City of Peterborough 2019

Assessment of Parks and Open Spaces

Introduction

This document and the Parks Development Standards document are the products of a comprehensive review of parks and open space in Peterborough (with a focus on Neighbourhood parkland), and of the planning, design and development of municipal parks and the open space system.

The **Assessment of Parks and Open Spaces** document sets out to research, assess and inform Municipal staff of the current state of the existing Parks and Open Spaces in Peterborough. The results of the assessment were used to formulate recommended solutions that will improve access to and quality of the City's existing and future parkland. The results of the assessment were also used to inform the Parks Development Standards document.

The purpose of this **Assessment of Parks and Open Space** document is to
1. Provide a high-level assessment of the parks and open space system, with a focus on Neighbourhood parkland;
2. Examine the approach to planning for, acquiring and developing parkland;
3. Evaluate the quality and functionality of established Neighbourhood parks – and identify priority Neighbourhood parks in need of rejuvenation;
4. Examine access to Neighbourhood parkland - and identify areas of the City that have inadequate access;
5. Evaluate the extensive inventory of City-owned (non-parkland) open space - and identify candidate sites to become parkland; and
6. Assess Neighbourhood park equity by Planning Area - and recommend an area-specific strategy for improvement.

Chapter One of the report further describes the project objectives and structure of this report.

Executive Summary

Key Findings

The Parks and Open Space System

Peterborough has an above average number of providers of public and publicly available open space, as well as culture and recreation facilities. Because of this and the City's setting and natural features, the amount of public and publicly available open space is above the norm, although a good deal of the land is natural heritage in nature and as such, will not support a high level of public use and facility development.

There is a good and improving network of linked open spaces and trails, mostly at the

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city-wide level. However, the connection between Neighbourhood parks and the city-wide trail and active transportation networks is generally weak.

There are many quality Regional and Community parks - although much of that land is comprised of natural heritage features. As a result, there is a shortage of medium and large size tableland-quality Regional and Community parks that can accommodate the outdoor and indoor culture and recreation facilities that will be required as the City grows. An additional 50-75 hectares of this type of open space will be required to support resident needs when the City is fully developed (2-3 large sites would be ideal). A strategy is required to address this challenge while opportunities still exist. Refer to **Appendix D** for the calculation of required parkland.

Refer to **Chapter Two** for more detail on the parks and open space system.

Quantity of Neighbourhood Parkland by Planning Area

The quantity of Neighbourhood parkland is below the recommended standard in 14 Planning Areas, with 8 Planning Areas well below the recommended standard of 1 hectare/1,000 population. The current City-wide ratio is 0.75 hectares/1,000 population. As residential density increases, especially in built-up areas, the ratio will worsen unless more parkland is acquired. Refer to **Appendix B**.

Chapter Three discusses how planning for parks and open space has been undertaken since the first Parks and Recreation Master Plan was completed in 1978. Also described are the various parkland acquisition techniques that have been utilized, and the way that parks have been designed and developed over the years.

Quality and Functionality of Neighbourhood Parks

A key objective of this study was to evaluate the quality and functionality of Neighbourhood parks.

To assist the evaluation, a list of 'minimum' and 'variable' design features and standards was prepared. Those standards are the centerpiece of the **Parks Development Standards** document that will guide the design and development of new parks, as well as the rejuvenation of existing Neighbourhood parks.

From that assessment, the following are the highest rated Neighbourhood parks in terms of quality and functionality. The number in brackets is the score out of 66 that each park received.

1. Rogers Cove (51/66) – a Community Park with an embedded Neighbourhood park
2. Barnardo (48/66)
3. Nicholls Oval (48/66) – a Community Park with an embedded Neighbourhood park

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    4. Stewart (40/66)

    5. Knights of Columbus (40/66) – a Community Park with an embedded Neighbourhood park

The following are the lowest ranked Neighbourhood parks in terms of quality and functionality. The number in brackets is the score out of 66 that each park received.

    1. Settlers Ridge (3/66) – one of the City's newest parks

    2. Redwood (3/66)

    3. Barleson and Leighton (6/66)

    4. Earlwood (6/66)

    5. Oakwood (6/66)

    6. 1497 Ireland Ave. (8/66)

    7. Raymond and Cochrane (8/66)

Refer to **Tables 4-1 – 4-5** in **Chapter 4** for the list of 'minimum' design features and the detailed assessment of each park.

Access to Neighbourhood Parkland

Another important objective of the study was to evaluate the distribution of Neighbourhood parkland and resulting access to local parks by nearby residents.

The analysis utilized a 400m service area from the center of each park (representing a 5-10 minute walk), adjusted to account for physical barriers for walking and cycling to parks.

The mapping revealed that many residential areas have gaps in access to Neighbourhood parkland, with Wards 2, 3 and 5 being the most serious. Refer to **Maps 5-1 - 5-5** in **Chapter 5**.

City-Owned (non-parkland) Open Space

Across the City, there are 250 hectares of City-owned (non-parkland) open space plus 69 hectares in current draft-approved plans of subdivision – much of this land with potential to become parkland.

149 properties were evaluated, utilizing 15 criteria. All but 15 properties are recommended to become parkland, with 95 identified as high priority for consideration. Refer to **Table 6-1** in **Chapter 6** for the evaluation and identification of candidate properties.

The aspects and features of recommended properties include some or all of the following:

- Display culture and recreation attributes,
- Contain natural heritage features,

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- Are adjacent to other public open spaces,
- Will improve distribution of and access to Neighbourhood parkland,
- Will contribute to Regional and Community parkland,
- Will provide linkage functions and/or are linear in nature,
- Contain archeological and/or cultural resources, and
- Contain a stormwater management facility.

Neighbourhood Park Equity

It was important to integrate all aspects of the assessment of parks and open space to see what was revealed about park equity, especially at the neighbourhood level – the focus of the study.

Park Equity = **Access** (to parkland) + **Quality** (of parks) + **Inclusivity** (the degree to which ALL residents can access parks and open spaces).

Utilizing the following criteria, it was determined that 18 Planning Areas (PAs) scored medium to low for Neighbourhood park equity, displaying at least two of the criteria.

1. Inadequate **access** to Neighbourhood parkland (16 PAs)
2. Low **quality/functionality** of Neighbourhood parkland (14 PAs)
3. The **quantity** of Neighbourhood parkland is below the recommended standard (14 PAs)
4. Above average **population density** (5 PAs)
5. Below average **household income** (10 PAs)

Refer to **Table 7-1** in **Chapter 7** for the list of Planning Areas with medium to low Neighbourhood park equity.

Key Recommendations

A New Parks and Open Space Classification

In concert with the update of the City's Official Plan, the parks and open space classification system was revised to reflect the future direction of the City, especially the trend toward increasing density of existing neighbourhoods and new residential development areas.

1. Regional Parks and Other Open Spaces
2. Community Parks and Other Open Spaces
3. Neighbourhood Parks and Other Open Spaces
4. Pocket Parks
5. **Urban Park Spaces** - a second tier of parks and open spaces to be located within high density areas (including the downtown).

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- o Urban Community Parks,
- o Urban Squares,
- o Urban Pocket Parks,
- o Sliver Parks,
- o Courtyards and
- o Connecting Links.

Priority Neighbourhood Parks for Rejuvenation

Because financial resources are always finite and many parks have been identified, it is important to prioritize neighbourhood parks in need of rejuvenation. It was decided that the factors comprising park equity be utilized to augment the quality/functionality assessment.

So, the 43 Neighbourhood parks that scored in the bottom third of the 'quality/functionality' assessment were further assessed based on the following criteria:

1. quality/functionality score of each park,
2. quantity (and ratio to population) of Neighbourhood parkland within each Planning Area,
3. household income of the neighbourhood,
4. population density of the neighbourhood,
5. the relative importance of each park to the neighbourhood, and
6. any development constraints.

Refer to **Table 4-6** in **Chapter 4** where these 43 parks are evaluated, scored and prioritized.

From that assessment, the following are the top 10 parks identified for rejuvenation:

1. Cameron Tot Lot
2. Earlwood
3. Keith Wightman
4. Dominion
5. Hamilton (embedded Neighbourhood park portion)
6. Glenn Pagett
7. Whitefield
8. Dainard
9. Denne
10. Queen Alexandra (+ Nichols Place Pocket Park)

Before any improvements are made, it is recommended that a rejuvenation plan be prepared for each park – and that 5-10 parks be identified as the first group for rejuvenation.

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It is recommended that incremental improvements be made to each park in the first group over two to three years to spread the benefit across the most neighbourhoods.

Once rejuvenation of the first group of parks is completed, the next group would be rejuvenated utilizing the same implementation strategy.

City-Owned (non-parkland) Open Space

All properties that are identified as candidates to become parkland should be officially designated as parkland. Properties that are rated as 'high-high' and 'high' should be considered first.

20 properties are recommended to become Neighbourhood parkland and each has been assigned a development priority. Refer to **Table 6-3** in **Chapter 6**. Development of these properties will need to be integrated with the development of new parks and the rejuvenation of existing parks.

It is recommended that City-owned (non-parkland) open space properties that contain high-value natural heritage features that are recommended to become parkland be further designated as 'nature reserves' or 'nature preserves'. Physical restrictions and policies should be implemented to limit or prohibit public use for the most sensitive properties or parts of properties. In some instances, the park name could incorporate 'reserve' or 'preserve'

The Strategy to Improve Neighbourhood Park Equity

Below are the seven elements of the strategy to improve Neighbourhood park equity across the City. For each residential Planning Area (except lightly populated Coldspring), a specific strategy has been developed that combines various combinations of these elements.

1. Through good design and adequate rejuvenation, improve the quality and functionality of Neighbourhood parks.
2. Develop new Neighbourhood parks to the recommended standard.
3. Within selected Regional and Community Parks, create new and enhance existing embedded Neighbourhood park features.
4. Attempt to partner with school boards to provide quality Neighbourhood park features at selected elementary schools.
5. Designate and develop a number of City-owned (non-parkland) open space properties into Neighbourhood parkland, access points and linkages (20 properties have been identified).
6. Acquire other properties to create new and enhance existing Neighbourhood parks.
7. Plan the location, quantity and characteristics of future Neighbourhood parks to

meet the recommended planning and provision standards.