



Parks Plan Overview



City of Toronto
Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division

What is the Parks Plan?

- ▶ A strategic five year plan that guides the acquisition, development, management and operation of Toronto's public parkland.
- ▶ In 2010 Council approved seven guiding principles for the Plan:
 1. Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure;
 2. Equitable Access for All Residents;
 3. Nature in the City;
 4. Place Making;
 5. Supporting a Diversity of Uses;
 6. Community Engagement and Partnerships; and
 7. Environmental Goals and Practices.

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The Parks Plan is not focused on Recreation programs and services, nor is it a recreation facilities master plan. The Recreation Service Plan, which is currently in progress, focuses on recreation programs and services provided by our Division.

1. Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure

The system of parks and trails is part of a continuous city-wide green space system including natural heritage system, open spaces and streetscapes.

High Park



Queen's Park

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The first principle is “Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure”

Parks and trails are vital components of city infrastructure and contribute to a high quality of life for City residents, businesses and visitors.

There are over 1600 named parks situated on over 8400 hectares of land, which comprise approximately 12% of the total City of Toronto land base and include: **the natural areas, City parks, and trails.**

Other publicly accessible open space throughout the city includes:



University Avenue Centre Median

- institutional lands
- cemeteries
- commercial plazas
- school properties
- hydro corridors
- streetscapes

Park Classifications

Toronto's parkland is classified into 7 distinct types within 2 categories:

A. Local Serving:

1. Parkette
2. Neighbourhood
3. Community

B. Regional/City-wide Serving:

4. District
5. City-wide
6. Destination
7. Greenway

All 7 park types can include Natural Heritage features, such as woodlots, meadows or ravines.

Parkettes ~ primarily provide opportunities for passive recreation and retreat for nearby residents and are generally less than 0.5 hectares in size.



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Many of these types of parks are located in the downtown area and provide amenities for residents, workers and visitors including: public art, horticultural displays, seating areas and playgrounds.

Examples of Parkettes: Berczy Park (Toronto East York), Besserian Parkette (North York), Vimy Ridge Parkette (Etobicoke York) and Sisken Parkette (Scarborough)

Neighbourhood Parks ~ serve the local neighbourhoods and are generally less than 3 hectares in size.



Burnhamill Park



Oates Park

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Neighbourhood parks provide opportunities for passive recreation and limited types of active recreation amenities within a reasonable walking distance of intended users.

Amenities include: seating areas; gardens; playgrounds; small sports fields; waterplay; and tennis courts.

Examples of Neighbourhood parks: Burhamill Park (Etobicoke York) , Oates Park (Scarborough), Bellbury Park (North York) and East Lynn Park (Toronto & East York)

Community Parks ~ are larger than Neighbourhood Parks and provide more opportunities for recreational uses. These parks are generally 3 to 5 hectares in size.



Lambton-Kingsway Park

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Community parks provide a wider range of passive and active recreational uses and are typically located in busier parts of the community, fronting on collector streets and within a reasonable walking distance of nearby residential areas.

These parks may include sports fields, tennis courts, outdoor swimming pools, artificial ice rinks, seating areas and areas suitable for community events.

Examples include: Lambton Kingsway Park (Etobicoke York), Wishing Well Park (Scarborough), Christie Pits Park (Toronto East York) and Roywood Park (North York).

District Parks ~ generally 5 to 15 hectares in size, providing many opportunities for recreational activities, and serve a broad range of residents from various communities.



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District parks are typically located near major roads and transit service, providing access to a range of passive and active recreational opportunities and serve a broad range of residents who travel beyond their immediate communities to use the facilities in the park.

Many include higher order facilities, such as: community centres, arenas or outdoor ice skating rinks, indoor or outdoor pools, pedestrian and cycling routes and on-site parking.

Examples of District Parks: Thomson Memorial Park (Scarborough), Trinity Bellwoods Park (Toronto East York), Eglinton Park (North York) and Earls Court Park (Etobicoke York).

City-wide Parks ~ provide opportunities for unique or specialized activities and attract users from across the city.



Yorkville Park



Humber Bay Park



Birchmount Park / Community Centre



Allan Gardens

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City-wide parks typically contain natural heritage or cultural features of interest to all City residents. These parks are located on major streets with good transit access.

Amenities include: civic plazas and amphitheatres, stadia, ski hills or golf courses, conservatories/public greenhouses, competitive sports tournament complexes, major trails and significant natural areas and art centres and/or unique art features.

Examples of City-wide Parks: Yorkville Park, Birchmount Park, Morningside Park, Woodbine Park, Humber Bay Shores

Destination Parks ~ provide unique features, specialized amenities and features of interest to all City of Toronto residents, as well as GTA residents and tourists



Rouge Park



Waterfront Parks



High Park



Toronto Islands

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These parks range in size and may include passive and active recreational amenities and natural features.

Examples of Destination Parks: High Park, Centennial Park, Music Garden, James Gardens, Rouge Park, Toronto Islands, Sugar Beach

Greenways ~ are linear parkland primarily providing major trail-related connections



Beltline Trail



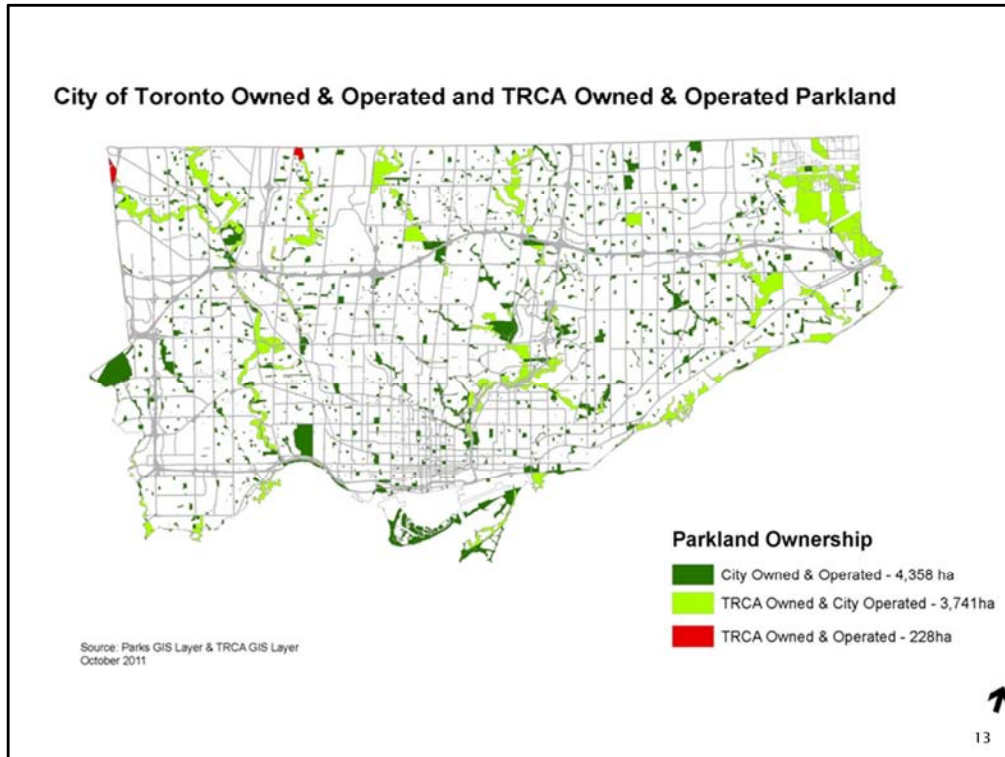
West Toronto Rail Path

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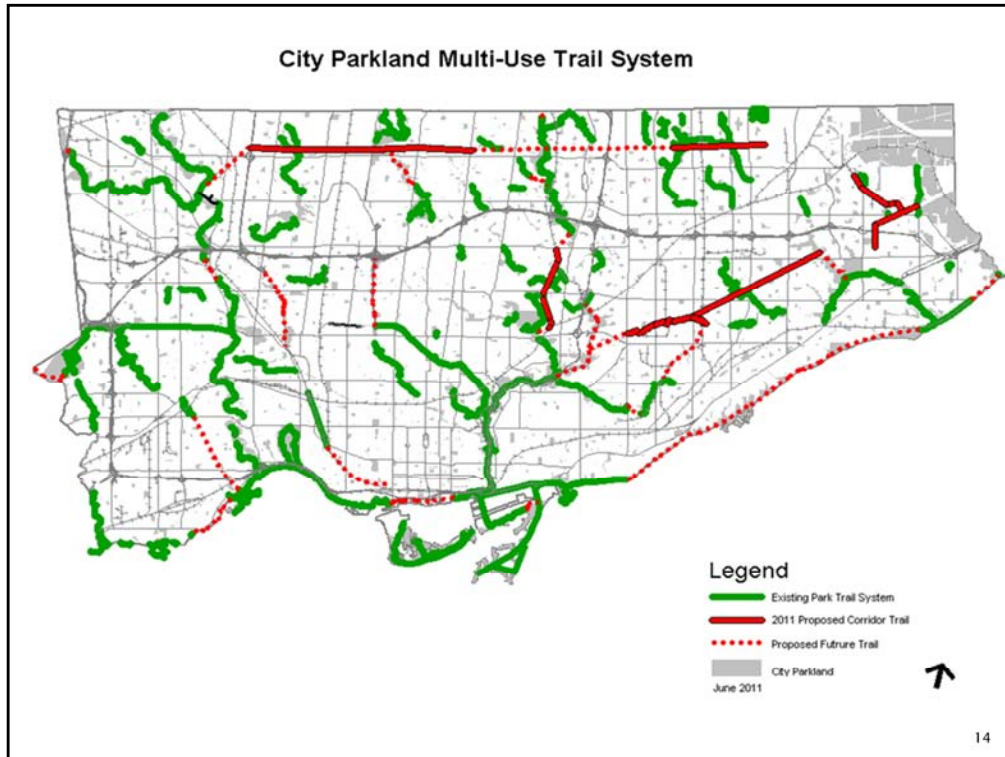
Greenways typically serve neighbourhoods located along their lengths as local parks for walking, biking and passive enjoyment and are generally 10 to 30 metres wide and vary in length.

These parks and open spaces may include amenities such as rest areas, signage, public art and plantings. Greenways may incorporate a developed trail corridor, or simply exist in the form of a more natural connection between points, serving more as green habitat or linkages for wildlife.

Examples of Greenway Parks: Kay Gardner Beltline Park, Gateway Greenbelt, West Toronto Rail Path, Highcroft Ravine



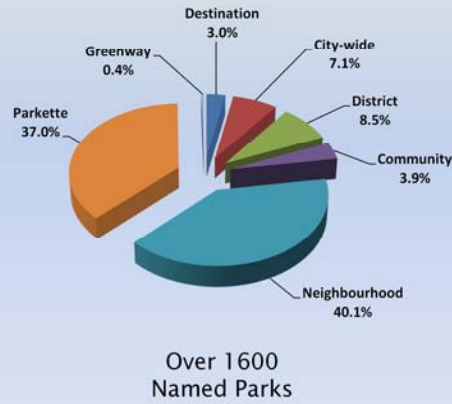
Of the over 8,400 hectares of parkland that is managed by Toronto, nearly half of it (46%) is owned by the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), but operated by the City under management agreements.



Multi use trails play a key role in helping to link parks and communities with each other. This map illustrates those trails that are located on lands operated by the City as parkland, whether City owned land or through management agreements with others.

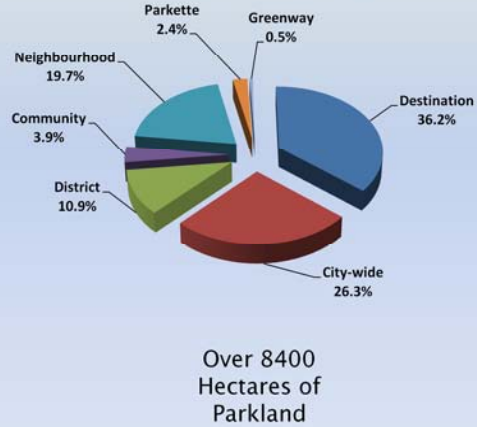
Total Parkland by Type and Area

Percentage of All Parks by Type



Over 1600
Named Parks

Percentage of All Parks by Area



Over 8400
Hectares of
Parkland

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The City has over 1600 named parks and over 8400 hectares of parkland.

This slide illustrates that there is a greater number of small parks across the City, typically parkettes and neighbourhood parks. The majority of parkland in terms of land area however, is situated in larger parks including destination and City-wide parks. (approx. 10% of all parks make up over 60% of parkland)

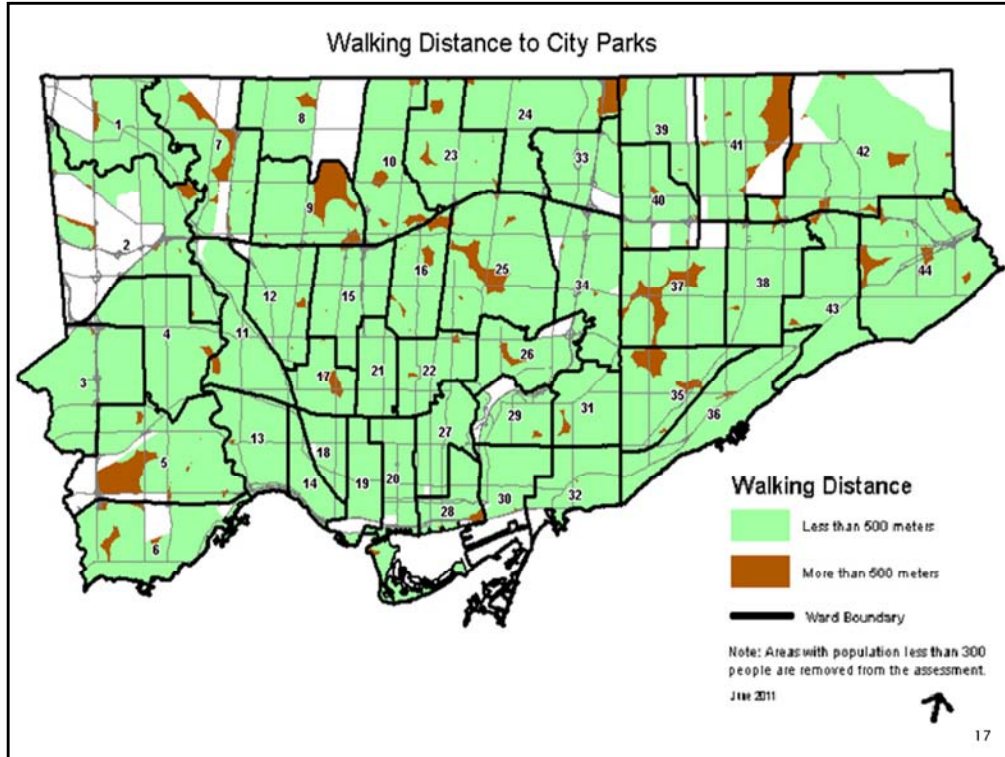
2. Equitable Access for All Residents

Parks and trails must be accessible to all residents in all parts of the City and must respond to the needs of a diverse population regardless of age, level of ability, income or cultural background.



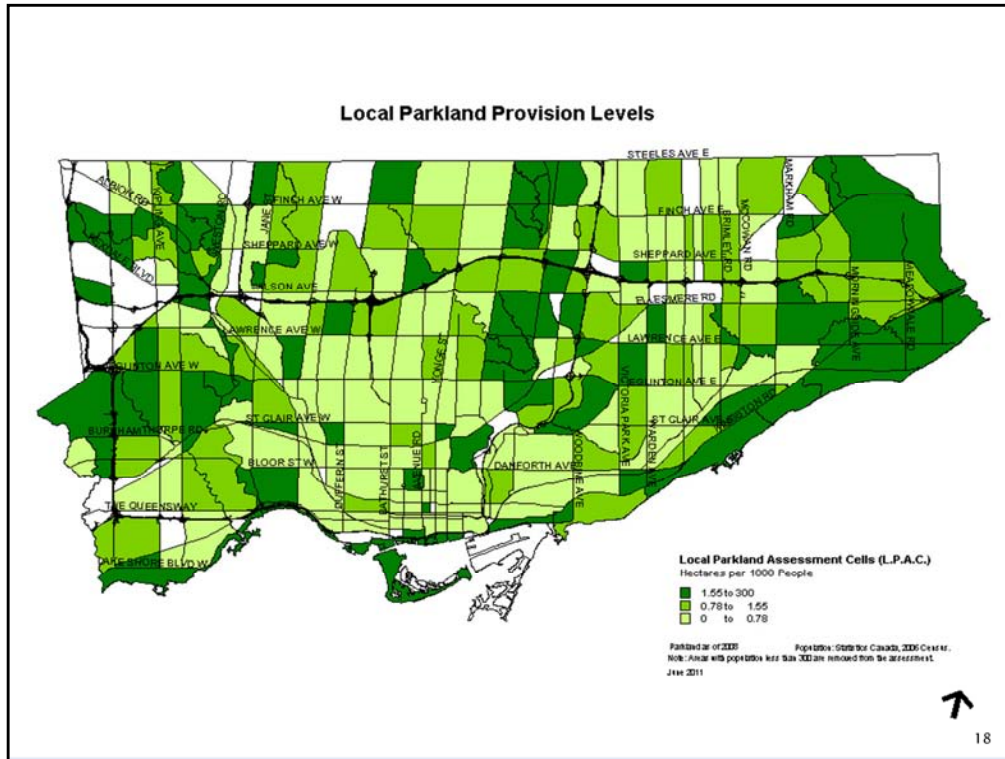
The second principle is “Equitable Access for All Residents”.

The Parks Plan will examine the provision levels of parkland and park amenities in relation to various needs of Torontonians. These needs may relate to income, age, gender, cultural background and level of ability.



This map illustrates areas the city that are located within a reasonable walking distance from a city park, without having to cross a major physical barrier to access it.

You can see from this map that most areas of the City are situated within a reasonable walking distance (500m or less) from a City park.



This map is a descriptive tool that is used in assessing the amount of local parkland that exists in a particular area, based on the population of the area. Each of these cells (called Local Parkland Assessment Cells) is colour coded to reflect the per capita provision of local parkland.

The cells in dark green indicate the highest level of local park provision per capita, while the lightest green cells indicate the areas of lowest provision per capita.

This assessment tool is used by PF&R staff in determining priorities for parkland acquisition. The areas that are indicated as having the lowest parkland provision levels are priority areas for new parkland acquisition.

3. Nature in the City

Natural Heritage areas are an important component of the City's green space system and should be protected and enhanced.



Don Valley Brickworks



Rouge Park

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The third Principle is “Nature in the City”.

The City's Official Plan acknowledges the importance of natural heritage areas through its policies to preserve and enhance these areas. These areas are protected through various statutory controls including: the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, Ravine and Natural Feature Protection Bylaw.

Nature In The City – Urban Forest

- Toronto has approximately 10.2 Million trees; of which 3.5 Million (35%) are located in City parks
- A key aspect of the Urban Forestry Strategy is its 40 year plan to increase the tree canopy coverage from 20% to 30% – 40% .

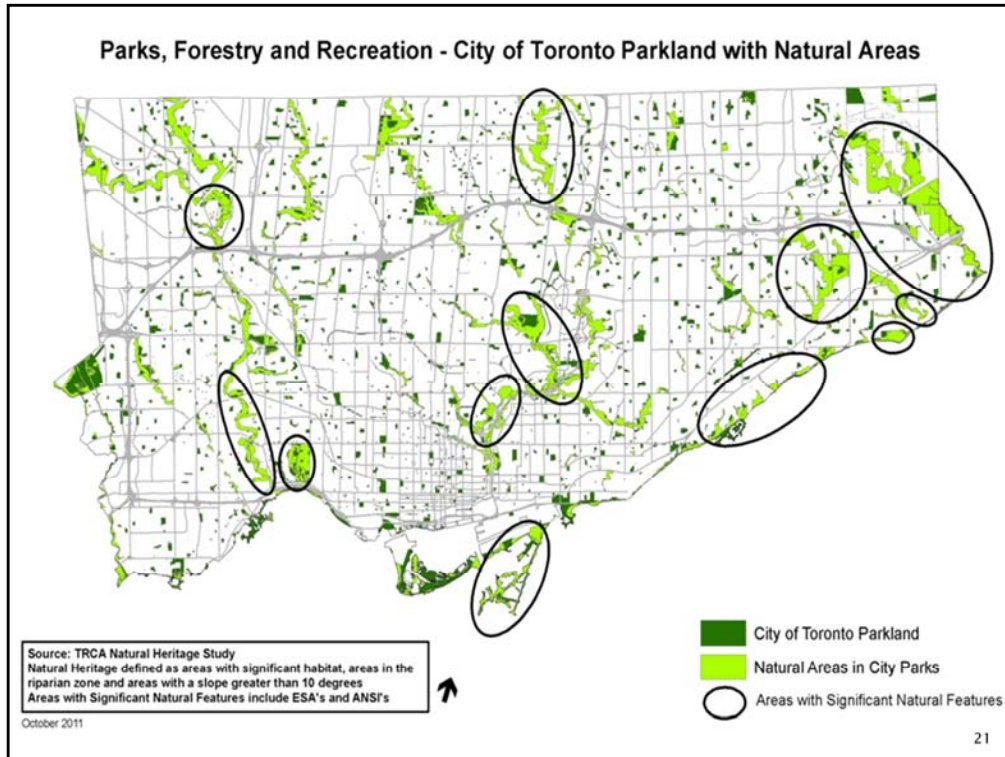


Rouge Beach Park

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Toronto presently has an estimated 20% tree canopy cover, representing 10.2 million trees, the majority (60%) of which are located on private property with the balance in City parks and natural areas; and

Toronto's Urban Forestry Strategy focuses on improved protection and maintenance of the existing tree inventory, protecting the forest and tree canopy and increasing tree plantings on public and private lands.



This map illustrates the portion of City's parkland and greenspaces that include natural areas.

Many of Toronto's parks include areas that have different types of natural features in them, such as woodlots, ravines and watercourses.

Some of Toronto's parks include areas of natural heritage significance. These are protected by legislation and include: **ANSIs** (Areas of Natural & Significant Interest) and **ESAs** (Environmentally Significant Areas). These are shown in the circled areas on this map.

4. Place Making
Quality must be emphasized in the planning, design and ongoing management of public parks.



The image contains three photographs illustrating place making. The top right photo shows a lush green park area with tall grasses and flowers, with a body of water and a city skyline in the background. The bottom left photo shows a fountain with water spraying upwards, surrounded by greenery and a statue. The bottom right photo shows an aerial view of a park with several circular green spaces and a parking lot.

University Avenue Centre Median

Humber Bay Shores

HTO Park

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The fourth principle is “Place Making”

The primary objectives of this principle include:

- Promoting Design Quality and Innovation;
- Providing a Physical and Social Focus for Communities; and
- Providing Well-Maintained and Comfortable Parks

Parks Operations Standards

Quality is reinforced through the development and implementation of Parks Operations Standards



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PFR has developed a set of **Service Standards** for the safe operation, maintenance, repair and enhancement of parkland and park assets.

These standards are achieved by means of:

- Parks Inspection Program
- Work Management System
- Parks staff training and resource tools, i.e.. Parks Branch Operations Handbook, Equipment Safety Standards.

Parks Operations Standards (cont'd)

▶ Parks Service Standards Apply To:

- ▶ General Maintenance
- ▶ Turf operations
- ▶ Horticulture operations
- ▶ Parks Construction
- ▶ Technical Services



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There are 11 areas within Parks operating activities, for which standards have been developed:

The first five include:

General Maintenance (Examples: litter picking, cleaning, minor repairs of parks and park assets and annual inspections)

Turf operations (Examples: maintenance includes integrated plant health care)

Horticulture operations (Examples: design, planting & maintenance of hort. displays)

Parks Construction (Examples: larger construction and maintenance projects – e.g., park development, and re-development, parks infrastructure)

Technical Services (Examples: smaller construction, maintenance and repair projects involving skilled trades)

Parks Operations Standards (cont'd)

- ▶ Greenhouse operations
- ▶ Conservatories
- ▶ Golf Course operations
- ▶ Ferry Services
- ▶ Animal operations



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The next five areas of parks standards include:

Greenhouse operations (Examples: production of annual and seasonal plants for seasonal displays and native plants for natural areas)

Conservatories (Examples: permanent horticultural displays/ specimens and seasonal flower shows at Centennial, Allen Gardens and Cloud Gardens)

Golf Course operations (Examples: turf, greens, facility and equipment maintenance)

Ferry Services (Examples: PFR is mandated by provincial legislation to provide regular ferry service to Island residents, as well as federal regulations to operate vessels.)

Animal operations (Examples: High Park, Riverdale Farm, Toronto Island)

Parks Operations Standards (cont'd)

- ▶ Winter Maintenance and operations



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the final parks operations standard focuses on:

Winter Maintenance and operations (Examples: artificial and natural ice rinks, snow clearing of park roadways, parking lots, pathways and stairs and entrances and exits to recreation facilities; as well as ski hill operations snow making, snow grooming, ski lift operations and maintenance)

PFR is in the process of developing **design & construction standards** for park development and re-development, based on the park classifications system.

5. Supporting a Diversity of Uses

Parks should be able to accommodate a variety of uses appropriate to their location and type.



Skateboarding



Sculpture



Off-Leash Area

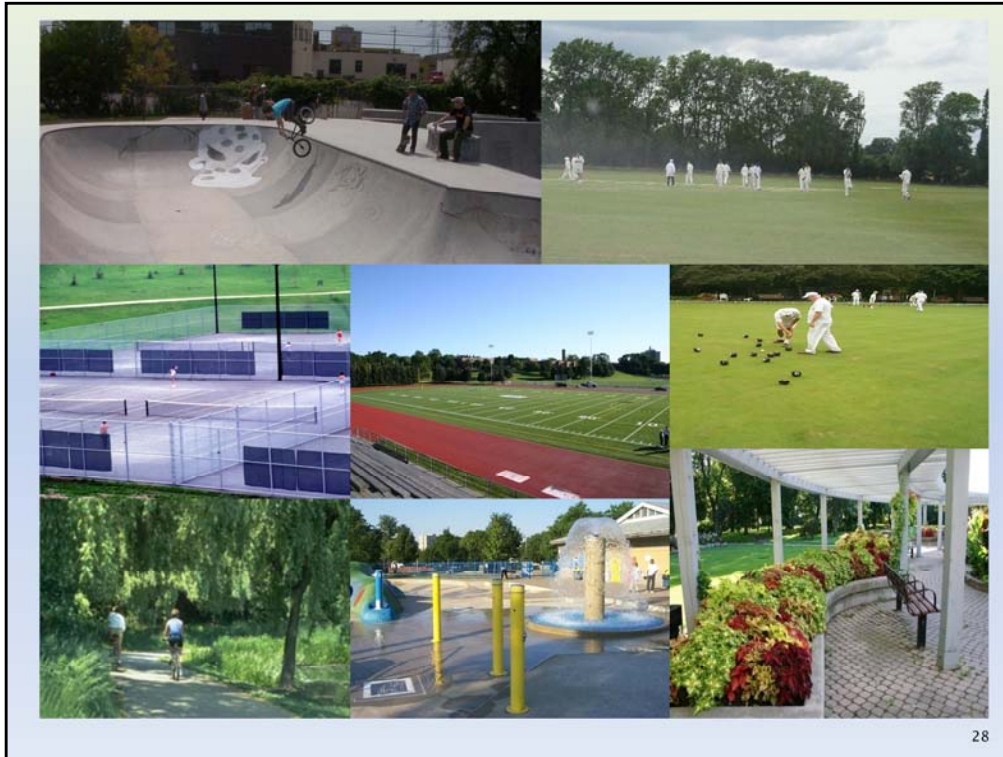
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The fifth principle is “Supporting a Diversity of Uses”

Toronto’s neighbourhoods are made up of residents of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. City parks should be able to handle a variety of recreational uses, appropriate to their location and park type, ranging from active to passive.

Examples of uses include:

- walking, running and cycling;
- fitness and active sports;
- passive recreation and quiet enjoyment;
- natural areas, habitat and tree canopy;
- community events;
- urban agriculture;
- cultural expression; and
- off-leash areas.

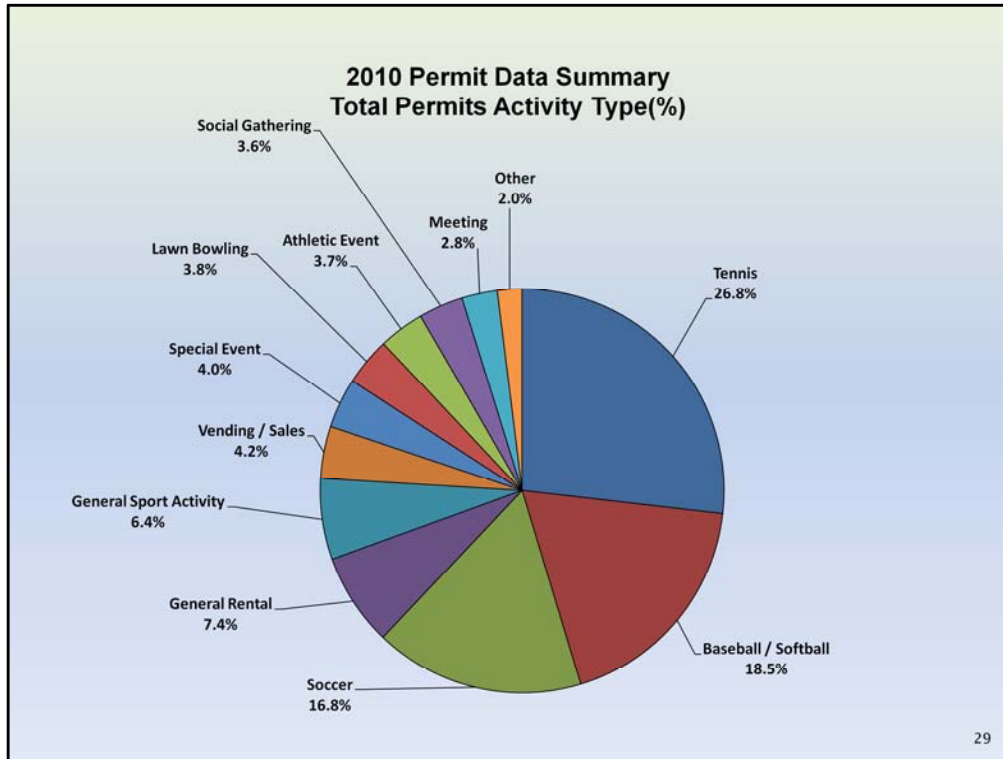


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- Demographics and Cultural Diversity play an important role in determining the existing and future park and recreational needs of residents.
- The City of Toronto Official Plan forecasts that the City will experience substantial growth, with an estimated half million people expected to settle here within the next 30 years.
- Seniors population (65+ age category) is expected to increase over the next 27 years as the population ages.

Overall, there is a trend away from team sports and towards low cost, casual and convenience activities.

Activities such as inline skating, freestyle BMX cycling and snowboarding, skateboarding are popular youth-oriented sports that are part of a trend away from organized team sports and towards more individual and unstructured activities.



In 2010 over 300,000 PF&R permits were issued, generating revenues of approximately \$19.3 Million. Of this amount, over \$3.5 Million in permit fees was obtained from Parks-operated facilities.

This graph provides a breakdown of permits by activity type.

- Tennis has the highest number of permitted hours, approximately 27% of the total.
- Baseball and softball accounted for the next highest number of permit hours at over 18% of the total hours.
- Soccer represented over 16% of total permit hours.
- General rentals made up 7.4% of all permitted hours.
- General sports activities, such as: volleyball, cricket, frisbee, lacrosse and ice hockey made up over 6% of the total hours.
- Vending / sales in parks and special events each accounted for 4.2% of all permitted hours.
- Other rental activities, such as: bootcamp, filming, photography and camping account for 2% of the total permitted hours.

City parks provide opportunities for community building such as:

- ▶ community and cultural festivals and events,
- ▶ outdoor food markets,
- ▶ community gardens and bake ovens.



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These activities support other corporate-wide initiatives such as the Toronto Food Strategy by providing urban agricultural opportunities for residents.

6. Community Engagement and Partnerships

The Parks Plan will explore opportunities to engage community and business partners to complement our existing resources through fund raising, partnerships and sponsorships.



Community involvement, through stewardship and volunteering, should be encouraged to complement existing city resources. Additionally, opportunities to engage the community and business partners to complement existing funding should be explored and implemented.

Parks Partnership Models

- ▶ **Local Park Interest Groups:**
 - Focus on local parks
 - Examples include Neighbourhood Associations and “Friends Of” groups
- ▶ **City-Wide Park Interest Groups:**
 - Focus on a system of parks or all parks in the City
 - Examples include umbrella Parks groups such as “Park People”
- ▶ **Private Donors:**
 - Advocacy organizations that raise private funding for design and operation of parks
 - Examples include foundations and conservancies
- ▶ **Public-Private Partnerships:**
 - Private and non-profit organizations collaborating with local government on parks infrastructure projects
- ▶ **Privately Managed Parks:**
 - Non-profit groups that take full responsibility to manage parks
 - International examples include privately governed conservancies

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Through our research, we have identified a number of park partnership models.

We would like to hear from you about your ideas on these and other opportunities.

7. Environmental Goals and Practices

Environmentally responsible practices and green initiatives must be incorporated into the day-to-day planning, design, operation and maintenance of the city's system of parks and trails



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The seventh and final principle is “Environmental Goals and Practices”.

Parks and trails should be designed to meet current standards of environmental sustainability and green development. These principles are guided by the City’s key environmental goals, as set out in the Climate Change, Clean Air and Sustainable Energy Action Plan, Official Plan and other supporting legislation.



An example of good environmental practice is the Urban Forestry's natural areas remediation program.

Here are some before and after images of areas rehabilitated by the removal of invasive species, to allow the introduction of more desirable vegetation.

The top two are the Goulding Estate (parkland close to Victoria Park and Dawes Rd.)

The bottom example is the Kimbark-Coldstream parkland ravine in proximity to Lytton Park residential area (Lawrence and Avenue Road).

Question to Consider

Principles: Parks and Trails as City Infrastructure and
Place Making

Over the next five years, what should the City of Toronto focus on to improve the quality of its parks, trails and open spaces?

Question to Consider

Principle: Equitable Access for all Residents

What do you think the barriers are to achieving equitable access for all residents and how can they be overcome?

Question to Consider

Principle: Supporting a Diversity of Uses

In your opinion, what are the top two priorities that the City should focus on over the next 5 years to support the diverse park needs of Toronto residents?

Question to Consider

Principles: Nature in the City and Environmental Goals and Practices

As Toronto continues to grow and develop, what should the City do to protect and enhance its parks, trails and natural areas?

Question to Consider

Principle: Community Engagement and Partnerships

How can residents, community groups and businesses help to develop, sustain and maintain City parks?

▶ Next Steps:



- Analysis of Parks Plan survey and consultation data.
- Parks Plan final report to be submitted for consideration by the Parks and Environment Committee in 2012.