

## SECTION 7: PARKLAND ASSESSMENT

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Parks provide countless benefits to the social, economic, environmental, and physical dimensions of individuals and communities. From an economic perspective, parks are an economic catalyst and positively impact the value of neighbouring properties. The availability of park and leisure facilities is an important consideration for companies and well-educated individuals that are choosing to re-locate.

*“...Urban parkland is not only a vital community asset, but it also serves to define a healthy, vibrant city – one that attracts and retains investment, as well as a variety of social amenities.”*

*- Evergreen, Green Space Acquisition & Stewardship in Canada’s Urban Municipalities*

This section contains an assessment of active parkland needs extending to 2031. For the purposes of this Plan, “active parkland” is referred to as all lands owned, leased, and/or managed by the City and classified as Regional Parks, District Parks, Neighbourhood Parks, and Parkettes / Public Squares. Active parkland typically consists of tableland suitable for the development or installation of built recreational amenities (such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts, etc.) that may be used for both organized and unorganized activities.

“Open space” lands, which have no to low development potential and are primarily designated for purposes such as environmental protection/conservation, stormwater management, buffers, etc. are outside of the scope of this plan.

### 7.1 Current Situation

Parks are critical elements that define Vaughan’s quality of life and contribute to the physical and social wellbeing of its residents. They are gathering places that help to strengthen neighbourhoods and create healthy and complete communities. They are used and loved by young and old, valued by residents from all walks of life, and relied upon to provide an increasingly wide range of structured and unstructured leisure and sport activities. Parks not only provide immeasurable personal benefits to the individual, but also contribute positively to the health of the environment, economy, and social/public realm.

The current park system has served the City well, but like many other large municipalities, Vaughan’s parks system is faced with several challenges:

- a) The City is continually seeking to keep pace with demands for sports fields and many other park amenities. General trends in leisure activities include an increase in some physical, social, and self-scheduled (unstructured) activities resulting in greater interest in walking and cycling trails, skateboard parks, natural areas, community gardens, picnic areas, special event areas, dog parks, etc. Trends and the movement toward “complete communities” also suggest that people are spending more time in their local communities, which is increasing the importance of equitable access to parks and open space areas. Public use of parkland is not only increasing along with the City’s population, but is also diversifying. The result is a greater need for a wider range of public spaces that fulfill the many roles of parks.
- b) Vaughan’s diversity places pressure on its park system, including greater demand for pursuits that various ethnic groups enjoy in their home country. This results in a growing need for

facilities such as fields for various sports (e.g., cricket, soccer, rugby, football), community gardens, and special event spaces.

- c) Although children are the primary user of parks, outdoor amenities and opportunities for adults and seniors are equally important, particularly given the health and social benefits that result from physical activity and community interaction. With a growing seniors' population, accessibility and geographic factors related to the location of parks will remain key factors in their overall provision.
- d) There is a growing deficiency of parkland in the City's newest communities and residential intensification areas. Opportunities to acquire land in these areas are infrequent and costly.
- e) The tools available under the *Planning Act* for parkland dedication are not sufficient on their own to meet Vaughan's active parkland needs. Without thoughtful municipal intervention, per capita active parkland supplies will continue to decline.
- f) The opportunities to assemble and acquire District and Regional Park sites – the larger parks that contain multiple lit sports fields, waterplay facilities, skateboard parks, picnic areas, etc. – are dwindling as the City transitions its focus from greenfield development to intensification.
- g) With higher density residential development comes smaller and more urban park parcels. Urban parks provide visual relief and respite, a space for social interactions, and connections within an otherwise dense urban environment. These parks will be intensively used and require a much higher standard of design and construction, making them more costly. A new funding framework is required to address the development and maintenance of this growing park type, as well as for the renewal of older park within neighbourhoods undergoing intensification.
- h) An ever escalating economy means that monies taken as cash-in-lieu for parkland dedication in years past will not buy the same amount of land today. Furthermore, parkland dedication values differ depending on the type of development application, while most municipal acquisitions (particularly in established areas) are purchased at full market value. The City has recently amended its cash-in-lieu of parkland formula to better account for these rising costs.
- i) Outside of the cash-in-lieu generated from new development, there is currently no dedicated municipal reserve fund for parkland acquisition. Furthermore, as the City matures and intensifies, the renewal and revitalization of parks will become a greater concern; however, funding sources are largely limited to the tax levy. Modifications to make parks more physically accessible to persons with disabilities will also place increased pressure on existing budgets.
- j) Vaughan lacks a comprehensive strategy to identify parkland acquisition priorities and opportunities. This Plan is helpful in identifying system-wide issues, but a more detailed acquisition strategy is needed in the short-term before opportunities are lost.

The emerging focus on medium and high density areas poses the greatest challenge to the City. With more multi-unit buildings, there will be fewer private backyards, which will create a greater reliance on public parks – both existing and new – for a wide range of uses. Parks in these areas are expected to be more intensely used and reflect their surrounding urban area, with a focus on providing a local gathering space for unstructured activities, including informal play and socialization. Further, these areas tend to attract a broader and larger group of users, including local residents, residents from across the City, office workers, tourists, and mobility hub users. In these contexts, the demand for parkland by different uses overlaps, which generate a greater demand for, and use of public space.

As is discussed later in this section, the City has begun to make changes to its parks system to better align it with these realities, including adopting a new classification system and reviewing its cash-in-lieu rates. The new Official Plan recognizes this: *“Intensification Areas will require new and creative parkland opportunities provided on a more urban scale, mostly in the form of Neighbourhood Parks and Public Squares.”* Nevertheless, there is the concern that the City’s current parkland dedication policies and implementation procedures may not be fully responsive to the City’s future growth patterns and trends. As such, there are a number of other policies and practices that will need to evolve in order to keep pace with these changes, including those that address matters such as (but not limited to) ownership, conveyance, funding, design, and maintenance.

## 7.2 Parkland Classification and Types

As recommended in the 2008 ATMP, the new Vaughan Official Plan established a new parkland classification system, including the introduction of Public Squares. This classification system is intended to act as a guide for the planning and development of future parks.

**Table 3: Current Parkland Classification System**

Parkland Type	Size	Target Market / Location Criteria	Uses / Amenities
<b>Regional Parks</b>	15+ hectares	City-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>large cultural, recreational and entertainment events, such as festivals, sport tournaments, weddings and other events, as well as uses found in District Parks</li> </ul>
<b>District Parks</b>	5+ hectares	coordinated with community centre sites, where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a variety of recreational and athletic interests, including major sports fields, large skateboard parks, outdoor skating facilities, field houses, picnic shelters, off-leash areas, aquatic/waterplay facilities and other uses</li> </ul>
<b>Neighbourhood Parks</b>	1 to 5 hectares	within a 10-minute walk of the majority of the community served; coordinated with school sites, where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a balance of active and passive uses</li> </ul>
<b>Public Squares</b>	up to 1 hectare (smaller sites may be considered in densely populated areas)	areas of higher density (intensively-used spaces)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a range of neighbourhood-oriented social opportunities and larger city-wide entertainment and cultural events depending on their size and location</li> <li>may include public art, small outdoor game areas such as chess tables, formal gardens and lawns, fountains/waterplay, small areas for dog walking, concert facilities and stages, seating areas and places to eat</li> <li>may also accommodate street-related activities such as vendors, retail kiosks, temporary markets, performance and exhibit space, and a range of other facilities</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from the new City of Vaughan Official Plan

Not listed above are “Open Space types”, including greenways, nature reserves, woodlots, stormwater management facilities, and cemeteries.

The parkland hierarchy in the City’s new Official Plan is a step in the right direction, but does not reflect the full complement of parks being proposed for some of Vaughan’s intensification areas, such as smaller public squares, plaza/ pocket parks, strata parks, and private amenity space. While the Vaughan Official Plan indicates that parks within intensification areas may be designed to be smaller, support more intensive uses, and accommodate less land-intensive activities, it does not provide alternate park types or criteria.

The City should review the urban parkland hierarchy and conveyance policies and develop innovative policies that support the development of a high quality and diverse parks system; this may be undertaken separately or as part of the proposed Parkland Acquisition Strategy. This review may consider amending the City’s existing hierarchy or adopting a separate hierarchy for higher density areas. In either case, a new urban park system must ensure that core park functions are maintained and that smaller parks are thoughtfully provided as part of a comprehensive planning strategy, not merely because a development site has a remnant piece of land.

Consideration of a new and flexible parkland dedication regime for Vaughan’s higher density areas should also take into account (among other matters):

- parkland dedication amounts and alternative provision rates;
- smaller and more urban park types, along with minimum park sizes;
- policies for strata parks (built on a development site, over top of a structure), with a view towards ensuring appropriate legal agreements and public access;
- policies for private amenity space; these may be accepted at the discretion of the City, but should not result in full parkland dedication credit;
- guiding principles for private sector involvement in park operation (e.g., cafes, markets, etc.); policies should seek to maximize public access, affordability, and municipal accountability; and
- alternative funding, maintenance, and management strategies.

As Vaughan becomes more urbanized, the need for larger district and regional parks will increase, as these parks will provide services unavailable elsewhere. The proposed Parkland Acquisition Strategy should also assess the potential to acquire these large types of parks moving forward, along with parkland needs in under-served communities.

<b>Parkland Classification and Types</b>	<b><i>Recommendations</i></b>
	<p>1. Continue to ensure <b>consistency between Vaughan’s Official Plan, Secondary Plans, and this Active Together Master Plan</b>. Where applicable, the evaluation of parkland and facility requirements relative to development applications should reference the findings, targets, and recommendations of this Plan. Furthermore, parkland requirements should be stated and evaluated using per capita measures, where possible.</p>

Parkland Classification and Types	Recommendations
<p>2. Develop an <b>urban parkland hierarchy and conveyance policy</b> that serves as an appropriate, equitable, consistent, and transparent framework for parkland dedication in higher density areas. Policies should take into account:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parkland dedication amounts and alternative provision rates (e.g., 1 ha : 300 units);</li> <li>• smaller and more urban park types, along with minimum park sizes;</li> <li>• policies for strata parks (built on a development site, over top of a structure), with a view towards ensuring appropriate legal agreements and public access;</li> <li>• policies for private amenity space; these may be accepted at the discretion of the City, but should not result in full parkland dedication credit;</li> <li>• guiding principles for private sector involvement in park operation (e.g., cafes, markets, etc.); policies should seek to maximize public access, affordability, and municipal accountability; and</li> <li>• alternative funding, maintenance, and management strategies.</li> </ul>

### 7.3 Active Parkland Supply

The City’s inventory of active parkland currently includes approximately 197 properties totalling 582 hectares; this includes lands that have been developed by the City, as well as those that are planned for development in 2013 (note: the 2013 inventory does not include parks that are slated for development beyond 2013, such as North Maple Regional Park and future District Parks – these will be applied against future populations).

With a population of 311,200, active parkland is currently being provided at a rate of 1.87 ha/1000 persons. Parkland per capita is a useful tool in monitoring how the City is achieving the active parkland goals in comparison to both historical measurements, as well as future projections. Maintaining or increasing the active parkland rate of provision will require a continued commitment toward parkland acquisition and creative partnerships with the development sector and other stakeholders.

Additional open space lands are also currently in municipal ownership and is supplemented by other greenspaces owned and/or maintained by agencies such as the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. As mentioned earlier, “open space” lands are outside of the scope of this plan as they are not typically acquired by way of legislated parkland conveyance.

The following table summarizes the active parkland supply by community and park type. Presently, Neighbourhood Parks and Parkettes comprise 61% of the inventory (1.1ha/1000), while District and Regional Parks represent the remaining 39% (0.7ha/1000). The highest per capita active parkland supplies are currently seen in Woodbridge and Thornhill/Concord (2.6ha/1000) – the City’s oldest communities. Conversely, Vaughan’s newer communities (Carrville and Vellore), along with Kleinburg/Nashville, have lower rates of active parkland provision (1.1 to 1.2ha/1000). These deficiencies were noted in the 2008 ATMP and, since that time, the City has acquired approximately 38 hectares of additional active parkland within these three communities in an effort to boost supplies.

**Table 4: Active Parkland Supply by Type and Community, City of Vaughan (2013)**

	Neighbourhood Parks / Parkettes (ha)	District Parks (ha)	Regional Parks (ha)	Total (ha)	Estimated Population (2013)	Ha per 1,000 residents
Carrville	41.9	12.5	0.0	<b>54.4</b>	50,860	1.1
Kleinburg/Nashville	13.6	0.0	0.0	<b>13.6</b>	12,067	1.1
Maple	55.9	24.7	0.0	<b>80.5</b>	59,051	1.4
Thornhill/Concord	101.7	19.8	57.2	<b>178.7</b>	68,962	2.6
Vellore	31.0	15.6	0.0	<b>46.6</b>	38,751	1.2
Woodbridge	111.0	57.4	40.0	<b>208.4</b>	79,291	2.6
<b>Total (City-wide)</b>	<b>355.0</b>	<b>130.0</b>	<b>97.2</b>	<b>582.1</b>	<b>311,200</b>	<b>1.87</b>
<b>Ha per 1,000 residents (pop. = 311,200)</b>	1.14	0.42	0.31	<b>1.87</b>		

Source: City of Vaughan, 2013

Totals may not add due to rounding

Note: Supply includes existing parks, as well as those to be developed in 2013. Excluded are parks that have been recently conveyed or purchased by the City, but that are not slated for development until beyond 2013, such as North Maple Regional Park and proposed District Parks in Blocks 11 and 18.

Year after year, in response to growing demand, the City extends its active parkland inventory. However, the City currently lacks a formal mechanism by which to track and update park assets. This led to challenges in documenting active parkland supplies in the 2008 ATMP (which were overstated); inventory data in this 2013 ATMP has been verified to correct known discrepancies. It is recommended that the City seek to integrate its parks and community facility inventory into a GIS-based system in order to improve research, future planning, asset management, and coordination. A formal updating mechanism will be required to keep this database current.

Active Parkland Supply	Recommendations
3.	Integrate the municipal parks and community facility <b>inventory</b> into a GIS-based system in order to improve research, future planning, asset management, and coordination. A formal updating mechanism will be required to keep this database current.

## 7.4 Active Parkland Needs and Acquisition

Household size and density have substantial implications for a parks system because they define the number of potential park users and also influence the scale and character of parks. Although the *Planning Act* and Vaughan’s Official Plan relate parkland requirements to dwelling unit rates and land allocations, parkland needs are best determined on a per capita basis. A “persons-based” approach is considered to be more equitable as it better accounts for the dramatic range of people generated by various forms of housing and changes over time, while ensuring some consistency (on a per capita basis) between urban and suburban forms of development.

The 2008 ATMP recommended that the City target the provision of active parkland at a rate of 2.5 hectares per 1,000 residents (1.5ha/1000 for neighbourhood parks and parkettes; and 1.0ha/1000 for

district and regional parks). This standard was established by comparing Vaughan’s active parkland provision rate at the time (which was thought to be 2.85 ha/1000; however, subsequent analysis of the inventory revealed that this figure was overstated) to ratios being targeted by other municipalities (generally 2.2 to 2.5 ha/1000 for active parkland) – the higher end of this range was chosen for Vaughan.

Further analysis though this Plan indicates that Vaughan active parkland provision rate is currently 1.87 ha/1000 persons (including existing parks, as well as those to be developed in 2013) and that some municipalities are beginning to lower their overall parkland targets due to factors such as the aging of the population and higher density developments. For larger urban communities such as Vaughan, a target near the lower end of the previously stated range – 2.2 ha/1000 for active parkland – has been found to be sufficient for meeting most parkland needs at a City-wide level. While this measure is intended for active parkland only, it is recognized that many such parks may have passive areas (e.g., open space, woodlot, etc.) and built recreation facilities (e.g., community centres, arenas, etc.) that complement their active components.

At this time, a City-wide target of 2.2 hectares of active parkland per 1000 residents is recommended to meet the needs of Vaughan’s current demographic mix. This ratio has been cross-referenced against facility and land requirements and found to be representative of current needs. As discussed further in the next section, parkland conveyance and cash-in-lieu will not likely be sufficient on their own to achieve this target in Vaughan. Strategic acquisitions (e.g., North Maple Regional Park), alternative acquisition tools, and partnerships will all be required.

The following table documents active parkland requirements based on the recommended provision target of 2.2 ha/1000 persons. With a supply of 582.1 hectares, the City presently has a shortfall of 102.5 hectares, although much of this will be negated through pending parkland development (including North Maple Regional Park). If no new parkland is added, this shortfall would increase to 210.7 hectares by 2021 and 334.4 hectares by 2031. To meet the 2031 target, the City’s active parkland supply would need to increase by 57%, to 916.5 hectares.

**Table 5: Forecasted Active Parkland Requirements, 2013-2031**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2031</b>
Total Population	311,200	360,380	416,573
<i>Parkland Provision Target</i>	<i>2.2 hectares (active parkland) per 1,000 residents</i>		
Parkland Supply Required to Attain Provision Target	684.6	792.8	916.5
Current Parkland Supply (ha)	582.1		
<b>Parkland Surplus (Deficit)</b>	(102.5)	(210.7)	(334.4)

Note: Does not include open space lands such as woodlots, stormwater ponds, or school lands.

The City's parkland development capital plan identifies anticipated park properties to be conveyed and/or developed by 2021, subject to development applications and funding availability. This database identifies 235.4 hectares of future parkland, comprised of the following (note: timing, size, and distribution are subject to change):

- 1 Regional Park (North Maple Regional Park)
- 6 District Parks (Blocks 11, 18, 29, 35, 40S, and 59)
- 46 Neighbourhood Parks / Linear Parks
- 30 Parkettes
- 14 Public Squares

As of 2013, the City of Vaughan has an active parkland ratio of 1.87 ha/1000 persons. Should the 2021 parkland and population targets be achieved, this ratio is forecasted to increase to 2.27 ha/1000. The anticipated development of the 80-hectare North Maple Regional Park is a big reason for this increase. This 2021 ratio is slightly greater than the recommended City-wide ratio of 2.2 ha/1000; however, it should be noted that this represents one point in time – the level is likely to fluctuate from year to year. Further, there is some uncertainty in the City's ability to achieve the level of parkland development anticipated by 2021; development applications, market conditions, policy frameworks, and municipal acquisitions all have the ability to positively or negatively impact overall parkland provision.

It is not practical or possible to achieve this provision target in every area of Vaughan. For example, it is recognized that this target may be more difficult to achieve in areas of higher density development. Caution should be expressed if this measure is used for community-specific planning as other factors may come into play. The City may utilize different community-specific targets that are representative of local supply and demand factors.

Nevertheless, this exercise can provide an interesting measure of park distribution per capita. Application of this target at a community-level suggests that the Carrville, Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, and Vellore areas are likely to be below the City-wide standard. Section 7.3.3.1 of the Vaughan Official Plan states that "*communities that fall short of the active and passive parkland targets are considered priorities for additional parkland resources.*"

Over time, these and other growing communities will require the acquisition of additional active parkland to keep pace with population growth, including beyond 2021 when it will be increasingly challenging to secure larger park blocks. Additional parkland acquisition and/or dedication is likely to be required in all growth areas in order to achieve appropriate service levels and distribution targets, as defined by the City's parkland classification system. Land will also be needed to accommodate the indoor recreation and library facilities recommended in this Plan.

In terms of parkland acquisition, the only legislative mechanism the City has is through parkland dedication in the development process; however, this is not generally sufficient to meet the full range of active parkland needs. As such, parkland dedication must be maximized and supplemented through acquisition or other arrangements.

Through the *Planning Act* and Vaughan's Official Plan, the City currently requires parkland dedication and/or cash-in-lieu as a condition of development or redevelopment. Parkland is conveyed at a rate of 2% for industrial or commercial and 5% for residential of the land proposed to be developed or redeveloped. Alternatively, parkland or cash-in-lieu may be required at a rate of up to 1 hectare per 300

dwelling units proposed; this alternative method generates more parkland at densities greater than 15 units per hectare.

As residential densities increase, the development industry in several communities has raised concerns over the application of the 1ha/300 units alternative method, indicating that it can place a significant burden on high rise developments. In some cases, the required parkland amount may be prohibitive to development (a density of 300 units per hectare requires 100% of the site be dedicated for parkland).

As a result, some municipalities are offering reduced parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu rates for medium and/or high density residential development, partly as a way to incentivize higher density development. Vaughan has achieved this by establishing a formula for a fixed unit rate to be applied to cash-in-lieu requirements for high density development (in 2012, the City reviewed its cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication for high density development and subsequently adopted a phased-in increase that continued to be based on a ratio of 1 hectare per 300 units). The main objective of a cash-in-lieu policy is to ensure that there are sufficient revenues collected to acquire the parklands necessary to meet City standards.

As identified earlier in this section, it is recommended that the City develop an urban parkland hierarchy and conveyance policies to address parkland dedication in higher density areas. Recognizing that intensification projects are likely to result in lower parkland ratios compared to more traditional greenfield developments, this framework should assist the City in securing meaningful park blocks within the development area in order to meet basic needs (e.g., neighbourhood level amenities such as playgrounds, courts, waterplay facilities, gathering spaces, etc.), while receiving the remainder of the dedication as cash-in lieu so that lands can be acquired elsewhere to address the balance of facility requirements generated by the development. This process should give consideration to the findings and recommendations of this Active Together Master Plan, including possible alternate funding streams to address the additional costs associated with urban park development.

It is important to note that the City now requires the conveyance of land (or cash-in-lieu) for park purposes in commercial and industrial areas, as per the provisions of the *Planning Act*. The provision of public parkland amenities to serve the City's employment lands is essential. These lands provide employees with places to meet, socialize, recreate, and exercise; employment areas also represent one of the last opportunities the City may have to develop larger District Parks, as is proposed in Blocks 35 and 59. In these instances, District Parks need not be co-located with community centres, but may contain lit sports fields and other uses that may otherwise have impacts on adjacent residential areas.

Vaughan's current ratio of active parkland is 1.87 hectares per 1,000 residents (including existing parks, as well as those to be developed in 2013), which is below the recommended City-wide provision target of 2.2ha/1000. Additional active parkland will be needed to meet community needs, both now and in the future. If the City were to rely on parkland dedication alone, this target may be unattainable in light of high land costs and the changing pattern of urban development. For this reason, the City will need to continue to employ a number of alternative acquisition methods to maintain an acceptable supply of parkland.

The following parkland acquisition tools are supported by Vaughan's Official Plan (Section 7.3.3.10):

- land purchases;
- the provisions of Section 37 of the *Planning Act* as set out in Section 10.1.2.9;
- land exchanges or swaps, especially where it may prevent private development on or adjacent to an open space that provides significant environmental benefits or is highly valued by the community;
- partnerships and/or joint provision of land; and,
- establishment of a non-profit Parks Foundation to promote parkland donation and conservation easements.

Section 37 of the *Planning Act* refers to “**bonusing**”, which allows the City to negotiate with developers to receive additional “public benefits” in exchange for an increase in height and/or density beyond current zoning regulations. In the context of this Plan, contributions could be secured toward the provision of and/or improvements to a community centre, library, parkland, or outdoor parks amenities that are on-site or in the general vicinity. As the agreement can be registered on title, the municipality has the power and authority to enforce the provisions of the agreement on successive owners.

To achieve the desired public benefits associated with “bonusing” and to facilitate timely and efficient discussions with developers, it is advantageous to determine local priorities and needs in advance of development applications. Public benefits should be sought when there is an identified need and when they can be achieved through the application of good planning principles.

Another option to consider in high growth areas is the provision of amenities that are traditionally outdoor features (such as soccer fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, etc.) inside buildings as part of mixed use developments. However, instead of these indoor spaces being private, they can be owned or leased by the City (possibly through a condominium agreement or public-private partnership) and, in this way, can be open to the general public. Where land is too scarce, this concept replaces outdoor parkland (but ideally not all outdoor space) with a comparable amenity indoors, where it can utilize floor space within a multi-level development (not unlike strata parks). For this model to be successful, a strong legal agreement is required (addressing ownership, maintenance, etc.) and the space must be accessible (both real and perceived) to the general public.

A Parkland Acquisition Strategy has been proposed to identify and prioritize parkland and open space acquisition options across the City. It is anticipated that this process will consider many of the alternatives outlined above, as well as land banking to take advantage of lower land values and to prepare for future requirements. Given the legislative challenges of assembling meaningful park blocks, all opportunities to expand and strengthen Vaughan's park system should be explored and maximized.

Lastly, “open space” lands (which are not captured in the active parkland provision) are largely a function of the local physical environment (e.g., valley lands, woodlots, waterways and area of environmental or geological significance). It is recommended that the City obtain new open spaces where the opportunity presents itself, but not as part of the required parkland dedication.

Active Parkland Needs and Acquisition	Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Acquire active parkland at the maximum applicable rate as permitted by the <i>Planning Act</i> and the City's implementing documents, with the goal of maintaining a City-wide supply of <b>2.2 hectares of active parkland</b> per 1000 residents. The City may utilize different community-specific targets that are representative of local supply and demand factors.</li><li>5. If deemed necessary by the City, developers may be required to provide <b>additional parks and recreational amenities in areas of intensification</b> (or indoor space in lieu of parkland), in addition to the prescribed parkland dedication and/or cash-in-lieu. This may be achieved by area-specific subdivision / condominium agreements or other implementing mechanisms, such as bonusing as per Section 37 of the <i>Planning Act</i>.</li><li>6. Continue to require parkland conveyance within <b>employment areas</b> in order to create public spaces that attract and serve businesses and their employees.</li><li>7. Do not accept <b>undevelopable Open Space lands</b> (e.g., stormwater management ponds, woodlots, valley lands, floodplains, hazard lands, etc.) as part of the parkland dedication requirement (i.e., no credit should be applied). Where appropriate, the City may assume these lands through voluntary dedication or easement. Trails and connections may be dedicated through 51(25)(b) of the <i>Planning Act</i>.</li><li>8. Develop a <b>Parkland Acquisition Strategy</b> to identify alternative parkland provision mechanisms and potential priority properties for acquisition, with a focus on under-served areas and larger district and regional park types.</li></ol>	

## 7.5 Park Renewal and Redevelopment

Compared to many other communities, Vaughan's parks system is quite modern. Many of its larger parks were built in the 1990s and 2000s to address the needs of a rapidly growing city. The typical lifespan for many parks and park components is approximately 30 years, although this can vary from site to site as it is dependent upon many factors. Nevertheless, there is a growing need to reinvest in some of the City's existing parks, particularly those near areas of residential intensification as new development brings with it a new wave of park users and demands. The impetus for park redevelopment can also be driven by many factors, including changes in leisure preferences, socio-demographic composition, and public support. To ensure that the park system remains relevant and that existing parks are properly aligned with changing community needs, opportunities for parkland renewal must be examined.

Renewal can take many forms, but should generally reflect the needs of the area the park is intended to serve, and should seek to modernize park designs and components such that they are able to withstand substantial use for many more years to come. This may range from simple component replacement, to expansion, to upgrades, to a complete redesign and redevelopment. Examples could include converting under-utilized assets (e.g., ball diamonds) to in-demand uses such as skate zones, or adding lighting to a sports field to extend usage, or re-imagining an older neighbourhood park as a village green for gatherings and passive recreation.

In order to determine needs and priorities associated with the retrofit and redesign of older municipal parks, a comprehensive study should be undertaken that examines the physical condition of parks, usage patterns, demographic factors, public input, design trends and practices, maintenance and management functions, financing options, etc.

In areas of intensification, the City should consider improving the quality of facilities within the area and developing linkages to other public facilities within a reasonable geographic area. In locations where land is limited, existing parks and facilities may need to be substantially refurbished to accommodate the more intense utilization of under-designed amenities. Where possible, lifecycle repairs and replacements should be coordinated so as to refurbish entire parks at one time, rather than taking a piecemeal approach over time.

As is the case in most municipalities, the lack of dedicated funding for park renewal is an impediment in Vaughan. Development Charges can be used to address growth-related shares, but are not eligible for repairs or replacements, leaving municipal tax funds as the major source of funding. Some municipalities use cash-in-lieu to assist in capital improvements required to accommodate intensification. Section 42(15) of the *Planning Act* states that, in addition to the acquisition of parkland, cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication can be used for “*the erection, improvement or repair of buildings and the acquisition of machinery for park or other public recreational purposes.*”

The potential to use cash-in-lieu for park improvements and/or renewal in Vaughan’s intensification areas should be supported in principle. In fact, City of Vaughan Council directed that staff review this matter and develop a program that would consider that an appropriate percentage of the funds collected be used to retrofit parkland in the vicinity of the residential development providing the funds. Such a program should ensure that some of the funds will be utilized in the immediate vicinity directly for the benefit of the residents in the high density areas.

Despite these proactive steps, it is likely that existing funding will be insufficient to provide for both parkland acquisition and parkland retrofitting. The City should also remain open to alternative partnerships that could assist in funding park development / redevelopment projects. The City is currently considering this option for the future North Maple Regional Park.

Park Renewal and Redevelopment	<i>Recommendations</i>
	<p>9. Where appropriate, use cash-in-lieu to offset the total cost of <b>renewing and revitalizing existing parks</b> intended to serve areas of residential intensification.</p> <p>10. Promote appropriate <b>community and public-private partnerships</b> in the municipal parks system in order to leverage additional resources, expedite development, and improve accessibility. Partnerships and creative approaches for park maintenance in areas of higher density may be required (e.g., adopt-a-park).</p>

## **7.6 Parkland Design Considerations**

Through park design, a number of amenities are provided at municipal parks that enhance the user experience and allow the parks to be used for different functions. In general, the City's population, like nearly all communities across Ontario and beyond, is becoming older, less mobile, and more ethnically diverse. Parks will remain prominent civic destinations and hubs, but many will require additional amenities to accommodate an evolving citizenry. This may include the need for more washrooms, benches, shade structures, picnic pavilions, open space for pick-up sports, outdoor fitness equipment, community gardens, hard surface pathways, recycling bins, drinking fountains, signage, etc. In addition, time-pressed individuals of all ages and families are looking for areas where they can enjoy park uses at their own convenience. As such, a greater emphasis should be placed on providing more informal space in new parks in order to promote unstructured activities.

Regarding more active use parks, wherever possible, the City should cluster the same type of playing fields together to increase a sense of form and function. Such parks should also include contain washrooms, electrical outlets, benches and safe, pedestrian-friendly pathways, etc. Washrooms should generally be provided at parks where major sporting facilities (e.g., soccer fields, ball diamonds) are located and along key destinations in the trails system.

Although demand is high for organized spaces such as permitted sports fields, a greater emphasis should also be placed on providing more informal space in new parks in order to promote unstructured and unorganized activities, as well as emerging interests. For example, picnicking has been observed to be a popular endeavour in communities with high levels of multiculturalism, a trend that is being seen in Vaughan. The design of active and passive parks should also incorporate elements that cater to individual physical activity and wellness, such as outdoor fitness stations and reading gardens. Incorporation of public art into public and private spaces is also encouraged.

New and replacement parks and trails infrastructure should continue to be designed and constructed on the basis of a "low maintenance" philosophy and approach. Components such as light fixtures, site furnishings, and signage should generally be selected on the basis of durability and replacement part availability to support ease of maintenance and repair. It would also be appropriate to identify a simple hierarchy of site features (e.g., basic, contemporary, heritage, etc.) to achieve a consistent image and cost efficiencies. Any use of non-standard materials and equipment (such as might occur in "special" parks) is to be based on a full understanding and justification of the operational ramifications and cost increases that will accrue to the relevant municipal department.

Lastly, Section 7.2.1.4 of Vaughan's Official Plan encourages the development of joint and/or shared community facilities, such as schools shared with public parks. This objective remains responsive to community needs and the City should continue to work with local school boards to develop and facilitate access to facilities and parks, with consideration to potential risks and lessons learned from past projects.

**Parkland Design Considerations**

***Recommendations***

11. In **designing parks**, continue to:
  - incorporate spaces and amenities encouraging physical activity, wellness, and informal use opportunities;
  - consider the needs of a diverse and aging population through the provision of washrooms, seating, shade, drinking fountains, pathways, and picnic areas;
  - follow accessibility legislation and guidelines to accommodate persons with disabilities;
  - apply CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles;
  - promote designs that encourage sustainable maintenance practices;
  - incorporate native and drought resistant vegetative features;
  - utilize materials that are robust, durable, and mindful of future maintenance requirements;
  - seek innovative and engaging initiatives that encourage environmental stewardship (e.g., recycling bins);
  - encourage public art; and
  - encourage active transportation connections and a linked open space system.
  
12. Continue to encourage the development of **joint and/or shared community sites**, such as schools, community centres, libraries, and parks.