



# The 2024 Canadian City Parks Report

Bridging the Gap: How the park sector can meet today's complex challenges through collaborations and partnerships.



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Park People expresses gratitude for the land where we gather and its critical connection to the health of all. We acknowledge the enduring presence and resilience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people on this land, and recognize their role as caregivers, stewards and storytellers across Turtle Island.

We acknowledge the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land through colonialism and believe that parks can help restore connections Indigenous people have to land in cities.

We believe that parks play a vital role in providing shared spaces for all people and are an important place for reconciliation and decolonization. We invite readers to join us in our commitment to the stewardship of this land as Indigenous peoples have done since time immemorial, and to further understand the history of colonization and how Truth and Reconciliation can be a part of how we bring people together on common ground.



# About Park People

**Park People is the only national, bilingual organization solely dedicated to championing city parks in Canada.**

**Since 2011**, we've collaborated with thousands of community leaders, non-profit park organizations, and park professionals to realize the incredible potential of our urban green spaces.

Park People's work is grounded in our core values of reciprocity, ecological integrity, and social equity. We believe that parks are vital to the health of Canada's cities and our environment, and that everyone—regardless of their income, identity, ability, or age—deserves equal access to the benefits of public green space.

We centre equity-deserving communities in our program planning and delivery, and we seek to foster deep relationships both with and between our collaborators. We also recognize the critical leadership role of Indigenous communities in protecting and restoring nature in our urban centres, and we seek to learn alongside them in their efforts.

## How We Work:

- **Activating Parks:** We work with communities to unlock resources and address barriers so that they can make their parks more vibrant and their neighbourhoods stronger.
- **Building Community:** We bring together park leaders and emerging advocates to celebrate community-driven initiatives, facilitating peer learning and exchange. We also promote best practices in park programming, community engagement, and operations to support their work more effectively.
- **Creating Change:** We track the trends, challenges, and opportunities that are happening in city parks. We use this knowledge to collaborate with municipalities and partners to ensure that parks are places that everyone can enjoy.

Through support from the Weston Family Foundation, RBC Foundation, the Government of Canada and Mohari Hospitality we're able to bring you the sixth edition of our annual Canadian City Parks Report. The report tracks challenges, trends, and opportunities in Canadian city parks both through numbers and the stories that inspire action, progress, and shared learning.

**Support our shared mission by ENGAGING with our communications and research, subscribing to our NEWSLETTER, attending our public events, and DONATING to our work to support great parks for everyone.**



# Funder Foreword

With approximately eighty-one percent of Canadians living in urban areas across the country, green space has become an increasingly vital resource, central to our social, environmental, and personal well-being. Parks are known to enrich communities by providing much needed space for physical activity and cultural events, as well as facilitating opportunities to build social connections and engage with nature.

Parks have a crucial role to play in the management and maintenance of our cities, hosting a range of natural features that contribute toward improving air quality, mitigating urban heat island effects, managing stormwater, and preserving biodiversity at a landscape level. For the past six years the Canadian City Parks Report has been instrumental in characterizing the state of urban parks and facilitating discussion in support of improved park policy and programming on a national scale. The Weston Family Foundation is proud to support the 2024 Canadian City Parks Report, centered on the theme of 'de-siloing work in parks', which aligns closely with our mission to support evidence-based research and initiatives that protect and restore biodiversity.

Environmental stewardship has been central to the Weston Family Foundation's approach for more than three decades. This focus on healthy landscapes has allowed the Foundation the opportunity to connect and collaborate with organizations across the country to support the sustainable and responsible management of Canada's most valued landscapes. With a central goal of preserving and maintaining biodiversity, parks and other urban green spaces offer an unparalleled opportunity to advance the health and function of our environment, while fostering the human-nature connections integral to achieving our shared environmental goals.

The Weston Family Foundation is grateful to the Park People team for their commitment to producing this important resource, and to the municipal staff, park professionals and members of the public who have contributed their time, insights, and stories to inform this report. The report not only highlights best practices implemented in parks across the country, but further addresses the emerging challenges and opportunities these landscapes face, while highlighting the ways we can all work together to address them. We are inspired by the dedication of volunteers, staff, and city leaders working to enhance our parks and green spaces. Their efforts pave the way for a thriving, greener future where urban parks continue to enrich and sustain our communities.



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Garfield Mitchell

*Chair, The Weston Family Foundation*



# Acknowledgments

A report this size is a team effort. First, huge thanks to the dozens of city staff that worked with us to compile city data, answer our questions, and respond to interview requests. We know this takes a tremendous amount of work and this report is not possible without you.

We also want to thank the park professionals, community members, non-profit staff, and academic researchers who provided their time and expertise to contribute to the report.

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We would also like to thank the RBC Foundation, the Government of Canada and Mohari Hospitality for their support.



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Lastly, but not least, thank you to the entire Park People team for their support and input.

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ami·es des parcs



# Executive Summary

In the last six years of the Canadian City Parks Report we've seen innovative projects and heard inspiring stories from across the country. But we've also seen trends that highlight a persistent gap between what we want from our parks and what they are today.

We position parks as critical infrastructure, but don't provide them with the funding to back it up. We value community engagement, but don't create enough avenues for people to get involved. We speak about the importance of collaboration, but work too often in silos.

Through our survey of 35 Canadian municipalities, 2,500+ residents of Canadian cities, as well as interviews with park staff and other professionals across the country, this year's report illuminated six key insights:

## **Park budgets are not keeping pace with need.**

- 80% of cities said the parks operation budget was insufficient.
- 78% of cities said insufficient budgets meant inadequate staffing levels, while 75% said it meant delays in park projects or planning.

## **Residents feel disempowered, but want to engage.**

- 52% of residents said they do not feel they have a voice or the ability to influence what goes on in their local park (e.g., design and programming decisions).
- 83% of cities said that with limited resources it can be difficult to conduct ongoing, proactive community engagement beyond standard consultation on park projects.

## **Mental and physical health benefits are key, but lack proactive programs.**

- 95% and 93% of residents believe parks play a positive role in their physical and mental health, respectively.
- 25% of cities feel "well-equipped" to address mental and physical health and well-being through parks.

## **Departmental structures can promote collaboration—or disconnection.**

- Nearly 1/3 of cities said their organizational structure makes it difficult for parks staff to collaborate with other divisions/departments.
- Less than 40% of cities include parks planning and design staff within the same department as parks operations staff.

## **Partnerships are critical, but cities need policies and structures.**

- 61% of cities said a barrier to partnerships with non-profits was an inability to meet municipal standards.
- 79% of cities reported having at least one partnership with a non-profit organization for park operations or programming.

## **Growing park issues require more training and collaborations.**

- 92% of cities agreed that in recent years parks departments are facing increased pressure to address issues beyond "traditional" parks issues.

This year's report is all about exploring the collaborations and partnerships—across city departments, community members, non-profits, and more—which we believe can help bridge these gaps. Parks are the places where we gather together, so it only makes sense that they will reach their potential the same way—together.

The report includes analysis of key data from our surveys of both municipal staff and residents of Canadian cities, including critical stats that both identify new and ongoing issues facing parks and can help city staff make better decisions about programs, policies, and funding.

The report also includes nine inspiring case studies that not only detail exciting partnerships and programs across the country, but provide actionable recommendations on how you can bring this type of work to your own city.

You'll read about the work the City of Victoria is doing leveraging nonprofit partnerships to increase health outcomes from food-based park programs, Metalude's approach to youth engagement in Montreal, the innovative Cultural Planning and Cooperation Agreement between the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Metro Vancouver Regional Parks in təmtəmíxʷtən/Belcarra Regional Park, and the groundbreaking work of Jay Pitter Placemaking working with the Institute for Social Research to understand the experiences of Black Canadians in public spaces.





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# Introduction

Over the past six years, Park People has been collecting park data and inspiring stories from cities across Canada to inform each annual edition of the Canadian City Parks Report (CCPR). The aim of the report has always been to unite park stakeholders on common ground and highlight shared solutions and tangible actions towards a stronger parks sector.

When we started this project in 2018, we never could have anticipated the amount of support and interest the report would receive. This year, over 2,500 residents of Canadian cities participated in the public survey and 35 municipalities graciously took part in our municipal surveys - the most we've ever had! This municipal and public survey data has been woven in with case study interviews to explore current challenges and opportunities for Canadian parks.

Across the five previous reports, one theme continues to emerge year after year: municipal capacity and budgets can't keep up with the increasing demand for parks and amenities. The cities and projects that have been able to better fill that gap tend to credit one thing - collaboration.

This finding led us to focus this year's report on digging deeper into our previous year's final key insight: "Find the collaboration sweet spots." While we recognize this is easier said than done, we wanted to explore the state of collaboration and identify the common barriers to success. The aim is that by bridging the gap between park stakeholders, we can move towards a park sector where resourcing, management and programming are collaborative, not siloed.

We hope within this year's report you will find compelling insights and inspiring stories that expand your collective understanding of the possibilities of parks and open up new ideas for partnerships. We believe that if we can all better align, coordinate and leverage the work across municipal departments, different levels of government, and community groups, we have the power to increase our collective impact, making parks better, more accessible and inclusive as well as places that enhance biodiversity and are resilient to our changing climate.

This report is just one step in the journey to making this work a reality. If you're interested in helping us continue this work please get in touch: [ccpr@parkpeople.ca](mailto:ccpr@parkpeople.ca).



# Methodology

## Process

**This year's report contains 35 Canadian cities**, including 33 returning cities, and 2 new cities. We aimed for diversity in size, geography, and official language, and prioritized cities that were returning from 2023, contacted us to participate, or filled a gap.

We distributed questionnaires to park staff, available in both French and English, that included questions on park inventory and infrastructure, and projects/practices. The questionnaire included a confidential section about challenges, allowing us to report on cross-country trends.

To ensure data quality, after cities submitted the questionnaires between May and June 2024, we verified some responses independently or followed up with questions. All cities had a chance to verify their City Profile data pre-publication.

We also undertook secondary research of media and scholarly sources. To ensure rich analysis and capture diverse perspectives, we conducted several expert interviews with city staff, park professionals, non-profit staff, and community members.

Finally, we created and launched a public survey in June 2024 to collect data on park use, perceptions, and preferences among people living in Canadian cities. This survey was open to residents of Canadian cities and was promoted through our newsletter, social media, and partner networks. We received over 2,500 responses from across the country.





## Challenges and Limitations

Part of what makes Canada’s landscape of city parks so exciting is its variety. Climate, topography, and governance are just a few factors that make cities unique—but that comes with challenges for comparability. Differences in which cities participate in the report each year also made cross-year comparability of data challenging, so we focused on overall trends.

### Variations within city data

Cities have very different systems regarding what metrics they track, how they track them, and how they coordinate data internally. For some cities, certain numbers were not available, or were only available as best estimates.

We’ve tried our best to ensure consistency and context. For example, we’ve used methods that standardize for city size (e.g., hectares of parkland per 1,000 people). In cases where there are important influencing factors that affect the data, we’ve noted these directly on the City Profile for transparency.

### Public survey demographics

For the public survey, the distribution of respondents across sociodemographic variables is worth noting: 68% identified as women, 37% were over the age of 60, 13% identified as LGBTQ2SIA+, 18% identified as newcomers to Canada and 79% identified as able-bodied. This means that these demographics are overrepresented in our sample when compared to the general Canadian population. Those who identified as an immigrant or racialized person were well represented compared to the Canadian population. Additionally, our survey has an overrepresentation of Ontarians with 58% of respondents coming from cities in Ontario.

If you have a suggestion or a comment, please [\*\*get in touch\*\*](#).

# Canada-Wide Trends

This section pulls together the latest park data from our survey of 35 municipalities and over 2,500 residents of Canadian cities highlighting current trends in visions and systems, policy, planning and resourcing, and community and programming. For more information about specific municipalities please refer to the City Profiles found in [Appendix A](#) and to learn more about our process please see the [Methodology](#).

## VISION + SYSTEMS

**This year's data tell the story of a parks sector on the cusp of change.**

Through our surveys, we heard that urban residents and municipalities alike share ambitious visions for the future of parks. Beyond just spaces for recreation, parks are increasingly being recognized as having a critical role in issues from mental health, to biodiversity protection, to racial justice.

Yet city staff working to bring this vision to life are coming up against institutional friction. Established municipal systems are rarely designed to support a holistic, multi-dimensional view of parks.

Parks departments are more likely to sit within infrastructure-focused divisions like public works than socially-focused divisions like community development, which can skew attention to the physical environment at the expense of social equity. Similarly, parks operations staff often work separately from park planners, which can create internal silos.

Structural changes to the ways parks departments are organized, connected and resourced are needed to bring a reimaged vision for parks into reality.





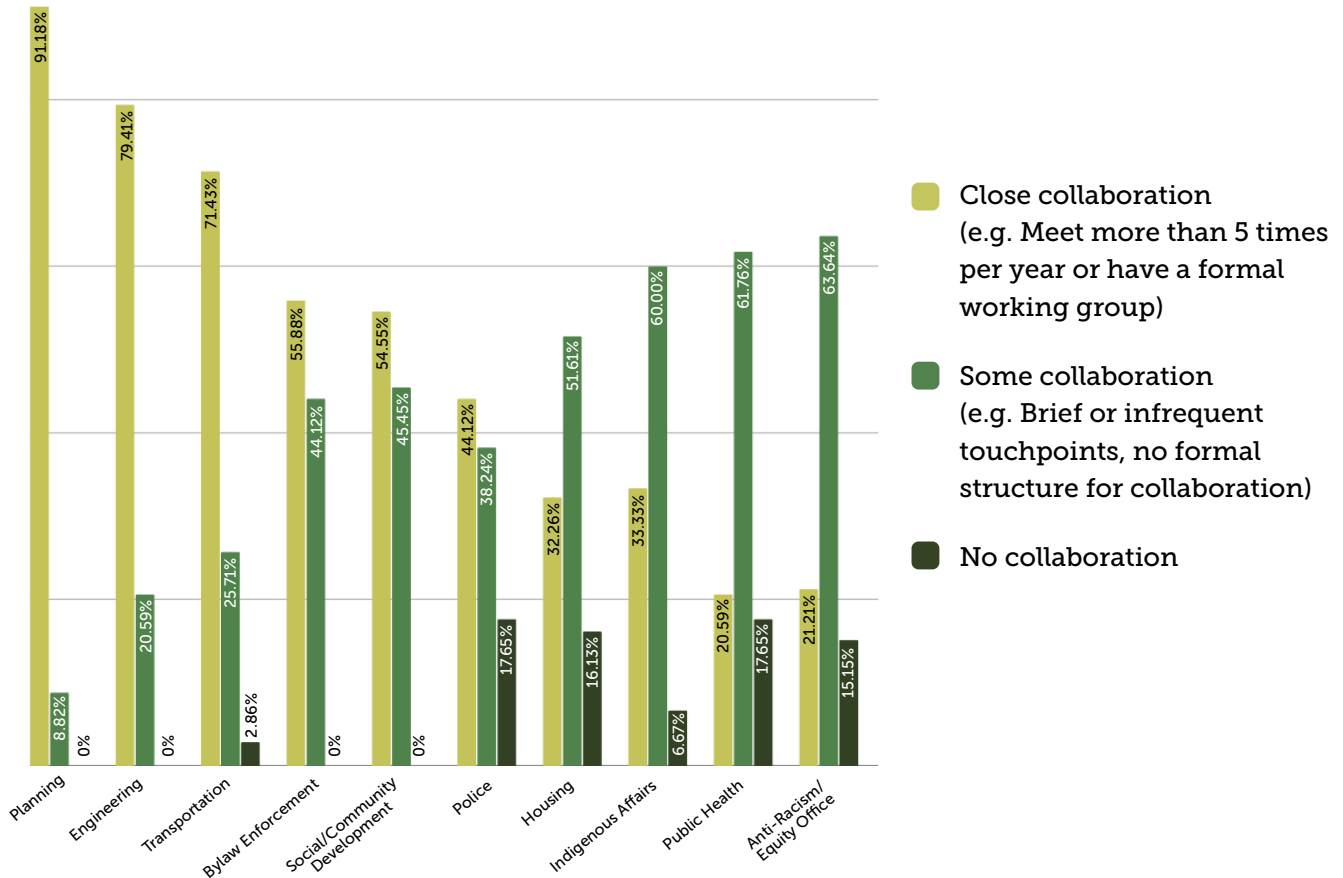
## Parks department structures can create silos, collaboration barriers

**We asked:** Which of the following best describe the organizational structure of your parks department within the municipality?

Park planning and park operations/maintenance staff work within the same office	37.1%
The parks department is within an infrastructure-focused division (e.g. public works, road services)	28.6%
The parks department is within a socially-focused division (e.g. community development)	2.9%
The parks department is standalone with no overarching division	8.6%
There is no parks department	5.7%
Other (please specify)	42.9%

## Inter-departmental collaboration focused more on infrastructure than equity

**We asked:** To what extent has your parks department collaborated with the following departments/divisions within your municipal and/or provincial governments in the past year?



## Statistics

- **67% of residents feel** that parks have a role to play in advancing equity and racial justice, however only 17% of cities feel equipped to address issues of anti-racism.
- **90% of residents agree** that in the past year parks have had a positive impact on their mental health.
- **92% of cities agreed:** "In recent years, our parks department is facing increased pressure to address issues beyond "traditional" parks issues."
- **31% of cities agreed:** "The organizational structure of our municipality can make it difficult for parks staff to collaborate with other divisions/departments."
- **71% of cities said** addressing systemic inequities and discrimination in parks is a challenge.



## POLICY, PLANNING + RESOURCING

**A visit to the park is an essential part of day-to-day life for most urban dwellers across Canada, with green spaces close to home especially well-used.**

However, perennial resourcing challenges—including insufficient operating budgets and restrictive parkland dedication policies—are making it difficult for municipalities to deliver on targets for both quantity and quality of parkland. City residents, however, continue to express strong support for increased public funding for urban parks.

### Park Use Snapshot

**Parks across Canada are well-used, with green spaces close to home doing the heavy lifting.**

- **67% of residents visit parks 2-3 times per week or more, including 33% that visit daily or almost daily.**
- **56% of residents said they are unsatisfied with the amount of time they currently spend in parks, and would like to spend more time.**

## Local neighbourhood parks most popular

**We asked:** Which type of park spaces do you visit most often?

Local or neighbourhood parks (small to medium in size)	77.71%
Trails	40.82%
Naturalized or “wild” parks or green spaces	36.42%
Beaches/waterfronts	33.29%
Destination parks (larger, more programming/amenities)	33.17%
Informal green spaces (school yards, hydro corridors, laneways, etc.)	19.52%
Other (please specify)	7.40%
Plazas or more “grey” public spaces	7.32%

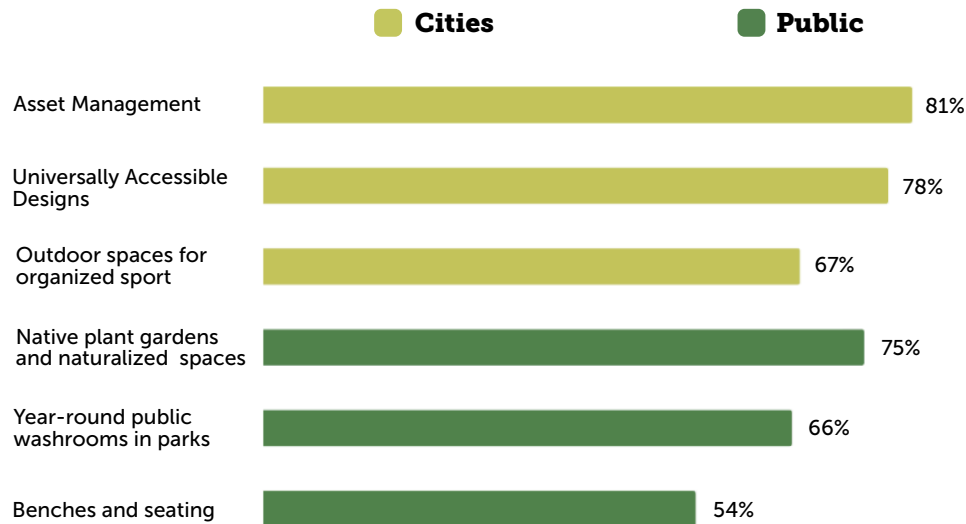


## Planning Priorities

Public desires and municipal priorities are slightly at odds when it comes to park amenities. Year after year, residents rank “the basics”—year-round washrooms, naturalized spaces, and ample seating—as the features they’d like to see most. Municipalities, however, are more focused on recreational amenities like sports infrastructure and trails.

Decision-making about which amenities to prioritize necessarily involves trade-offs. Luckily, 80% of residents appreciate seeing people use parks in different ways than they do personally, showing people benefit from diverse park activities even without direct participation.

## Top 3 Public versus City priorities for parks



## Resourcing and operations

Many parks departments continue to report inadequate funding, impacting their ability to meet maintenance standards, (re)develop parks, and maintain staffing levels.

- **80% of cities** said the parks operating budget is insufficient to allow the municipality to deliver on all park-related priorities.
- **The most mentioned impacts** of an insufficient operating budget are inadequate staffing levels (78%), delays in projects and planning (75%), and inability to meet maintenance and operational standards (56%).
- **65% of residents** consider their city's parks and green spaces well cared for, steady for the past two years but a significant drop from 78% in 2021.
- **85% of city residents** would like to see more public funding invested in improving city parks and green spaces.
- **67% of cities agreed:** The current system of parkland dedication policies makes it challenging for our city to meet parkland provision goals.



## COMMUNITY + PROGRAMMING

**Realizing the full potential of parks requires strong relationships between parks departments and community members.**

We heard from municipal leaders that there is a desire to strengthen these connections, both through direct public engagement and enhanced partnerships with non-profits to support park programming.

This is good news, as our public survey showed that there's a strong appetite for park involvement. However, many residents are feeling disconnected from decision-making about their local park—a trend we've seen in recent years that appears to be intensifying.



### Public engagement

City residents are eager to be more involved in their local parks, but finding opportunities to participate is not always straightforward. Interestingly, while most survey respondents reported facing barriers to participating in park engagement processes, many felt confident they'd know the appropriate process to voice a concern about their local park.

The challenge for municipalities, then, is ensuring there are accessible opportunities for proactive versus reactive engagement—opportunities to share visions versus complaints. This can be difficult to prioritize, however, as cities struggle with limited staff time and expertise in managing community relationships.

## What we heard from the public...

- **86% of residents** are interested in becoming more involved in their local park(s).
- **26% of residents** feel they have a voice or the ability to influence decision-making about their local parks, while 54% do not - compared to last year's findings where 34% of residents felt they had a voice or the ability to influence decision-making about their local parks with 43% saying they did not.
- **45% of residents** feel confident in knowing the appropriate process to bring forward concerns and ideas related to their local park, compared to 30% who are not confident, with the remaining neutral.

### Top barriers to participating in parks community engagement processes relate to lack of information and trust.



39% say they are unsure of how to get involved (up by 6% from 2023)



34% say they are unsure if their participation would make a difference (up by 7% from 2023)



32% say there is a lack of engagement opportunities on issues I care about (up by 4% from 2023)



30% say they do not have enough time (down by 9% from 2023)

## What we heard from parks departments...

- **83% of cities agreed:** With limited resources, it can be difficult to conduct ongoing, proactive community engagement beyond standard consultation on park (re)development projects.
- **53% of cities agreed:** Our team feels satisfied that the needs and perspectives of equity-deserving communities inform decision-making about our municipality's park plans and programs.
- **58% of cities agreed:** Our parks staff have a good system for documenting and maintaining relationships with different community stakeholders (e.g. to ensure continuity in the event of staff turnover).
- **42% of cities agreed:** We are satisfied that our municipality meaningfully involves and collaborates with local Indigenous groups and First Nations on park projects.

## Community partnerships

Working with external organizations and government bodies is another way parks departments can broaden public engagement, bring in diverse expertise, and reach equity-deserving groups.

Currently, parks departments work closest with school boards, and sports and recreation leagues, while partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous organizations are comparatively under-developed.

While many parks departments told us they have connections with non-profit organizations that share aligned visions, deepening these partnerships can raise challenges around coordination, oversight, and liability.

## Indigenous partnerships under-developed compared to schools and sports organizations

**We asked:** Which of the following types of partners is your parks department currently collaborating with on park operations or programming?

School boards	91.18%
Sport/recreation league(s)/association(s)	88.24%
Non-profit organization(s)	79.41%
Federal government (e.g. Parks Canada)	50.00%
Local business(es) or business association(s) (e.g. BIAs)	47.06%
Provincial/territorial government	44.12%
Regional government (if applicable)	44.12%
Indigenous community organization(s)	41.18%
Real Estate Developer(s)	41.18%
First Nation(s)	35.29%
Universities/colleges	32.35%
Other (please specify)	17.65%



## Staff time and municipal standards top challenges to partnership development

**We asked:** What are the primary barriers hindering collaboration with non-governmental organizations?



# Key Insights

In the last six years of the Canadian City Parks Report we've seen innovative projects and heard inspiring stories from across the country. But we've also seen trends that highlight a persistent gap between what we want from our parks and what they are today.

We position parks as critical infrastructure, but don't provide them with the funding to back it up. We value community engagement, but don't create enough avenues for people to get involved. We speak about the importance of collaboration, but work too often in silos.

This year's report is all about exploring collaborations and partnerships—across city departments, community members, non-profits, and more—which we believe can help bridge those gaps. Parks are the places where we gather together, so it only makes sense that they will reach their potential the same way—together.

These six key insights were informed by our survey of 35 Canadian municipalities, 2,500+ residents of Canadian cities, as well as interviews with park staff and other professionals across the country.



## PARK BUDGET ARE NOT KEEPING PACE WITH NEED



Waterfront guided tour, Park People Conference in Toronto. Credit: Park People.

- **80% of cities said the parks operation budget was insufficient.**
- **78% of cities said insufficient budgets meant inadequate staffing levels, while 75% said it meant delays in park projects or planning.**

Since 2019, we've heard consistently from cities about the operational budget gap between what's needed to keep parks in good shape and what funding is provided every year. Essentially, parks departments are expected, year after year, to do more with less as populations grow, park use rises, and pressures, like extreme weather, increase.

The growth in the backlog for state of good repair in many cities is one of the results of years of under-investment in parks operations. As day to day maintenance issues slip, they become larger, costlier repair or replacement jobs. It's not surprising then that 81% of cities said asset management was a high priority, with 17% listing it as a medium priority (for more information refer to Data Section: Canada-wide trends, on page 17).

Another result is a slip in residents' satisfaction with the state of their parks. This year, 65% of residents said their parks were well-cared for. While nearly two-thirds of residents is a good result, this also represents a drop from 78% who said the same in 2021. There is however, strong support for more park funding - if politicians have the will to act. The majority of residents (85%) said they would like to see more public funding invested in parks.

## RESIDENTS FEEL DISEMPOWERED, BUT WANT TO ENGAGE



"Parole d'excluEs" workshop to amplify the voices of neighbourhood residents and park users, RaCINE Committee, Montreal-Nord. Credit: Bakr Elfekak, Montreal Park People Network.

- **52% of residents said they do not feel they have a voice or the ability to influence what goes on in their local park (e.g., design and programming decisions).**
- **83% of cities said that with limited resources it can be difficult to conduct ongoing, proactive community engagement beyond standard consultation on park projects.**

A continuing trend is the gap between residents' desire to get involved in parks and their perceived ability to do so. The top three reasons residents felt disengaged from parks were because they weren't sure how to get involved, didn't feel their participation would make a difference, or there weren't enough opportunities. Indeed, 83% of cities said they were challenged to create avenues for ongoing, proactive community involvement in parks.

Given the choice, nearly 60% of residents said they would be interested in advocating for park improvements and green space protection, while participating in park events/activities organized by someone else came in second at 45%.

This highlights a potential engagement growth opportunity for cities by expanding and better advertising park-based activities, whether delivered by the city or a partner organization.

While city staff cannot directly get involved with organizing residents related to park advocacy, supporting more engaged residents through park activities may be one way to foster a sense of shared purpose amongst residents who may then be more likely to advocate for more park funding and protections.



## MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS ARE KEY, BUT LACK PROACTIVE PROGRAMS



Street dance performance by the School of Groove, mentorship program empowering women through dance, Toronto. Credit: Kat Rizza, Arts in the Parks.

- **95% and 93% of residents believe parks play a positive role in their physical and mental health, respectively.**
- **25% of cities feel “well-equipped” to address mental and physical health and well-being through parks.**

The mental and physical health benefits of parks are well-known and accepted. However, we found that despite this, there is a lack of confidence in city staff on how to proactively act on these benefits—just 25% of cities said they feel “well-equipped” to address mental and physical health and well-being through their work in parks.

This is misaligned with the top reasons that residents visit parks, which is for their mental and physical health. There are of course passive ways that parks boost well-being: simply walking in a green space has been found to boost mood and lower stress. However, if we are to fully capture the health benefits of parks, it’s not enough to rely on their passive power.

City staff do not need to create new programs to address these needs on their own. Building partnerships with non-profit organizations whose missions align with mental and physical well-being is one way cities can actively address mental and physical well-being through parks. As an example, see the case study in this year’s report from the City of Victoria’s work addressing health directly through park-based food growing programs.

## DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURES CAN PROMOTE COLLABORATION - OR DISCONNECTION



Vancouver Park People Social, Museum of Vancouver. Credit: Park People.

- **Nearly 1/3 of cities said their organizational structure makes it difficult for parks staff to collaborate with other divisions/departments.**
- **Less than 40% of cities include parks planning and design staff within the same department as parks operations staff.**

Looking at how a city structures its parks department seems a bit like examining snowflakes—each one is a little different. While there’s no right or wrong way to organize a parks department, how work is structured does impact internal collaboration strengths and focused priorities. It’s important to understand the trade-offs.

For example, when parks are housed within infrastructure departments, we heard it allows for greater collaboration with technical experts in areas like stormwater management; however, it may also mean a greater focus is put on parks as hard infrastructure to the detriment of how parks can drive social equity and community health impacts .

Internal structures can also impact how well parks are maintained over time—a constant challenge with constrained budgets. Less than 40% of cities include parks planning/design in the same department as parks operations, which may be exacerbating the divide between what gets built in city parks and how infrastructure is maintained. As one municipal parks staff person said: “We plan better parks and services [when] we know and truly understand our operational limits.”



## PARTNERSHIPS ARE CRITICAL, BUT CITIES NEED POLICIES AND STRUCTURES



Planting and inauguration of the Talon Gardens as part of the participatory depaving program 'Bye Bye Béton,' Montreal. Credit: Louis-Etienne Doré, Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension Borough.

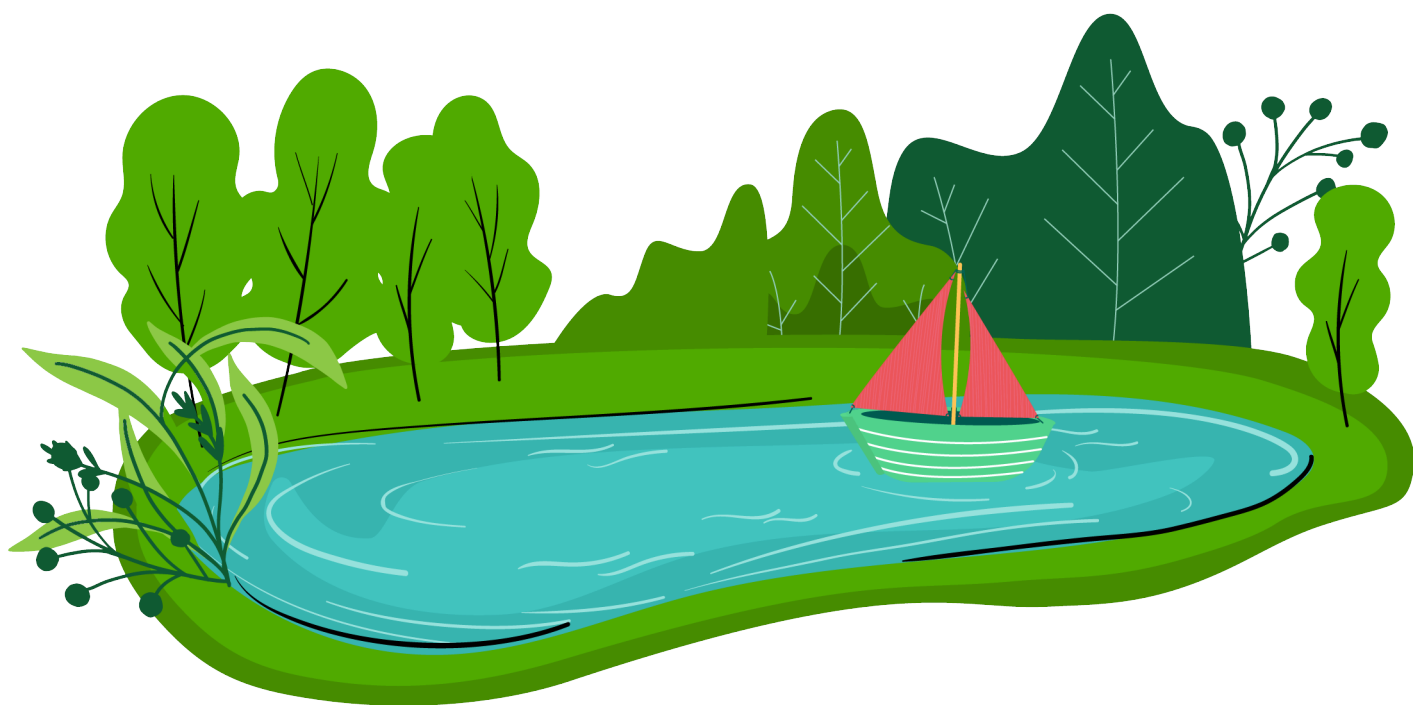
- **61% of cities said a barrier to partnerships with non-profits was an inability to meet municipal standards.**
- **79% of cities reported having at least one partnership with a non-profit organization for park operations or programming.**

Partnerships are a cornerstone of good park systems. Cities know they can't go it alone in addressing the issues facing parks and providing the programs that residents need. We found 91% of cities partner with school boards, 88% with recreation leagues, and 79% with non-profit organizations.

The benefit of partnerships with non-profit and other community-based organizations is that they are often more nimble and able to deliver locally relevant programming and services at the neighbourhood level. They are also sometimes seen as a friendlier face to engage with than the city itself, especially for more vulnerable communities.

However, city staff find managing partnerships and collaborations challenging. In our survey this year, the top barriers were the staff time required to coordinate with partners, the ability of partners to meet municipal standards, budgetary concerns, ensuring accountability, and liability concerns. Interestingly, just 14% said lack of connections to non-profit organizations was a barrier. These findings suggest that it's not for lack of awareness that partnerships are challenging, but having the right policies in place to manage expectations and relationships (which, in turn, also reduce the staff time burden in partner coordination).

Ultimately, partnerships should be a complement to city park staff work—not a replacement for that work. In this year’s report, we have a number of case studies that showcase how partners work with city staff to address both gaps and provide value add to already existing programs. For more information, see our case study on Victoria’s park-based food growing program and Toronto’s work animating vacant spaces before they are turned into parks.





## GROWING PARK ISSUES REQUIRE MORE TRAINING AND COLLABORATIONS



Kihcihkaw aski, permanent cultural site for Indigenous ceremonies, events, and knowledge sharing, Whitemud Park, Edmonton. Credit: Julian Parkinson, Reimagine Architects Ltd.

- **92% of cities agreed that in recent years parks departments are facing increased pressure to address issues beyond “traditional” parks issues.**

We know park use is changing, evolving from primarily recreation-based activities to more informal social spaces—a process that has sped up since the pandemic saw a boom in park use. With this change, we’re seeing a growing gap between what park staff feel equipped to deal with and what feels outside of their expertise. In fact, city staff indicated they did not feel well-equipped to deal with many issues in parks, with active transportation the only issue ranked above 50% in our survey—even higher than issues like biodiversity.

While the benefits of parks for physical and mental health, biodiversity, and climate resilience were at the top, residents also understand and value parks as places to address social issues. For example, residents agreed or strongly agreed that parks had a role to play in racial justice (66%), Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (59%), and houselessness (40%).

Meanwhile, city staff felt only somewhat or ill-equipped with the knowledge and tools to deal with many of these same issues. Just 17% feel well-equipped to address anti-racism, 14% Truth and Reconciliation, 9% houselessness, and 9% green gentrification. Additionally, the city departments outside of parks that park staff work with the least were those related to anti-racism, housing, and public health, pointing to a potential benefit of increasing internal collaboration and de-siloing of what constitutes “park issues.”

Without training and skill-building amongst city park staff as well as collaboration with other divisions and partners, there will be a growing divide and frustration between what people expect from parks and what their cities can deliver. For more information, see our case studies on Metro Vancouver Regional Park’s collaborative work with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and our conversation with Jay Pitter on her BEING BLACK IN PUBLIC SURVEY.



Kihcihkaw aski, permanent cultural site for Indigenous ceremonies, events, and knowledge sharing, Whitemud Park, Edmonton. Credit: Julian Parkinson, Reimagine Architects Ltd.



# CASE STUDIES

Inspiring projects, people, and policies from across Canada that offer tangible solutions to the most pressing challenges facing city parks.



# Learning to Bend with the Wind

Lessons learned from Hurricane Fiona in Charlottetown.

by Jake Tobin Garrett



Fallen tree on a road. Credit: Jan Mallender.

## Summary

- **Hurricane Fiona hit Charlottetown as one of the most powerful storms ever, causing massive damage to infrastructure and tree canopies.**
- **High winds caused power outages and knocked down trees, resulting in communication challenges and closing amenities like trails and playgrounds.**
- **Protecting against high winds is challenging, but cities can be more prepared through strong partnerships across city departments and with local community groups to be more nimble in times of uncertainty.**

As climate change brings more frequent extreme weather, cities are grappling with increasing storm damage to parks and infrastructure. In 2024, 97% of municipal parks departments said that addressing impacts from climate change and extreme weather has become a challenge. Floods, droughts, and fires all pose risks, but there's another element that's caused massive damage in recent years—wind.

Park managers we spoke with in 2023 mentioned increasingly intense storms that don't just bring higher wind speeds, but winds that last for more sustained periods, causing far more damage. While cities have begun to redesign parks to withstand flooding or adapt to drought through altering planting palettes, preparing for high wind presents a difficult challenge.

As the Parks and Recreation Manager for the City of Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island, Frank Quinn knows a thing or two about preparing for storms. But when Hurricane Fiona hit the Island in September 2022 as one of the strongest storms to ever land on Canadian shores, it was a different beast.

The storm was **Atlantic Canada's most costly**, causing \$220 million in damage to Prince Edward Island alone. Hurricane Fiona lasted for hours, damaging municipal infrastructure and ravaging the city's tree canopy. In the Royalty Oaks natural area many old growth trees were knocked down—some 300 years old.

Quinn said the City's **Emergency Measures Organization**, which includes senior staff from different departments, met frequently leading up to the storm as well as afterwards. As a smaller city, Quinn said people from different departments are used to working and supporting each other—something that came in handy after the storm.

"We all had good working relationships, we all know each other. We had a wide range of experiences and expertise." They were able to draw on each other's knowledge of internal staff expertise, but also contractors who could be brought on to help.

Public safety and clean-up were top priority, but Quinn was also cognizant that "once you're in the house for a couple days, you want to get out." His team assessed every playground within the first couple of days as well as inspected trail systems, posting notices about what was closed and what was open for use.

Without power, communication was a challenge, Quinn said. As the city cleared trails and re-opened amenities like playgrounds, they posted messages on the city's website and used the media. But the key to public messaging was working with community organizations, like church groups, to pass information along to city residents.

The City is now building redundancies into systems and creating more back-up services. One big issue during the storm was fuel, Quinn said. While staff had fueled up machinery and vehicles prior to the storm arriving, when they needed to be refueled there were issues because the main fuel depot did not have a back-up generator on site.

"We dealt with smaller storms before where there were power outages for a day or two," Quinn said, "But when you have a storm and sections of the City doesn't have power for two weeks, this creates several issues and challenges," such as where to get fuel.



Quinn said the City has learned lessons from the experience of Fiona and has already begun to prepare for the next storm. “We’re building new infrastructure and making it more resilient so that it can stand up to higher winds,” he said. The City also purchased new equipment that can be used for cleaning up trees, but can also be adapted for other day-to-day uses like grading trails.

## Recommendations

- **Create memorandums of understanding** with local organizations and groups on what resources and assistance they can offer during and after storms (like communications help), but be sure to review yearly to keep things current.
- **Ensure communication strategies** that relay critical safety messages to residents as well as the closure or opening of park amenities like trails and playgrounds include methods of communication that work if the power is out, such as physically posted messages and leveraging community organization networks.
- **Build redundancy into systems** (e.g, generators) and ensure you have enough fuel to operate machinery for tree removals and trail clearing even if fuel pumps are down due to sustained power outages.

**“We’re building new infrastructure and making it more resilient so that it can stand up to higher winds.”**

**Frank Quinn, Parks and Recreation Manager for the City of Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island**

# Protecting Biodiversity from National to Local

How Nature Canada is building a web of partners at all scales to help Canada achieve its biodiversity conservation goals.

by Jake Tobin Garrett



Claireville Conservation Area in Brampton, Ontario. Credit: TRM Images CC BY-SA 2.0

## Summary

- **Reaching Canada's goal to protect 30% of land, water, and marine areas by 2030 will take the work of many partners across the country.**
- **Nature Canada acts as a hub connecting many of these partners to tell a unified story about impact.**
- **While governments and non-profits are important partners, individual residents and community groups play an important role as those closest to the ground and able to hold politicians to account.**

By 2030, 30% of Canada's land, water, and marine areas will be protected. That is, of course, if the country meets this goal, which was set by the international community at COP15, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference.

Reaching such an ambitious goal requires strong collaboration. All levels of government, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, local non-profits, private landowners, and individual residents must all work together. But how do you build such a broad, but also deep coalition?

The work of **Nature Canada**—a national organization dedicated to protecting Canadian wildlife and wilderness—is all about bringing those various actors together in a concerted effort to work both nationally and hyper-locally through the **Municipal Protected Areas Program** to ensure Canada meets its 30x30 goal.

While protected natural areas may conjure images of vast uninterrupted pristine landscapes far away from where many of us live, Nature Canada Organizing Manager Dylan Rawlyk argued that protecting land within urban areas is vital.

One practical reason is that the most biodiverse landscapes within the country are situated along the southern edge of Canada where the majority of the population lives within a constellation of urban areas. Another less obvious reason has to do with storytelling. Bringing protected natural areas close to where people live their everyday lives helps make the importance of biodiversity more tangible. “[People] know it, they love it, and they’re connected to it,” Rawlyk said.

While cities often have natural area management and restoration plans in place, they each undertake conservation in slightly different ways, so part of the work of achieving the 30x30 target is working with cities to “unify all of our collective impacts,” Rawlyk said. While the majority of cities listed it as a priority, Park People’s 2024 survey found that one third of cities said addressing federal biodiversity and land protection goals was a high priority in 2024.

Nature Canada has forged both cross-country and hyper-local partnerships, creating, as Rawlyk put it, a web of organizations. At Nature Canada “we play the role of convening all those groups together and ensuring that we can see how the actions each one is doing is contributing to the greater whole.”

For example, in Hamilton, work led by **Ontario Nature** is helping to convene different organizations to add lands in the city’s Eco Park system to Federally recognized protection status. By working with the City of Hamilton, Hamilton Conservation Authority, and Hamilton Naturalist Club, the goal is to assess current lands and see which ones may need some different protection policies in place to meet the Federal definition and contribute to the overall 30x30 goal. Projects like this aligned with Federal programs such as the **National Urban Park** initiative led by Parks Canada are important to meet biodiversity protection goals.

Collaboration with First Nations communities and Indigenous organizations is “core” to the work, Rawlyk said, especially given the colonial history of conservation movements that have displaced Indigenous peoples from their land. To ensure these past mistakes are not repeated, Rawlyk pointed to an example of recent work by [Réseau de Milieux Naturels protégés in Quebec](#), which “ran a workshop with a range of land trusts and also First Nations communities to try to build bridges between them.”

Nature Canada has also built partnerships with regional non-profits such as [Ontario Nature](#) and [BC Nature](#) who better understand local contexts and have strong political ties to move policies forward. Drilling down even further, working with hyper-local organizations, such as [Whistler Naturalists Society](#), is essential because these groups hold deep knowledge of specific places, often performing activities like bio-blitzes to monitor species.

“That level of species understanding within the region is incredibly vital to be able to move forward with this work,” Rawlyk said. Even individual residents play a key role as they “can advocate to put more conservation measures in place” and act as watchdogs to ensure these places stay protected.

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## Recommendations

- **Build strong collaborations** from recognizing and leveraging the unique strengths, expertise, and skills of partners.
- **Designate a single organization**, even when building broad-based coalitions, who can act as a convener or “hub” that helps connect all the work together.
- **Connect your impact with the everyday lives of people** and focus on place-based storytelling as a way to drive an emotional connection.

**At Nature Canada “we play the role of convening all those groups [local to national] together and ensuring that we can see how the actions each one is doing is contributing to the greater whole.”**

**Dylan Rawlyk, Nature Canada Organizing Manager**

# Leading Through Lived Experience

How Waterfront Toronto is raising the bar on inclusivity through their Waterfront Accessibility Design Guidelines

by Laura Smith



Waterfront Toronto's Accessibility Advisory Committee on a site tour with Waterfront Toronto staff (l-r Bruce Drewett, Pina Mallozzi [WT], Kasia Gladki [WT], Chris Stigas, Roman Romanov, Vail Zerr [WT], Dan Euser, Diane Kolin). Credit: Waterfront Toronto

## Summary

- **Although many municipalities flag that increasing accessibility of parks is a priority, there are still many Canadians who feel excluded from city parks.**
- **Waterfront Toronto established a permanent Accessibility Advisory Committee made up of individuals with disabilities to review the design of all future projects.**
- **Incorporating a diverse range of lived experiences into the design review process is critical for the creation of inclusive public spaces.**



Designing for inclusivity and accessibility is top of mind for many municipalities. From our surveys, 78% of municipalities indicated that universal accessible design is a high priority in their work. And while many municipalities look to provincial accessibility guidelines to meet basic standards, our 2022 public survey revealed that 10% of city residents say that insufficient accessibility features discourage them from visiting and enjoying city parks. This suggests that parks are still not working for everyone.

**Waterfront Toronto**, a tri-government agency, noticed gaps in existing provincial and municipal accessibility guidelines when designing new public spaces, specifically spaces around water. Some of these gaps include standards around the design of boat launches, boardwalks, beaches and water entry points.

Waterfront Toronto knew that in order to create truly **accessible public spaces** they needed to learn from, listen to and involve the people who understand accessibility challenges and opportunities the best - people living with disabilities.

Waterfront Toronto assembled an **made up of** individuals with professional and technical expertise, most of whom are people living with disabilities, to guide the development of their **new design guidelines**. The guidelines aim to go above and beyond existing requirements and ensure waterfront settings can be enjoyed by all. Notable requirements include standards that all beaches must have accessible pathways into the water and boat launches for adapted canoes and kayaks must be provided.

The process of including community members with lived experience in an advisory committee is not a novel engagement practice. But what really sets this work apart is that the guidelines incorporated a permanent mechanism to include those with lived experience in all future projects.

The advisory committee emphasized the guiding principle of “nothing about us without us”, and the idea that no single voice speaks for the entire disability community. The committee members also highlighted the importance of implementation.

One of the ways Waterfront Toronto addressed this was to create a permanent accessibility committee that reviews all future public realm projects and will advise on future updates to the guidelines. This follow-on committee, known as the Accessibility Advisory Committee, is made up of individuals with professional expertise, advocates and caregivers, most of whom identify as a person with a disability, who receive an honorarium for their time. When composing the committee, Waterfront Toronto sought people with a range of disabilities and experiences to try and represent the diversity of accessibility needs.

For any new parks or public space projects, the Accessibility Advisory Committee is engaged at least twice in the process. The committee provides feedback within the early stages of the design phase to flag any accessibility concerns and again once the construction is complete, with additional opportunities for input as needed. This “roll through” of complete projects identifies any potential areas for improvement. This feedback will be implemented as amendments to the guidelines and applied to future projects, but Waterfront Toronto has also committed to accommodating the feedback at the site when a retrofit or repair is needed.

The guidelines set out a new standard for inclusively designed public spaces by filling gaps and going above and beyond current requirements, and proactively seeking out those with lived experience to guide projects on a long-term basis.

Enhancing accessibility to blue spaces ensures that everyone has access to the restorative power of nature. And while the implementation of the new guidelines ensures that people with disabilities can participate in these public spaces, accessibly designed spaces are good for everyone.

As Pina Mallozzi, Senior Vice President, Design at Waterfront Toronto says “We know that to create a vibrant waterfront that belongs to everyone, we must have a strong commitment to accessibility in everything we make and do. With the support of the Accessibility Advisory Committee we are making accessibility another area of true design excellence.”

## Recommendations

- **Ensure that a diversity of individuals with disabilities are consulted** in community engagement processes as no one person can speak for an entire community.
- **Provide engagement opportunities for people with disabilities** to visit physical spaces so they can help identify accessibility-related barriers that may be less obvious in the design process.
- **Involve community members with lived experience** as early in the design process as possible to ensure feedback can be meaningfully incorporated into the project.

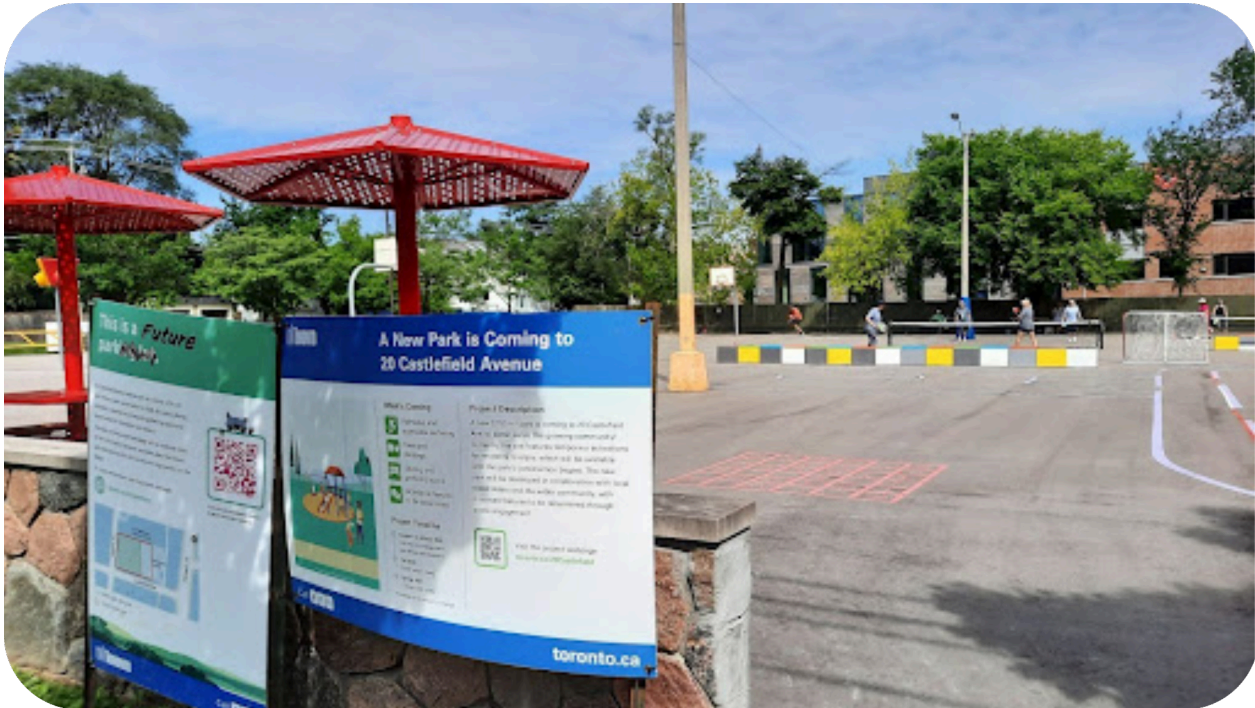
**“We know that to create a vibrant waterfront that belongs to everyone, we must have a strong commitment to accessibility in everything we make and do. With the support of the Accessibility Advisory Committee we are making accessibility another area of true design excellence.”**

**Pina Mallozzi, Senior Vice President, Design at Waterfront Toronto**

# Animating Parks Before They're Parks

How an inter-divisional collaboration in Toronto is bringing vacant spaces to life.

by Jake Tobin Garrett



Phase 1 of the park set to open in the Yonge-Elinton area. Credit: City of Toronto.

## Summary

- **Funding, ownership, legacy agreements and environmental contamination issues can cause spaces slated to become parks to sit vacant for years.**
- **Partnerships within the City of Toronto and with external cultural and economic development organizations are helping animate these spaces with interim uses so the public sees benefits now before spaces are fully designed.**
- **Interim uses allow the City to understand what works and what doesn't to better inform future design, programming, and operational decisions.**

Cities are in dire need of new park space. Despite that need, however, sometimes funding challenges, environmental contamination, and ownership issues mean that sites slated to become parks won't actually be designed and built in their final form for several years.

To address this challenge, Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division is collaborating with the City's Economic Development and Cultural Division and external cultural and economic development organizations to provide and animate much-needed public space in the immediate term.

Toronto's Director of Parks Planning, Paul Farish, said that rather than waiting sometimes years to go through a formal process that includes design and procurement—all while the space remains vacant—the City is “opening a public space that people can access and enjoy and even shape themselves at the front end.”

He added the City's Economic Development and Culture Division has been a “very useful partner” because they bring “ideas and third parties who can introduce programming and run events” until Parks, Forestry and Recreation is ready to turn it into a fully operational park.

One example is a future park space at Front and Bathurst Streets where environmental contamination issues meant it would be several years before the City could turn the land into a public park. In the meantime, the City is working with [Stackt Market](#), which has run a successful shipping container market—North America's largest—and outdoor event space on the site since 2019. The partnership brings thousands of people to the space for [free and ticketed events](#), provides space for local businesses in pop-up shops, includes food and drink options and prioritizes community programming.

“It's a kind of quasi-public space,” said Farish, adding that it's “important to be flexible and acknowledge that there's different ways in which a property can achieve its objectives, including public space objectives.”

Parking lots represent another opportunity. Farish said that the City has plans to convert a number of parking lots to parkland over the next few years, but due to funding or other factors they “are not going to become parks tomorrow. In the meantime, we need to get a little bit creative and bring in partners to animate them and make them as engaging as possible.”

One challenge is that people may get attached to the interim uses so much that when it's time to design the actual park, there is push back. “We're conscious of it,” Farish said. In some places, the City is floating the idea of putting in a pickleball or basketball court in a parking lot—uses that could become entrenched in people's minds even if they're meant to be interim uses. “But you grapple with it,” he said. “It's less of a concern because it's still within the range of what was intended to be a public space with some sort of recreational or environmental benefit to the community.”

In Midtown Toronto, a city-owned parking lot is poised to become the largest park addition in the Yonge-Eglinton area in decades, providing much needed public space in the rapidly intensifying neighbourhood. There the City is installing pickleball and basketball courts as well as tables, seating, and other amenities as an immediate “phase one” approach in advance of full park design and construction.



In Toronto's parkland-deficient Downtown, the City purchased one of the last undeveloped parking lots. As environmental work and park design processes take place, the site has been temporarily programmed as a popular restaurant patio. A known landmark in the city, the property was a part of a **design competition** that secured an innovative design and approved budget of \$10 million.

At another site, along the waterfront, a recently closed parking garage at Spadina Pier is being planned for refurbishment as a site to host cultural and special events in the near term to showcase its potential as a future permanent park. Farish noted a number of local organizations that could serve as programming partners.

The first was a partnership with The Bentway—the park conservancy that operates a public space underneath a nearby elevated highway—to activate the site as part of Toronto's 2023 Nuit Blanche. The Bentway's installation (delivered in partnership with the City) helped to test and build awareness for the planned waterfront park, including art projections on the recently restored 100-year old Canada Malting silos.

"The phased approach helps City staff, residents and partners to develop the long-term vision for the park through temporary activations, fluid programming and on-the-ground experimentation" Farish said. Lessons are learned during this process about what works on a specific site that can inform future designs and operational needs for the park.

The approach also provides "flexibility in terms of partnership and operating models," he said, "furthering the creativity and experimentation while maintaining an emphasis on the benefits of public space and publicly-owned lands."

## Recommendations

- **Forge partnerships across departments**, as well as with business improvement areas, community organizations, cultural groups and social enterprises to animate interim spaces.
- **Work with local partners and residents** to ensure interim uses are locally-relevant and build on the strengths of the surrounding community.
- **Clearly communicate interim uses to the public** and present the spaces as an opportunity to experiment and help shape a future permanent design.

**The phased approach also provides "flexibility in terms of partnership and operating models, furthering the creativity and experimentation while maintaining an emphasis on the benefits of public space and publicly-owned lands."**

**Paul Farish, Toronto's Director of Parks Planning**

# Making Room for Parks

How Mississauga is expanding parkland in a growing urban neighbourhood to meet future demand  
by Jake Tobin Garrett



Cooksville park sign, Mississauga. Credit: City of Mississauga.

## Summary

- **Mississauga's growing Cooksville neighbourhood is already park deficient by city standards and will only see more growth as new infrastructure and transit comes online.**
- **A long-term plan to acquire single-family properties, some within a floodplain, was created to expand parkland to serve the growing neighbourhood without reducing its housing stock.**
- **While some residents raised objections, the City has successfully acquired multiple properties through a willing buyer-willing seller approach and has not used expropriation powers.**

One of the key challenges of growing cities is acquiring new parkland to serve intensifying neighbourhoods when so much land has already been built on. In fact 69% of municipalities said acquiring new parkland was a major challenge for them in 2023. A long-term plan in Mississauga shows how a consistent, transparent approach to acquiring existing housing can lead to long-term gains in expanded parkland for a growing population.

Mississauga's Cooksville neighbourhood, an area designated as an urban growth centre, is already deficient in parkland according to the City's parks plan. While the City's goal is 12 percent of land area for parks within urban growth centres, Cooksville was significantly below that target. With the future LRT and high-rise housing development coming to the area, growth will only continue to intensify, said Sharon Chapman, Manager of Parks and Culture Planning at the City of Mississauga.

The solution is a long-term plan by the City to acquire land within the Cooksville area to expand existing parkland so that it can accommodate more use and different activities. Council **approved the plan in 2017**, identifying 31 properties totalling 10ha to be acquired to assist in "achieving large cohesive areas of park with continuous trails systems."

While expanding parkland is the primary goal, there is a second benefit of the expanded parkland—climate resilience. Some of the current houses in the area sit within a floodplain and could not be constructed today, which might make it more appealing to sell to the City, Chapman noted, since homes with a history of flooding are less marketable to buyers.

The project is not without controversy, however. Some homeowners have been upset at the plans to demolish housing in the area, saying that they **don't plan on selling to the City**. Chapman said she thought some of the initial resistance from homeowners was due to misinformation as well as concern about change. The City made sure to clarify that it was proceeding on a "willing buyer-willing seller" basis only, meaning that expropriating properties is not part of the plan. Negotiations with owners willing to sell are based on reports prepared by accredited independent appraisers estimating the fair market value of the property.

"Our approach has been really a co-operative one with each individual homeowner," Chapman said. "We have respected property owners who did not want to talk anymore about it."

Commonly, park and housing advocates are pitted against each other as if urban residents need to pick between one or the other. Chapman acknowledged this and said that the City was aware "the project might be seen as removing housing stock," but she noted it was only a few single-detached homes and not all 31 properties actually had houses on them. "We know that we are losing a small amount of single family homes and the area overall will grow immensely in terms of the new units that come in, so we need to keep the bigger picture in mind to make sure we have the right amount of parkland there."

To date, 19 properties have been acquired, creating over 8 ha of new parkland—just shy of the 10 ha goal. Demolition happens on a rolling basis so that houses don't sit vacant and can be turned into parkland right away.

"We're at a point now that the properties we have acquired are enough that we can now start moving forward with plans to redevelop the park," Chapman said. The City has moved now into **public engagement for the parkland**, which will include both natural and built features.

## Recommendations

- **Ensure plans and acquisition tools are explained clearly and plainly** when parkland expansion requires the purchase of housing, including detailing future housing expansion in the area the parkland will be serving.
- **Demolish buildings quickly and turn land into temporary usable parkland** before long-term park designs are finalized so residents can see results quickly and concerns regarding vacant properties are assuaged.
- **Work with conservation authorities and related agencies** to identify locations at risk of flooding to highlight areas along waterways that can serve multiple city goals of parkland expansion and climate resilience.

**"We're at a point now that the properties we have acquired are enough that we can now start moving forward with plans to redevelop the park."**

**Sharon Chapman, Manager of Parks and Culture Planning  
at the City of Mississauga**



# The Kids are Alright

How to better engage with youth in public spaces

by Jake Tobin Garrett



The Burning Brass Band in Parc Marcelin-Wilson Plaza. Credit: City of Montreal

## Summary

- **A temporary plaza was built in a park in response to a need to create more space for young people to hang out.**
- **A consultant, Metalude, was engaged to observe and engage young people in how the space was used through behavioural observation as well as semi-structured interviews.**
- **Observations of use are important because they can uncover how things built for one purpose may be adapted for another or how things are used differently by different groups of people.**

A typical neighbourhood park often contains slides and swings for younger kids and benches for adults to gather, but what about teenagers? What does play look like for them and what park designs are needed to support that?

This is something that Stephanie Watt thinks a lot about. Watt is a co-founder and co-director, along with Margaret Fraser, of **Metalude**—a public space consulting firm that specializes in engaging with youth up to age 18 to promote public participation, playable public spaces, and child-friendly cities.

Youth are very aware of their “minority” status in public spaces, Watt said, and aren’t often invited to participate in conversations about park design. They sometimes feel like they fall into a gap in public spaces where playgrounds may be designed for younger kids and other park amenities are designed with adults in mind. It’s not about designing literal play structures and objects, but about instilling a sense of playfulness in the space itself, she said.

Take the example of a plaza built in Parc Marcellin-Wilson in the Ahuntsic-Cartierville borough of Montreal. The park is situated near two large high schools and a public survey and conversations with the schools revealed a need to have a “meeting place for young people,” David Sauvé, Development Officer for the Department of Culture, Sports, Recreation, and Social Development in Ahuntsic-Cartierville said. So the borough decided to test a temporary “plaza” structure in the park, also near a bus stop, meant to be a hang-out spot for youth. The structure included multiple seating areas to accommodate flexible socializing.

Metalude was brought in to better understand the use of the structure. They did this through direct observation of plaza use, semi-structured interviews with youth at the plaza as well as in other parts of the park and even at a shopping mall across the street where youth sometimes go to eat lunch. In the end they ended up collecting observational data from about 500 users and interviewed approximately 50 youth about their experiences.

Engaging with youth requires a different approach, Watt said. That means switching up what you may view as a “professional” engagement. For example, Watt said sometimes they listen to music with youth during their engagements—something that likely wouldn’t fly at a traditional town hall. You have to either keep things really fun or you have to make them really short, she said because youth often have lots of other demands on their time, from caring for siblings to sports practice to homework. It’s about learning how to “build 10 or 15 minute engagement moments that are rich,” Watt said.

The engagement was a learning moment for borough staff as well. “They brought us back to what it was like to be a teenager in public space,” Sauvé said. “Things we tend to forget when we become adults.”

The observational nature of the study allowed for the natural uses of the plaza to be uncovered, leading to potential design decisions about a permanent structure. For example, the importance of the social design of the seating, which was arranged in such a way that four to six people could sit and socialize in a circle rather than the typical park bench design, which forces everyone to face the same way in “a long line of strangers,” Watt said. “The furniture allows for face-to-face [interactions] and the furniture that isn’t face-to-face was mostly used for waiting by people who were alone taking the bus.”

Another finding was how the use of one particular structure—a net installed on the plaza—was quite gendered. While boys called it a trampoline and jumped on it, girls called it a hammock. Watt said a design recommendation could be to create two different amenities, one that can accommodate jumping and one for relaxing.

“You can plan for something, but it’s really important to get out there and see how people are using it. And then accommodate those usages—there isn’t a right or wrong usage,” Watt said.

## Recommendations

- **Ensure the public engagement** process is either fun or very short to encourage more participation by youth who may have lots of other things to do.
- **Bring the engagement** directly to youth, not just by setting up in the park in a booth, but by walking up to youth and starting conversations directly.
- **Test amenities and park furniture** with well-designed but temporary structures, and pair that with observations and study of actual use so that final designs can be tweaked.

**“You can plan for something, but it’s really important to get out there and see how people are using it. And then accommodate those usages—there isn’t a right or wrong usage.”**

**Stephanie Watt Co-founder and Co-director of Metalude**



# Food for Thought

How the City of Victoria is using parks as a tool towards food justice.

by Laura Smith



Fernwood Get Growing Victoria Participants. Credit: City of Victoria, Kingtide Films.

## Summary

- **The City of Victoria grows edible seedlings that are distributed to non-profit organizations across the city for public gardens or to disseminate to individuals and families.**
- **Park-based food programs can have widespread impacts on community health through partnerships with organizations focused on public health and mental health and organizations that work with those at-risk of experiencing food insecurity.**
- **Parks departments should think creatively about the resources they have available and how they can be used to actively boost community health.**



Food-based park programming like food forests, community gardens and edible plants have grown in scope and popularity in the last five years in Canadian cities. Clearly, both municipalities and community members see the potential for food production in parks and want to see more of it. Over the past three years, 50% of city residents consistently say they'd like to see more urban agriculture and community gardens in their parks.

But if cities are planning to invest in park-based food programs, how can they ensure they are being used and, crucially, that produce is actually reaching those in need?

Launched in 2020, the City of Victoria's **Get Growing Victoria program** uses a food justice approach to provide gardening supplies to communities at-risk of experiencing food insecurity, including people experiencing houselessness, Indigenous and racialized communities, seniors and youth.

Instead of only focusing on increasing access to fresh food for all residents, food justice acknowledges that certain populations face structural and systemic barriers to food security. By acknowledging the barriers to gardening, the Get Growing program is able to provide sustainable and healthy food to those who tend to be excluded from community garden programs.

The Parks department quickly realized that the best way to reach those at-risk populations was to partner with non-profit organizations who know the community needs best. Collaborating with non-profit partners also meant the City was better able to meet the community where they're at rather than expecting people to self-identify and sign-up for the program through city processes.

The program now has 67 community partners including public health organizations, mental health service providers, immigrant and refugee organizations, social service providers and affordable housing organizations. The partner organizations distribute gardening supplies and vegetable seedlings grown in City greenhouses to their clients and community members so they can use the materials at home or in their local community garden. Get Growing gives partners the autonomy to integrate the materials into their program delivery in ways that best suit their community's needs.

City of Victoria food systems coordinator, Julia Ford, tells us they would not be able to run the program without the non-profit partners. "They greatly increase our impact, and allow us to reach more vulnerable communities that the program is intended for and who may not otherwise interact with the City directly."

Exemplifying Julia's point, this year our public survey found that over 30% of city residents do not feel confident that they know who to reach out to if they experience a problem or have feedback about their park. By collaborating with local non-profits that do have stronger rapport with local community members, the City of Victoria can reach those who feel disconnected from city services.

Now in the program's fourth year of operation, it is estimated that 400,000 pounds of fresh produce has been grown. Beyond that, evaluation of program participants found that the vast majority of participants felt that the program increased their mental well-being, intake of healthy foods and increased their overall physical activity levels. The program demonstrates what's possible in parks when we start looking at them with community health in mind.

"I think this program demonstrates the potential for Parks Departments to really look at the resources they have available and think creatively about how to use them to support community and preventive health in a much more active way," Ford said. "I think within the Parks sector there's a solid understanding that passive park use and access to green space is important for mental health and well-being. But how can we move to be active partners in supporting communities who want to spearhead innovative uses of public space? How can we support people to explore new recreational activities in a meaningful, accessible and equitable way?"

## Recommendations

- **Broaden your perspective** on park-based food programs, recognizing them as not just an opportunity to grow food, but as powerful tools for community building, strengthening partnerships and enhancing mental health.
- **Collaborate with non-profit organizations** that work with those most vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity to ensure they have access to park-based food programs.
- **Empower non-profit partners** with the autonomy to creatively use resources in ways that best address the unique needs of their community.

**"I think this program demonstrates the potential for Parks Departments to really look at the resources they have available and think creatively about how to use them to support community and preventive health in a much more active way."**

**Julia Ford, City of Victoria, Food Systems Coordinator**

# Working Together in təmtə́míxʷtən/ Belcarra Regional Park

How an agreement between the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Metro Vancouver Regional Parks provides a path for shared cultural planning  
by Jake Tobin Garrett



Renaming ceremony at təmtə́míxʷtən/Belcarra Regional Park. Credit: Metro Vancouver Regional Parks.

## Summary

- **A cooperation agreement between Metro Vancouver Regional Parks and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation provides co-governance mechanisms for təmtə́míxʷtən/Belcarra Regional Park.**
- **The park is part of the Nation's traditional territory and was the site of an ancestral village.**
- **Joint-member committees help coordinate shared decision-making and planning for projects in the park.**

In Metro Vancouver, a ground-breaking agreement between a government agency—Metro Vancouver Regional Parks—and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation shows a different way of managing parks and highlighting their past and present cultural value.

At 2,560 acres, **təmtəmíxʷtən/Belcarra Regional Park** is two and a half times the size of Vancouver’s Stanley Park and receives 1.2 million visitors per year. The park was also the site of the largest ancestral village within the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

Gabriel George, a Tsleil-Waututh Nation member and also the Nation’s Director of Treaty Lands and Resources Development said that a lot of the Nation’s territory falls into parkland “so it’s been something that historically has isolated us and disconnected us from our land. I think the importance of trying to engage and have partnerships...is an important way for us to exert our rights.”

Mike Redpath, Director of Parks for Metro Vancouver Regional Parks said that Metro Vancouver Regional Parks began working with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation in 2017 on developing a **“Cultural Planning and Cooperation Agreement,”** which was signed in 2020. The agreement outlines a shared vision, guiding principles, and governance for the park. These include, among others, protection of natural resources, promotion of the site for recreational use, and increased public awareness of Tsleil-Waututh Nation cultural history.

“There’s a strong acknowledgement within the agreement and the relationship that it is public land; however, there was a traditional use of the site and the agreement strives to find a balance between the two,” Redpath said.

Good governance is a cornerstone of a successful partnership. The cooperation agreement contains two mechanisms for joint-governance: a Leadership Committee and a Technical Committee, which include both members from the Nation and Metro Vancouver Regional Parks.

Projects are prioritized in an annual work plan by the Technical Committee, which is then approved by the Leadership Committee and submitted during an annual budget process. Each individual project includes an “engagement agreement,” which outlines deliverables and ensures both partners understand roles and responsibilities.

The agreement also includes economic development policies, such as using Tsleil-Waututh approved contractors in the park to support local entrepreneurs.

“We had an economy in place that was basically stripped from us,” George said. “We had currencies older than paper. We had systems of trade. So we lost that.” He noted that his people used to harvest clams for thousands of years, but then had to “sneak around at night...because they weren’t allowed.” so seeking out these economic opportunities is “our inherent right.”

Although the cooperation agreement was signed just four years ago, there have been several significant projects that have been implemented since then, with more on the way.

The first was a park renaming in 2021, which changed the park’s name to təmtəmíxʷtən/Belcarra Regional Park. Prior to this, Metro Vancouver Regional Parks had not engaged in any renaming of the regional park system to traditional place names with First Nations communities.



For George, the term “renaming” doesn’t quite fit, however. “It’s more than that,” he said. “It’s recognizing the real name of that place. It’s important because we need to be represented. We need to be seen. We need to be heard on our own territory.”

Redpath also said it provided Metro Vancouver Parks with a naming precedent that could be used in other places. Indeed, another regional park has just had its name changed from Colony Farm Regional Park to **łéxətəm (tla-hut-um) Regional Park**—a name gifted by the kʷikʷəłəm (Kwíkwetlem) First Nation that translates to “we welcome you.”

Another joint project was the just completed installation of a welcome pole in the area of the Nation’s traditional village site. Other projects have included environmental restoration work, interpretive programming, and the development of a Cultural Heritage Study that will better understand the depth of cultural history of the park.

While it took time to implement the agreement, Redpath said it provides many benefits. Staff are “able to pick up the phone and talk to someone at the Nation who’s a familiar face. It helps advance projects together and sometimes faster as well.” The willingness to try doing things differently is key to success. “It’s a change process,” Redpath said, adding that it’s a different way of doing business in many ways. He stressed that early and ongoing communication is key for the trust-building necessary for a strong partnership.

“The agreement is a piece of paper, but the relationships and the conversations are really what make it successful.”

George echoed these sentiments. “It can be so easy to not change things,” he said, but it’s important to push outside of comfort zones and do things differently. “You can’t fix all the issues, but when you approach the work, think about what kind of legacy you can create.”

“I think for Indigenous Nations, parks can be important places to occupy and to reclaim,” he said, adding that they’ve seen big successes in some of their relationships to their parks. “This is our home. We think of it as an extension of our community.”

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## Recommendations

- **Ensure regular ongoing communication touchpoints**, such as individual project agreements, so roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- **Explore the use of jointly-staffed formal committees** to allow for shared governance.
- **Take the necessary time to establish good communication and trust** between partners to ensure long-term success.

**“I think for Indigenous Nations, parks can be important places to occupy and to reclaim... This is our home. We think of it as an extension of our community.”**

**Gabriel George, a Tsleil-Waututh Nation member and the Nation’s Director of Treaty Lands and Resources Development**

# BEING BLACK IN PUBLIC

A conversation with Jay Pitter about Black people's experiences  
in parks and public spaces

by Laura Smith and Lexi Kinman



Jay Pitter, MES, is an award-winning placemaker, adjunct urban planning professor and author whose practice mitigates growing divides in cities across North America. Her forthcoming books, *Black Public Joy* and *Where We Live*, will be published by McClelland & Stewart, Penguin Random House Canada.

Photo Source: Jay Pitter

## Summary

- **Parks and public spaces are sites of systemic racism, leading many racialized individuals to avoid these areas due to fear of discrimination and violence.**
- **A significant portion of the public (67%) and cities (66%) recognize the need for parks to address racial justice and equity.**
- **Despite growing awareness, only 17% of cities are equipped to address these issues, Jay Pitter's research offers strategies for enhancing Black cultural identity and inclusion in parks.**

Over the past few years, our collective understanding has recognized that systemic racism is prevalent in parks and public spaces. Historically, these areas have been sites where Black, Indigenous, and racialized people face suspicion, surveillance, harassment, violence, and even death.

Year after year, our public survey has shown that about 1 in 10 city residents avoid parks and greenspaces due to fear of discrimination or policing.

This year, when asked whether city parks should do more to address equity and racial justice, over two-thirds (67%) agreed. Similarly, in 2023, 66% of cities recognized the role of parks in combating racism.

While awareness of these issues is growing, action remains limited. Only 17% of cities feel equipped to address racism, allowing the needs of racialized populations to fall through the cracks.

How can municipalities move from awareness to action? We spoke with Jay Pitter about the BEING BLACK IN PUBLIC SURVEY a bi-national survey, developed by Jay Pitter Placemaking (Lead Investigator: Jay Pitter, Co-Investigator: Professor L. Anders Sandberg) and administered by the Institute for Social Research. Overall, the survey asked "What are the public space policies, design approaches and unspoken social attitudes that both diminish and enhance Black peoples' experiences when navigating cities?"

This research fills gaps in understanding the Black experience in parks and other public spaces in Canada and the United States. Pitter identified a lack of data, particularly in Canada, on how Black communities perceive and experience these spaces. Many institutions measure narrowly defined ideas of inclusion by tracking safety or the absence of anti-Black violence, but Pitter argues that this is insufficient - mitigating violence should be the bare minimum.

Her research also explores how the historical and ongoing trauma from racism, police brutality, and violence in public spaces as well as, mobility inequity and lack of pathways to economic prosperity affect Black people's well-being, social belonging, and sense of spatial entitlement.

"At the heart of this survey is filling a gap in what the other stats do not—which is to centre Black people as wholly, human, spiritual beings. Previous research and stories often omit the impact of incidents related to lack of safety and restriction. What do those numbers mean? To Black people's mental health, to Black people's sense of self, to Black people's belonging, to Black people's imagination and aspirations? So, one of my main focuses was to re-humanize Black individuals and communities by creating space for their deep reflection, healing and dreaming aloud."

The BEING BLACK IN PUBLIC SURVEY uses a trauma-informed, asset-based approach that emphasizes Black joy and knowledge. Respondents were asked about positive experiences and memories in public spaces, with Pitter emphasizing the importance of learning from successes, not just tragedies.

Pitter also highlighted how Black communities contribute to public spaces. “I didn’t want to reduce our experience in public to strictly a victim experience, because despite the auction block, centuries of anti-Black public space policy, and disproportionate experiences of violence and homelessness, Black peoples’ labour, placemaking expertise and culture have contributed so much to the form and vibrance of public spaces. We make public spaces lit.”

This approach of centering joy and honouring Black peoples’ placemaking contributions is a crucial example of how cities can engage with equity-deserving groups without compelling them to relive histories of oppression. Pitter noted that many respondents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their positive experiences and knowledge.

The findings from this study will be shared in an action-oriented report in February 2025, offering insights for cities and institutions on fostering real inclusion for Black communities in parks and other public spaces. Pitter shared some early findings: parks are among the most frequented public spaces by Black individuals and generally score well on physical safety. However, her early findings indicated that parks fall short in fostering Black cultural identity, deep belonging, and inclusive programming.

Pitter sees significant opportunities for growth, including co-creation of spaces, representation in park leadership, power-sharing, and park events that elevate Black communities.

To learn more about how your city can enhance inclusion for Black communities in public spaces, stay tuned at [jaypitter.com](http://jaypitter.com) for the full report in February.

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## Recommendations

- **Conduct community engagement** with racialized communities using an asset based, trauma-informed approach focusing on moving towards conversations around celebrating cultural identity.
- **Track inclusion** in parks through more than measures of feelings of safety or a lack of anti-Black violence and discrimination.
- **Use storytelling and other qualitative methods** to create a more robust understanding of the data including socio-spatial issues and quality of experience in parks.
- **Provide Black communities with opportunities** to co-create new parks, policies and park programs to strengthen cultural identity and sense of belonging to parks.



# Next Steps

We didn't write the Canadian City Parks Report so it can sit on a virtual shelf— we want it to be used.

To help put the report's learnings into practice, we will be hosting [webinars and other learning opportunities](#) centered around our findings. Many of our speaking engagements and signature events, including regional summits and forums will also dig deeper into this research and its implications for the city parks sector.

To stay in the loop about these opportunities, please subscribe to our [newsletter](#). You can also follow us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

You can find video recordings as well as key take-aways from past Canadian City Parks Report webinars on our [website](#), including sessions on climate justice, houselessness, community programming, small-scale biodiversity projects, and more.

This is our sixth edition of the Canadian City Parks Report in its current format. However, this is not the end of our parks research - merely a point of reflection and reimagination. As Park People evolves, we will take our learnings from the past six years to bring about exciting new research opportunities.

If you have input or feedback about our future research directions or the Canadian City Parks Report, we'd love to hear from you! How have you used the report? How has the Canadian City Parks Report been beneficial to your work? What stories or data resonated most? Please take 5 minutes to [fill out this feedback form](#), or [send us an email](#) to book a conversation with our research team.

Thank you for reading and supporting us along this journey!





# Appendix A City Profiles

Key park statistics, inventory/amenities, parkland provision goals and funding from the cities that participated in our 2024 surveys.

# Brampton

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 656,480

## ANALYSIS

- Brampton has the second most hectares of parkland relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, with 6.6 hectares per thousand people.
- Brampton has the highest percentage of city land area that is parkland for cities over 500,000 residents at 16.1%.
- Brampton has the second most hectares of natural parkland relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, with 2.7 hectares per thousand people.

**40%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,752 ha

Parkland provision goal: 1.6 ha per  
1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**6.6 ha**

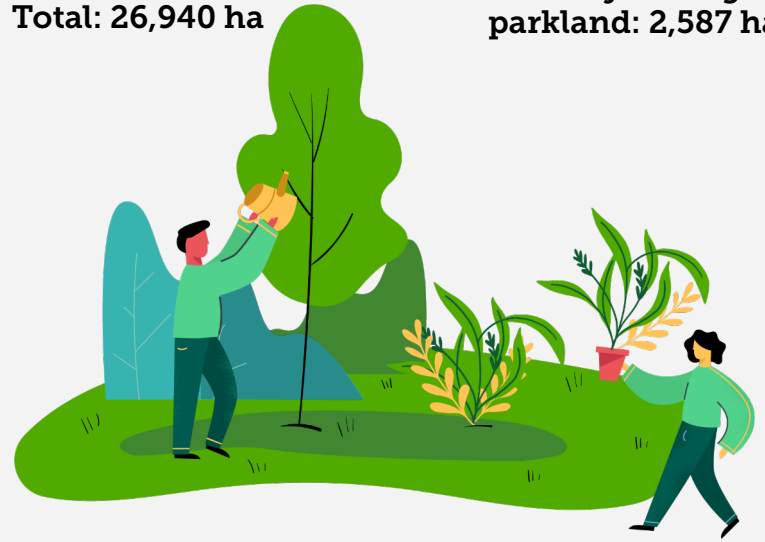
ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 4,339 ha

**16%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 26,940 ha

**60%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 2,587 ha



**977 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**7**

dog parks

**346**

playgrounds

**9**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**13**

public  
washrooms

**0**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$50**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$32,542,000**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$27,595,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Brandon

MANITOBA  
POPULATION 53,313

## ANALYSIS

- Brandon has the fourth most community gardens relative to population with 21 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Brandon is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at 13 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Brandon is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

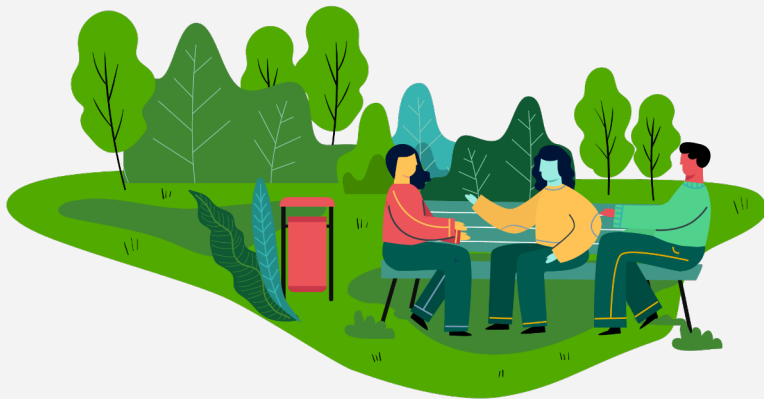
**40%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 164 ha

Parkland provision goal per 1,000 people (mixed):

Activity Park: 3 ha  
Celebration Park: 1.5 ha  
Connector Park: 1 km  
Cultural Park: 0.5 ha  
Leisure Park: 2 ha

\*See [Greenspace Master Plan](#) for additional details.



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**7.6 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 407 ha

**1%**

of total city land areas as parks  
Total: 80,550 ha

**56%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 229 ha



**14 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

\*Excludes an additional 64 hectares of school division lands.

**3**

dog parks

**35**

playgrounds

**11**

community gardens/urban farms

\*Excludes an additional 9 gardens/orchards not on city-owned land.

**7**

public washrooms

**1**

winterized washrooms

\*1 of the 7 public washrooms is winterized.

## FUNDING

**\$85**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$4,539,334**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$7,775,570**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)



# Burlington

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 186,948

## ANALYSIS

- Burlington is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at nearly 13 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Burlington is above average for the percentage of parkland that is actively managed at 69%.
- Burlington is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

**31%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 212 ha

Parkland provision goal: 3 ha per  
1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**3.7 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

Total: 692 ha

*\*Includes parking lots*

**4%**

of total city land  
areas as parks

Total: 18,700 ha

**69%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 480 ha  
*\*Includes parking lots*



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**8**

dog parks

**110**

playgrounds

**5**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**24**

public  
washrooms

**8**

winterized  
washrooms

*\*excludes an additional 4 portable toilets  
available in parks.*

## FUNDING

**\$39**

Operating budget/person

Total: \$7,200,000

**\$660,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$6,400,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Edmonton

ALBERTA

POPULATION 1,010,899

## ANALYSIS

- Edmonton is one of five municipalities that have 100% of park washrooms open for use year-round.
- Edmonton has the third most hectares of parkland relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, with 6.3 hectares per thousand people.
- Edmonton has the second most dog parks relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at 10 dog parks per 100,000 people.

**41%**

of parkland that is natural area

Total natural area: 2,573 ha

\*Changes from 2022 due to refinements in data reporting.

**Parkland provision goal: 500m or a 10 minute walk**



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**6.3 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

Total: 6,335 ha

\*Changes from 2022 due to refinements in data reporting.

**59%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 3,763 ha

**8%**

of total city land areas as parks

Total: 78,310 ha



**2,307 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**60**

dog parks

**424**

playgrounds

**104**

community gardens/urban farms

\*Includes 28 pop-up community gardens.

**27**

public washrooms

**27**

winterized washrooms

\*An additional 10 winterized portable washrooms are available.

## FUNDING

**\$72**

Operating budget/person

Total: \$73,005,088

**\$1,845,024**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$47,125,547**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Fort Saskatchewan

ALBERTA  
POPULATION 28,500

## ANALYSIS

- Fort Saskatchewan has the third most hectares of parkland relative to population with 20.9 hectares per thousand people.
- Fort Saskatchewan is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with 119 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Fort Saskatchewan is above average for percentage of city land area that is parkland at 10.5%.

**24%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 142 ha

**Parkland provision goal: 400m**



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**20.9 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 595 ha

**11%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 5,650

**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**76%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 453 ha



Membership community garden - 0.19 ha  
Public Garden Plots - 30 at 1.92 m<sup>2</sup>  
Public Orchard - 0.14 ha

**34**

playgrounds

**2**

dog parks

**4**

public  
washrooms

**3**

winterized  
washrooms

\*There are an additional 30 seasonal portable  
toilets and 2 winterized portable toilets  
available in parks.

## FUNDING

**\$101**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$2,885,766

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**N/A**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Gatineau

QUEBEC  
POPULATION 291,041

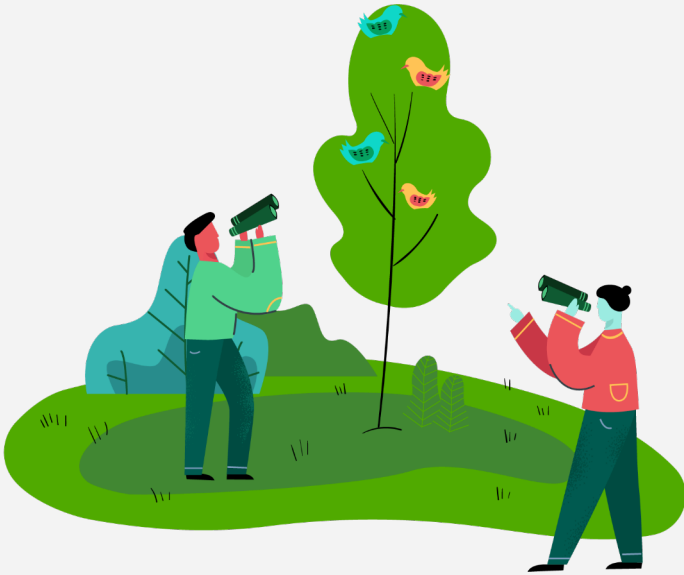
## ANALYSIS

- Gatineau has the third most playgrounds relative to population with 127 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Gatineau is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at 13 washrooms per 100,000 people.

**31%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 408 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
Neighbourhood park: 400 m  
Neighbourhood park: 800 m  
Nature park: 1200 m  
Municipal park: 1200 m



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.6 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,336 ha



**69%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 928 ha

**4%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 34,184 ha



**3,620 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**7**

dog parks

**39**

public washrooms

\*97 portable toilets, an additional 14  
toilets in buildings available 7am to  
10pm and 4 semi-public toilets.

**4**

winterized  
washrooms

**25**

community gardens/urban farms

\*Not including 4 urban farms managed by  
non-profits.

**369**

playgrounds

## FUNDING

**\$18**

Operating budget/person

Total: **\$5,316,805**

\*This number may not include all investment costs.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$6,350,000**

Capital budget

\*This is the budget for projects funded in 2024. The projects will be  
carried out in 2024-2025 or 2026. In 2023, the budget was \$3,350,000.

**[Parkland Map Link\\*](#)**



# Guelph

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 144,356

## ANALYSIS

- Guelph has the second most dog parks relative to population at 35 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Guelph is above average for the percentage of parkland that is natural area at 63%.
- Guelph is above average for the number of community gardens relative to population, at nearly 10 gardens per 100,000 people.

**63%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 577 ha

**Parkland provision goal:  
2 ha per 1,000  
people or a 5-10 minute walk**

\*An additional 1.3 ha per 1,000 people is encouraged.



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**6.3 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 910 ha

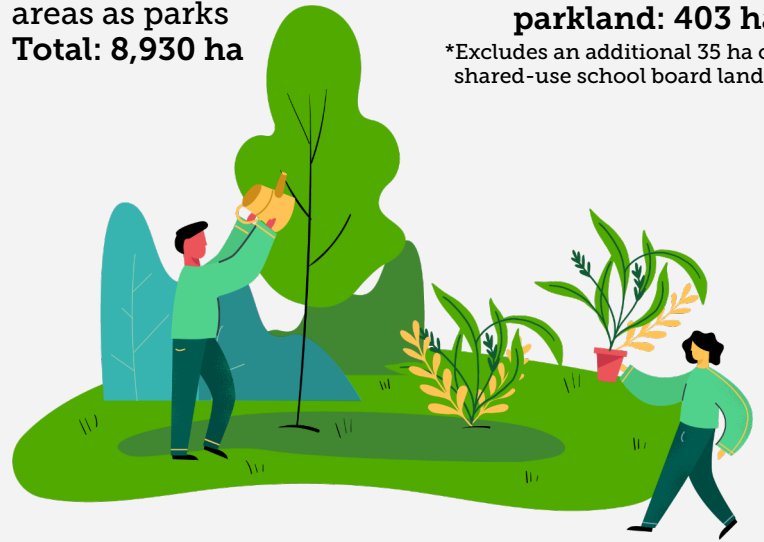
**10%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 8,930 ha

**44%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 403 ha

\*Excludes an additional 35 ha of  
shared-use school board lands.



**775 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**51**

dog parks

**94**

playgrounds

**14**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**16**

public  
washrooms

**0**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional  
22 on non-city-owned  
lands.

## FUNDING

**\$82**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$11,868,019**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$6,097,800**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Halifax

NOVA SCOTIA  
POPULATION 439,819

## ANALYSIS

- Halifax has the third highest percentage of parkland that is natural area at 85%.
- Halifax is above average for the number of dog parks relative to population, at nearly 9 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Halifax is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with 91 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**85%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 4,185 ha

Parkland provision goal: 0.33 ha per  
1,000 people or a 10 minute walk

\*For neighbourhood parks.



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**11.1 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 4,899 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 592,700 ha

\*Approximately 75% of the area  
is undeveloped, containing vast  
areas of crown land and lakes,  
which yields a very small  
percentage of parkland.

**15%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 714 ha



**9,594 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

\*Excludes an additional 176 ha of school yard lands.

**39**

dog parks

**401**

playgrounds

**27**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**21**

public  
washrooms

**6**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 70 portable toilets  
available in parks.

## FUNDING

**\$32**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$14,000,000

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$9,400,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Hamilton

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 569,353

## ANALYSIS

- Hamilton has the second highest percentage of parkland that is natural area for cities over 500,000 residents at 54%.
- Hamilton is above average for the amount of natural area relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents at 2.2 hectares per 1000 people.

**54%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,233 ha



Parkland provision goal:  
0.7 ha per 1,000 people  
Neighbourhood parks:  
800 m service radius  
Community parks:  
2 km service radius

## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

Total: 2,280 ha

\*Decrease from 2022 due to refinements in data reporting. Includes parking lots and other structures.

**2%**

of total city land areas as parks

Total: 114,882 ha

**37%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 843 ha

\*Decrease from 2022 due to refinements in data reporting.

**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**14**

dog parks

**42**

public washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 32 washrooms accessible to recreation permit-holders.

**14**

winterized washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 12 accessible portable toilets in parks.

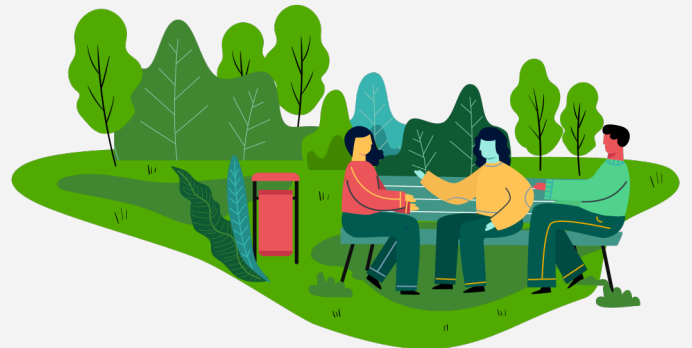
**23**

community gardens/urban farms

**291**

playgrounds

\*Community Gardens on city-owned lands: Churchill Park, Hill Street Park, Riverdale Salad Bowl, Stinson Park, Central Park, Binbrook Park, Powell Park, Olympic Park #1, Green Venture Community Garden, Gage Park, Stoney Creek Municipal Service Centre, Keith Community Park, Paradise Community Garden (Wellington St. N), Victoria Park, T. Melville Bailey Park, Macassa Lodge, Fonthill Park, Birge Park, Children's Garden at Gage Park, McQuesten Urban Farm, Simcoe Tot Lot Park, Montgomery Park, Johnson Tews Park.



## FUNDING

**\$51**

Operating budget/person

Total: \$29,272,655

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$21,520,559**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Kelowna

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 144,576

## ANALYSIS

- Kelowna is above average for the percentage of parkland that is natural area at 49%.
- Kelowna is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 9%.
- Kelowna is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at nearly 16 washrooms per 100,000 people.

**49%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 949 ha

Parkland provision goal:

Linear parks: 1 km per 1,000 people

Active parks: 2.2 ha per 1,000 people

Urban core: 400 m

Outside urban core: 500 m



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**13.5 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,950 ha

**15%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 300 ha

**9%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 21,777 ha



**974 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**13**

dog parks

**82**

playgrounds

**11**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**23**

public  
washrooms

**6**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$91**

Operating budget/person

**Total: \$13,212,000**

\*2024 operating budget.

**\$244,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$27,849,000**

Capital budget

\*2024 capital budget.

[Parkland Map Link](#)



# Kingston

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 132,485

## ANALYSIS

- Kingston is above average for the number of community gardens relative to population, at 9 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Kingston is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at nearly 14 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Kingston is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with nearly 91 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**33%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 201 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
4 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.6 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

Total: 606 ha

\*Includes recreational centre lands.

**100%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 606 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks

Total: 45,119 ha

\*Includes recreational  
centre lands.



**405 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**5**

dog parks

**120**

playgrounds

**12**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**18**

public  
washrooms

\*Some only  
available when  
sports fields are  
in use.

**0**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**N/A**

Operating budget/person

Total: N/A

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**N/A**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Kitchener

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 256,885

## ANALYSIS

- Kitchener is above average for the percentage of parkland that is natural area at 52%.
- Kitchener is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 12.3%.
- Kitchener is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

**52%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 895 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
1 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**6.7 ha**

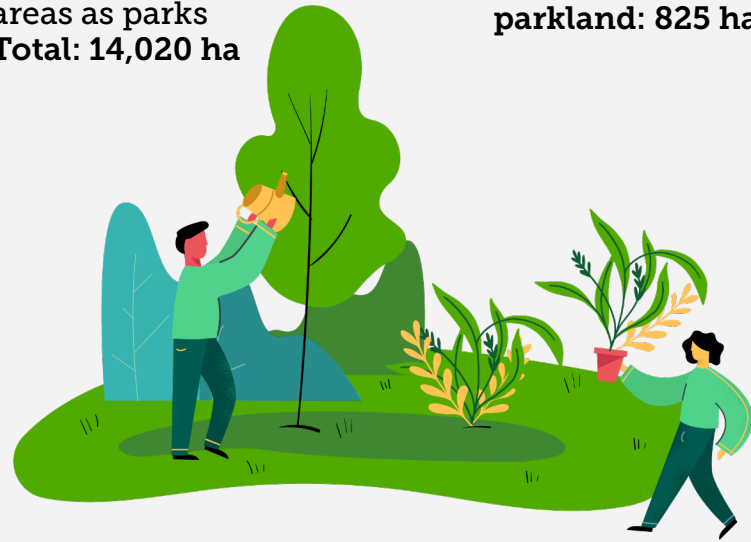
ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,722 ha

**48%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 825 ha

**12%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 14,020 ha



**220 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**4**

dog parks

**148**

playgrounds

**21**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**7**

public  
washrooms

**2**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional  
20 gardens on  
non-city-owned lands.

## FUNDING

**\$76**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$19,525,425**

**\$230,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$14,386,240**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Lethbridge

ALBERTA  
POPULATION 98,406

## ANALYSIS

- Lethbridge has the highest percentage of city land area that is parkland at 23%.
- Lethbridge has the second most hectares of parkland relative to population with 29.7 hectares per thousand people.
- Lethbridge has the second most playgrounds relative to population with 129 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

\*Population 98,406: 127 playgrounds.

**70%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 2,041 ha

**Parkland provision goal:  
10% of all developable land**



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**29.7 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 2,924 ha

**32%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 923 ha

\*Data from 2022.

**23%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 12,700 ha



**653 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**5**

dog parks

**127**

playgrounds

**8**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**19**

public  
washrooms

**13**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$146**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$14,404,751

**\$38,765**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$3,655,761**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Longueuil

QUEBEC  
POPULATION 254,483

## ANALYSIS

- Longueuil is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 8.8%.
- Longueuil is above average for the number of community gardens relative to population, at 9 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Longueuil is above average for the percentage of park washrooms that are winterized, with 50% open year-round.

**65%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 708 ha

**Parkland provision goal:**  
7 minute walk to a local park  
15 minute walk to a neighbourhood park



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.3 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,087 ha

**98%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 1,060 ha

**9%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 12,300 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**4**

dog parks

**136**

playgrounds

**23**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**4**

public  
washrooms

**2**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$41**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$10,400,000

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$18,500,000**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\\*\*\*](#)



# Mississauga

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 717,961

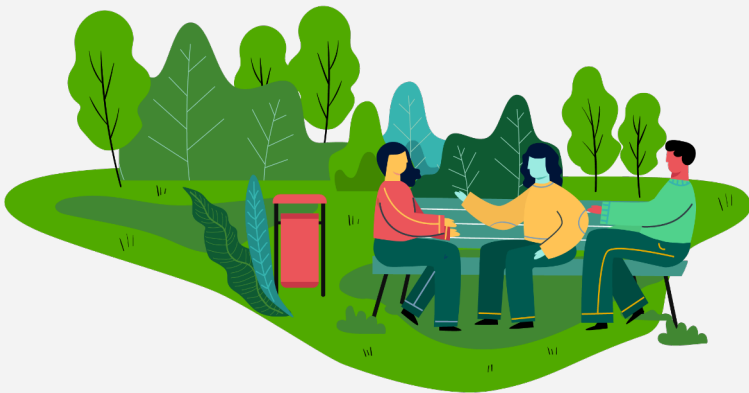
## ANALYSIS

- Mississauga is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 9.6%.
- Mississauga is above average for percentage of parkland that is natural area for cities over 500,000 residents at 42%.
- Mississauga is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

**42%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,165 ha

**Parkland provision goal:**  
**Urban Growth Centre and Major Nodes:**  
12% of gross land area  
**Other residential areas:** 1.2 ha per 1,000 people and within a 10 minute walk  
**Playgrounds:** within 800 m of residential areas or 400 m in areas of intensification



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**3.9**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 2,803 ha

**64%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 1,803 ha

**10%**

of total city land areas as parks  
Total: 29,274 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**16**

dog parks

**266**

playgrounds

**9**

community gardens/urban farms

**36**

public washrooms

**14**

winterized washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$64**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$45,632,981

**\$77,024**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$73,193,522**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Montreal

QUEBEC  
POPULATION 1,762,949

## ANALYSIS

- Montréal is above average for the number of community gardens relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 6 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Montréal is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at 55 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Montréal is above average for the percentage of park washrooms that are winterized, with 90% open year-round.

**30%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,912 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
N/A



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**3.7 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 6,446 ha

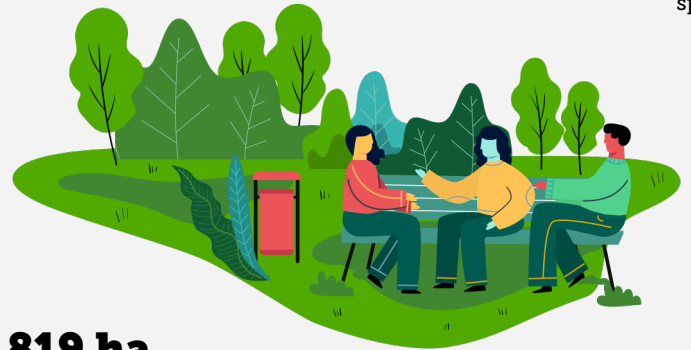
**2%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 365,200 ha

**52%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 3,357 ha

\*The remaining 18% is not classified  
as actively managed or natural park  
space



**1,819 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**64**

dog parks

**969**

playgrounds

**97**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**20**

public  
washrooms

**18**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Includes only the washrooms in major  
parks, excluding La Fontaine Park and  
Jeanne-Mance Park.

## FUNDING

**\$17**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$30,087,300

\*Parcs-Nature, Mount Royal Park, TiohtiàOtsira'kéhne Park, and  
Frédéric-Back Park only. The day-to-day management of urban parks is  
delegated to the boroughs."

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**N/A**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\\*\*\*](#)

**\*Note: The data provided is only reflective of large parks in Montréal and does not include data from neighbourhood parks. This is due to the unique governance structure in Montréal.**

# North Vancouver

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 58,120

## ANALYSIS

- The City of North Vancouver has the third highest percentage of city land area that is parkland at 14.1%.
- The City of North Vancouver has the second most community gardens relative to population with 24 gardens per 100,000 people.
- The City of North Vancouver is one of five municipalities that have 100% of park washrooms open for use year-round.

**69%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 115 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
3 ha per 1,000 people

Neighbourhood park: 5 minute walk  
Community park: 10 minute walk



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**2.9 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 167 ha

**28%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 47 ha

**14%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 1,183 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**6**

dog parks  
\*Includes one pilot park.

**18**

playgrounds

**14**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**7**

public  
washrooms

**7**

winterized  
washrooms

\*There are an additional 3 semi-public washrooms used by sports teams, and 9 portable toilet locations available in parks.

## FUNDING

**\$70**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$4,085,000

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$930,000**

Capital budget  
\*Excludes salaries.

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Ottawa

ONTARIO

POPULATION 1,017,449

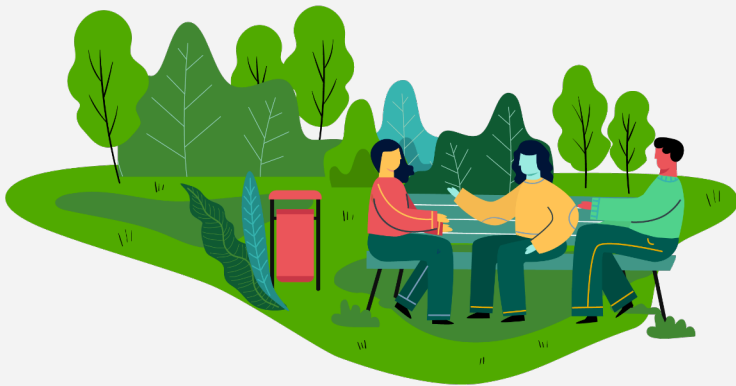
## ANALYSIS

- Ottawa has the most dog parks relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at 17 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Ottawa has the second most playgrounds relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 77 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Ottawa is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

**27%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,237 ha

**Parkland provision goal:**  
2 ha per 1,000 people and;  
One green space within 5 minute walk or 400 m  
Two green spaces within 10 minute walk or 800 m  
Natural area within 15 minutes by transit



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.5 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 4,572 ha

**96%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 4,372 ha

**2%**

of total city land areas as parks  
Total: 288,500 ha



**1721 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**781**

playgrounds

**41**

public washrooms

**0**

winterized washrooms

**18**

community gardens/urban farms

\*There are over 130 community gardens within the municipality, with 18 in parks.

**175**

dog parks

\*Excludes an additional 61 mixed-use parks where dogs can be off leash in specific areas or during specific times.

## FUNDING

**\$35**

Operating budget/person

**Total: \$35,921,466**

\*Excludes tree planting and maintenance, includes some costs for non-park areas such as roadsides, woodlots and ravines.

**\$94,039**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$13,634,956**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)



# Quebec City

QUEBEC

POPULATION 549,459

## ANALYSIS

- Québec City has the most hectares of parkland relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, with 7.7 hectares per thousand people.
- Québec City has the most playgrounds relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 84 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Québec City has the second most community gardens relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 7 gardens per 100,000 people.

**66%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 2,788 ha

**Parkland provision goal:**

**Access to a public space (or a natural environment) within a 5 min walk (400m). and 10 minute walk (800m)**



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**7.7 ha**

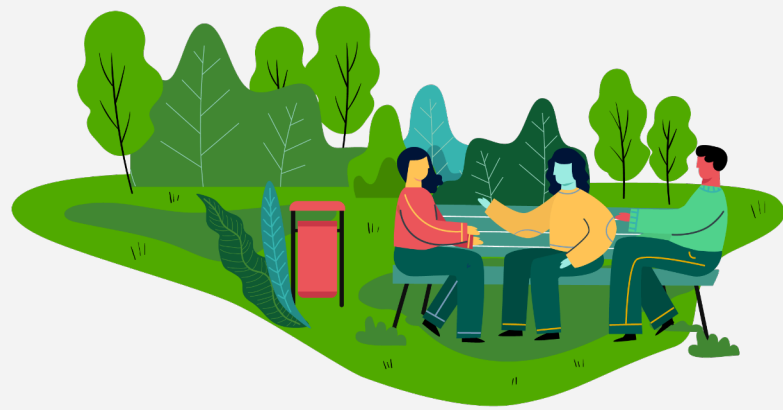
ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 4,208 ha

**9%**

of total city land areas as parks  
Total: 45,428 ha

**34%**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: 1,420 ha



**390 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**5**

dog parks

\*Includes a pilot project.

**460**

playgrounds

\*Preliminary data. The City of Quebec is currently organizing data related to urban amenities and sports and recreational equipment in its public spaces.

**37**

community gardens/urban farms

**65**

public washrooms

**N/A**

winterized washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$25**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$13,730,000**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$19,350,000**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\\*\*\*](#)

# Quispamsis

NEW BRUNSWICK  
POPULATION 18,768

## ANALYSIS

- Quispamsis is one of five municipalities that have 100% of park washrooms open for use year-round.
- Quispamsis is above average for the number of dog parks relative to population, at nearly 11 dog parks per 100,000 people.

**33%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 14 ha

Parkland provision goal: N/A



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**2.3 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 43 ha

**67%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 29 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 6,700 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**2**

dog parks

**10**

playgrounds

**1**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**6**

public  
washrooms

**6**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 13 portable toilets  
available in parks.

## FUNDING

**\$69**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$1,300,000**

**\$14,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$340,000**

Capital budget

# Regina

SASKATCHEWAN  
POPULATION 226,404

## ANALYSIS

- Regina is above average for percentage of parkland that is actively managed at 88%.
- Regina is at the average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with nearly 68 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**13%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 168 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
0.7-1.6 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**5.9 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,344 ha

**88%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 1,186 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 182,430 ha



**930 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**5**

dog parks

**154**

playgrounds

**10**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**5**

public  
washrooms

**1**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$68**

Operating budget/person

Total: **\$15,390,000**

\*Excludes splash and spray pads.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$1,341,062**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Richmond Hill

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 202,022

## ANALYSIS

- Richmond Hill is above average for the percentage of parkland that is natural area at 67%.
- Richmond Hill is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 10.9%.
- Richmond Hill is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with nearly 113 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**67%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 731 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
1.37 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**5.4 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,099 ha

**33%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 368 ha

**11%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 10,100 ha



**940 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**2**

dog parks

**228**

playgrounds

**11**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**8**

public  
washrooms

**3**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$50**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$10,146,800**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$8,112,742**

Capital budget  
\*Excludes salaries.

**[Parkland Map Link](#)**

\*See map link entitled "Search for a Park".



# Saanich

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 117,735

## ANALYSIS

- Saanich has the most dog parks relative to population at 48 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Saanich is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at nearly 18 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Saanich is above average for the percentage of park washrooms that are winterized, with 76% open year-round.

**65%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 566 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
5 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**7.4 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 871 ha

**35%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 305 ha

**8%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 10,830 ha



**906 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**5**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**56**

playgrounds

**56**

dog parks

\*Excludes an additional  
43 parks that are  
leash-optional between  
9-6am. Change from  
2022 due to bylaw  
update.

**21**

public  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 12 portable toilets  
available in parks.

**16**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$66**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$7,757,700

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$3,317,550**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Saskatoon

SASKATCHEWAN  
POPULATION 266,141

## ANALYSIS

- Saskatoon is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with nearly 73 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Saskatoon is above average for percentage of parkland that is actively managed at 87%.

**13%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 148 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
400 m



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.1 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,099 ha

**87%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 951 ha

**5%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 23,633 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**11**

dog parks

**194**

playgrounds

**N/A**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**13**

public  
washrooms

**4**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$61**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$16,300,000

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$6,232,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Strathcona County

ALBERTA  
POPULATION 99,225

## ANALYSIS

- Strathcona County has the most hectares of parkland relative to population with 45.9 hectares per thousand people.
- Strathcona County has the highest percentage of parkland that is natural area at 91%.
- Strathcona County has the most park washrooms relative to population at 45 washrooms per 100,000 people.

**91%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 4,153 ha

Parkland provision goal per 1,000 people:  
Neighbourhood parks: 1.5 ha or  
0.5-0.75 km service radius  
Community parks: 2 ha  
Regional parks: 4 ha



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**45.9 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 4,550 ha

**9%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 397 ha

**4%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 117,065 ha



**3,284 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**14**

dog parks

\*Includes 9 seasonal dog parks.

**144**

playgrounds

**50**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**45**

public  
washrooms

\*Excludes an  
additional 14  
portable toilets in  
parks.

**9**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an  
additional 5 winterized  
portable toilets in parks.

## FUNDING

**\$76**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$7,500,000

**\$112,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$6,700,000**

Capital budget

\*Includes a \$3,600,000 contribution from the City of Edmonton for a shared pedestrian footbridge project.

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Surrey

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 568,322

## ANALYSIS

- Surrey has the most park washrooms relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at 17 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Surrey is above average for hectares of parkland relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, with 5.1 hectares per thousand people.
- Surrey is above average for the percentage of park washrooms that are winterized, with 83% open year-round.

**9%**

of parkland that is natural area  
**Total natural area: 272 ha**

\*Sum of parks with no public access or planned public access in the future. Significant change from 2022 due to change in classification system.

**Parkland provision goal per 1,000 people:**

**Overall: 4.2 ha**

**Community: 1.0 ha**

**City class: 1.2 ha**

**Neighbourhood: 1.2 ha in secondary plan areas**

**Nature preserves/corridors: 0.8 ha**

**Distance to park: 10 min walk in town centres and urban areas**

## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**5.1 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

**Total: 2,880 ha**

\*Decrease in this number is likely due to the removal of Provincial and Regional Park areas.

**9%**

of total city land areas as parks

**Total: 31,640 ha**

**488 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

\*Decrease in this number is likely due to the removal of Provincial and Regional Park areas.

**19**

dog parks

**168**

playgrounds

\*Excludes splash pads and water parks.

**12**

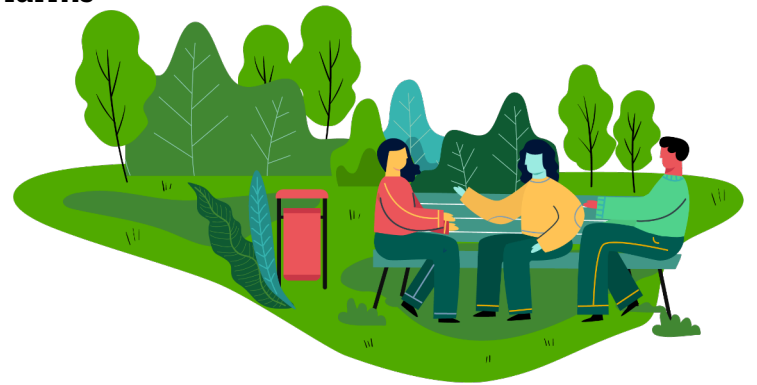
community gardens/urban farms

**99**

public washrooms

**82**

winterized washrooms



## FUNDING

**\$50**

Operating budget/person

**Total: \$28,504,854**

\*That is excluding Cemetery Services & PPRD but includes the Cloverdale Fairgrounds (which were not included in the 2022 year-end Operating). The Cloverdale Fairgrounds operating expenditure was \$1,962,239 so that explains much of the increase from 2022 year-end.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$36,317,024**

Capital budget

\*Significant increase from 2022 due to large capital expenditures on the Bear Creek Athletics Centre in 2023.

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)



# Thunder Bay

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 108,843

## ANALYSIS

- Thunder Bay has the second highest percentage of parkland that is natural area at 85%.
- Thunder Bay has the fourth most hectares of parkland relative to population with 19.0 hectares per thousand people.
- Thunder Bay is above average for the number of community gardens relative to population, at 9 gardens per 100,000 people.

**85%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,769 ha

**Parkland provision goal:  
Neighbourhood Park: 1.25-3 ha in size,  
within 400 m walking distance;  
servicing up to 3,000 residents**

\*Not formally adopted but currently being used as standard.



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**19**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 2,070 ha

**15%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 301 ha

**6%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 32,824 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**4**

dog parks

**73**

playgrounds

**10**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**12**

public  
washrooms

\*37 additional portable toilets are  
available in parks.

**0**

winterized  
washrooms

\*13 additional portable toilets are  
available in parks in winter.

## FUNDING

**\$66**

Operating budget/person  
Total: \$7,190,800

**\$99,346**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$4,980,400**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Toronto

ONTARIO

POPULATION 2,794,356

## ANALYSIS

- Toronto has the second highest percentage of city land area that is parkland for cities over 500,000 residents at 12.9%.
- Toronto is above average for the amount spent per person on the parks capital and operating budgets.
- Toronto has the third most park washrooms relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at 12 washrooms per 100,000 people.

**N/A**

of parkland that is natural area

Total natural area: N/A

\*Data isn't available because it's in the process of being updated.

Parkland provision goal:

N/A



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**2.9 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people

Total: 8,106 ha

**N/A**

of parkland that is actively managed  
Total actively managed parkland: N/A

\*Data isn't available because it's in the process of being updated.

**13%**

of total city land areas as parks

Total: 63,000 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**79**

dog parks

**97**

community gardens/urban farms

\*Increase from 2022 partially due to improvements in data quality.

**908**

playgrounds

**346**

public washrooms

\*Increase from 2022 partially due to improvements in data quality. 152 additional portable washrooms.

**75**

winterized washrooms

\*Increase from 2022 partially due to improvements in data quality. 77 additional portable washrooms.

## FUNDING

**\$61**

Operating budget/person

Total: \$170,281,108

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$160,195,768**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Township of Langley

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 132,603

## ANALYSIS

- Township of Langley has the second highest number of park washrooms relative to population at 32 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Township of Langley is above average for the percentage of parkland that is actively managed at 74%.
- Township of Langley is one of five municipalities that have 100% of park washrooms open for use year-round.

**26%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 209 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
3.4 ha per 1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**6.1 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 811 ha

**74%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 602 ha

**3%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 31,600 ha



**1,223 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

\*Excludes an additional 110 ha of school board lands under shared-use agreements.

**6**

dog parks

**84**

playgrounds

**9**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**43**

public  
washrooms

**43**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$110**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$14,550,000**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$13,419,000**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Vancouver

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
POPULATION 662,248

## ANALYSIS

- Vancouver has the third highest percentage of parkland that is natural area for cities over 500,000 residents at 53%.
- Vancouver has the third highest percentage of city land area that is parkland for cities over 500,000 residents at 10.3%.
- Vancouver is above average for the percentage of park washrooms that are winterized, with 95% open year-round.

**53%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 623 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
Neighbourhood parks: 1.1 ha per  
1,000 people



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**1.8 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,179 ha

**43%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 512 ha

**10%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 11,497 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**44**  
dog parks

**159**  
playgrounds

**41**  
community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**98**  
public  
washrooms

**93**  
winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$80**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$53,200,000**

**\$1,527,000**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$28,300,000**

Capital budget

\*Excludes costs related to park field houses and washrooms.

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)



# Vaughan

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 323,103

## ANALYSIS

- Vaughan is above average for percentage of parkland that is natural area at 62%.
- Vaughan is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with 72 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**62%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,037 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
2 ha per 1,000  
people or a 5-10 minute walk



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**5.2 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,672 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 273,560 ha

**38%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 635 ha



**2,531 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space

**6**

dog parks

**234**

playgrounds

**6**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**20**

public  
washrooms

**0**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$56**

Operating budget/person

Total: **\$18,200,000**

\*Includes snow removal for municipal sidewalks and street tree maintenance costs.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$19,230,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Victoria

BRITISH COLUMBIA

POPULATION 91,867

## ANALYSIS

- Victoria has the third most dog parks relative to population at 17 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Victoria has the third most community gardens relative to population with 22 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Victoria has the third most park washrooms relative to population at 32 washrooms per 100,000 people.

**36%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 91 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
N/A



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**2.8 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 254 ha

**64%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 163 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 19,470 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**20**

community gardens/  
urban farms

\*32 community gardens in the city, 20 of which are on city land. There are 12 community gardens located on non-city land (private, SD61 etc.) There are three active urban farms in 2024.

**41**

playgrounds

**16**

dog parks

**18**

public  
washrooms

**15**

winterized  
washrooms

\*Excludes an additional 6 portable toilets in parks  
\*Holland Point, Cook and Dallas and Memorial Crescent are closed when temperatures drop below zero.

## FUNDING

**\$127**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$11,621,962**

\*Includes Forestry budget.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$4,986,308**

Capital budget

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)

# Windsor

ONTARIO  
POPULATION 229,660

## ANALYSIS

- Windsor is above average for the number of park washrooms relative to population at nearly 16 washrooms per 100,000 people.
- Windsor is one of 37% of cities that reported securing park funding from philanthropic sources.

**44%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 447 ha

Parkland provision goal per person:  
Neighbourhood Parks: 0.8 ha per 1000  
Community/Regional Parks: 3.25 ha  
per 1000 and 800m unobstructed  
distance



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.44 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 1,020 ha

**1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 157,852 ha

**56%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 573 ha



**440 ha**

Total institutional & other public green space  
\*2016 data.

**6**

dog parks

**125**

playgrounds

**8**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**36**

public  
washrooms

**8**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$92**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$21,210,600**

**\$152,891**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$21,000,000**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)

# Winnipeg

MANITOBA

POPULATION 749,407

## ANALYSIS

- Winnipeg has the most community gardens relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 7 gardens per 100,000 people.
- Winnipeg has the third most playgrounds relative to population for cities over 500,000 residents, at nearly 70 playgrounds per 100,000 people.
- Winnipeg is above average for the percentage of city land area that is parkland at 7.2%

**37%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 1,262 ha

**Parkland provision goal:  
50m<sup>2</sup> per person by 2045**



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**4.6 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 3,441 ha

**63%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 2,179 ha

**7%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 47,570 ha



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**24**

dog parks

**523**

playgrounds

**52**

community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**63**

public  
washrooms

**10**

winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$50**

Operating budget/person

**Total: \$37,741,716**

\*2022 operating budget as 2023 was not available at the time of surveying.

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$3,000,950**

Capital budget

\*2024 capital budget.

[\*\*Parkland Map Link\*\*](#)



# Yellowknife

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
POPULATION 20,340

## ANALYSIS

- Yellowknife is one of five municipalities that have 100% of park washrooms open for use year-round.
- Yellowknife is above average for the number of dog parks relative to population, at nearly 10 dog parks per 100,000 people.
- Yellowknife is above average for the number of playgrounds relative to population with 93 playgrounds per 100,000 people.

**4%**

of parkland that is natural area  
Total natural area: 2 ha

Parkland provision goal:  
N/A



## INVENTORY/AMENITIES

**2.5 ha**

ha parkland/1,000 people  
Total: 50 ha

**96%**

of parkland that  
is actively managed  
Total actively managed  
parkland: 48 ha

**<1%**

of total city land  
areas as parks  
Total: 13,620 ha

\*Unique parks landscape  
given the northern context.



**N/A**

Total institutional & other public green space

**2**  
dog parks

**19**  
playgrounds

**N/A**  
community  
gardens/urban  
farms

**1**  
public  
washrooms

**1**  
winterized  
washrooms

## FUNDING

**\$74**

Operating budget/person  
Total: **\$1,504,668**

**N/A**

Philanthropy/sponsorship

**\$620,209**

Capital budget

[Parkland Map Link](#)



# Appendix B

## Definitions

Devised through a review of established definitions in Canada. Many were adapted from those provided by Yardstick, a park benchmarking service offered worldwide and within Canada.

Park People offers its deepest thanks for their assistance.

# Definitions

## **Total parks and green space:**

Total hectares of parkland and green space that is publicly accessible and owned, leased, or under a management agreement by the municipality. This number should capture all parks and green spaces that are perceived/used by residents similarly to parkland. Specifically, it should include:

- Actively managed parkland
- Natural parkland/areas
- Other municipally owned, managed, or leased open spaces that are used as public green space

### **Excludes:**

- Golf courses
- School yards, if owned/maintained by the municipality
- Active (open) cemeteries
- Sports stadia
- Parking lots
- Institutional and other publicly owned green space
- Other parks/green spaces that are not owned, managed or leased by the municipality (e.g. privately owned public spaces)

## **Natural parkland:**

A natural area is a green space which receives a relatively low level of maintenance and supports natural or naturalizing vegetation. Natural areas may be publicly accessible (e.g. via trail networks) or areas with limited/little public access.

### **Natural areas may include:**

- Trails or walkways
- Washrooms
- Environmentally sensitive/protected areas
- Stormwater ponds/water bodies located within natural areas

### **Excludes:**

- Parking lots
- Actively managed parkland

## **Actively managed parkland:**

Total hectares of parkland that is actively maintained by the municipality for community use. These parks often contain built and natural amenities such as: park furniture, planted trees/beds, sports fields, playgrounds, and mown grass.

### **Includes:**

- Plazas and "grey" spaces used for public recreation, when maintained by the parks department
- Small ponds/water bodies located within actively managed park spaces

### **Excludes:**

- Natural areas
- Hazard lands
- School yards
- Active (open) cemeteries
- Golf courses
- Sports stadia
- Parking lots

## **Institutional & other public green space:**

Total hectares of parks and publicly accessible green spaces that are owned and maintained as parkland by public entities other than the municipality, such as:

- The federal government
- The province
- A regional government
- Conservation authorities
- Universities

### **Excludes:**

- School board lands
- Privately owned public spaces

## **Playgrounds:**

A playground refers to an area with purpose-built children's playground equipment present, and may have just one single item of equipment or several items located together.

### **Excludes:**

- Adult exercise equipment such as fitness equipment
- Fallen trees/tree trunks left on parks
- Skateboard facilities, bike and BMX facilities
- Water play parks and splash pads

## **Public washrooms:**

Total number of permanent public washrooms in parks that are open year-round or seasonally. Excludes portable toilets, *unless indicated otherwise*.

**Population:** Total population of the municipality based on 2021 Canadian census.

## **Operating expenditures (actuals):**

Direct operating expenditures (not including revenues) for 2023 for maintaining parks and natural areas. This number will be used with your current year population to understand operating budget spent per person.

### **Includes:**

- Planting and maintenance of trees in park/natural areas
- Graffiti & vandalism repair
- Management, administration & operational staff salaries
- Consultant/contractor costs
- Parks horticultural plantings
- Maintenance of closed cemeteries if carried out from the parks operating budget
- Parks litter pickup & waste disposal
- Inspection and maintenance of splash pads, playgrounds & outdoor fitness equipment
- Maintenance & replacement of park furniture
- Public toilets where maintained from parks budget
- Sports field maintenance
- Snow clearing and ice control for parks & natural areas
- Any other parks/green space maintenance costs except cemetery costs where the cemetery is "active"

### **Excludes:**

- Golf courses
- Swimming pools
- Indoor recreation facilities/halls
- Forestry
- Zoos



## **Capital expenditures (actuals):**

Capital expenditure for all capital items related to land improvement works completed during the 2023 financial year.

### **Includes:**

- Both new and renewal work
- Capital items carried forward from previous years
- Salaries and wages for all staff involved in the design, planning and delivery of capital projects
- If salaries and wages for internal park planning and design staff are not included in a municipality's capital budget, they should be shown separately

## **Total philanthropy/sponsorships:**

Total amount donated to the city through philanthropic sources or corporate sponsorship in 2023 to fund park based projects.

### **Excludes:**

- General revenue generated by the city (e.g. through user fees, park bench dedication programs, etc.)
- Provincial/federal government grants

## **Community gardens/urban farms:**

Community gardens/urban farms are food-growing gardens available for the public to use that may require membership. This includes community orchards.

## **Off-leash dog areas:**

Includes both standalone dog parks and off-leash dog areas within parks.

## **Community park group program:**

A formal municipal program through which residents can get involved in parks. An example would be an adopt-a-park program. The roles of these groups may include environmental stewardship (e.g., clean-ups), social/recreational programming (e.g., festivals, yoga in the park), etc. Does not include one-off volunteer opportunities (e.g., volunteering at a specific event).

## **Community grant program:**

A monetary grant offered by the municipality that residents and community groups can apply for, and can be used for the purposes of improving or programming parks.

## **Parks system master plan:**

An overall plan or strategy dealing with the municipality's current and future park/greenspace provision needs. It usually includes an analysis of current provision against population and a review of future park/greenspace acquisition/disposal needs.

## **Universal design:**

The design of parks or park amenities to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized modification. This would include people of all ages, and those with and without disabilities.

## **Disclaimer:**

Definitions for total parks and green space, natural parkland, capital expenditures and operating expenditures were refined for the 2022 Canadian City Parks Report. As a result, data may not be directly comparable to 2021 and previous years reports.