- Determine where sport fields can be accommodated in the future as demand increases with growth.

## Develop a park development manual

To ensure we are continuing to provide a similar level of service in newer parks, we need to develop clear expectations for park quality and design. Park service level and design guidelines developed through a park manual, will help ensure we continue to offer the same service level as existing parks, even if park sizes are smaller. It will also help guide facility-fit conceptual planning that may be required by developers to demonstrate smaller parks can accommodate our future recreational needs.

As part of the park development manual, we must develop an asset management plan for park and outdoor recreation facilities. This should include defining acceptable asset condition and level of service for all assets. Capital budget planning should advocate for appropriate funding to achieve these standards.

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<sup>62</sup> [The Prevalence and Use of Walking Loops in Neighborhood Parks \(2017\)](#)

## Increase our urban forest canopy and naturalized spaces in parks

We will continue to strategically grow the urban forest canopy and create small naturalization in our parks. This work will be completed in alignment with the goals and objectives of the [Urban Forest Management Plan Implementation Plan](#) (UFMP). We will also continue to involve residents in community planting projects and support local organizations like Trees for Guelph and Ontario Public Interest Group in their planting initiatives.

### Measuring success

An important part of the plan is understanding what success looks like and what specific measures we can use to determine success. Some key performance indicators will be measured in larger corporate initiatives identified in the [Strategic Plan's Action Plan and Performance Measure Framework](#), including, percent of current assets that provide satisfactory levels of service, percent of residents who perceive themselves to be safe in the city and percent citizens expressing a sense of belonging to Guelph.

We will also need to measure how we are meeting the goals of our plan. Collecting and managing data about parks will help monitor the plan's success. An overall action for our plan is to "enhance our decision making through greater use of data." We will continue to assess, maintain and use park data to support capital and operating practices. Measuring how we are providing services to the community and regularly monitoring it will be an important part of our plan moving forward. As part of a data management program, performance measures should be developed and tracked regularly. Potential performance measures can include:

- Percent of people within a ten-minute walk of a park (500-800 metres)
- Percent of parks with walking paths
- Amount of parkland or CIL acquired per year
- Percent of canopy cover in parks

The success of our plan will be reported regularly and may be included in a report about our Parkland Dedication Reserve Fund.

A review and update of the plan is recommended for 2028 at the five-year mark. A five-year review may include revisiting goals, priorities and aligning work plans with a future Strategic Plan or new opportunities. A full update is recommended in 2033.

## Financial implications

This plan primarily addresses our land needs for the next 30 years. The financial impacts of the park plan and estimated costs for land acquisition will be developed and evaluated through future studies and reports to Council. A financial plan including setting priorities will also be completed as part of the future Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### Acquiring future land for future parks

One way to acquire land for new parks is through development. We a [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) and [Official Plan policies](#) allowed by [the Ontario Planning Act](#) to require planning and development applications to transfer land to the city for parks and public recreation, or to provide cash-in-lieu (CIL) of parkland so parks or recreational spaces can be purchased—we referred to as parkland dedication.

Land for parks can also be acquired by purchasing land with parkland dedication CIL funds, purchasing land with tax dollars, repurposing other city-owned land into parkland, or through leasing/partnerships with other agencies and governments.

### **We will need to rely on more than parkland dedication to meet needs**

Parkland dedication will only cover a portion of our land needs in the future. The Planning Act limits the amount of parkland dedication that can be collected through development.

The Planning Act also allows municipalities some discretion on what type of rate and how best to apply these rates through a local bylaw. [Guelph’s Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) uses policies to detail our specific conditions, exemptions, rates and limits for parkland dedication (land or CIL) within the City of Guelph. Our local bylaw does not seek the maximum amount of parkland dedication, but balances our park needs with local needs to provide housing and employment.

Parkland dedication rates are typically a percent of the development area or calculated by the number of residential units proposed. The estimated amount we can collect through development, using the Planning Act limits, is about 0.9-1.5 hectares of parkland for every 1000 people and varies based on the development.

We have already planned about 58 hectares of parkland to be acquired by 2051. Since our population is forecasted to grow by over 60,000 people, our estimated rate of parkland growth for our planned parkland is about 1 hectare per 1000. This is similar to what we can expect to supply through parkland dedication and the rate we have been acquiring parkland since 2009—which is 0.9 hectares per 1000 people.

Our city-wide provision is 3.3 hectares per 1000 people. Parkland dedication will provide us with roughly a third of this target, leaving close to 174 hectares of land unplanned. Acquiring 174 hectares of land would be like acquiring almost half of the Clair Maltby Secondary Plan area. With the rising cost of land, long-term growth forecasts and competing infrastructure needs, this will be incredibly difficult to acquire as most of this land will need to be acquired in the built-up area.

By 2051, if we don't supplement parkland dedication with other alternatives, we will likely be providing parkland at a rate of 2.4 hectares per 1000 people—about 30 percent less than what we are currently providing. This is slightly less than providing 2 parking spaces per person. A future Official Plan Amendment process will determine if we should change our targets in the Official Plan or determine if we should assess parkland needs based on other key performance indicators.

### **We need to be strategic about how we plan future parkland**

To meet future needs, we will need to be more proactive and strategic about how we plan parkland and use all the tools we can to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers. We will also need to develop other land acquisition strategies or alternative arrangements. We will need to evaluate the following strategies in future work:

- Through an Official Plan Amendment, we should consider if our service level of 3.3 hectares per 1000 people is still appropriate and if it can be reduced
- Determine if we should acquire new parks by purchasing land with tax dollars or capital reserves for parks in key areas.
- Consider developing policies to convert existing city properties that are underutilized or surplus into parkland
- Develop partnerships with other levels of government, agencies or private landowners to use their land for park purposes
- Consider adopting policies that focus on access to parkland and quality of parkland over the quantity of land
- Intensify use of our existing parks by adding new features, amenities or infrastructure
- Evaluate if strata parkland or other alternative arrangements can help offset our local needs
- Consider alternative funding models to reduce financial burden

Each of these options will need to be evaluated as part of a long-term financial and resource strategy in the future. Meeting our service needs while improving and expanding our park network will be a key challenge for the future. It will require continued investment through both operating and capital budgets and may require new funding strategies.

## **Next steps**

Through a parallel process, we will update our Parkland Dedication Bylaw by September 2022 as required by provincial legislation.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will take the recommendations of this plan and develop overall priorities for the Parks Department and the Culture and Recreation Department. To support these priorities, a long-term financial and resource strategies will be developed to guide future investment in the park and recreation systems and develop work plans to support the creation of new policies. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will also identify the timing of undertaking a future Official Plan Amendment for Open Space System policies.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Municipal Comparator Benchmarks

## Summary of comparator municipalities

**Table 6 - Summary of comparator municipalities' parkland policies**

City*	Park types (Typical size)	Walkability standards	City-wide provisions	Actual city-wide provisions	Are natural areas considered parkland dedication?	Parkland dedication credits for NHS land dedication or trails
<b>Guelph</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Square (0.1-0.5ha)</li> <li>Neighbourhood Park (1 ha)</li> <li>Community Park (10ha)</li> <li>Regional Park (25ha+)</li> </ul>	5-10 minute walk or 500m unobstructed by major barriers	3.3 ha/1000 people Note: maintain 2.0 ha/1000 people and encourage 1.3 ha/1000 people	3.1 ha/1000	No parks and NHS lands are considered separately	No credits for trails, NHS lands or parks held in private ownership
<b>Barrie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Square</li> <li>Neighbourhood Park</li> <li>Community Park</li> <li>Regional Park</li> </ul>	500 to 800 metre radius of major residential areas, unobstructed by major pedestrian barriers	4.7ha 1000 for all types of land Note: maintain provision of useable parkland for recreational purposes at rate of 2.2ha/1000	2.2 ha/ 1000 people 8.6 ha/ 1000 people including all parkland types including NHS	Barrie's PRMP recognizes the NHS as an important component of the city's open space system. Provisions provided only for active parkland or 'parks.'	Barrie generally does not accept NHS lands as parkland dedication.
<b>Burlington</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Park (1-2.5ha)</li> <li>Urban Square (0.1-0.5ha)</li> <li>Urban promenade or linear park (no standard)</li> <li>City Park</li> <li>Community Park</li> <li>Neighbourhood Park</li> <li>Parkette</li> <li>Window to Lake Park</li> </ul>	400-800m walking distance 99.9% within 800m 90.6% within 400m	No provision target identified	2.8ha/1000 just for parks 3.74ha/1000 including Special Resource Areas (NHS)	No, there are Parks and Special Resource Areas ('natural heritage')	
<b>Halton Hills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local parkland (0.2-2.5) which are parkettes and neighbourhood parks</li> <li>Non-local parkland (6-11ha) which are community and town-wide parks</li> </ul>	200-400m for parkettes 400-800m for neighbourhood parks	2.2 ha/1000 people  Note: 1.2ha/1000 people local and 1ha/1000 people not local	2.65 ha per 1,000	Does not quantify all lands together	Lands designated as Greenlands or required for stormwater management facilities shall not be considered as any part of the required parkland calculation.

<b>City*</b>	<b>Park types (Typical size)</b>	<b>Walkability standards</b>	<b>City-wide provisions</b>	<b>Actual city-wide provisions</b>	<b>Are natural areas considered parkland dedication?</b>	<b>Parkland dedication credits for NHS land dedication or trails</b>
<b>Kitchener</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural areas</li> <li>Parkettes (0.2-1.0ha)</li> <li>Urban greens</li> <li>Urban plazas</li> <li>Greenways</li> <li>Neighbourhood Park (1.0-2.5ha)</li> <li>District Park (20-30ha)</li> <li>City-wide Park (&gt;50)</li> </ul>	Not included	1.5 ha/1000 people  Note: key metric is 9.8 square metres per person (0.98 ha/1000 people)	2.6ha/1000  7.1ha/1000 including all NHS lands	Natural hazard lands and natural heritage features will not normally be accepted as part of parkland dedication	a parcel of land may be considered to be of unsuitable size if it is less than 0.10 hectare in area
<b>London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City-Wide Parks,</li> <li>District Parks,</li> <li>Neighbourhood Parks,</li> <li>Sports Parks,</li> <li>Urban Parks,</li> <li>Civic Spaces, and</li> <li>Facility Parks</li> </ul>	Providing one playground generally within an 800m radius of every residential area (without crossing a major arterial road or physical barrier.	3.0 ha/1000 people Note: For neighbourhood and district parks	2.2 hectares per 1,000 residents	*Where a development contains hazard and/or environmentally constrained lands, these lands will be excluded from parkland dedication calculation so long as the hazard/constrained lands are dedicated to the city. Hazard lands may be accepted in lieu of table land at a ratio of 27 ha for every 1 ha of table land Open space or constrained lands may be accepted in lieu of table land at a ratio of 16 ha for every 1 ha of table land	Hazard or open space lands will only be accepted as part of parkland dedication requirements at the city's discretion (at a substantially reduced rate of 27 hectares of hazard land for every 1 hectare of table land or 16 hectares of open space or constrained lands for every 1 hectare of table land
<b>Markham</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City-wide Parks (&gt;12ha)</li> <li>Community Parks (~6ha)</li> <li>Neighbourhood Parks: various sizes and 5 min walk, broken into:</li> <li>Active Parks (1.0-6.0ha)</li> <li>Urban Squares (0.5-5.0ha)</li> <li>Parkettes (low to mid-rise areas) and Urban Parkettes (0.2-0.5ha)</li> </ul>	Community parks 10 minute walk Neighbourhood parks: 5-minute walk (400m) 150m – 400m 150m – 400m	1.2ha/1000 people Note: focus is on walking radius not provision	1.41 ha/1000 people	Open Space Lands, which provide benefits to the parks and open system beyond those provided by city Parks, but are not suitable for City Park programs and facilities and therefore, not accepted as parkland dedication under the Planning Act.	Land for park purposes may be designed to include stormwater detention features

<b>City*</b>	<b>Park types (Typical size)</b>	<b>Walkability standards</b>	<b>City-wide provisions</b>	<b>Actual city-wide provisions</b>	<b>Are natural areas considered parkland dedication?</b>	<b>Parkland dedication credits for NHS land dedication or trails</b>
<b>Ottawa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Park (10ha)</li> <li>• Community Park (3.2-10ha)</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Park (1.2-3.2ha)</li> <li>• Parkette (0.4-1.2ha)</li> <li>• Urban Parkette/Plaza (0.2-0.4ha)</li> <li>• Woodland park (1.2-3.2ha)</li> </ul>	<p>Neighbourhood Park: Approximately 10-minute (or 800m) walking distance</p> <p>Parkette or urban parkette: Approximately 2 to 5-minute (or 200 to 450m) walking distance</p> <p>Woodland Park: Approximately 10-minute (or 800m) walking distance</p>	<p>2.0 ha/1000 people</p> <p>Note: target for municipal parks and leisure areas</p>	2.35 hectares per 1,000 residents	The City, at its discretion, reserves the right not to accept the conveyance of the following lands as parkland: valley lands; watercourse corridors; environmental constraint lands, setbacks, or conservation buffers; and transportation corridors.	The City retains the right not to accept the conveyance of land as parkland that is considered unsuitable, including: hazardous or flood prone lands; wetlands and woodlots retained for conservation purposes; steep or unstable slopes; any land having unsuitable or unstable soil conditions; hydro rights-of-way or easements; any land containing an easement, encumbrance, or right-of-use that limits or restricts the City's use of the land; any land to be conveyed for stormwater management facilities, for flood plain or conservation purposes, for roadways, walkways or any other non-parkland purpose.
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Park</li> <li>• Community Park</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Park:</li> <li>• Local park</li> <li>• Parkettes</li> <li>• Linear parks</li> <li>• Urban square</li> </ul>	5-minute walk (400m) for neighbourhood parks	<p>1.6 ha/1000 people</p> <p>Note: 16 square metres per person</p>	1.37 ha per 1000 people	<p>Not all green spaces in the Town are considered "parks" within the context of this Plan.</p> <p>The Parks Plan deals exclusively with municipal parks – unencumbered lands secured and owned by the municipality primarily for active recreational use. Parks are lands that are appropriate locations for all types of recreational facilities, and such facilities can be sited in parks without restrictions associated with environmental preservation, hazard issues (i.e., flooding), or cultural heritage protection.</p>	Conveyance of environmental and open space lands including lands required for drainage, stormwater management facilities, shoreline protection purposes, lands susceptible to flooding, lands within valley and watercourse corridors, hazard lands, environmentally sensitive areas or lands, areas of natural and scientific interest, wetlands, woodlands, that portion of a property containing a cultural landscape that is designated to be of cultural value or interest pursuant to Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act lands required for buffer purposes and other lands not suitable for development, shall not be accepted or considered as a conveyance of lands for a park or for other public recreational purposes
<b>Waterloo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City</li> <li>• Community (4ha)</li> <li>• Local (0.5-2ha)</li> </ul>	<p>Community park (1600-2500m)</p> <p>Local park (600-800m or 15 to 20 minute walk)</p>	<p>3.0 ha/1000 people</p> <p>Note: updated from 5.0ha/1000 people in most recent park plan (2021)</p>	3.16 ha / 1000	Other open space types should not be included in the inventory of parkland although they form part of the open space system and may contribute to recreation uses.	

\* Cities in this list are part of the City of Guelph's approved list of comparator municipalities and cities included as part of our service rationalization review

**Table 7 - Summary of comparator municipalities' parkland dedication policies**

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Guelph</b>	<p>Downtown area, greater of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land equivalent to 5% of land or</li> <li>• 1 hectare (1ha) per five-hundred (500) Dwelling Units, but not to exceed twenty-percent (20%) of the total area of the Land</li> </ul> <p>Outside of Downtown, greater of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land equivalent to 5% of land or</li> <li>• 1 hectare (1ha) per three-hundred (300) Dwelling Units, but not to exceed twenty-percent (30%) of the total area of the Land</li> </ul>	Land up to 2% of land to be developed	shall be determined whichever single requirement will result in the greatest total area of the Land being required to be conveyed to the City for Parkland	<p>Downtown area, greater of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land equivalent to 5% of land or</li> <li>• 1 hectare (1ha) per five-hundred (500) Dwelling Units, but not to exceed twenty-percent (20%) of the total area of the Land</li> </ul> <p>Outside of Downtown, greater of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land equivalent to 5% of land or</li> <li>• 1 hectare (1ha) per three-hundred (500) Dwelling Units, but not to exceed twenty-percent (30%) of the total area of the Land</li> </ul>	<p>APPRAISAL AND VALUATION</p> <p>an appraisal of the Market Value of the Land from a certified professional appraiser of real estate who is designated as an Accredited Appraiser by the Appraisal Institute of Canada, at no expense to the City.</p> <p>Land values for single unit residential is provided in Schedule 'A'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City use or school boards</li> <li>• University or college</li> <li>• Hospital</li> <li>• Replace buildings razed by fire or other acts of gods, provided replacement does not exceed gfa or previous units of original</li> <li>• Secondary unit</li> <li>• Temporary structure</li> </ul>
<b>Barrie</b>	<p>Land equivalent to 5% of land OR Land equivalent to 1 ha every 300 units OP: Land up to 5% of land to be developed for densities less than 15 units per ha. AND Land at a rate of up to 1 ha per 300 units for densities greater than 15 units per ha</p>	Land up to 2% of land to be developed	Predominant land use shall be determined and applicable rate for predominant use will prevail for entire site	For residential development or redevelopment, at a rate of 1 ha per 500 units or the value of land otherwise required, whichever is greater	<p>APPRAISAL</p> <p>Based on market value of land and be determined in accordance with Canadian Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice of the Appraisal Institute of Canada In the case of residential development with 1 ha/500 unit rate, the value of the land may be calculated at a value that is less than its market rate in accordance with any Council approved policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lands which have previously been charged, unless there is increase in density or new use proposed on commercial/industrial lands</li> <li>• Replace buildings razed by fire or other acts of gods, provided replacement does not exceed gfa of original</li> <li>• second suites and other building alterations that do not increase dwelling units</li> <li>• development or redevelopment of lands included in City's parkland inventory</li> </ul>

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Burlington</b>	Low Density: 5% of the land area Medium Density: Land equivalent to 1 ha every 300 units High Density: Land equivalent to 1 ha every 300 units	Land up to 2% of land to be developed	for the residential component of the development, park dedication shall be on the basis of residential policies; for the commercial, industrial and institutional component of the development, parkland dedication shall be 2 percent of the land area for the percentage of the total floor area used for non-residential uses	Low Density: Cash-in-lieu equals the value of land day before building permit x 5% Medium Density–lesser of: The number of units divided by 500 x the per hectare value of the land the day before building permit; OR The number of units proposed x \$6,500. High Density–lesser of: The number of units divided by 500 x the per hectare value of the land the day before building permit; OR The number of units proposed x \$5,500.	APPRAISAL Based on market value of land to an upset value based on density of the site.	No exceptions identified
<b>Halton Hills</b>	Low Density: 5% of the land area Urban Living Areas: Land equivalent to 1 ha every 300 units	Land up to 2% of land to be developed	Land conveyed in accordance with Residential, Commercial and industrial dedication rates	For residential development or redevelopment, at a rate of 1 ha per 500 units	APPRAISAL Based on market value of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial/industrial expansion under 25% of the of the site buildable area is 2%</li> <li>• renovation or expansion of an existing residential building not adding new units</li> <li>• Replace buildings razed by fire or other acts of gods, provided replacement does not exceed gfa or previous units of original</li> </ul>

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Kitchener</b>	Land at a rate of 5% of land to be developed OR Land at a rate of 1 ha per 300 dwelling units, whichever is greater	Land equal to 2% of land to be developed	Land conveyed in accordance with Residential, Commercial and industrial dedication rates	Cash equivalent to land requirement for all land use types may be required	APPRAISALS Land value for plans of subdivision of 4 ha or more shall be determined by accredited appraiser with cost paid for by Park Trust Fund Land value for plans of subdivision less than 4 ha, or site plan approval, or consent/land severance are determined based on the land values in the Dedication Policy – land types are given separate values per hectare. City may decide to conduct a site-specific accredited appraisal for cash-in-lieu, with cost paid for by Park Trust Fund. OP STATES that CIL will be based on fair market value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown Kitchener Community Improvement Area</li> <li>• if the maximum park dedication has previously been made, no further park dedication will be required in the event of development or redevelopment</li> <li>• if no previous park dedication has been paid, the City will require the maximum allowable in event of development or development</li> <li>• Council may opt to exempt public sector institutional development (hospitals, universities, etc)</li> </ul>
<b>London</b>	Land equal to 5% of land within the development application OR Land at a rate of 1 ha for each 300 dwelling units, whichever is greater	Land equal to 2% of the land to be developed	Land conveyed in accordance with Residential, Commercial and industrial dedication rates	CIL rates based on predetermined land values based on residential frontages. Alternative rates outlined in the Planning Act.	VALUATION Value is determined by multiplying the value per dwelling unit in valuation table for the corresponding type of residential dwelling unit by the number of that type of dwelling unit proposed on the land, and then adding all of the values for each type of dwelling unit to arrive at the prevailing land value. APPRAISAL Other non-residential purposes will be determined by a registered property appraiser and be valued at a market rate consistent with the timing of development under the Planning Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if the park dedication has previously been made, no further park dedication will be required in the event of development or redevelopment</li> <li>• Parkland dedication is required if more density is added to an existing site or commercial/industrial lands are repurposed</li> </ul>

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Markham</b>	Land in the amount of 1 ha per 300 dwelling units (no less than 5%) for detached and semi-detached units AND Land in the amount of 1 ha per 300 units capped at 25% for medium and high density developments	Land equal to 2% of the land to be developed	Conveyance is the sum of the individual uses; defined by the Gross Floor Area of ground floor for all non-residential uses exclusively devoted to each use and surface parking area in addition to any required residential dedication	Cash equivalent to land requirement for residential land use types at a rate of 1 ha per 500 units. Cash and/or Land equivalent	<p>APPRAISAL</p> <p>Shall be determined in accordance with generally accepted appraisal principles, carried out by an independent accredited market appraiser retained by the City and at the cost of the applicant</p> <p>In the event of a dispute, the City may require a peer review by another independent appraiser at the cost of the applicant</p> <p>City may utilize other valuation approaches, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recent record of land sale not more than 1 year old</li> <li>• a per ha land value established by the City on an annual basis</li> <li>• an in-house valuation of the market value of the land prepared by the Manager of Real Property</li> </ul>	<p>May consider reduction or exemptions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development for public use</li> <li>• includes affordable housing</li> <li>• is a nursing home</li> <li>• development by a not-for-profit organizations</li> <li>• within a heritage conservation district or heritage conservation district study area and development is in conformance with policies and guidelines for HC</li> </ul> <p>No conveyance required for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enlargement or alteration to residential structure so land as it continues to conform to the zoning by-law and does not increase the number of dwelling units</li> <li>• creation of secondary suite</li> </ul> <p>Strata may be accepted as parkland contribution</p>

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Ottawa</b>	<p>High density (&gt; 18 units per ha): one (1) hectare for every three hundred (300) dwelling units, but for apartments, as defined by the zoning by-law this parkland conveyance will not exceed a maximum of 10% of the land area of the site being developed</p> <p>Low density (&gt;18 units per ha): 5% of the gross land area of the site being developed or rural severance - 400 m2</p>	Land equal to 2% of the land to be developed	<p>Parkland requirement calculated as follows: Where land is located on discrete parts of the site, the parkland will be calculated based upon the proportion of the site devoted to each use at the rates identified.</p> <p>Where land is developed for a mix of uses within a building, the parkland requirement for each use will be based upon the above rates prorated proportionally to the gross floor area allocated to each use.</p>	Money in-lieu of the conveyance of land will not exceed an amount equivalent to ten percent (10%) of the value of the land area of the site being developed	APPRAISAL Market appraisal approved by the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if the park dedication has previously been made</li> <li>• if more density is added to an existing site or commercial/ industrial lands are repurposed</li> <li>• Replace buildings razed by fire or other acts of gods, provided replacement does not exceed gfa or previous units of original</li> <li>• renovation or expansion of an existing residential building not adding new units</li> <li>• place of worship, cemetery</li> <li>• Non-profit rental</li> <li>• University or college</li> <li>• Municipal or government use or any development or redevelopment of a use undertaken in partnership with the City</li> <li>• Secondary unit</li> <li>• a temporary structure</li> <li>• change of use from residential to commercial/industrial or from commercial/industrial</li> </ul>

City*	Land dedication policies residential	Land dedication policies commercial/ industrial	Land dedication policies mixed use	Cash-in-lieu policies	Land valuation vs appraisals	Exemptions or special policies (Strata/POPS)
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	The greater of: 5% of the land proposed for development OR The lesser of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 ha for each 300 units; or</li> <li>1 ha for each 730 persons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.51 ppu single detached</li> <li>2.88 ppu semi-det.</li> <li>2.83 ppu townhouse</li> <li>1.92 ppu multi-res</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Land equal to 2% of the land to be developed	Land will be conveyed at the rate applicable to the predominant proposed use and all land proposed for development will be included in calculating the required amount of land to be conveyed	CIL will be calculated at the set rate determined by land use Payment of money in an amount equal to the value of the lands the day before the (first) Building Permit is issued	APPRAISAL Shall be determined in accordance with generally accepted appraisal principles Commissioner of Corporate and Financial Services is authorized to establish the value of land	To a development or redevelopment where the predominant proposed use of the land is for Special Resident Uses or for Institutional uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To a residential development that will not result in an increase in the number of dwelling units</li> <li>To a commercial or industrial purpose that will not result in an increase in the GFA</li> <li>Where park or CIL has been dedicated, no additional dedication for development or redevelopment on that land will be required, unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing density</li> <li>Conversion of Comm or Ind to Res.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> No POPS/strata policies
<b>Waterloo</b>	Land equal to 5% of the development area for densities of 100 unites/ha or less AND Land at a rate of 0.10 ha per 300 units for densities exceeding 100 units/ha Capped at 15% when land or cash-in-lieu are conveyed	Land equal to 2% of the land to be developed	Proportional based on land type	At discretion of City's General Manager of Development Services City may establish a fixed value for land use types that shall be updated every 5 years (OP)	APPRAISALS Owner will retain independent accredited real-estate appraiser at own expense Value the day before granting of plan of subdivision or condo/provisional consent/building permit City may accept purchase price of the land as the determinant land value provided the purchase occurred within 12 months of complete application submission, appropriate zoning or rezoning of land for proposed use, and applicant can demonstrate to the City that the purchase was a bonafide arms-length purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building damaged or demolished by fire or other natural causes, where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the building is repaired or replaced within 2 years</li> <li>continues to be used for same purpose</li> </ul> </li> <li>Provincial universities and colleges</li> <li>Other uses as determined by Council</li> <li>Industrial development and redevelopment</li> <li>In Uptown: Office and ground floor commercial in office mixed-use</li> </ul>

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