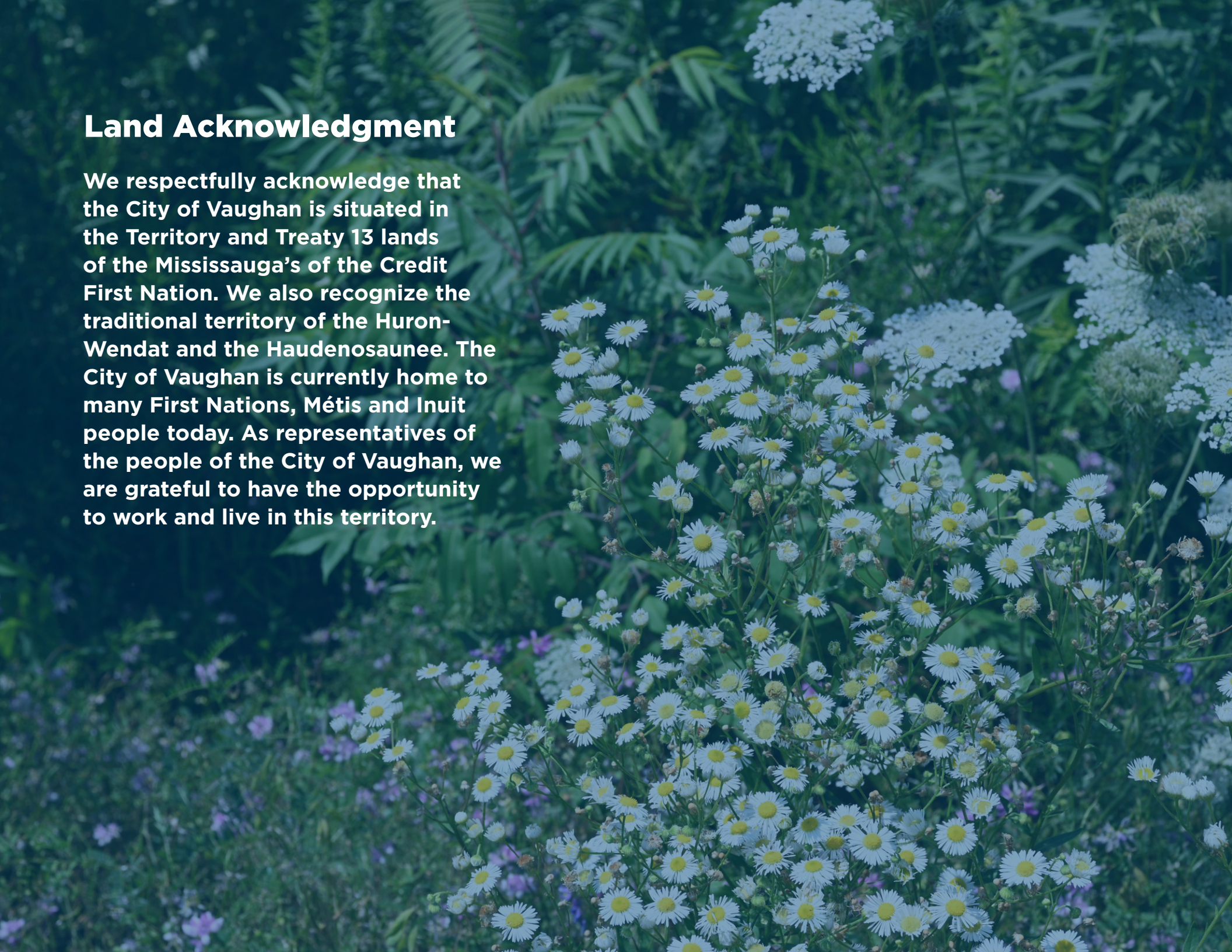


Vaughan Greenspace Strategic Plan

May 2025

Land Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Vaughan is situated in the Territory and Treaty 13 lands of the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The City of Vaughan is currently home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people today. As representatives of the people of the City of Vaughan, we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and live in this territory.



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Project Team Acknowledgement

The development of the Greenspace Strategic Plan was achieved through the joint collaboration of the City's project management team, officials and staff with external technical professionals and the input of Vaughan's residents and interested parties. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and ideas to this project.

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A photograph of a paved walking path in a park. On the right, a large, mature weeping willow tree with long, drooping green branches dominates the upper half of the frame. The path curves to the left in the distance, bordered by a metal railing. The background is filled with lush green trees under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

“I love being outside breathing fresh air, feeling the sun. It always makes me feel peaceful no matter what overwhelms me. It is an easy escape away from technology, school and general expectations.”

- Engagement Respondent

Executive Summary

The City of Vaughan started as multiple small villages, eventually large swaths of suburban development followed and today Vaughan is growing through a combination of new greenfield development and high-density intensification areas. Greenspace needs, as a result have changed.

Vaughan today has a well-developed greenspace system that is designed to provide residents with passive and active recreation opportunities, protect natural habitats and promote environmental sustainability. The greenspace system includes a variety of parks, natural areas, trails and amenities that contribute to the quality of life of residents in the city.

City parks and greenspaces are essential to our health and well-being, to promote healthier lifestyles, encourage physical activity through a variety of outdoor facilities, support stress reduction and social interaction. Parks and greenspaces also act as tools for ecology by improving climate resiliency and helping preserve important natural landscapes and wildlife habitats within urban settings.

Vaughan is anticipated to grow to 575,900 people by 2051 with most of the growth to be accommodated in Strategic Growth Areas. In the City's Strategic Growth Areas, the delivery of greenspaces and more specifically parks will need to adapt to a higher density built form, changing

demographics and recreational needs and enhance the city's resiliency to climate change.

The Greenspace Strategic Plan (GSP) provides strategies and recommendations to guide future planning, design, implementation and enhancement of parks and greenspaces, to meet the needs of a growing population and preserve equitable access over the next 30 years.

Vision and Goals

The vision statement was informed by extensive engagement with Vaughan residents, City staff, interested parties, community groups, and existing City policies and plans:

Our greenspaces are an essential asset to the City that supports our economic prosperity, the celebration of culture, and the physical and mental health and well-being of our residents. We are responsible for our greenspace system to provide ecological habitats, support climate and function as green infrastructure.

The GSP is guided by eight goals, each goal guides the implementation of the GSP to support the vision. The eight goals are under the following headings:

- » Greenspace Expansion
- » Equitable Access

- » Diverse Greenspace Experiences
- » Celebrate Culture
- » Increase Tree Canopy
- » Adaptable Spaces
- » Climate Resilience
- » Sustainable Funding

Circuit 51

To connect the city's greenspace system to the natural heritage network, Circuit 51 was developed as a strategy of the Greenspace Strategic Plan. The pattern of the greenspace system in Vaughan can be likened to circuitry. Circuit 51 illustrates a conceptual foundation for the creation of new parks and connections to complete and support the city's green and blue circuitry to 2051. Vaughan's complex natural heritage network and greenspace system presents a powerful analogy for a system that can grow from the circuitry of green infrastructure and community amenities.

Framework and Implementation

The GSP sets out parkland targets drawing on technical analysis, best practices, community input, and lessons from past plans. These targets are aspirational yet grounded in practical considerations. The parkland targets are listed below:

- » Maintain a parkland target of 2.0 hectares per 1000 people in the short term and achieve a city-wide target of 1.6 hectares of parkland per 1000 people by the year 2051.
- » Adopt a Strategic Growth Area parkland service target for the VMC and Primary Centres of 0.3 hectares per 1000 people.
- » Adopt a greenspace service target to ensure all residents living in an Urban Area are within a 500 metre walk of parkland by 2051.
- » Maintain a parkland service target that all residents are within 2.5 kilometres of a District Park.

The Greenspace Strategic Plan will be implemented through 29 strategic actions called out in Chapter 8 that will focus on:

- » methods to acquire additional parkland
- » improving the quality and availability of City greenspace data to help make informed decisions
- » amendments to existing policies, the creation of new policies and the inclusion of policies in the Vaughan Official Plan 2025. These policy actions relate to parkland acquisition, dedication, planning and construction, and funding of greenspaces
- » enhancements to internal processes

and collaboration, and adjustments to operations and maintenance in alignment with the vision of the GSP

- » strengthening existing relationships with agencies and finding new partners to work together with to build upon Vaughan's greenspace system

Glossary

Active Recreation: sports activities and other activities requiring specialized facilities, such as playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, baseball, soccer, cricket, racquet sports, aquatics, basketball and multi-use courts, volleyball, ice skating, skateboarding, off-leash dog areas, bocce, hockey, and similar uses.

Biophilic Design: is an approach that connects people with nature through purposeful design considerations in buildings and in communities.

Climate Resiliency: the ability to prepare for, adapt and cope with the impacts of climate change.

Encumbrance: is an impediment that would hinder the use of land for the intended use of parkland and amenities.

Greenspace: greenspace indicates all types of open space and parks that the City of Vaughan owns. When referencing a greenspace system, other lands owned by a public body may be included as indicated. This includes active and passive parks and Natural Heritage Networks such as tableland, woodland, valley lands, wetlands, and other open space areas such as cemeteries, stormwater management infrastructure, and City-owned golf courses.

Green and Blue Infrastructure (as referenced in Circuit 51): A connected network of greenspaces and water systems including the Humber and Don River watersheds that enhances biodiversity and sustainability through ecological integration.

Green Infrastructure: natural and humanmade elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes. Green infrastructure can include components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, street trees, urban forests, natural channels, permeable surfaces, and green roofs.

Natural Heritage System: means a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of native species, and ecosystems. These systems can include natural heritage features and areas, federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue. The Province has a recommended approach for identifying natural heritage systems,

but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used.

Open Space: open space refers to greenspace areas that are not parkland and include natural areas, wetlands, woodlands and other areas that may be protected for environmental reasons.

Parkland: parkland refers to all active and passive parks, owned, leased or managed by the City whose primary purpose is to provide recreational activity. Most parkland is acquired through the development application process through dedication or payment-in-lieu. Parkland typically consists of tableland suitable for developing or installing built recreational or civic amenities (such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts, gardens, etc.) that may be used for organized and unorganized activities. However, these parks may also incorporate natural features. Excluded from this definition are open space lands.

Passive Recreation: are activities characterized by low-intensity outdoor pastimes, using unstructured social and recreation facilities such as seating areas, picnic areas, allotment/community

gardens, outdoor classrooms and amphitheatres, and similar uses.

Privately Owned Public Spaces: open space that is privately owned and maintained but is a publicly accessible space complementing public parks or offering other public programming purposes secured by an easement with the City.

Strata Park: a park with horizontal delineation of legal ownership between public and private uses as described in the Condominium Act, 1998, SO 1998, c19, for example, a public park located on top of privately owned parking structure.

Strategic Growth Areas: areas identified on Schedule 1A as Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC), Primary Centres, Protected Major Transit Station Areas, Local Centres, Regional Intensification Corridors, Regional Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas, Primary Intensification Corridors and Primary Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas.

Urban Heat Island Effect: heat islands occur when a developed/urban area experiences higher temperatures due to closely packed buildings and paved surfaces trapping heat more than natural and rural areas.

Introduction

The City of Vaughan is currently undergoing a bold transformation from traditional suburban development style to a walkable, high density, and transit-oriented urban area. As Vaughan's population grows, so too will the demand for parks and greenspace. The following section provides a snapshot of Vaughan today, and some of the unique challenges and opportunities that comes with ensuring ample parks and greenspaces are provided for the rapidly growing population.

Purpose of the GSP

Vaughan's greenspace network is comprised of City-owned parkland, open space, trails, greenways, and natural areas. The greenspace network is essential to improving local amenities that are necessary for a high quality of life. Rising land costs, shifting development patterns towards increased intensification, increasing population densities, changing demographics and competing demands on the greenspace system require that the planning of our communities takes these factors into account.

At the same time, the City must become more resilient to climate change to protect the health of its community. This requires not only concerted action, but thinking differently about the function and role of our parks and natural areas in the context of a changing climate.

The Greenspace Strategic Plan (GSP) will serve as a roadmap to help guide decisions surrounding the acquisition, provision, and maintenance of Vaughan's greenspace network for the next 30 years.

Development of the GSP is based upon thorough best practice review, evidence-based research, and comprehensive stakeholder consultation. The GSP was informed by a provincial and city-wide policy framework. Importantly the GSP considers provincial legislative changes and builds on the vision and direction established by city-wide plans to provide a diversity of parks and open space and contribute to a high quality of life for residents.

The recommendations and guidelines in the Plan are rooted in this systematic approach that helped identify and evaluate existing park assets as well as future priorities.

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, the City of Vaughan is committed to planning responsibly and providing a clear vision and direction for the long-term growth and development of the city. This commitment involves ensuring reliable infrastructure, fostering a robust economy, and building new and resilient communities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

Status Quo Urbanization

Transformation of the City

Before the City of Vaughan was created, it was made up of towns and villages, including Maple, Concord, Kleinburg, Thornhill and Woodbridge. By 1991, these towns and villages merged to create the City of Vaughan as we know it today and became one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, reaching a population of over 320,000 in 2021. Vaughan primarily developed under a low density housing style which has led to urban sprawl, environmental impacts, and

traffic congestion. Figure 1 illustrates the traditional suburban development pattern that has occurred in Vaughan.

As more people move to Vaughan, the City is faced with increased demand on its housing and infrastructure. However, Vaughan has committed to foster the development of transit supportive and complete communities that responds to the challenges of a growing city. Today, the City is currently undergoing a bold transformation from a traditional suburban

development style to a walkable, high density, and transit-oriented urban area, with a growing metropolitan core.

Supporting the development of a complete community through a range of housing, retail and employment options, community amenities and facilities, and mixed use development while protecting agriculture, water resources and greenspaces ensures a balanced approach to growth.



Figure 1: A traditional subdivision in Vaughan. Source: Blair Gordon Main/Shutterstock.com

The Value of Parks and Greenspace

Greenspaces are indispensable to a livable, vibrant, and great city. They are invaluable assets that offer a range of benefits; some are more tangible, such as promoting physical health, social and mental well-being, and environmental benefits. Other benefits are not easily quantifiable, such as their economic, educational, or aesthetic value. Together, these factors help contribute to the overall 'image', appeal, and enjoyment of a city. Though not exhaustive, the following highlights the values and benefits of parks and greenspace.

What are the benefits of greenspace in our cities?

Support Biodiversity

Prioritizing biodiversity in parks not only addresses environmental sustainability but also enhances the overall quality of life for urban residents, offering both ecological and social benefits.

Social Engagement

Parks are important gathering places that promote social interaction that enable people to see and be in the presence of others. As such, they are foundational for fostering sense of place and community and creating social resilience.

Habitat + Migration

By integrating green spaces, wildlife corridors, and natural buffers into open space planning, cities can create a more resilient urban ecosystem that values both human and animal communities.



Healthier Communities

Access to high-quality parks can greatly improve overall health and wellbeing. Increased access to parks not only help encourage physical activity but reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Climate Change Resiliency

Parks do, and will continue to play a key role in providing climate resilience through flood protection, carbon storage and by helping reduce the urban heat island effect.

Supporting Local Economies

Parks can contribute to the overall desirability of cities. Some studies have shown that its benefits can be quantified through increased property values of the surrounding neighbourhood as well as overall tourism revenue.

Resilient Parks – Resilient Cities

With the rise in global temperature, Ontario can expect more frequent and extreme weather events, including prolonged heat waves. The number of days with extreme heat is expected to quadruple by the 2080s (OPCCIA, 2023). More so than ever, the planning and design of parks is recognized as a primary strategy for making cities more resilient to the effects of climate change. For example, increasing cities' tree canopy coverage has been shown to reduce urban temperatures by up to 2.9 degrees Celsius (WEF, 2023), which highlights the importance of providing greenspace in our cities to ensure safe and comfortable environments. Parks can also act as cooling stations during heat waves and provide stormwater infiltration during heavy rain events. Vaughan is committed to improving its resiliency through various actions and initiatives such as the Mayor's Monarch Pledge to protect pollinator habitat, setting a target of 25% tree canopy cover through the Urban Forest Management Plan and incorporating climate resiliency into the design of greenspaces.

Healthy Parks – Healthy People

The presence and access to greenspace can greatly improve one's physical, mental and social health and wellbeing, including reducing health risk factors such as low physical activity related to chronic diseases (Toronto Public Health, 2015). Nine out of ten Canadian children do not meet the recommended level of physical activity (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2017). However, children who have a park playground within one kilometre of their home were five times more likely to have healthy weights (Toronto Public Health, 2015). Low physical activity (and other risk factors) can be reduced with increased presence and access to greenspace (Toronto Public Health, 2015). In addition, parks can facilitate and improve well-being by reducing stress, promoting relaxation (James, Banay, & Hart, 2015), and social cohesion (Sandifer, Sutton-Grier, Ward, 2015).

Social Life of Parks and Greenspaces

While the social and health benefits of parks have been well known, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for access to high-quality parks and open spaces. The number of people reporting an increase in high levels of anxiety had quadrupled at the start of the lockdowns (National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, 2022). During the pandemic, parks provided respite from home confinement, opportunities



Source: David Parker, Landezine



Source: Town of Shelburne

for social interaction, and community connection, which underscores parks' vital role in supporting mental health, social resilience, and community well-being. Public spaces serve as important venues for socialization, fostering casual encounters and planned gatherings that strengthen social ties and build community networks. In one study, 40% of people reported social isolation as having the greatest impact on their mental health (National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, 2022). As noted in the UN World Cities Report (2022), improving physical infrastructure and residents' proximity to public spaces at the neighbourhood scale is one of the most successful strategies to create social resilience.

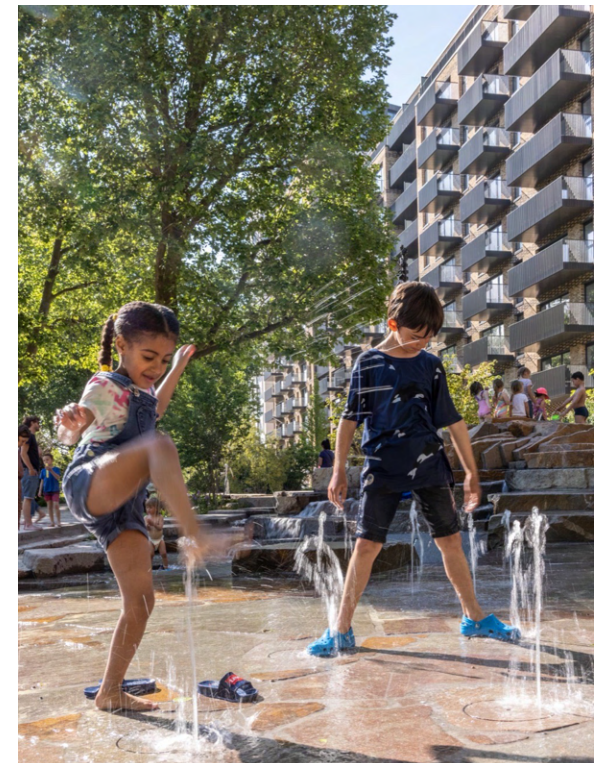
A Park's Worth

Great parks attract and draw people in. They contribute to the desirability of a city and its neighbourhoods, attracting residents, visitors and businesses. Though less understood than other 'land uses' (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial land, etc.,) the economic value of parks and greenspaces is increasingly being recognized and has been found to be far-reaching.

The recent and novel Economic Value of Health Benefits Associated with Urban Park Investment study from the University of Waterloo in 2023 analyzed the potential economic value of health benefits attributed to the newly built Quaker Foods City Square Park in Peterborough, ON. The study estimated the park would generate \$133,000 in annual savings through increased physical activity, enhanced mental health and improved air quality. When considering increased life satisfaction for the residents in the catchment area of the park, the totally yearly benefit equals an income increase of \$694 per resident totaling more than \$4,000,000.¹

Another example comes from a 2023 study in Copenhagen, Denmark, which examined the economic benefits of newly developed urban greenspaces. The research estimated that the addition of green areas resulted in \$1.2 million in annual savings due to reduced healthcare costs, improvements in mental health, and increased physical activity among residents. The study also highlighted that the presence of these green spaces enhanced property values, contributing an additional \$10 million annually to the local economy.

¹ Wilson, J., & Xiao, X. (2023). The Economic Value of Health Benefits Associated with Urban Park Investment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(6), 4815. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20064815>



Source: Gillespies, The Park at Elephant Park

The Future of Vaughan's Greenspace

What is the Greenspace Strategic Plan?

The GSP is a comprehensive document that:

- » Identifies current and projected greenspace gaps;
- » Establishes priorities for improving and expanding the greenspace system;
- » Creates a framework for greenspace levels of service;
- » Proposes decision-making guidelines for securing new greenspaces.

The GSP responds to Vaughan's population growth, evolving development patterns, and Provincial legislation changes by adopting a comprehensive perspective of Vaughan's greenspace system.

The GSP will inform the City, partners, and the development community on where greenspace is needed in the city by identifying priority acquisition areas. The City will acquire land for future parks over time; these new parks will be complemented by the city's broader open space network including natural areas, greenways, and woodlands.

What makes up "greenspace"?

Greenspace

Refers to all active and passive publicly-owned parks and open spaces, this includes City-owned parks and open spaces, natural areas owned by other public bodies such as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and privately-owned public spaces (POPS).

Parkland

City-owned land that is formally designated as a park and is accessible to the public. Examples include Giovanni Caboto Park, Marita Payne Park, and North Maple Regional Park.

Open space

Natural areas that are not dedicated as parkland under sections 42 and 51.1 of the *Planning Act*, but may be used for active and passive recreation. These include woodlands, stormwater ponds, and utility corridors, for example.

Purpose of the Plan



Establish Priorities

The GSP addresses the impacts of growth and increasing demand for new parkland. Based on community input and a thorough understanding of where the service gaps are today, the GSP identifies priorities and design parameters to consider for park expansion and development.



Direct Investment

Significant funds will be needed to implement the recommendations in this Plan, both in one-time capital funding and annual operating costs. The Plan outlines greenspace priorities, its financial considerations, and other available tools to implement the policy directions. The delivery of greenspace will be realized through a combination of private development, civic investment, and strategic partnerships.



Identify Strategic Partnerships

Rising land costs and an increasing population require innovative ways to leverage strategic partnerships. The GSP outlines opportunities to collaborate with community organizations, local Business Improvement Associations (BIAs), not for profits, school districts, and utility agencies to utilize existing infrastructure and resources, and foster stewardship and maintenance of greenspace throughout the city.



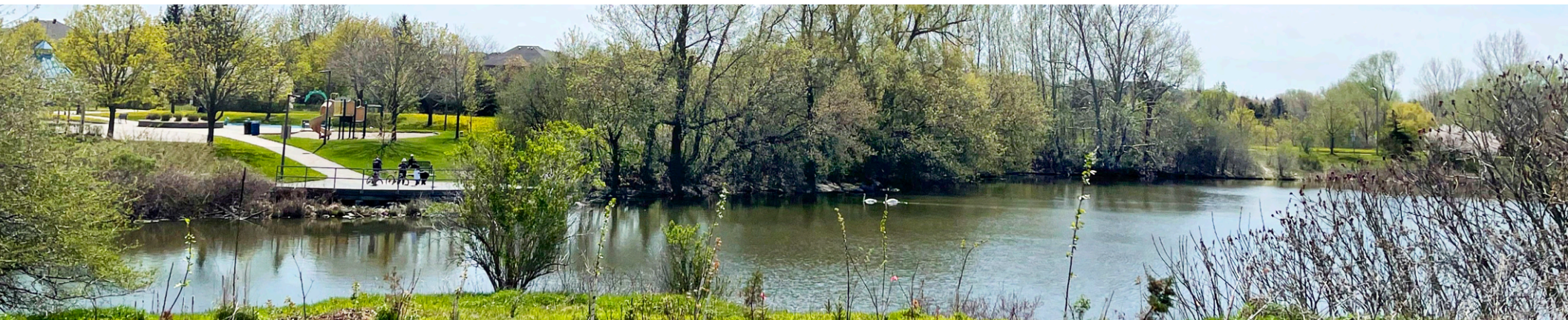
Provide Tools for Strategic Growth Areas

The City of Vaughan has identified, through the Vaughan Official Plan 2025, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC), Primary Centres, Regional Intensification Corridors, Local Centres, and Primary Intensification Corridors to be the focus for intensification of population and job growth. The GSP will provide recommendations on how to acquire lands in these areas to provide more greenspace for a growing population.

Vision

The GSP vision establishes long term direction for Vaughan and describes the desired future state of the City's parks and greenspaces. Developed through extensive engagement with Vaughan residents, City staff, stakeholders and community groups, the vision statement highlights the City's commitment to celebrating greenspaces as valued community and ecological assets:

Our greenspaces are an essential asset to the City that supports our economic prosperity, the celebration of culture, and the physical and mental health and well-being of our residents. We are responsible for our greenspace system to provide ecological habitats, support climate and function as green infrastructure.



Goals

Building on the vision, the GSP is guided by eight goals. Each goal guides the implementation of the GSP to support the realization of the vision. Achieving the goals of this Plan will also help achieve underlying outcomes such as improved physical health and mental well-being, environmental conservation and protection, and economic development to name a few examples. In part, the implementation of the GSP will occur through the completion of strategic actions outlined in Chapter 8.



Greenspace Expansion

Greenspace is acquired to meet the needs of a growing population.



Equitable Access

Greenspaces are distributed based on identified community needs.



Diverse Greenspace Experiences

Create a variety of park types, amenities, and recreational opportunities that cater to the diverse community needs and interests.



Celebrate Culture

Represent Vaughan's multi-cultural identity through its greenspaces.



Increased Tree Canopy

Greenspaces take a primary role in achieving Vaughan's tree canopy goals.



Adaptable Spaces

The function of parks and the amenities offered respond to the changing needs of the community.



Climate Resilience

Vaughan's greenspaces help contribute to our climate goals.



Sustainable Funding

The acquisition, development, maintenance, and lifecycle needs are funded to meet the needs of residents.

Circuit 51 Concept

The Humber and Don Rivers in Vaughan create a natural north-south greenspace corridor on the east and west sides of the city. As intensification occurs along corridors and in the centre of Vaughan, it will be important to connect the intensification areas with natural greenspace corridors and parks, to create a more interconnected greenspace network by 2051.

Vaughan's existing network of natural areas presents a compelling similarity to circuitry, see Figure 2, which highlights the importance of creating a co-dependent and interconnected greenspace system.

As the City grows, so should the connections of its greenspace system. This includes differently scaled and designed greenspaces to facilitate the diverse needs of an ever-changing population.

Vaughan's complex natural heritage network and greenspace system presents a powerful analogy for a system that can grow from the circuitry of green infrastructure and community amenities.

Circuit 51 illustrates a conceptual foundation for how the GSP will address the greenspace objectives of the City at a time of unprecedented growth.

This concept will be discussed further in Chapter 5 to explore how Vaughan's circuitry of natural areas and greenspaces can be further connected.



Figure 2: Circuit 51 | Green + Blue Network Concept Diagram

Home is where the park is



Summers in Vaughan
Winters in Mexico



Dance me
to the
flowers



Furry feathers
Silent fliers

Hover, drink
Hover, drink



Insect eating dragon

Spring
carpet
majesty

VAUGHAN vaughan.ca/NMRP

“Home is where the park is”



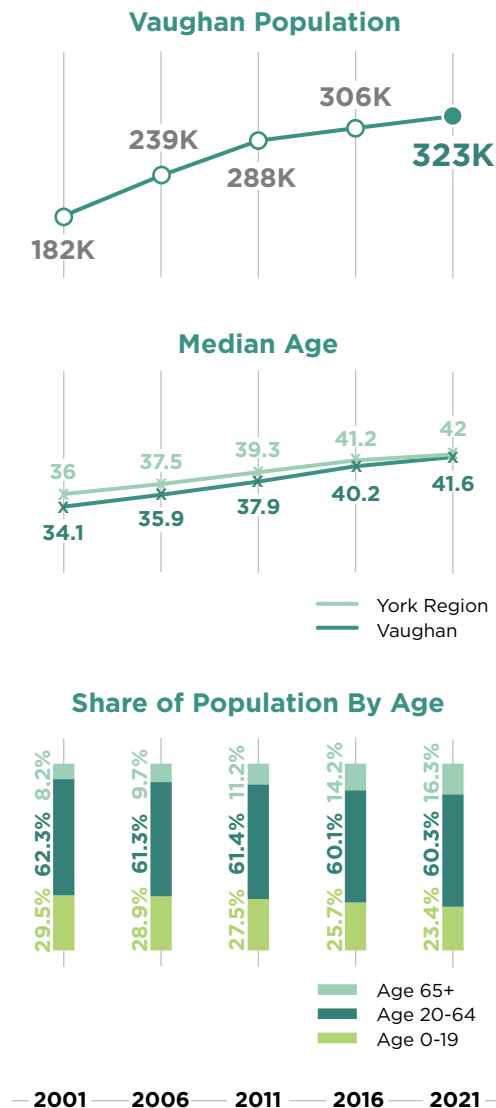
Chapter 1

Background – Setting the Stage

Vaughan's population is growing rapidly. Previously comprised of a collection of separate agricultural-serving villages, Vaughan has become a significant part of Canada's largest metropolitan region. By 2051, an additional 235,500 people are anticipated to call Vaughan home, bringing the total population to a minimum of 575,900. This section provides background and context of Vaughan and its existing parkland system.

1.1 Vaughan Today

With an enumerated population of 323,103 in 2021, Vaughan grew nearly 5.5% from 2016, welcoming approximately 280 new residents each month. Figure 3 provides a snapshot of Vaughan's 2021 demographics and the population and age trend of the city over the past five Canadian census. Vaughan's population continues to trend upward in median age, requiring greater consideration on the greenspace needs of seniors. Vaughan's population also continues to become more diverse with approximately 40% of the population identified as a visible minority, illustrated on the right side of Figure 3.



Visible Minority Population in 2021 Percent of Total Population

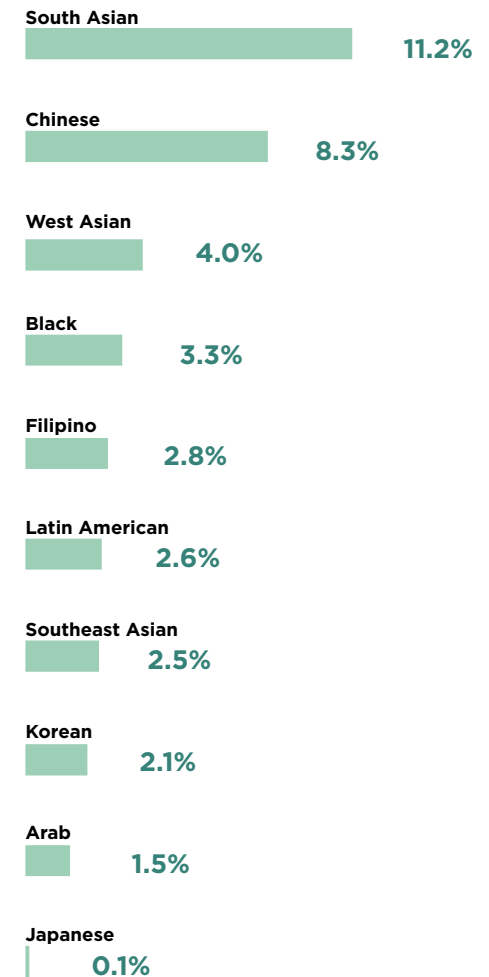


Figure 3: Snapshot of Vaughan's 2021 demographics.

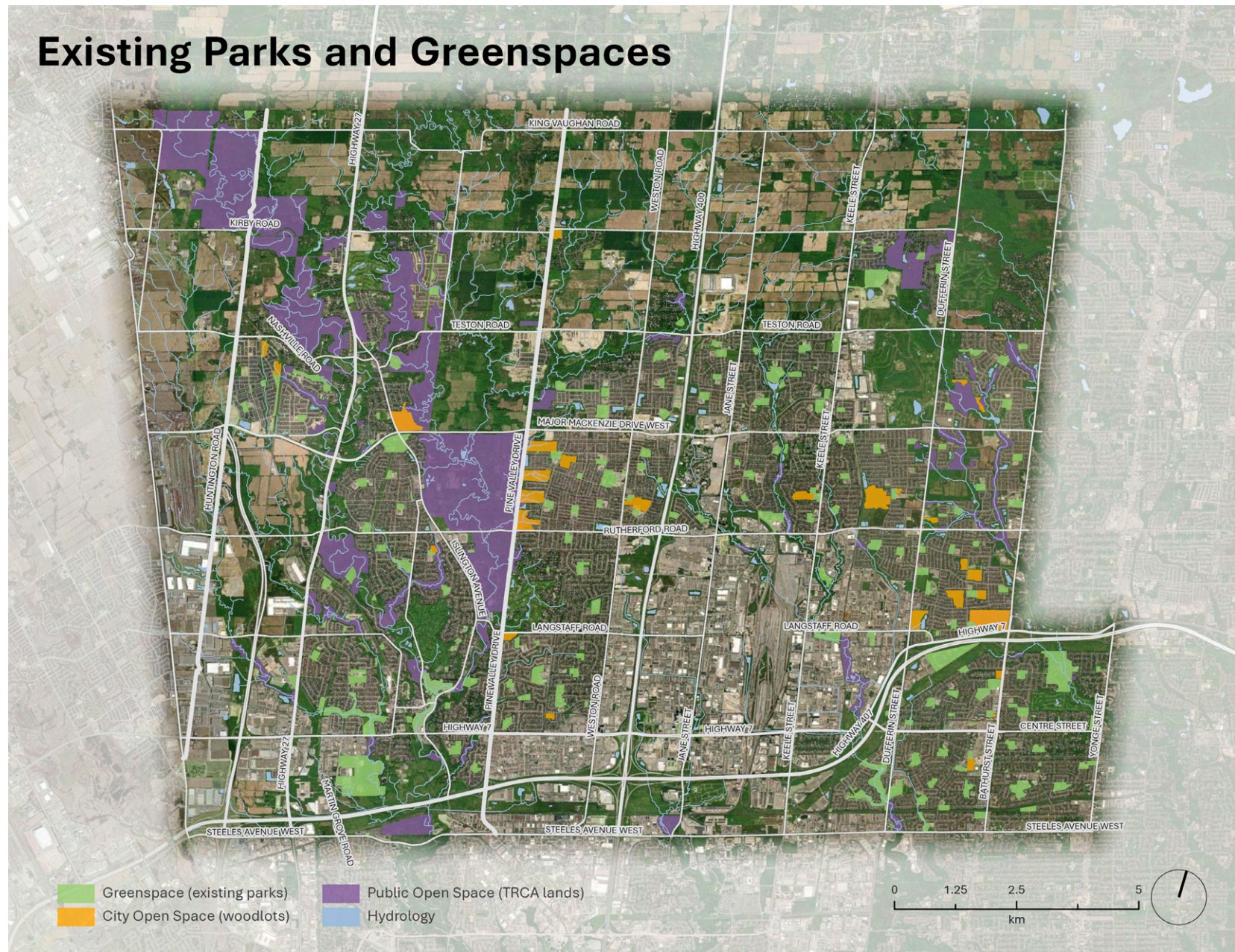


Figure 4: Existing public parks and greenspaces in the city.

1.2 Existing Parks and Greenspace

Vaughan's greenspace network is comprised of City-owned parks and open spaces, which support passive and active recreation. The greenspace network also includes private open spaces, trails, woodlands and natural heritage areas. The following section highlights some of Vaughan's core greenspace assets.

Natural Heritage

From an ecological perspective, greenspaces are incredibly valuable assets. They provide opportunities for people to connect with nature, foster environmental learning, and support responsible stewardship of our natural assets. They also provide habitat for a range of species, playing an essential role in supporting biodiversity within the city.

Further, greenspaces contain a variety of forested stands and other native vegetation, as well as a host of planted and maintained species. These vegetated areas provide permeable ground cover, helping to capture and absorb stormwater and reducing the potential for flooding. Plant life in greenspaces can also filter air and water pollution, sequester carbon, and mitigate the impacts of the urban heat island effect. Greenspaces are an essential component of the City's green infrastructure. In alignment with the Greenspace Strategic Plan, greenspaces have the potential to reduce significant amounts of energy and water treatment costs by naturally providing these functions while also supporting flood mitigation efforts.

Flanked by the Humber River along the west and Don River to the east, Vaughan contains a significant number of valley systems that are closely linked to the character of the city. In addition to its river valleys, Vaughan remains closely tied to its protected and natural heritage network including the Oak Ridges Moraine where many of Vaughan's critical wetlands are located.

Humber River and Don River

Spanning 903 square kilometres, the Humber River watershed's forests, meadows, farmlands, wetlands, rivers and creeks are home to a diverse range of aquatic and terrestrial habitat communities and plant species. The Don River covers approximately 360 square kilometres including portions of the City of Toronto, City of Vaughan, City of Markham, and City of Richmond Hill. At 38 kilometres in length, two principal tributaries flow south through the Cities of Vaughan, Markham, and Richmond Hill, eventually draining into Lake Ontario.

Conservation Areas

TRCA plays an important role as an environmental steward and major landowner, providing extensive public access to natural spaces across the Greater Toronto Area. TRCA manages large tracts of conservation land along with numerous regional and local trail networks.

A local favourite identified during Phase 1 engagement, the Kortright Centre for Conservation includes an extensive trail network, allowing nearly 100,000 annual visitors to stroll through 325 hectares of pristine woodlands. Opened year-round, the centre also offers a wide-range of environmental educational programs. Boyd Conservation Area is a popular gathering spot for families, social gatherings, picnics and celebrations. The area also includes network of hiking and cycling trails that wind through the Humber River valley.

TRCA's management of these areas conserves valuable ecosystems and fosters public engagement with nature through recreation and education.

Parkland

In Vaughan, residents currently have access to 635 hectares of parkland provided in a variety of forms from Public Squares to Regional Parks. The City owns or controls another 110 hectares of parkland that has yet to be developed. Parks in the city provide access to both passive and active recreation opportunities from sitting and socializing with friends to premier tournament sports facilities. Within the parks, the City offers a variety of amenities, including 296 playgrounds, and 235 sport courts¹. Some recent and notable projects that are under construction or scheduled to be in the near future:

- » North Maple Regional Park: A 364 ha destination for sports and recreation, and building community and culture within a natural environment
- » MacMillan Farm, Martin Tavares Park, and Doctors McLean District Park redevelopment

Trails

Vaughan also offers a network of over 63 kilometres² of trails for residents to walk, ride, and roll which will soon be punctuated by the planned Vaughan Super Trail. Once complete, this 100-kilometre trail will incorporate two existing north-south off-road trails - William Granger Greenway and Bartley Smith Greenway - and will link neighbourhoods, parks, public spaces and key destinations.

¹ 76 basketball courts, 23 bocce courts, 136 individual tennis courts - situated within 60 tennis facilities/ installations. Source: City of Vaughan, Corporate Asset Management; 2024)

² City of Vaughan, Corporate Asset Management 2024



635

hectares of parkland

1.3 Existing Park Types

Like many cities, Vaughan has a diverse range of parks with each ranging in size, function, amenities and uses. As such, the City organizes its parks into different park typologies. This helps inform the City in making decisions on what types of parks are needed/appropriate in new or existing neighbourhoods. This helps ensure that Vaughan's park system is responsive to the needs of its residents.

Table 1: Existing Park Types Identified in VOP 2010

Parkland Type	Typical Size (hectares)	Uses and Amenities	Target Market
Regional Park	15 or more	Supports large cultural, recreational and entertainment events, such as festivals and tournaments, as well as uses listed for District Parks.	Specialized events and amenities attract users from across the Region.
District Park	5 or more	Supports a variety of recreational and athletic interests with amenities, such as sports fields and courts, large skateboard parks, outdoor skating facilities, field houses, picnic shelters, off-leash dog areas and water play facilities. Co-located with Community Centres, where possible.	Specialized events and amenities attract users from across the City.
Neighbourhood Park	0.75 to 5	Supports a balance of active and passive uses, such as playgrounds, skate zones, play courts, unlit sports fields and social gathering spaces. Coordinated with school sites, where possible	Serves community located within a 10-minute walk of the park.
Urban Park	1 or more	Supports the social and cultural fabric of intensification areas through the provision of highly programmed outdoor spaces. May include program and event space, recreation such as playgrounds and outdoor skating and small-scale park supporting uses.	Serves areas of intensification.
Public Square	0.2 to 1	Supports neighbourhood-oriented social opportunities, as well as city-wide entertainment and cultural events depending on their size and location. May include public art, small outdoor game areas, seating areas and places to eat, as well as street-related activities such as vendor and exhibit space	Serves areas of intensification, however, found throughout the City and within Urban Parks.

1.4 Community Facilities

Community facilities are public facilities and amenities for recreation, social and cultural activities such as recreation centres and libraries, and may be co-located with parks. These facilities are an integral component of the greenspace system. They provide residents with spaces for passive and active recreation, socialization and healthy lifestyles. As Vaughan's population continues to grow, the City plans to provide more community facilities to keep up with demand. The Community Spaces Plan (previously known as the Active Together Master Plan) identifies the required sports fields and amenities to serve the anticipated population at 2051, as well as the addition of libraries and indoor recreation facilities.

The number of sports fields required will influence the parkland provision requirements and thus the Community Spaces Plan and GSP will work together in the determination of parkland provision requirements.



Top - Image Credit: Hoi Pham on Unsplash + Bottom - Image Credit: Andy Kuo on Unsplash

1.5 Department Structure

The planning, acquisition, construction, and the maintenance of Vaughan's parks require significant planning and coordination efforts across multiple City departments, divisions and its staff.

Table 2: Department Structure

Department	Division	Responsibilities
Facilities and Parks Delivery	Parks Delivery	Undertakes capital project planning, design, construction, contract administration and inspection for new park and open space development and park facility renewal.
	North Maple Regional Park	Leads all aspects of planning, design and delivery to implement the 900-acre vision for NMRP.
Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations		Maintains and enhances Vaughan's boulevard trees, parks, open spaces, playgrounds, trail systems, sports fields, play courts and cemeteries. The Forestry Permitting and Plan Review (FPPR) team consults on public and private planning and development initiatives as they affect trees throughout the city.
Policy Planning and Special Programs	Environmental Sustainability	The Environmental Sustainability team leads biodiversity and citizen science initiatives such as for World Migratory Bird Day, the Christmas Bird Count. In addition the team also leads the Community Garden program.
	Parks & Strategic Initiatives, VMC	VMC Staff lead all aspects of planning, design and delivery of Parks, Public Squares and Open Space in the VMC to align with the VMC Secondary Plan and visioning documents.
Real Estate		Negotiates and implements the acquisition and disposal of property on behalf of the City, ensures administrative and legislative requirements are met, and is responsible for cash-in-lieu of parkland valuations.
Infrastructure Delivery		Responsible for capital project design, review, tendering, construction, and inspection of the City's linear infrastructure. This infrastructure includes roads, bridges, sidewalks, watermain, sewers, stormwater management facilities (ponds) and streetlighting.
Development and Parks Planning	Parks and Open Space Planning	Responsible for the planning and general design of the City of Vaughan through the land use planning process. Develops long range plan and policies that establish the City's parks and open space service levels and guide the acquisition of new parkland through the development approval process.
Recreation Services		Provides community programming and summer camps for active use, and issues permits for use of sports facilities and park spaces.

1.6 Policy Framework

1.6.1 Provincial Policy Alignment

Development of the GSP involved a thorough review of provincial, regional and city-wide policies and plans to ensure alignment with these guiding documents. See Appendix I for a comprehensive policy summary.

Provincial Planning Statement

The Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS 2024) came into effect on October 20, 2024, and replaces the Provincial Policy Statement 2020 and a Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2019. The PPS 2024 is a province-wide land use planning policy framework that provides policy direction on matters of Provincial interest related to land use planning and development. Municipal plans such as the GSP, must be consistent with the policies of the PPS 2024.

In relation to greenspace, the PPS 2024 advocates for healthy, active, and inclusive communities that are supported by greenspace that accommodate people of all ages and abilities, continuous natural heritage system, and co-locating public service facilities with one another.

More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019

The *More Homes, More Choice Act*, 2019, impacts parks and greenspaces by modifying how parkland development is funded. This bill removed the mandatory 10% deduction for all eligible development charge services and limits the amount of parkland that developers must dedicate or pay for, reducing the financial contribution to new parks. The bill replaces some development charges with Community Benefits Charges (CBCs), which are capped at a 4% of land value, potentially limiting funds for parks. It also includes transition provisions to adjust existing policies, affecting how municipalities plan and finance parks and greenspaces.

Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019

The *Plan to Build Ontario Together Act*, 2019, received Royal Assent in December 2019 and amended several statutes including the *Planning Act*, which was revised to set out an appeal process for community benefits charge by-laws and also provides information on transition matters related to parkland dedications from new development that were initially introduced through Bill 108.

COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020

The *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act*, 2020 received Royal Assent in July 2020 and proposed significant amendments to the *Planning Act* as it related to CBCs and development charges and its parkland dedication regime, largely rolling back amendments made through the *More Homes, More Choice Act*, 2019.

Notably, this legislations reinstated several parkland dedication policies that were previously in effect, but did allow for parkland dedication by-laws to be appealable and instituted a sunset clause on existing by-laws. The CBC regime passed in the *More Homes, More Choice Act*, 2019 was further modified, introducing a requirement that municipalities cannot impose a CBC on a development with fewer than five stories at or above ground or fewer than ten residential units. Furthermore, this Act allowed for CBCs to be imposed for public recreational purposes, provided that the capital costs for some are not also being charged pursuant to a development charge by-law or funded from the parkland special account.

More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022

This Act, which received Royal Assent on April 14, 2022 made changes to the parkland dedication legislative framework in the *Planning Act*. The amendments implemented a maximum and tiered

alternative parkland dedication rate for municipal parkland in areas designated as transit-oriented communities. The *More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022* also requires municipalities to accept encumbered parkland identified by the Province that counts towards the requirements for public parkland if the land is capable of being used for park or other public recreational purposes.

More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

The *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* introduced a variety of significant legislative changes to how municipalities in Ontario fund growth through community benefits charges, development charges, and parkland dedication. This Act included the following changes related to parkland acquisition and development:

- » The maximum alternative dedication rate has been reduced to 1 ha/600 units for parkland dedication and 1 ha/1000 units for payment in lieu.
- » Maximum alternative dedication rates are capped at 10% of the land for sites 5 hectares or under and 15% for sites greater than 5 hectares.
- » Affordable residential units, attainable residential units, inclusionary zoning residential units, non-profit housing, and additional residential unit developments are exempt from parkland dedication requirements.

- » Parkland dedication rates are frozen as of the date that a zoning by-law or site plan application is filed.
- » To take effect at a future date, developers will be able to identify the land that they intend to convey to the municipality for parkland. These lands may include POPS or strata parks.
- » Municipalities are required to spend or allocate 60% of the monies in their parkland reserve account at the beginning of each year.
- » Conservation Authorities ability to regulate and restrict development activity regarding the conservation of land have been curtailed. Their focus will remain on hazardous lands, wetlands and water courses.

As a result, these legislative changes will have far-reaching effects on the quantity and quality of parkland that is acquired by the City through the development process.

Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, 2023

The *Affordable Homes and Good Jobs Act, 2023* received Royal Assent in December 2023 and amended the *Development Charges Act* with provisions setting out definitions of when a residential unit is affordable.

Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024

The *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024* received Royal Assent in June 2024 and made a variety of amendments to several Acts, including the *Planning Act* and *Municipal Act*. The most notable amendment for the GSP is that York Region has become an upper-tier municipality without planning responsibilities as of July 1, 2024. This downloads all planning responsibilities onto Vaughan and other lower-tier municipalities in York Region.

Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan is a set of policies that identify where growth and development should not occur to protect the region's valued farmland and natural areas. The Greenbelt Area in Vaughan comprises of 'Protected Countryside' (including 'Natural Heritage System', 'Rural Settlements', 'Specialty Crop Areas', 'Prime Agricultural Lands'), the 'Oak Ridges Moraine', and 'Urban River Valley'.

Each of these plan areas contain specific policies that regulate how the land may be used. Much of the greenspace in the North of Vaughan and the greenspace east of Islington Avenue, where the Kortright Centre for Conservation and Boyd Park is located are classified as 'Protected Countryside' under the Greenbelt Plan.

Similarly, much of the northeast corner of Vaughan is described as the 'Oak Ridges Moraine Area' under the Greenbelt Plan is protected under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017)

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) is an ecologically-based land use plan that provides land use and resource management direction for over 190,000 hectares of land and water across central Ontario. The ORMCP aims to guide land use and resource management for governments, organizations, and landowners. Its primary goal is to preserve the natural and ecological features of the Oak Ridges Moraine as the region develops.

Parkway Belt West Plan (1978)

The Parkway Belt West Plan was originally created to provide for transportation and utility infrastructure corridors plus a system of open space and recreational facilities. The plan now mostly focuses solely on transportation, utility and communication linear infrastructure. In Vaughan, the Parkway Belt West Plan boundary aligns with the Highway 407 corridor. This area is also to provide space for a linked open space system. In 2022, the Province proposed the revocation of the Parkway Belt Plan.

1.6.2 Regional Policy Alignment

York Region Official Plan

The *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act*, 2024 amended the *Planning Act* by removing upper-tier planning responsibilities from York Region. The York Region Official Plan (YROP) 2022 is now an official plan of the City of Vaughan and currently remains in effect. The YROP 2022 provides comprehensive policies for economic, environmental, and community planning decisions across York Region, including population and employment forecasts for Vaughan and the eight other municipalities within the region to 2051.

Living City Policies (LCP) for Planning and Development in the Watersheds of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

The TRCA's Living City Policies (LCP) for Planning and Development in the Watersheds outline the principles, goals, objectives, and policies for TRCA's roles in planning and development approvals under the Conservation Authorities Act. Amendments through the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022 have limited TRCA's responsibilities, focusing its role on managing natural hazards like flooding and erosion rather than broader environmental impacts. The amendments streamline regulations, reducing TRCA's involvement

in the broader planning process and limiting the conditions it can impose on development permits.

Despite these changes, TRCA continues to play a crucial role in watershed and shoreline management and restoration. Alignment between TRCA, York Region, and the City of Vaughan remains essential to support an integrated greenspace system. As a significant landowner in Vaughan, TRCA's updated policies will influence development and greenspace planning around Vaughan's ravines, particularly in the implementation of the Greenspace Strategy Plan and its "Circuit 51" approach.

Don River Watershed Plan (2009)

TRCA has ongoing work on the watershed planning process for the Don River Watershed Plan (DRWP). The intent of the Don River Watershed Plan is to guide government at all three levels and private land owners in order to support policy development and environmental stewardship. It outlines strategies to implement a coordinated effort to ensure the ecological health and protection of the Don River watershed. Along with the Humber River, the Don River watershed is a critical water resource for Vaughan. Vaughan will continue to ensure the health of its natural areas are protected and enhanced.

Humber River Watershed Planning

The Humber River Watershed Characterization Report highlights the impact of urbanization on the watershed, which spans 90,258 hectares and encompasses parts of Toronto, Peel Region, York Region, Dufferin County, and Simcoe County. Within this, the watershed lies within the municipal boundary of Vaughan, which includes approximately 17,861 hectares (19.8%) of the watershed area. Future management scenarios will be examined for potential impacts under different land use and climate change scenarios to ensure that these areas remain resilient, biodiverse, and integral to the community's ecological health.

1.6.3 City-wide Alignment

Vaughan Official Plan (2010)

Vaughan's Official Plan (VOP) (2010) is an overarching plan that guides long term growth, development environmental, social, and economic objectives. Vaughan's long-term land use planning strategy and is currently under review. A new Official Plan is being prepared as part of this process. In the Draft Vaughan Official Plan 2025, Schedule 1A identifies Strategic Growth Areas as the locations for accommodating intensification and higher-density mixed uses in a more compact built-form.

The existing VOP 2010 also classifies the types and hierarchy of parks provided throughout the city and the policies for dedicating and designing new parks and greenspace. The park hierarchy established in the VOP are the only parks eligible for parkland dedication credits through the development process and open spaces must be established and acquired through other means.

Natural Heritage Network Study (2014)

The Natural Heritage Network (NHN) Study (2014) is an environmental planning initiative aimed at protecting Vaughan's natural environment to sustain native plants and animals over the long term. The study assessed the biodiversity of Vaughan's natural areas, developed a comprehensive GIS database, and prepared a strategy to enhance the natural system. The study identified three main components: Core Areas, Linkages, and Enhancement Areas, which form the basis for identifying, acquiring, and managing parks and greenspace in Vaughan. It provides a detailed GIS database and uses Provincial and City policies to employing a systems-based approach for habitat protection.

City-wide Urban Design Guidelines (2016)

The City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines (2016) apply to new development and help shape their built form and character. The Guidelines integrate recommendations from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan to enhance active transportation and connectivity. Key principles include making urban parks central to each VMC neighborhood, framing parks with adjacent buildings, and encouraging active uses at grade. The plan addresses urban design strategies for park and open space surroundings, including building facades, setbacks, and retail configurations.

Active Together Master Plan (2018)

The ATMP is a long-range plan for parks, recreation and library facilities. The ATMP identifies current needs and future facility provision strategies to ensure parks and facilities serve the diversity of Vaughan's residents. The first ATMP was published in 2008 and has been updated every five years. The ATMP is being replaced by the Community Spaces Plan and will address the future provision levels needed for recreation and community facilities and amenities.

Parks Redevelopment Strategy (2018)

The 2018 Parks Redevelopment Strategy (PRS) provides a 10-year framework for renewing Vaughan's parks, focusing on Neighbourhood Parks and Urban Parks. The study emphasizes integrating parks with civic functions, enhancing accessibility, and using development charges, infrastructure reserves, and external revenues to support improvements. The PRS assists the City in managing the renewal and development of municipal parks and open space facilities until 2028. The PRS uses an evidence-based assessment tool to identify park redevelopment considerations at the neighbourhood and community level to keep pace with changing demographics and intensifying urban structure.

Green Directions Vaughan (2019)

Green Directions Vaughan (2019) is a community sustainability plan focused on social, environmental, and economic pillars. Key goals related to parkland include developing a natural heritage stewardship and restoration strategy, creating a land securement strategy for parks and natural features, and enhancing green infrastructure, the urban forest, and recreational trail networks.

The plan promotes green infrastructure to build climate resilience, maintains non-vehicular networks like pedestrian and cycling pathways, and aims to increase canopy cover in the urban forest.

Additionally, it emphasizes planning and implementing a recreational trail network near residential areas.

Climate Emergency Declaration (2019)

On June 4, 2019, Vaughan declared a climate emergency, committing to urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate resilience. The declaration outlines the city's intent to integrate climate considerations into planning and decision-making processes, emphasizing the need for immediate and effective measures to combat climate change.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2020)

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2020) outlines key strategies to enhance Vaughan's active transportation network for people walking, riding bikes and using micromobility devices. It focuses on expanding multi-use trails and developing a citywide continuous pedestrian and cycling network. It prioritizes safety improvements and physically separated facilities between all transportation modes. The plan also emphasizes seamless connections between Vaughan's off-road trails with sidewalks and cycle tracks within the road boulevard to ensure safe, accessible routes, including links to schools and parks within the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Land Acquisition Strategy (2020)

Vaughan's Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS) was developed to help guide and inform future decision-making with various tool, policies, and processes to acquire land for greenspace and other municipal purposes. The LAS responds to Vaughan rapid population growth, rising land values, evolving development pattern, and changing legislation.

Parkland Dedication By-law 168-2022

Under the *Planning Act*, municipalities can require land for park to be given to the City as a condition of approval of a development application. Development of Vaughan's Parkland Dedication By-law 168-2022 was informed by Parkland Dedication Guidelines Study (2022). The intent of the By-law provide clear direction to address long-term parkland needs of Vaughan residents. The By-law establishes requirements for dedicating parkland during the development process.

Community Benefit Charge Strategy (2022)

Vaughan's Community Benefit Charge Strategy is a legislative requirement for implementing Community Benefit Charges (CBCs) by the Province. The Strategy analyzed Vaughan's past and expected development to determine the revenue generated from CBCs and how these funds will be used.

Vaughan Age-Friendly Community Active Plan (2022)

The Vaughan Age-Friendly Community Action Plan (2022) focuses on creating an inclusive environment for all ages by collaborating with local seniors' clubs, integrating diverse programs, and supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ community through the Rainbow Space Program. It promotes community engagement, volunteer opportunities, and smart city innovations. The plan also emphasizes enhancing parks with accessible facilities, inter-generational spaces, and CPTED strategies for better inclusivity and functionality.

Asset Management Plan (2023)

The City of Vaughan's Asset Management Plans outlines a strategic approach to maintaining and renewing its infrastructure assets, including parks, urban forestry, and active transportation systems. The plan aims to ensure the long-term sustainability and reliability of these essential services through proactive management, regular assessments, and prioritizing investments based on risk and criticality.

Tree Protection By-law 052-2018

This by-law regulates the removal, injury, and maintenance of trees on both private and public lands, ensuring the protection of the city's green canopy. It requires property owners to obtain permits for the removal of trees above a certain size and sets guidelines for preserving trees during development. It also outlines enforcement measures and penalties to ensure compliance, helping to maintain and enhance the urban tree canopy as a vital part of the city's green infrastructure strategy. An update to the by-law is planned for June 2025.

Urban Forestry Management Plan (2024)

The UFMP identifies how to sustainably manage Vaughan's urban forest over the next 20 years. The UFMP targets a 25% tree canopy coverage city-wide by 2051. The Plan proposes policies and programs to achieve this canopy target across all land use zones in Vaughan. One of the main goals of the GSP is to expand and improve Vaughan's greenspace system. A key component of this goal will be increasing the urban forest canopy to assist in the implementation of the UFMP by planting more trees in Vaughan's parks and greenspace.

Non-Conventional Stormwater Policy (2024)

As Vaughan continues to adopt a higher density form of development, traditional stormwater management facilities are becoming increasingly difficult for developers to provide. The Non-Conventional Stormwater Policy (NCSP) streamlines the evaluation and acceptance processes for stormwater management facilities used in higher density developments. Since suburban-style stormwater management ponds are considered a part of the greenspace network, the GSP must consider these changes in higher density developments.

VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan (2024)

The VMC Parks & Wayfinding Master Plan was initiated in May 2020 and outlines a vision for developing parkland and signage within the VMC. This plan comprises two key components: a Parks Master Plan, which guides the development of compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open spaces; and a Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan, which helps residents, visitors, and businesses navigate the public realm. Finalized and adopted by Council in December 2024, it establishes a framework for cohesive growth, enhancing livability as the VMC matures into a dynamic urban hub.

Municipal Energy Plan (underway)

The Municipal Energy Plan (MEP) is presently being updated and will inform the new Vaughan Official Plan 2025, which is currently underway. The MEP will set a path forward to reduce per-capita greenhouse gases by half by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050, using a 2013 baseline. The MEP is based upon an assumed population and growth targets for the City, and how energy consumption will need to change to meet demands, with a particular focus on residential development.

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) Guidelines and Standards (underway)

Study is presently underway and responds to City By-law 168 and recent legislative changes from the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022 which allows POPS to be credited as parkland dedication. The Study will establish guidelines and standards for the design and implementation of POPS, setting criteria for them to be eligible for parkland dedication credit. The intent of the guidelines is to serve as a toolkit for the development community to create POPS that are inclusive, accessible, welcoming and well-maintained places for everyone to enjoy.





“I think it is important work to care for the trees and lands preserving the beauty of nature that Vaughan has to offer.”

- Vaughan Resident

Chapter 2

Trends and Best Practices

Understanding emerging park trends and best practices provides insight and context for ensuring Vaughan's parks meet the needs and interests of the communities they serve. As societal preferences evolve over time, designing parks that are flexible and adaptable to meet the range of needs for a diverse population becomes increasingly important.

2.1 Park Trends

The following section provides a summary of relevant trends in park services. A review of park trends was conducted to help ensure Vaughan stays up to date on development, design and programming. A comprehensive review of the best practice scan is outlined in Appendix I.

Technology

The wide-spread adoption of smart devices, including smartphones and smart watches, has integrated technology into daily life and is becoming increasingly a part of outdoor recreation (Mangold, 2024). Similarly, infrastructure and public spaces that are connected with smart technology is becoming more common. Both provide insight into how park use may be enhanced as well as informing planning and management decisions. Additionally, using a data platform that allows residents to report issues in the greenspace network or identify and geo-locate their favorite locations within the city empowers community engagement, improves maintenance responsiveness, and helps tailor greenspace enhancements to public needs and preferences.

Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi and internet access in public spaces is a service that is becoming increasingly common in Canadian and U.S. municipalities. Toronto has implemented free Wi-Fi in several public parks and squares, such as Nathan Phillips Square and Union Station. This service is part of Toronto's broader initiative to enhance digital connectivity in public spaces.

Augmented Reality

Mississauga has experimented with augmented reality through digital wayfinding in parks, where visitors can use their smartphones to access interactive maps and information about park features and events.

Park Use & Monitoring

Modern information and networking technology present opportunities and challenges for the management of municipal parks. Monitoring technology, for example, can provide real-time visitor data, however, the efficacy of surveillance and visitor tracking raises important ethical and legal questions regarding privacy, data protection, and ownership.



Image Credit: Hutima, wikipedia





Figure 5: The High Line in New York City.



Figure 6: City of Hamilton's Adopt-a-Park program. Image Credit: City of Hamilton

Brampton has integrated smart technology in select parks to monitor foot traffic and usage patterns, helping the city optimize maintenance schedules and plan for future park upgrades. However, they also emphasize the importance of balancing technology use with privacy considerations. The SmartParks initiative in Vaughan is a pilot project enabling visitors to book amenities, report litter, and make service requests via QR codes located near park entrances and sports facilities. This program enhances visitor experience and operational performance through data-driven decision-making and innovation.

Accessibility

Not everyone has equal access to Vaughan's greenspaces. Many people, especially those with disabilities, face challenges when accessing parks due to physical barriers. For example, people with mobility devices are limited to traveling on hard surfaces and to areas accessible by ramps. New York City's High Line, shown in Figure 5, provides an example of how ramps can be integrated into the design of public spaces.

Improving the accessibility of Vaughan's greenspaces involves creating barrier-free environments that cater to all ages and abilities. Vancouver's planned inclusive sensory park and Edmonton's interactive map for locating park amenities exemplify efforts to make greenspaces more accessible.

Volunteering Partnerships

Maintenance is critical for greenspace functionality and appeal. Innovative partnerships and volunteer programs can help maintain parks and woodlands, such as Richmond Hill's Park Ambassadors and Hamilton's Adopt-a-Park, similar to Vaughan's programs, shown in Figure 6. Structured maintenance plans, aligned with the GSP ensure greenspaces remain attractive, safe, and ecologically balanced.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Designing inclusive greenspaces for all ages and abilities is critical for improving equity. Tailoring features to local demographics helps address disparities in access, especially for those who confront more barriers to inclusion and participation, such as those who have lower incomes, racialized or migrant communities, or 2SLGBTQI+ people. In addition, there is an opportunity for Indigenous reconciliation through greenspace by forming partnerships on the development of greenspaces. Some notable examples across various municipalities include:

- » **Sparkling Change (Parks People), Canada-wide:** Creates spaces for the 2SLGBTQI+ community, transforming parks into community hubs, that provides training, capacity building and networking opportunities for participants.
- » **Spirit Garden, Thunder Bay, ON:** Waterfront park co-designed with Indigenous communities, providing a space for meditation and celebration, shown in Figure 7. In Vaughan, there is an opportunity to work with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous communities to include Indigenous culture and learning activities into some of the parks throughout the city.
- » **Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, Vaughan ON:** Honours Black contributions, supports diverse communities and promotes inclusivity in urban parks.

Health and Wellbeing

During the COVID-19 pandemic, greenspaces were essential for mental health and well-being, offering physical activity, socialization, and nature exposure. Programs like Ontario's "Parks Prescriptions" highlight nature's therapeutic benefits, combating depression and enhancing mental health. Edmonton's City Farms, shown in Figure 8, help reduce food insecurity by transforming fallow land into gardens for local food banks. These parks can strengthen social networks through daily interactions, which can improve community support systems in times of crisis, such as during heat waves when people such as seniors and those who live alone are more vulnerable.

Biodiversity

Promoting and preserving biodiversity in greenspace planning is vital for supporting resilient and thriving natural environments in cities. Biodiversity enhances ecological stability by supporting a variety of plant and animal species, which contributes to the city's overall ecosystem health and functionality. Diverse plant life can improve soil quality, manage stormwater, and provide essential habitats for wildlife, which creates more dynamic and engaging public spaces that attract people and promote outdoor activities. Additionally, diverse typologies of greenspaces help build community connections and educational opportunities by fostering a deeper appreciation for nature. By prioritizing biodiversity, greenspace plans not only address environmental sustainability but also enhance the overall quality of life for urban residents, offering both ecological and social benefits.

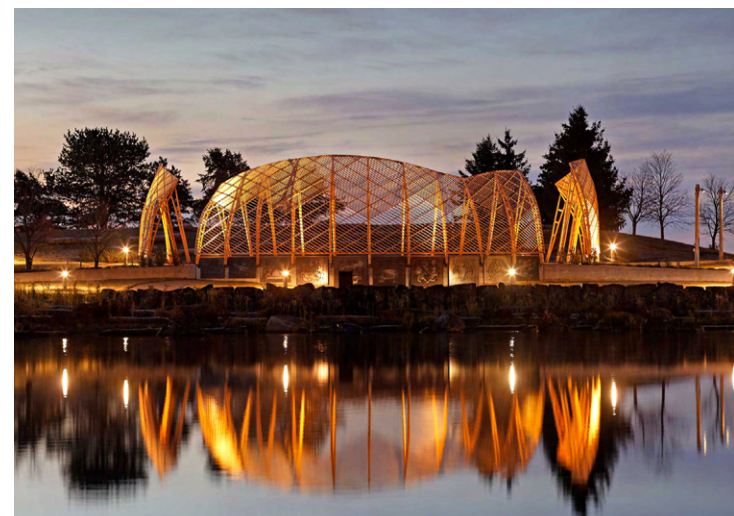


Figure 7: Spirit Garden in Thunder Bay, ON. Image Credit: Brook McIlroy



Figure 8: Edmonton's City Farm program. Image Credit: Explore Edmonton



Figure 9: A rain garden.



Figure 10: A park misting station. Image Credit: ABC Recreation

Biophilic Design

Incorporating biophilic design principles into greenspace planning can help connect people with nature in urban environments to improve their health and well-being. Key practices include planting a variety of plant species, connecting urban spaces with existing natural systems, maximizing sunlight exposure, and incorporating natural forms and patterns in urban design elements. Together, these practices improve public health, reduce stress and make us all more happy, social and community-spirited.

Habitats and Migration

In greenspace planning, habitat and migration considerations are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity. Designating natural areas that support diverse habitats ensures that wildlife can find suitable environments for feeding, breeding, and migrating. Migration pathways provide green corridors that allow birds and animals to move between habitats safely to access resources and adapt to environmental changes. Incorporating these factors helps prevent habitat fragmentation, which can lead to declines in wildlife populations and disrupt ecological processes. By integrating wildlife corridors and natural buffers into greenspace planning, cities can create a more resilient urban ecosystem that values both human and animal communities.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure provides ecological functions in urban environments to improve air quality, reduce urban heat island effects and manage stormwater run-off. By planting trees and native vegetation, using permeable pavements, and engineered natural drainage systems as shown in Figure 9, cities can better mitigate the impacts of climate change. This not only reduces the strain on municipal systems and services but also supports a healthier natural environment.

Climate Resiliency

In open space planning, climate resiliency is crucial for ensuring that urban areas can withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change. By integrating resilient design features—such as green infrastructure, floodplain restoration, and urban heat island mitigation—cities can better manage extreme weather events, rising temperatures, air quality concerns and changing precipitation patterns. Creating resilient open spaces helps

reduce the risks of flooding and heat waves, enhances water and air quality, and provides critical cooling and stormwater management benefits. By prioritizing climate resiliency in open space planning, cities can create and design an open space network within the city where both people and nature coexist in the urban environment – spaces for new ecologies, economies and social ways of life that value these spaces as not only places for retreat, relaxation and recreation, but also as spaces that provide ecosystem services and contribute to the health and performance of the city. Examples of implementing new park amenities to help be more resilient include drinking fountains, shade structures, permeable pavers, solar reflective paints, and misting and cooling stations as shown in Figure 10. These new park designs and amenities can be paired with natural forms of park designs to further improve park resiliency to the effects of climate change.

Urban Forestry

Trees and wooded areas provide a variety of essential ecosystem services, from reducing urban heat island effects to improving the mental health of nearby communities and creating habitats for wildlife. Vaughan's *Urban Forest Management Plan* (2024) finds that the urban forest generates \$6.5 million worth of community benefits every year.

Vaughan manages more than 130,000 street trees and 27 municipal woodlots. However, approximately 60% of the tree canopy is located on lands not owned by the City or the TRCA. Incorporating urban tree canopy policies into the GSP is an integral component to creating a sustainable and healthy greenspace system.

Boosting Tourism

Vaughan's parks are often surrounded by beautiful natural elements that attract visitors from across the GTA. Parks and open spaces can boost local tourism and increase economic benefits through sporting events and hosting markets and festivals.

Parks Zoning Flexibility

Municipalities continuously look at a variety of methods to attract people to use parks. One method is by adding more commercial uses and amenities to parks such as private bicycle repair shops, cafes and small restaurants and even rental/retail space to provide equipment that can be used in the park. More municipalities have been adjusting their zoning by-law to allow for these uses in conjunction with a park while still adhering to the applicable planning legislation.



2.2 Benchmarking Parks

A benchmarking study was conducted to understand how select Ontario municipalities are measuring, providing and servicing greenspace. Fifteen cities were chosen due to their geographical similarity to Vaughan. In particular, Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton are similar to Vaughan in relation to population growth and intensification. Insight into these three municipalities can provide Vaughan with insights on how to best manage greenspace in an urbanizing context. The 15 benchmarking locations are listed below:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| » Toronto | » Kingston | » Newmarket |
| » Ottawa | » London | » Whitchurch-Stouffville |
| » Hamilton | » Brampton | » Georgina |
| » Markham | » Mississauga | » King |
| » Richmond Hill | » Aurora | » East Gwillimbury |

The following section provides a summary analysis of parkland service levels, park typologies, and parkland acquisition criteria across Ontario municipalities.

2.2.1 Parkland Service Levels

The most common way to measure parkland service level is by calculating the total area of city-owned parkland per 1,000 residents.

Figure 11 summarizes the existing and target parkland service levels for comparable municipalities within York Region and beyond. Municipalities often benchmark themselves to other municipalities in Ontario to see how they compare to each other. This figure highlights Vaughan's citywide parkland target is similar to many other municipalities. However, it's important to note that each municipality has its own method of classifying and counting parkland for service level targets, therefore direct comparisons are not advised without gaining a full understanding of the context in which other municipalities set their targets.

*Open Space definition for municipalities in which open spaces are inclusive within the Target Service Level:

1. Georgina - Open Space Areas - are primarily for passive recreation. They may be developed but should generally be publicly accessible.
2. Whitchurch-Stouffville—Regional/municipal/local: undeveloped lands accessible to the public that contain significant natural features (e.g., woodlots, wetlands, watercourses, wildlife habitat). These spaces may include pedestrian pathways, bicycle trails, community gardens, open lawn areas, and remnant parcels of open land.

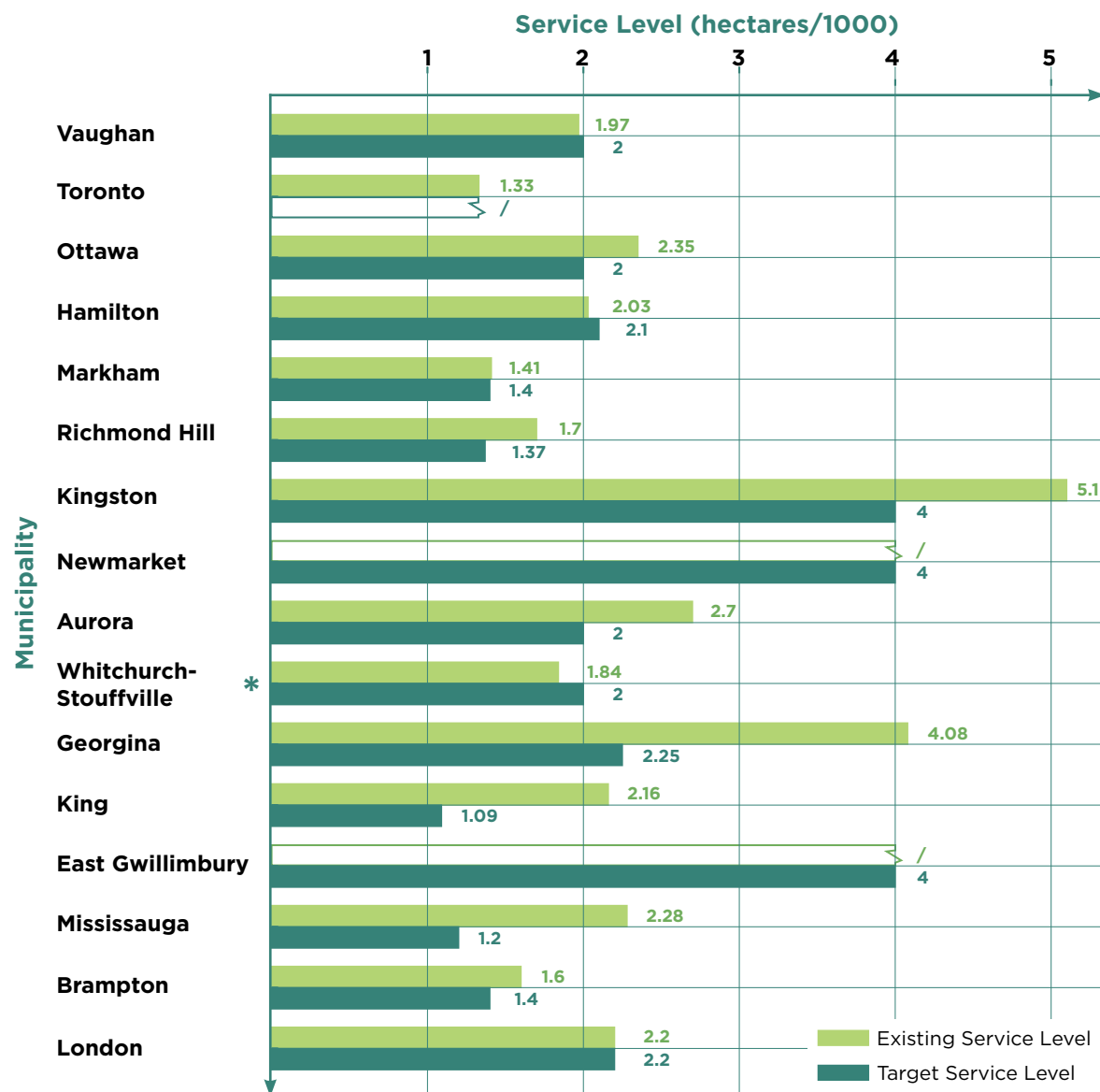


Figure 11: Parkland Service Level Benchmarking

2.2.2 Park Classifications

The benchmarking study provided context to help inform how other municipalities serve and manage their greenspace system. This also helped identify opportunities to update Vaughan's park classifications to address its changing needs and demographics.

The total number of park types varied widely across municipalities with the classification influenced by the city's context and its preferred management approach (see table 3). Refer to the Appendices for additional detail on how different municipalities define and use the variety of park types.

Generally, fewer park types usually mean broader categories that cover a wider range of parks. On the other hand, more park types indicate that the categories are more specific, covering a narrower range of parks. Neighbourhood Parks were the most commonly used park type across the reviewed municipalities. However, since cities may define and classify parks differently, these findings shouldn't be seen as a direct one-to-one comparison.

Table 3: Park Classifications Across Ontario Municipalities

Park Type	Municipality	
Destination Park	» Markham » Richmond Hill	» Whitchurch- Stouffville
Regional Park/ City Wide Park	» Markham » Hamilton » London	» Vaughan » Whitchurch- Stouffville » East Gwillimbury » Toronto
District Park	» Toronto » Ottawa » Vaughan » London	» Markham » Richmond Hill » King
Neighbourhood/Community Park	» Toronto » Ottawa » Hamilton » Vaughan » London » Richmond Hill » Brampton	» Aurora » East Gwillimbury » King » Whitchurch-Stouffville » Newmarket » Georgina
Parkette	» Toronto » Hamilton » Ottawa » Markham	» Aurora » Whitchurch-Stouffville » King » Vaughan
Urban Park	» Vaughan	» Brampton
Urban Plaza/Square	» Ottawa » Markham » Newmarket	» Aurora » Richmond Hill » Vaughan
Linear Park	» Ottawa » Burlington	» Richmond Hill » Brampton
Ecological Park	» Ottawa » Whitchurch-Stouffville	» Aurora » Burlington

2.2.3 Parkland Acquisition Criteria

The benchmarking analysis also examined how Ontario municipalities evaluated and acquired lands for future park use. Notably, Toronto, Hamilton, and Burlington each apply different parkland acquisition criteria. This in part reflects the unique context, varying needs and priorities across each city.

For Burlington, the most important consideration is meeting the parkland and recreation service needs of the community. This is also complemented by a general site/design focused-criteria.

Hamilton incorporates an equity lens into its determination of parkland amount and type. Areas of highest priority are identified by overlapping several focus areas such as low income, high child and youth population along with others, including transit corridors and low or no parkland.

Toronto uses a two-tiered assessment which combines a range of factors including parkland provisioning, equity, transit, and culture.

These case studies highlight key criteria for developing a consistent and transparent framework for applying parkland acquisition tools. The following chapters will provide a detailed analysis of Vaughan's priorities for land acquisition for parkland.

Table 4: Acquisition Criteria Comparison of three Ontario Municipalities

Parkland Acquisition Criteria		
City of Burlington	General Criteria	Site Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Official Plan consistency » Street frontage » Size and shape » Location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Site construction » Grading » Restrictive lands » Park base » Development approval » Urban forest
City of Hamilton	Focus Factors	Suitable site for a park
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Existing high density area » Planned high density area (intensification) » Nearby to planned frequent transit service node » Low or no other municipal parkland » Low income area » High youth population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Catchment contains sufficient people » Potential sites align with existing plans » Opportunity for partnerships
City of Toronto	Primary Assessment	Secondary Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Is the site in a parkland priority area? » Is the site suitable for parkland purposes? » Does the site improve connectivity to other parks and open spaces? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does this address a park range gap in the area? » Is the site located within an area with a high number of employees, students, or tourists? » Is the value of the acquisition reasonable relative to the number of people who would benefit? » Can the site accommodate new facilities under the Facilities Master Plan? » Is the site within 500 m of transit access? » Is the site located in an area with a high percentage of low income residents? » Does the site have cultural significance?



Chapter 3

Engagement

The development of the Greenspace Strategic Plan involved a comprehensive and multi-stage engagement process. Across each phase of the project, the project team hosted citywide engagement initiatives to ensure that the development of the GSP was rooted in the shared values of community members and stakeholders.

3.1 Engagement by the Numbers

The GSP is a product of extensive community engagement, carefully balancing different perspectives from many residents and interested parties along with input from City Council and staff. Over 2030 touchpoints occurred during the GSP to gather a variety of perspectives. As a result, the shared vision and goals of Vaughan residents will help guide future provision of parks and greenspaces over the next 30 years.

Ways Stakeholders Participated



4 Stakeholder Advisory Group Meetings



12 Pop-Up Events



2 Public Open Houses



3 Online Surveys



Community Walk



Storymap + Youth Engagement



Park Forum



Interested Party Meetings and Outreach (including BILD, TRCA, Ratepayers)

Engagement by the Numbers

over **2030**

Touchpoints with participants, residents and stakeholders

A touchpoint is an interaction not a person. Very involved residents could be the source of multiple touchpoints.

312

Pop-Up Participants

160

Youth Workbooks

126

Youth Poster Entries

10

Self Serve Engagement Stations

716

Online Survey Respondents

22

Open House Attendees

34

Park Forum Participants

40+

Social Media Posts

3.2 Engagement Purpose and Approach

Purpose

Parks and greenspaces are one of the most treasured aspects of Vaughan. As the city continues to grow, it is important to develop a shared vision and strategy for adapting the greenspace system to maintain its quality.

Through the engagement phases, shown in Figure 12, the goal was to understand how residents currently use Vaughan’s parks and greenspaces, the needs and wishes of park visitors, and the barriers people face to accessing these spaces. The inputs and insights from these questions were essential to the development of the GSP to ensure that its principles, policies and recommendations reflect the lives of Vaughan’s residents.

Principles

Inclusive: By creating a welcoming space for conversation that respects the diverse lived experiences of all participants.

Accessible: By making it easy to participate and access information, by considering diverse abilities, learning styles, and amount of time required.

Meaningful: By providing opportunities for participants to share ideas and concerns openly and authentically.

Transparent: By providing clear information about the process, how decisions are made, and report back on what we heard.

Adaptive: By being flexible to respond and adapt to the changing needs of participants over the course of the project.

Timeline

Phase 1 (Fall 2023)

Where We Are and Where We Need to Go

Phase 1 engaged Vaughan residents and interested parties to raise awareness about the GSP, assess how greenspaces are currently used and valued, and identify satisfaction levels, challenges, and opportunities.

Phase 2 (Spring 2024)

How We Are Going to Get There

Phase 2 identified residents’ and interested parties’ preferences and priorities for greenspace location, function and amenities within Vaughan’s growing and changing environment. The results of this phase of engagement inform the development of a framework for guiding greenspace acquisition and enhancement.

2023
Fall

2024
Spring

2024
Fall

2025
Spring



Figure 12: Project timeline and engagement phases

Phase 3 (Fall 2024)

Confirming the Plan

Phase 3 sought to validate three key components of the draft GSP with residents and interested parties. This phase gathered feedback from participants on proposed greenspace guidelines and strategies, and identified potential gaps in the plan to ensure alignment with community needs and preferences.

Phase 4 (Spring 2025)

Celebrating the Plan

The final phase of the project will conclude the engagement process with a community update to share and celebrate the approved Greenspace Strategic Plan with Vaughan residents and interested parties.

Audience

A variety of audiences were engaged to maximize the number of perspectives in the development of the GSP. Each group brings its own interests and shares input that helps develop a well-rounded plan that applies to a variety of uses.

Audiences include:

- » Council and Senior Leadership
- » Development Community
- » General Public
- » Indigenous Partners
- » Landowners
- » Ratepayer Groups
- » Specialized City Task Forces and Committees
- » Stakeholder Advisory Group
- » Technical Advisory Committee
- » Youth

General Public

Vaughan residents were invited to participate in a variety of engagement events throughout the project timeline. Events were chosen to maximize participation across a variety of demographics, including:

- » In-Person Pop-Ups

- » Outreach Events
- » Community Walks
- » Open Houses
- » Online Park Forum
- » Online Surveys, Maps, and Storymaps

These methods were chosen to provide flexibility and allow residents to choose a method that worked best for them. Detailed feedback from the general public, including the survey results is located in the Phase 1, 2 and 3 What We Heard Reports.

Indigenous Partners

Recognizing the importance of reconciliation and engagement with Indigenous peoples, the GSP sought to share project information with Indigenous partners throughout all phases of engagement. Indigenous partners provided input to the Project Team and offered suggestions on how the GSP could integrate and commemorate Indigenous histories and presence in the area.

Community Stakeholders

In Phase 1, regional stakeholders and community groups were invited to complete a workbook containing questions about how their organizations use greenspaces and what changes may encourage greater use.

The **Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)**, was formed in Phase 1 of the project and consisted of 18 community representatives who were selected through a civic lottery process, which ensured that the SAG was representative of Vaughan's demographics. The SAG provided a forum for selected residents and interest groups to receive updates, review materials and information, and provide feedback to the City of Vaughan throughout the project. Summaries of the SAG meetings are contained in the Phase 2 and 3 What We Heard Reports.

Municipal Stakeholder Groups

Council and Senior Leadership were engaged throughout the project to provide context on Vaughan's greenspace, feedback on study considerations, priority areas of improvement, and establishing a vision and set of goals for the GSP.

The **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** is a group of cross-functional City staff members who provided advice and input on the plan and its implementation. The TAC provided insight on the vision and trajectory of the project, greenspace service targets, park types, partnerships, and decision prioritization.

During Phase 2 engagement the project team presented to the City of Vaughan Age-Friendly Advisory Committee and shared communications with the Anti-

Black Racism Special Advisory Committee to receive input from their expertise and perspective.

Youth Engagement

Local high school students were engaged to better understand what youth most value about parks and greenspaces and to identify how parks can be designed to attract more use from youth and particularly teenagers. The City issued workbooks to classrooms that explained the GSP to students and asked students to create a poster that would encourage youth of a similar age group to visit their favourite park or greenspace. Students were encouraged to create a slogan and highlight key features that would attract other youth to visit the greenspace they selected. The exercise received 126 posters and 160 completed workbooks. The workbooks and posters were used in subsequent engagement events and highlighted important characteristics of parks in the eyes of high school students. A collage of posters are provided in this chapter and Chapter 8. A summary of the student engagement feedback can be found in the Phase 2 What We Heard Report.

Development Industry

Ensuring that the GSP can be implemented in practice is critical to its success. The development community in Vaughan was

engaged through the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) during the Phase 3 engagement. Feedback from BILD can be found in the Phase 3 What We Heard Report.

Park Forum

On May 30th, 2024, the City hosted a virtual Park Forum titled, What's Trending? New park typologies, creative placemaking and equitable and accessible programming that bring people together in parks.

The Park Forum brought together three park professionals (Adri Stark, Park People, Desiree Liu, ETM Associates, Amanda O'Rourke, 880 Cities) with expertise in greenspace advocacy, design, operations, and management. The conversation explored how emerging trends in greenspace typologies, placemaking, and programming can support municipalities' goals of improving community health, increasing access and inclusion, and ensuring livable and sustainable public spaces amid urban growth.

What We Heard Reports

What We Heard Reports from the Phase 1 through 3 engagement phases are available on the project webpage and provide a more detailed summary of the community feedback.

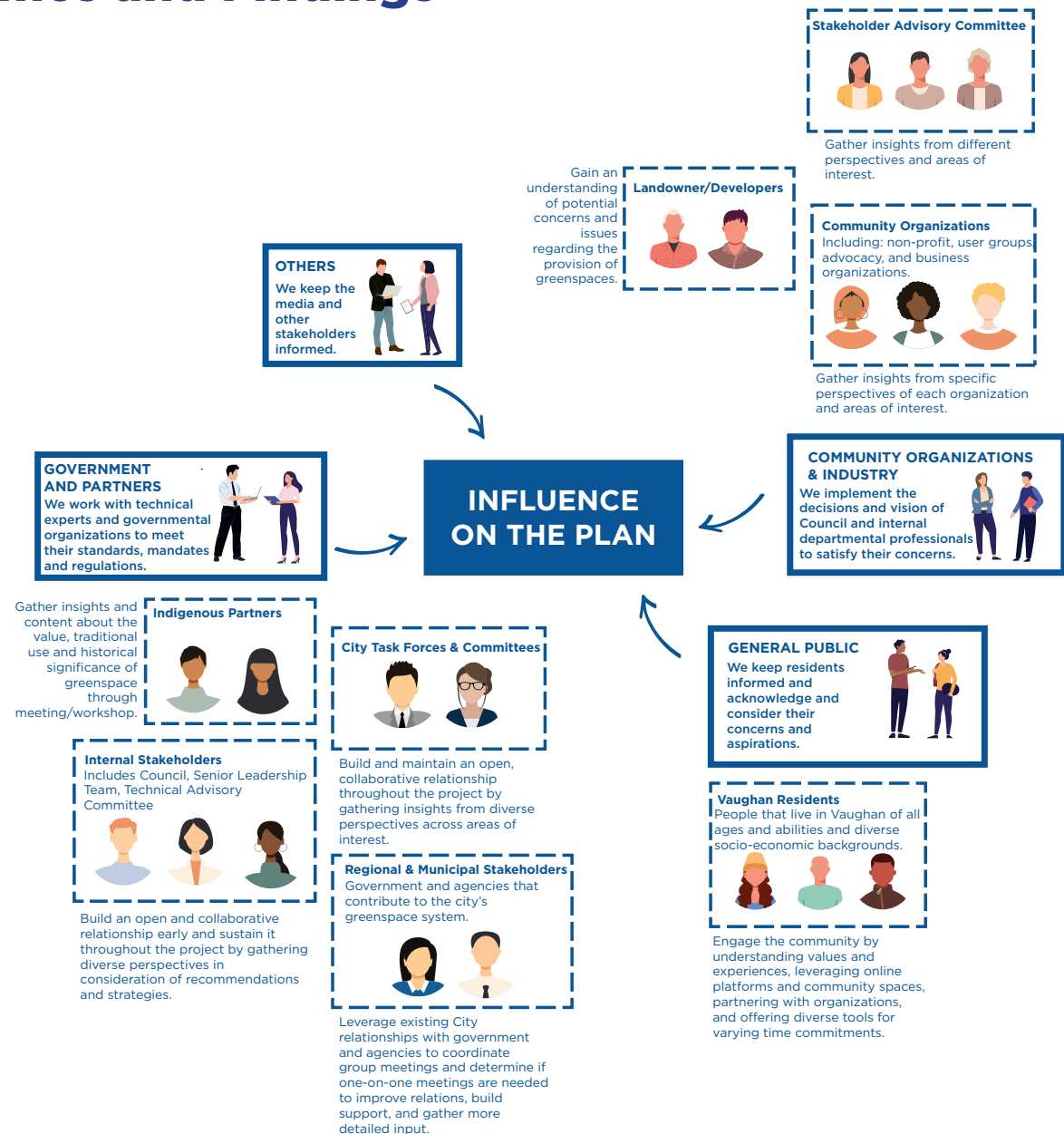
3.3 Engagement Outcomes and Findings

Key Takeaways

Overall, engagement with members of the public identified the following improvements:

- » More passive and active recreation amenities, especially new and trending opportunities
- » Make greenspaces for all people to enjoy
- » Parks play an important role in providing health benefits
- » More greenspaces, especially near growth or intensification areas
- » Greater connection between greenspaces
- » Emphasis on the preservation and enhancement of existing natural features

Engagement with Council and TAC provided more technical feedback related to the GSP's goals, parkland service targets, methods of acquiring additional greenspace, park classification, and how to finance the greenspace system.



JULLIARD PARK

IN JULLIARD PARK, HAPPINESS EMBARKS!



FUN PLAY FOR EVERYONE

CLEAN

Julliard Park is a clean park with lots of places to put your waste.



RELAXATION

Lots of comfortable seats and tables to promote relaxation.



EXERCISE

Julliard Park has a variety of options to help you exercise. There's a large field with soccer nets and pathway around it. There's also fun ways for kids to get exercise at the recreational structures.

101 Julliard Dr.

CHANCELLOR PARK

Where every step leads to ADVENTURE

430 CHANCELLOR DR. WOODBRIDGE, ON L4L 3W4

VISIT NOW

- FUN PARK SPACE
- BASKETBALL AND SOCCER AREAS
- SPLASH PAD DURING THE SUMMER
- ICE RINK DURING THE WINTER
- COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR RELAXATION, FUN CAMPS AND MUCH MORE

VAUGHAN

Boyd Park

Boyd Park: Where Every Step is an Adventure

VAUGHAN

8730 Humber River, Vaughan, ON L4L 3A6

Get Directions
Contact Us

BOYD CONSERVATION PARK

"Always have fun, but never at the expense of the Earth!"

Our mission at Boyd Conservation Area Park is to encourage Vaughan's youth to spend time outdoors while considering the environment. Boyd is the perfect area to have picnics, take long walks, and appreciate the scenery of the GTA. It trails much of the Humber River and spans for miles on end. It's populated densely with old-growth pine and maple trees. The park is also equipped with safety bylaws, washrooms, and water fountains to ensure that those who visit are safe and comfortable.

Picnics
Hikes
Sports
Scenery
Wildlife
Bike paths

CHANCELLOR DISTRICT PARK

430 CHANCELLOR DR, WOODBRIDGE, ON L4L 3W4

HOURS: 8 AM - 11 PM
PHONE: 905-832-2281

ACTIVITIES!

- ICE RINK
- LIBRARY
- SOCCER FIELD
- COMMUNITY CENTER
- SPLASH PAD
- PLAYGROUND
- BASKETBALL

CHANCELLOR PARK HAS SOMETHING TO OFFER FOR ANYONE, NO MATTER THEIR RACE OR AGE! CHANCELLOR WILL 100% KEEP YOU SATISFIED

"A Childhood Dream"

Soccer Fields
Baseball Field
Tennis
Water Park
Bike/Walk Trails

SONOMA HEIGHTS

LA ROCCA SQUARE

Join the community!

- Fun for everyone
- Meet new people
- Play in the playground
- Relax at the seating area
- Go to church

Places nearby:
McDonalds
Starbucks
Dairy Queen
And More!

At La Rocca Square you can interact with the community through church, or play in park, or just enjoy the open space and greenery. So many things to do and in this beautiful park. Not to mention there are tons of food and drink places near by if you get hungry or thirsty while you enjoy nature and get your vitamin D.

LA ROCCA SQUARE

Join the community!

- Fun for everyone
- Meet new people
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- Relax at the seating area
- Go to church

Places nearby:
McDonalds
Starbucks
Dairy Queen
And More!

At La Rocca Square you can interact with the community through church, or play in park, or just enjoy the open space and greenery. So many things to do and in this beautiful park. Not to mention there are tons of food and drink places near by if you get hungry or thirsty while you enjoy nature and get your vitamin D.

MOKEIT WORK

Protect our Parks

Mathew Park

1 Villa Royale Ave

Our Park Needs Your Spark

VALUES AND AMMENITIES:

Mathew park offers a variety of activities:

- Baseball
- Skateboarding and Skating
- Soccer
- Splash Pad and Playground
- Tennis
- Track
- Bocce

Map of Our Park

This recreational park also includes the veltore village community centre which offers inclusive play, public access to washrooms, and recreational activities.

Fred Armstrong PARKETTE

VAUGHAN

EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL SCENIC TRAIL RIGHT BY THE HUMBER RIVER

WISHING WELL PARKETTE

VAUGHAN

MOSSWOOD PARK

641 THORNHILL WOODS DR, VAUGHAN ON

- Tennis courts
- Beach volleyball
- Greenspace to play
- Communal areas
- New play structure
- Lots of playground equipment

Community Is Here!

MOKEIT WORK

Chapter 4

Parkland Needs Analysis

Acquiring new land for parks is costly and will be increasingly challenging. As such a parkland needs analysis was conducted using a range of methods and data sources with the goal of identifying existing challenges and opportunities in acquiring and delivering new parkland.

4.1 Existing Parkland Provision

How Vaughan Acquires Parkland

Parkland Dedication

One of the tools that the City of Vaughan uses to acquire parks is parkland dedication. Under the *Planning Act* (Section 42 and 51.1), Ontario municipalities can require a percentage of land to be dedicated as municipal parkland as a condition of development approval.

Another common greenspace acquisition tool is payment-in-lieu. Where the City deems that land is unsuitable or unfeasible for park purposes, it can require payment-in-lieu of parkland dedication. For example, a development site may be too small to accommodate both parkland and the proposed development. The payment amount is calculated using a pre-determined formula as per the City's Parkland Dedication By-Law. Payment-in-lieu from developers is deposited into the payment-in-lieu reserve fund and is used as a funding source to acquire parkland in the future.

There are other ways that the City acquires land for parks, however they are less common and often require a partnership or a unique agreement between the City and the third-party providing the land or the payment for parkland.

The City currently uses a wide range of tools to acquire greenspace:

- » Parkland dedication
- » Payment-in-lieu
- » Purchasing new land
- » Reciprocal agreements
- » Expropriation
- » Shared use agreements

- » Open space redevelopment
- » Donation

Vaughan's existing parkland provision is 19.9 square metres per person. Figure 13 illustrates a person standing in a park full of trees. To provide context, 20 square metres is approximately the size of one small to medium size tree.

Parkland Per Person in Vaughan (2024)

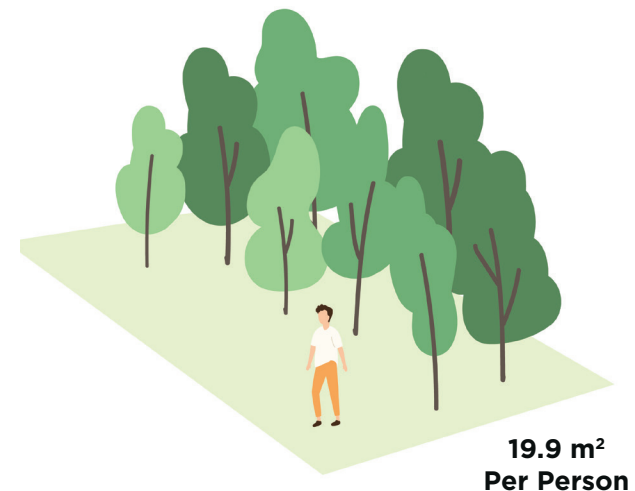


Figure 13: Vaughan's existing park area per person.

Parkland Provisioning per Planning Block 2021

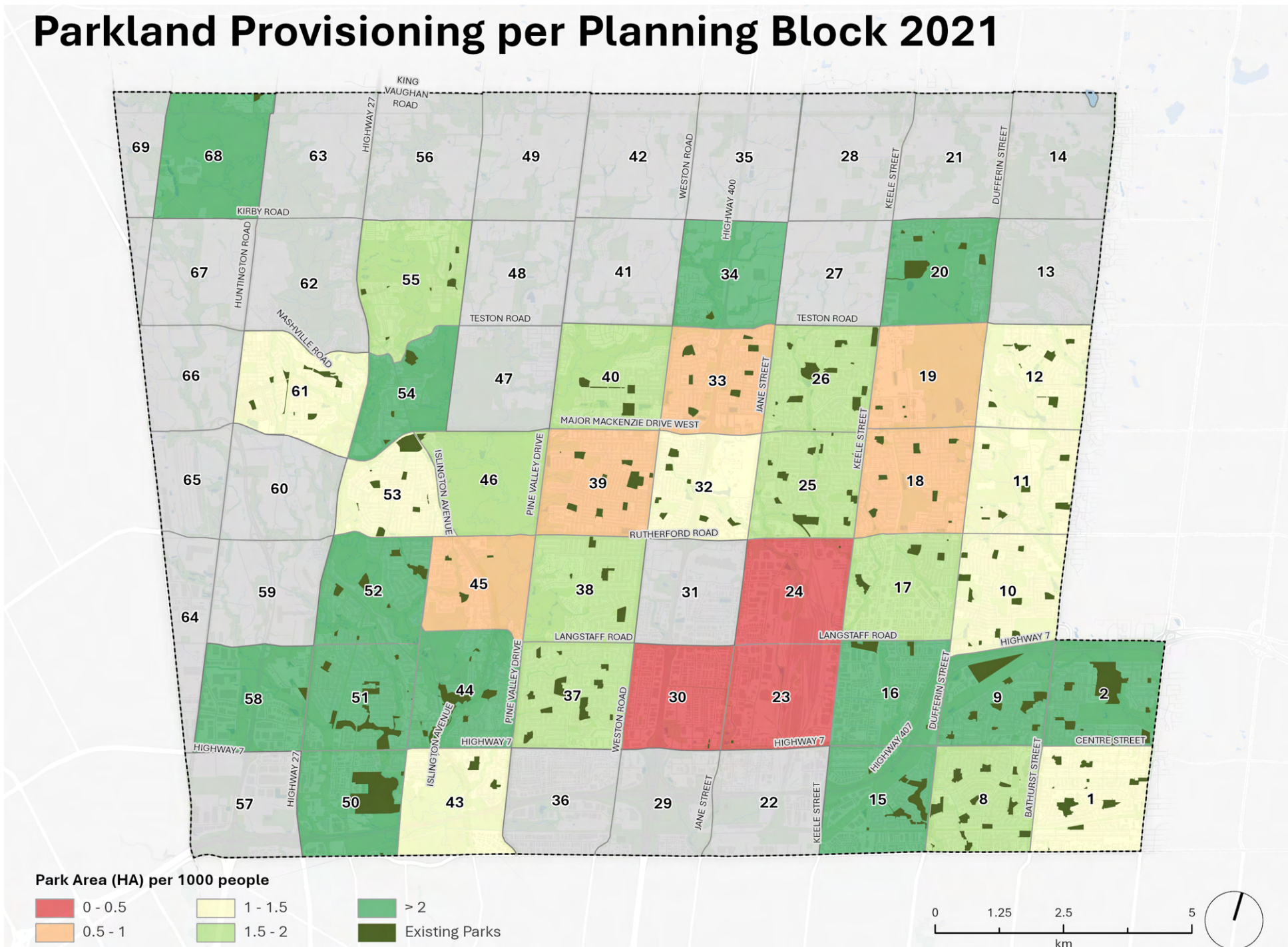


Figure 14: Vaughan's parkland provisioning per planning block using 2021 census.

4.2 Parkland Provision

The City of Vaughan currently measures its parkland supply as a ratio of parkland area per population. This measure provides a brief understanding of how much parkland serves a population and is commonly used by other municipalities in Ontario. As populations grow faster than the supply of parkland, the ratio decreases.

The City of Vaughan currently uses a parkland provision target of 2.0 ha per 1,000 people. The parkland provision ratio helps identify areas in the city where more parkland could be acquired to meet the needs of the community. It is important to remember that this assessment only considers active park spaces and not open spaces (e.g., woodlands and other natural areas).

The City's current parkland provision ratio per planning block is illustrated in Figure 14. The ratio is based on the 2021 Canadian Census for Vaughan and highlights blocks 23, 24 and 30 as being the most deficient.

Challenges in Achieving the Parkland Provision Target

As Vaughan continues to intensify and build up, the City must rethink how its parks are planned, acquired, and serviced. Vaughan's Strategic Growth Areas are intended to accommodate 57% of the City's projected population growth to 2051 through the redevelopment of existing urban areas.

As these areas redevelop, their population growth can outpace the rate at which the City acquires more parkland. This leads to a declining parkland provision ratio.

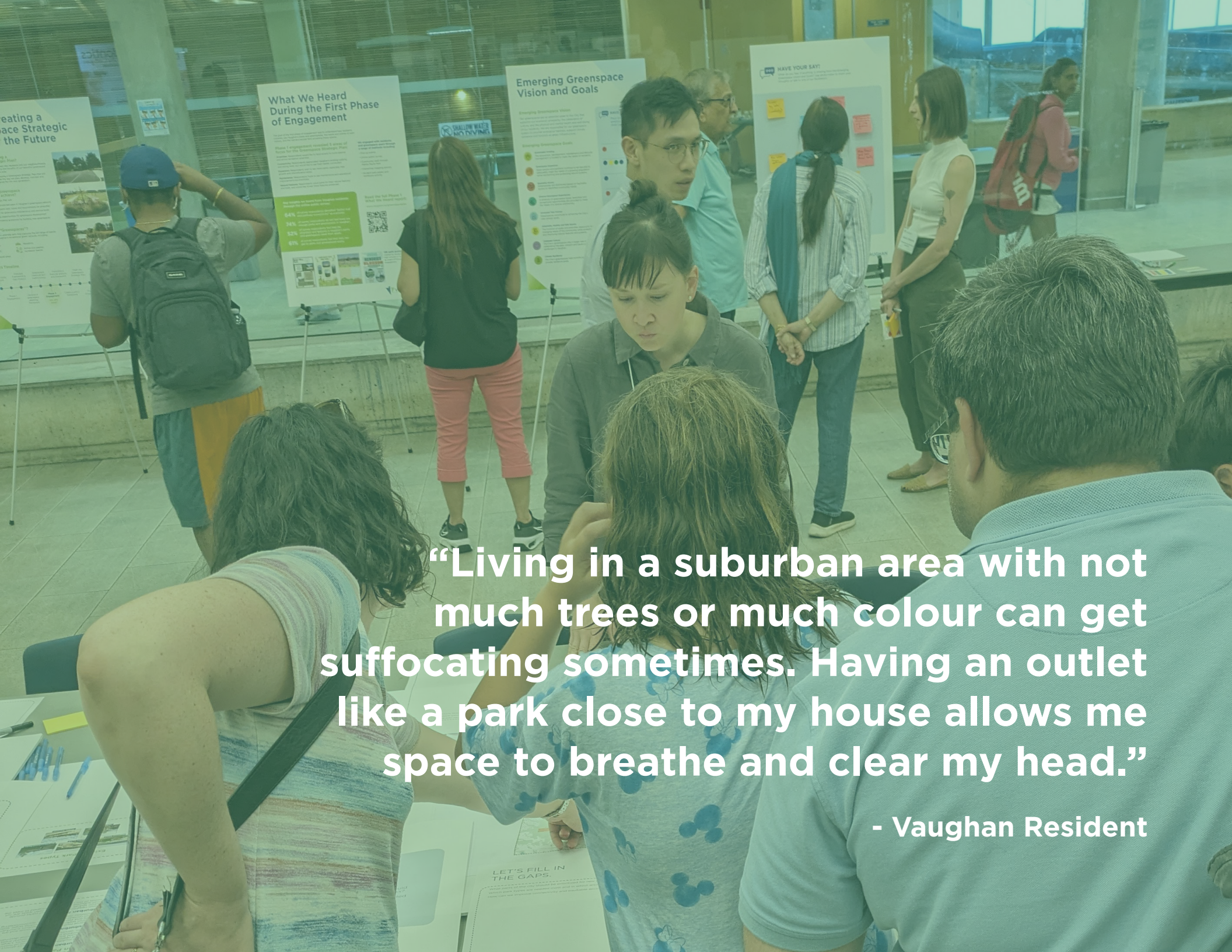
Furthermore, land within Strategic Growth Areas tends to be more fragmented and a developer's ability to dedicate land can be limiting due to parcel sizes and land costs. Another associated challenge is the unknown impacts that POPS may have on park acquisition, due to the ability to receive credit for POPS, developers may prefer to build POPS rather than provide land or payment-in-lieu of land. This means the City may have less funding available to acquire land based on lower than anticipated payment-in-lieu funds. A lower reserve fund would be compounded by the price of land within Strategic Growth Areas, which makes parkland acquisition more difficult for the City to meet existing parkland provision ratios.

Evaluating Existing Parkland Provision Targets

Using the City's current 2.0 ha per 1000 residents parkland provision target, an analysis was conducted to determine how much parkland would need to be acquired to keep up with Vaughan's expected population growth until 2051. The City would need to acquire an additional 335 ha by 2051.

Acquiring the parkland necessary to keep up with population growth will be a difficult task, especially as the City shifts towards a higher-density multi-unit form of development that often provides payment-in-lieu rather than parkland dedication.

Therefore, it is important that the City explores other methods for purchasing and collecting parkland including community benefits charges, property taxes, provincial funding, grants, leveraging City-owned lands, and donations to achieve its parkland service targets.



“Living in a suburban area with not much trees or much colour can get suffocating sometimes. Having an outlet like a park close to my house allows me space to breathe and clear my head.”

- Vaughan Resident

Chapter 5

“Circuit 51” Conceptual Approach

Through project research, engagement and establishing priorities, a core philosophic “concept” was developed that constitutes the evolution of greenspaces in the city. This is particularly important as intensification areas will sharply challenge traditional patterns of development and access to parkland. Analysis of Vaughan’s current open space system shows a bisected green patchwork of several greenspace assets that are not readily accessible without a car.

Similar to the complexity of computational hardware, we see many components providing an important function to the overall greenspace network and life of the city. Varying in size and scale, each component is distinct and built for a purpose, however, has a co-dependency as part of the wider operational intent.

Linking these components together are circuits. Circuitry is instrumental to bring the entire system to life and providing purpose to each component, with the flexibility to grow as additional computational responsibility is imposed on the network. An emerging goal is to see a network that could make the key greenspace assets within the city accessible through a growing and evolving “circuitry” of parks and open space that connect local and regional amenities.

The concept of “Circuit 51” (51 is for 2051), illustrated in Figure 15, is to reinforce a connective network of greenspace that is anchored by the north/south Humber and Don River watersheds. The east/west armature of public parks and green infrastructure will provide much needed access to neighbourhood blocks, that are often severed by wide arterial roads. The fluidity of the network helps to rethink the existing greenspace network as an interconnected series of local and regional components that further connect as Vaughan continues to urbanize. **Let’s explore Vaughan’s Circuit 51 in more detail...**



Figure 15: Circuit 51 | Conceptual Illustration

5.1 Objectives

Typically, technical reports such as the GSP are used to inform decision making from data and spatial analysis. Although publicly accessible, parkland strategy reports are historically “internally facing” documents to the City, as they pertain to delivery of services, operations and maintenance. This is common practice to municipal parks planning, including among the several jurisdictions studied through the benchmark analysis outlined in section 2.2.

Circuit 51 acknowledges the technical requirements of the GSP, however also provides a visioning philosophy surrounding the greenspace in the city. This vision was encouraged by the findings of field analysis, public and stakeholder engagement, and leadership by City staff. Circuit 51 aims to provide an **“externally facing”** summary to the objectives of the GSP. This document in many ways is unique and provides a forum for ideas that illustrate ongoing transformation of greenspace in the city. Not only will Circuit 51 add to the **transparency and literacy** of the GSP, it is the expectation that the public will also be able to recognise and support shared ambitions in improving greenspace for Vaughan to 2051. As an externally facing document, Circuit 51 will help better translate the following:

Challenges to Greenspace

It is important to recognize the projected growth of the city as it relates to the delivery of parkland. The GSP clearly outlines challenges faced in continuing to provide service levels with more users and less per-capita area to greenspace. Circuit 51 provides a vision grounded in the future development of remaining lands and brings heightened awareness of the challenges of providing greenspace into the future.

Commitment to Service Level Delivery

The GSP is predicated on providing the highest level of parks and open space service possible. This requires continued awareness of user needs and changing patterns usage overtime. Circuit 51 intends to elaborate on how the larger vision and scaled opportunities will contribute to an overall reflection of community needs and focused areas of acquisition. This will also include aligning existing and future parks to the highest and best use to serve the changing demands of users. Circuit 51 reinforces the public’s need to establish a baseline of park amenities in each community of Vaughan, as a measure of successful park service delivery.

Improving Access

Existing conditions have clearly outlined the physical gaps in accessing baseline expectations to park amenities in some parts of the city, including newly developed intensification areas. Circuit 51 aims to enhance connectivity by aligning other City-wide active transportation objectives (Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, 2020) to connect bisected greenspace network to ensure that citizens can access local park amenities, while highlighting active/transit modes to key park destinations throughout the city. At a minimum every resident will have access to greenspace, including baseline park amenities, within 500 metres by 2051.

Partnerships

Improving access to greenspace is not only a municipal responsibility. Although the City will advance all opportunities to increase its greenspace footprint, it is also incumbent on other agencies to strategically improve access to publicly facing lands that could serve community needs. TRCA, utility agencies and school boards provide the most notable opportunities to secure partnership, building on existing public uses. Active use connections through notable TRCA conservation parks and lands has been cited as key opportunity to reconnect the open space network, particularly to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Community Action

Circuit 51 is also designed to create awareness and foster community action in improving the greenspace network of the city. Through continual engagement, stewardship programs, and education, the GSP will bring about a proactive approach to park improvement and change. Local stakeholders and public groups will become more aware of the importance of greenspace in their community and will hopefully lead action to protect existing parks and advance the objectives of the GSP.

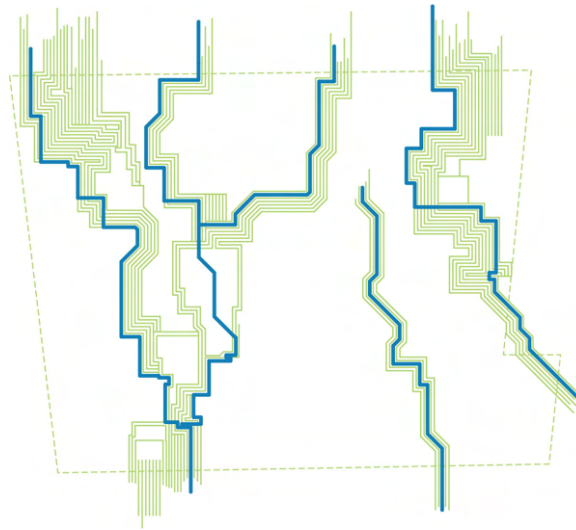
Programming and events can be informed by community action. Community gardens and reforestation programs can be advanced through public awareness. Parks planning should also directly address local issues of access and safety to ensure equity and diversity needs are continually being met especially as the city changes.



5.2 System of Green + Blue Circuitry

The existing **Green and Blue** infrastructure of the City presents a compelling likeness to circuitry and highlighting the importance of a co-dependent greenspace network. The complex layering of natural heritage systems and defined public spaces creates a powerful analogy for a system that can grow from the circuitry of public infrastructure and community amenity. As Vaughan grows, so does the intricacy of the greenspace network, including different scaled open spaces to facilitate the diversity of an ever changing demographic and population.

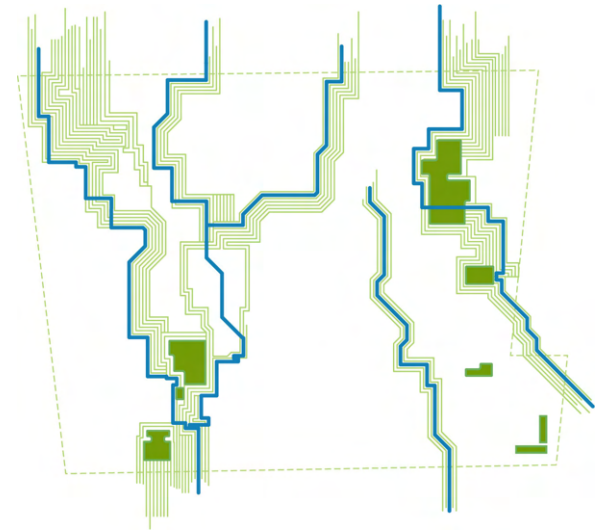
Circuit 51 illustrates a conceptual foundation for how the GSP will address the greenspace objectives of the City at a time of unprecedented growth. The following section constructs the diverse layering of circuitry that constitutes Vaughan's **Circuit 51 Conceptual Approach**.



Foundational Green+Blue Network (Natural Heritage)

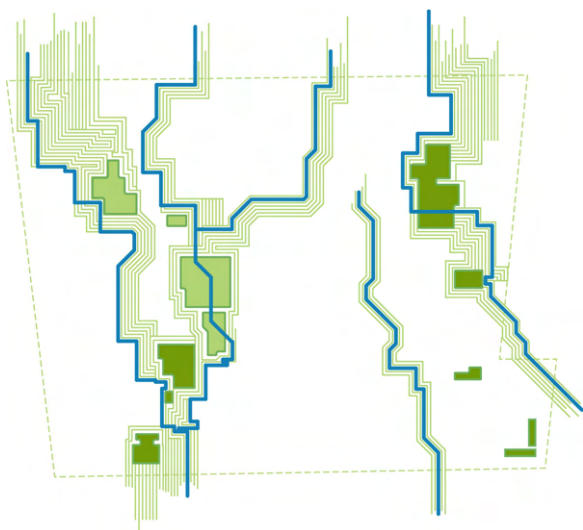
As the original settlement rationale behind urbanization, the Green + Blue Network, characterized by the Natural Heritage system provides the foundation of Circuit 51. Historically natural heritage was torn down and controlled to allow for urbanization. This past is clearly expressed in the southern and older parts of the city, where segments of the watershed are buried or channelized. This is in sharp contrast to northern parts of the city where natural heritage assets are protected and allowed to function, even as development continues to grow.

The continued growth of this circuitry provides vital connectivity for flora and fauna, that is tied to Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine. Its importance to Vaughan should never be undermined. Therefore, it is vital that every resident is directly or indirectly linked through this network.



Identifying Key City Hubs (Destination + Regional Parks)

Within the Green + Blue Network are a series of key City owned parks, which act as hubs of activity. These are destination and regional parks, larger scale hubs that serve all residents and have a regional draw for ecology, athletics and culture. The appeal of these key park spaces is tied to active programming and access to natural heritage. The City will continue to explore opportunities to grow and enhance municipally owned key hubs, particularly as the population grows. These hubs are intrinsically tied to the residents of the city, who have always had access to the Green + Blue network. Lands in the Greenbelt, including the Oak Ridges Moraine, will be protected in growth areas and provide a strategic opportunity to introduce civic amenities, including North Maple Regional Park (NMRP).



Identifying Key Cultural Heritage Hubs (TRCA Assets, etc)

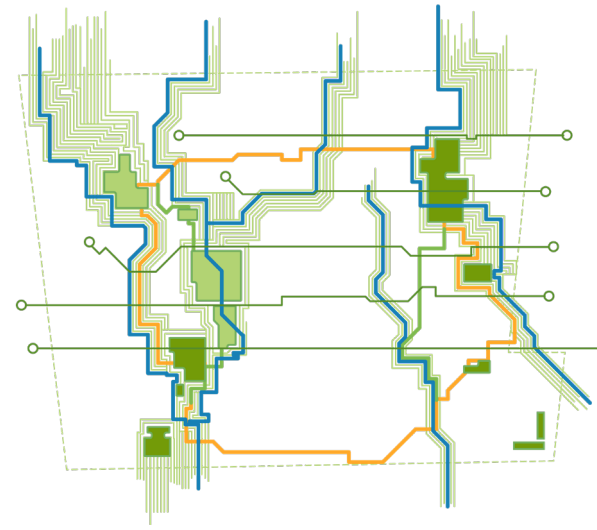
To support access into the Green + Blue Network it is important to build upon the public and cultural heritage assets within the natural heritage system. These include but are not limited to heritage conservation districts, community centres, significant parks and environmentally sensitive lands. Residents often regard many of these key public destinations as part of the overall greenspace network already. Although the access and operations of these sites are often outside of the City's control, partnerships should be explored to formally allow passive uses to serve local communities and enhance connections.

The grounds of McMichael Canadian Art Collection and other private amenities within the Green + Blue Network are also part of the social consciousness of the city's greenspace.



Primary Conduit "the Vaughan Super Trail"

The Vaughan Super Trail is a significant undertaking that helps to stitch together the various components into a wider greenspace system. Analysis and engagement have exhibited a largely severed and discontinuous system to active and passive mobility throughout the city. Although the Vaughan Super Trail is part of a separate City project, it is important to recognize its importance in building a connection and improving access to all aspects of the greenspace system.

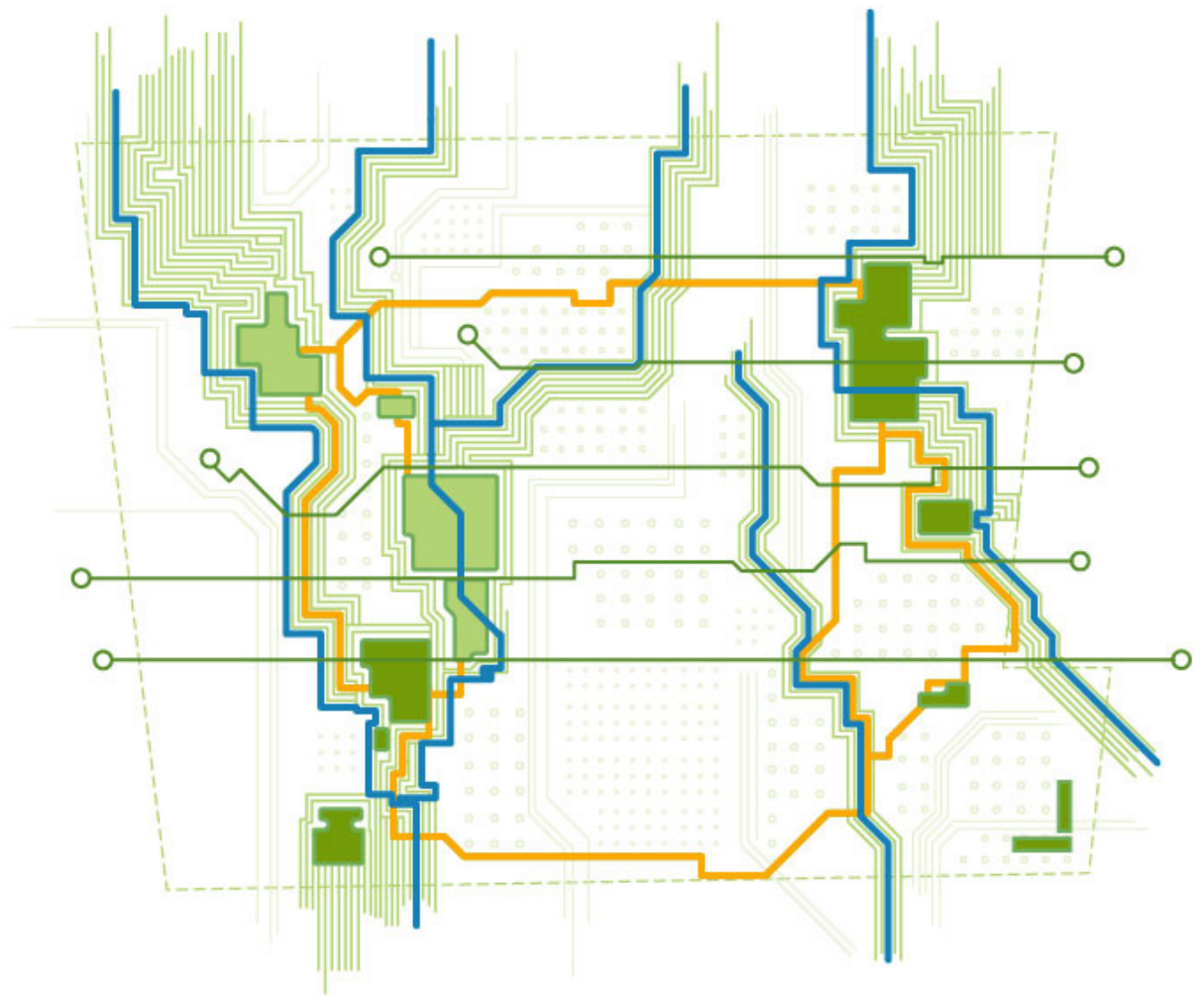


East - West Green Connectors "Green Streets"

The layering of the Vaughan Super Trail over the north - south oriented Green + Blue network creates a clear void in parts of the city that have developed along table lands. The east - west Regional Arterial Roads provide bisecting infrastructure throughout Vaughan and offer a clear opportunity to advance the greenspace system throughout the block structure of the city. These wide ROWs will evolve over time and will transform into multi-modal green networks that include Green + Blue infrastructure, along with active transportation and transit. They will play an important part in advancing the delivery of parkland beyond localized neighbourhoods, and into a more integrated system.

Local Green Circuits “Neighbourhood Open Spaces”

Within the fabric of each neighbourhood are a series of greenspaces that range in providing amenities to meet local needs. These “local green circuits” are important in providing the day-to-day open space requirements of a community. These constitute the baseline expectations of service delivery and have been validated through engagement. Key components to local greenspace will include active and passive uses, playgrounds and natural areas within 500m of every resident.



Urban Centred Circuits Priorities

The VMC, Weston Road and Highway 7, Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue, and Jane Street Corridor to name a few, are subject to unique pressures that preclude development from obtaining similar provision and service levels. To address this potential deficiency, Circuit 51 outlines strategies to meet baseline expectations of service delivery in other parts of the city. This includes urban solutions to provide access for active and passive uses, playgrounds and natural areas. The urban centred circuits will be designed differently than traditional neighbourhoods in Vaughan. Compact development and high-density design will reduce the footprint of greenspaces and introduce more users to the limited greenspace in these areas. The following strategies will be employed in Strategic Growth Areas.

Activation of Setbacks and Streetscapes

As outlined within the City's Urban Design Guidelines, setbacks and integration of streetscapes will provide one of the most important armatures of open space, particularly in intensification areas. These spaces offer important opportunities to introduce trees and greenery, and passive recreation uses. Activated streets and open spaces provide an opportunity to extend and further connect and improve the greenspace network through other means than parkland dedication.

POPS and Strata Parks

Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS) are encumbered lands and subject to their own guidelines and policies (POPS Guidelines and Standards Study). Strata Parks may provide opportunities for public programming defined by the City, depending on their agreement.

While unencumbered public parkland is always preferred compared to POPS and Strata Parks, these two forms of public space can help extend the greenspace system into developing urban areas of the city in response to recent legislative changes.

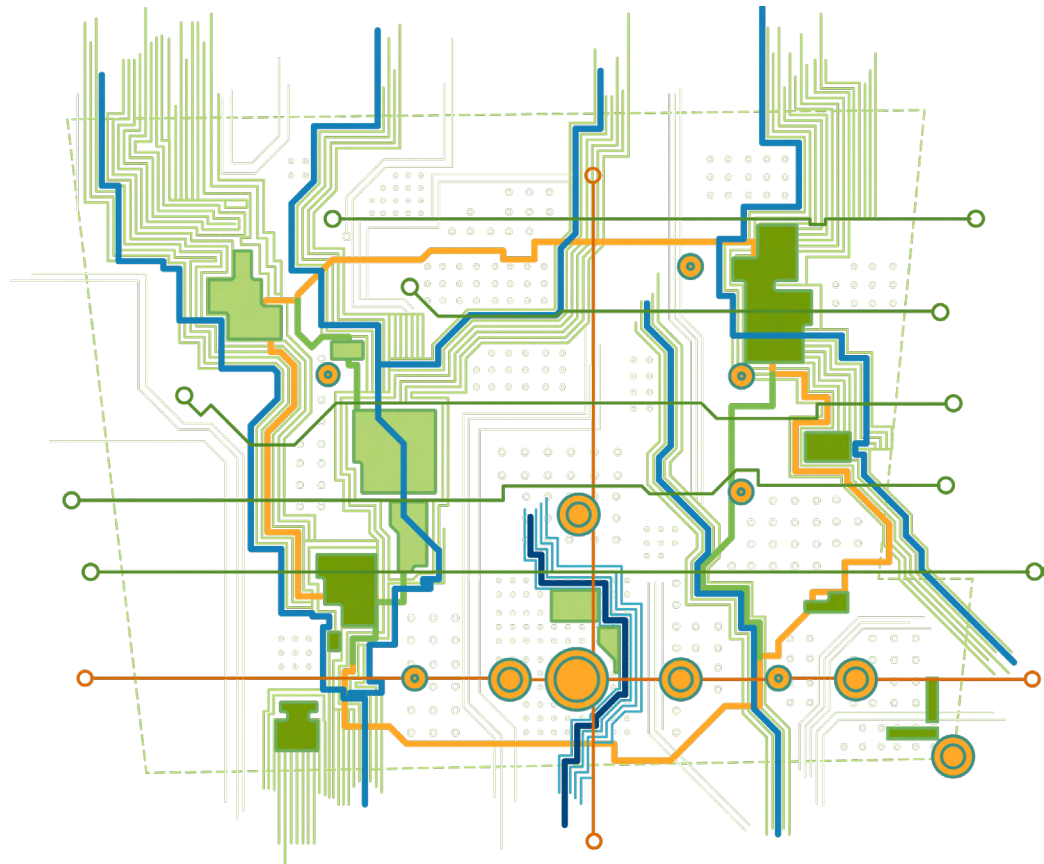
Re-Establishing Black Creek

The void of natural heritage in the post-industrial intensification areas creates a significant service gap, particularly in the VMC. Building upon the City's existing work for Black Creek renewal, there is an opportunity to improve the stormwater management and ecology of the area while creating an innovative greenspace that serves the growing population of the VMC.

The renewed Black Creek would provide a critical natural greenspace in a developing urban area that currently does not meet the City's park provision target. Furthermore, the renewed greenspace would provide improved active transportation access to the rest of Vaughan's greenspace network in the most urbanized part of the city and re-establish a historic Green-Blue circuit.

5.3 Circuit 51 Composition

The composition of layered circuits as expressed through section 5.2, shows the elaborate network that is made available amid existing and future development. This conceptual approach directly informs the Greenspace Strategic Plan. Each of the components that make up Circuit 51 inform park typologies, provisioning, dedication practices, acquisition, as well as redevelopment through various types of urban form, as further elaborated in Chapter 7.



5.4 Circuit 51 to Parkland Approach

Circuit 51 is heavily based on contextual drivers as well as engagement results. In particular, the Phase 2 engagement survey provides key insights to the distribution of local parks and city-wide or regional open space amenities as illustrated in Figure 16. Informed by this data, Circuit 51 has provided a conceptual approach of layering of greenspace asset throughout the city. The spatial distribution model illustrated in Figure 17, helps to better understand the expected impacts to residents as it relates to the wider system.

Spatial distribution supports immediate access to local active play, passive areas, playground, and natural areas either through the natural heritage system or supporting green infrastructure (i.e., natural areas and woodlands). As outlined through the survey, cultural, community and professional athletic facilities will be provided through city-wide greenspace facilities that potentially require other modes of transport. The following diagram provides a bridge between the Circuit 51 and the Parkland Approach (chapter 7), including the revised parkland typologies. Chapter 7 will also outline the parkland provisions, dedication, acquisition and redevelopment as a framework to advance greenspace. This framework is then broken down into case studies to provide suggested application of the GSP.

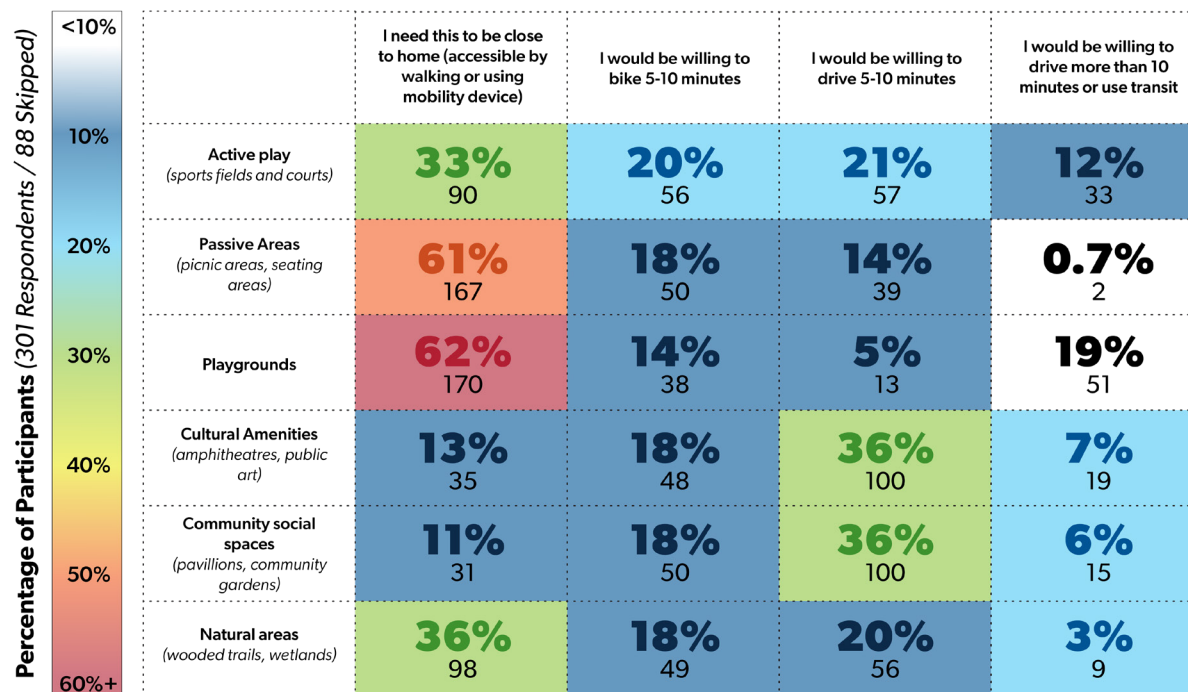


Figure 16: Phase 2 Engagement Survey Results on Travel to Greenspace Amenities

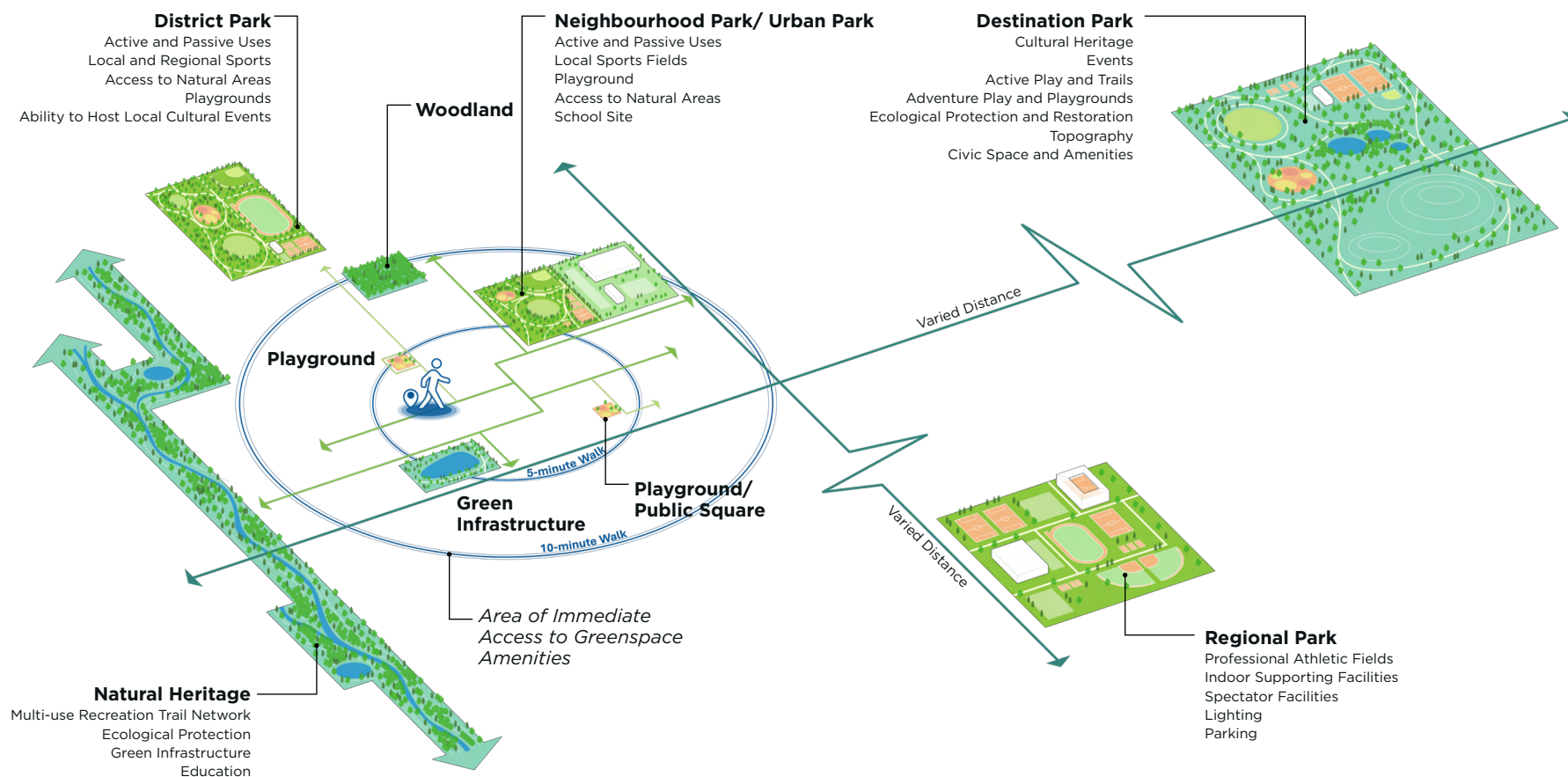


Figure 17: Spatial Distribution Model

A lush green forest scene with tall trees and a grassy clearing. The image is heavily green-tinted. In the foreground, there's a grassy area with several large, light-colored rocks scattered across it. The background is filled with dense foliage and tall trees, some with visible trunks. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

**“Making Vaughan more green is always
a good idea and I appreciate whenever
there’s more nature around me.”**

- Vaughan Resident

Chapter 6

Acquisition Priority Areas

The GSP considered a range of factors based on input from residents and stakeholders to develop greenspace acquisition priority area maps. This will help Vaughan identify where greenspace is needed as it continues to grow.

6.1 Priority Acquisition Layers

The GSP considered a variety of factors to identify areas of the City where greenspace should be acquired or improved. Through public engagement and internal engagement with City staff, the following priorities were identified for improving and expanding Vaughan's greenspace system.

- » Improving transit, biking, and walking access to parks.
- » Providing parks close to strategic growth areas.
- » Providing greenspace for equity-deserving groups.

Building on these priorities, nine layers were used to assess Vaughan's existing greenspace system and guide greenspace acquisition and improvements in consideration of its expected growth and demographic shifts:

- » 2051 Population Density
- » 2051 Park per Person
- » Park Catchment Gaps
- » Transit Access
- » High Youth Population
- » High Senior Population
- » Low Income Areas
- » District Park Catchments
- » Impervious Surfaces

Each of these layers were mapped individually illustrated in Figure 18, shown on the following pages, and then overlaid to create a composite map where each layer overlap. Areas that have the greatest number of layers warrant greenspace acquisition and/or improvements to their surrounding areas.

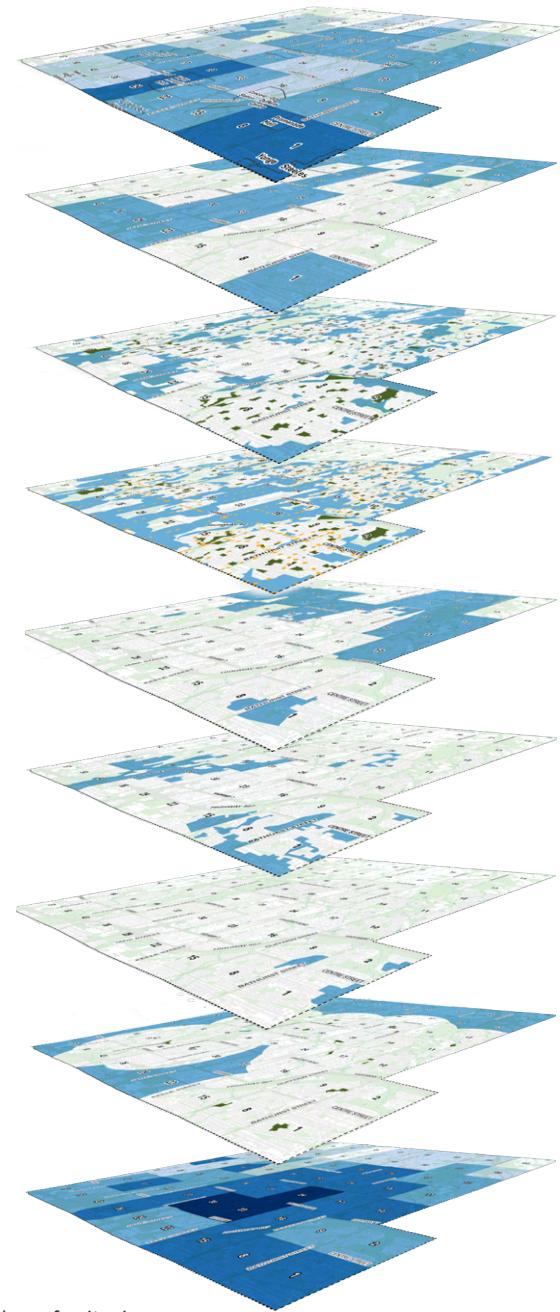


Figure 18: Overlay of criteria maps.



6.1.1 2051 Population Density

Vaughan is expected to experience significant population growth over the next 30 years and reach a population of 575,900 by 2051. Understanding where and how that growth will occur can improve the effectiveness of greenspace planning.

Figure 19 illustrates the projected 2051 population density by planning block. Mapping for this layer used projected population data from Vaughan's secondary plans and other forecasts, assigning population to planning blocks proportionately based on the area of the secondary plan and dissemination block. To determine acquisition priority areas, blocks where population density is expected to exceed 5000 people per square kilometre are used as part of the overlay analysis. This analysis helps to prioritize areas where population growth is expected to present the greatest challenge to meet parkland targets.

2051 Population Density

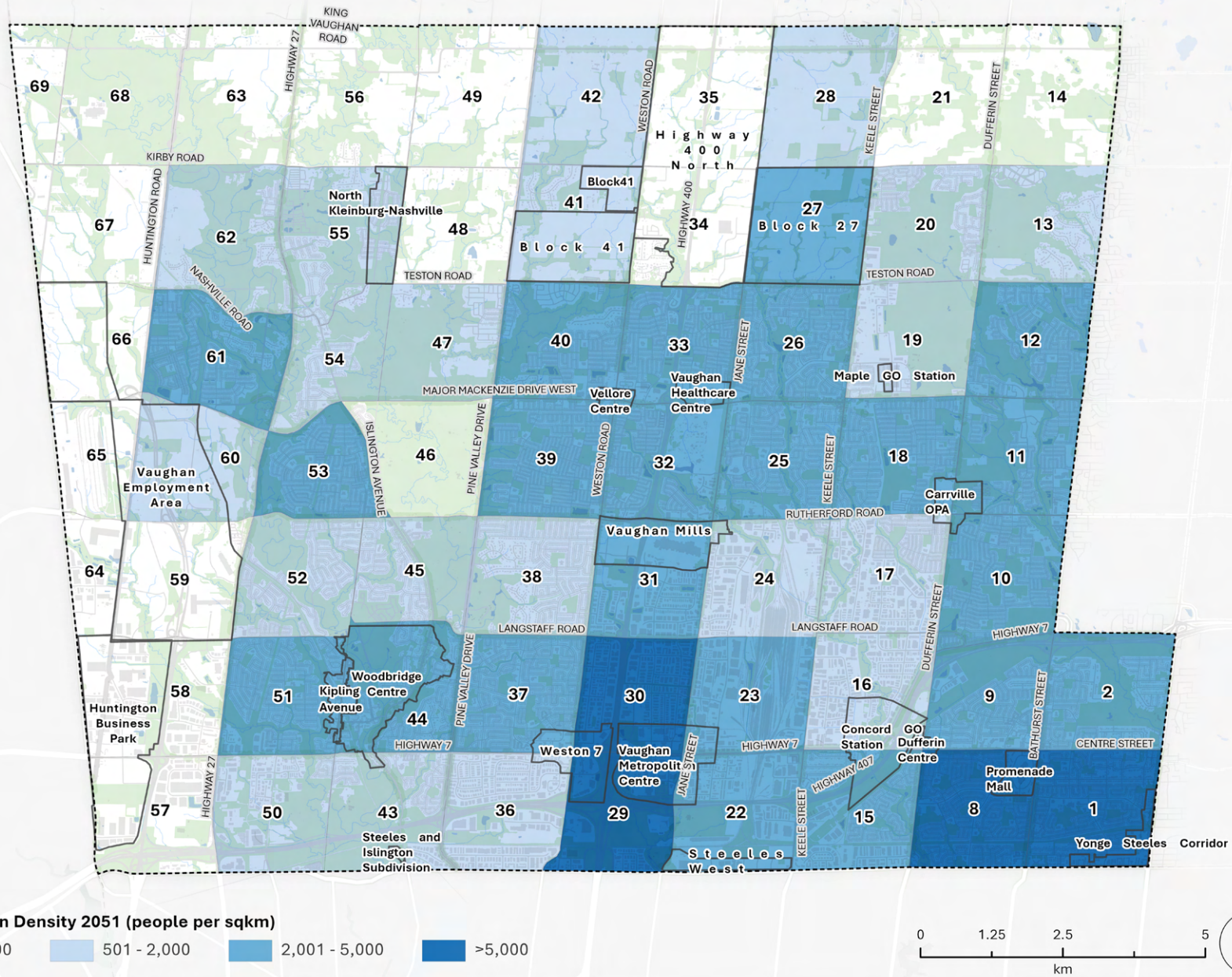


Figure 19: 2051 population density.

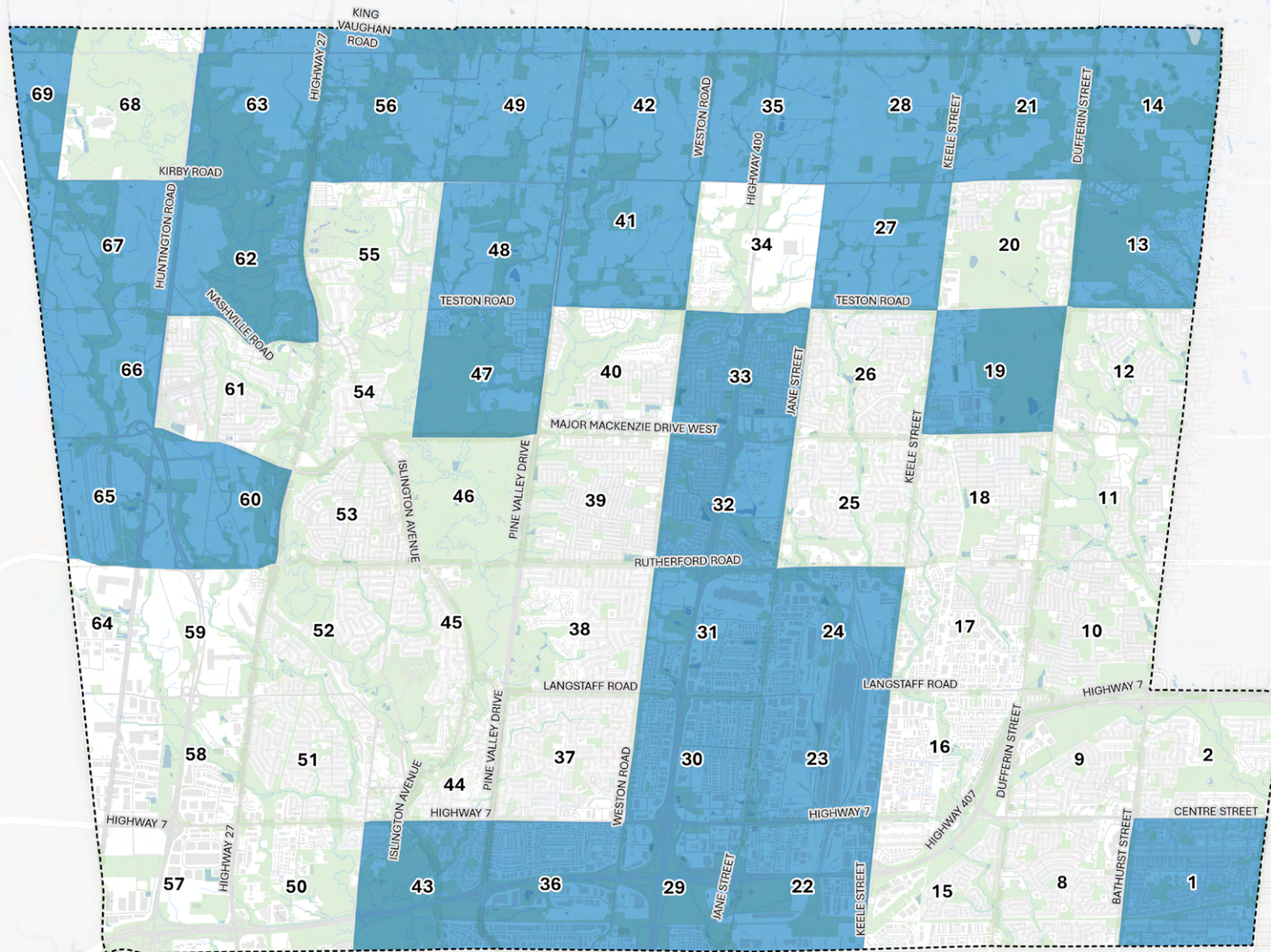


6.1.2 Parkland Supply per Person

Understanding the existing and planned parkland supply in relation to population growth is important for determining where to prioritize park improvements and acquisition. Data for existing and future parks and 2051 population data were grouped by Vaughan's planning blocks. Forecasted 2051 park area was compared to 2051 population data by planning block to determine the expected park area per person by 2051. This comparison identifies planning blocks that will fall short of meeting the City's current citywide goal of 2 hectares per 1000 people or 20 square metres per person.

Figure 20 illustrates planning blocks that will have less than one hectare per 1000 people of parkland in 2051 based on known existing and future parks. It will be key to update this analysis and map as more parks are dedicated and purchased each year.

2051 Park Area Per Person



Park Area Per Person

Less than 10 square metres

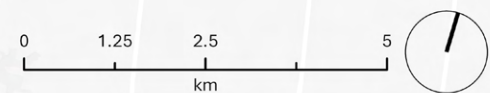


Figure 20: 2051 park area per person

6.1.3 Park Catchment Gaps

To assess park catchment gaps, a park walking catchment model was created, shown in Figure 21. A catchment model considers on-the-ground walking conditions such as paths and sidewalks, whereas buffer models do not. The model extended a 500-metre walking distance from each park entry point for every park in Vaughan. Areas within these catchments allow residents to access a park within a 5-10 minute walk.

Figure 22 on the following page identifies residential areas that lack a park within a 500-metre walking distance, shown in blue.



Figure 21: Demonstration of 500 metre park catchment.

Park Catchment Gap Areas

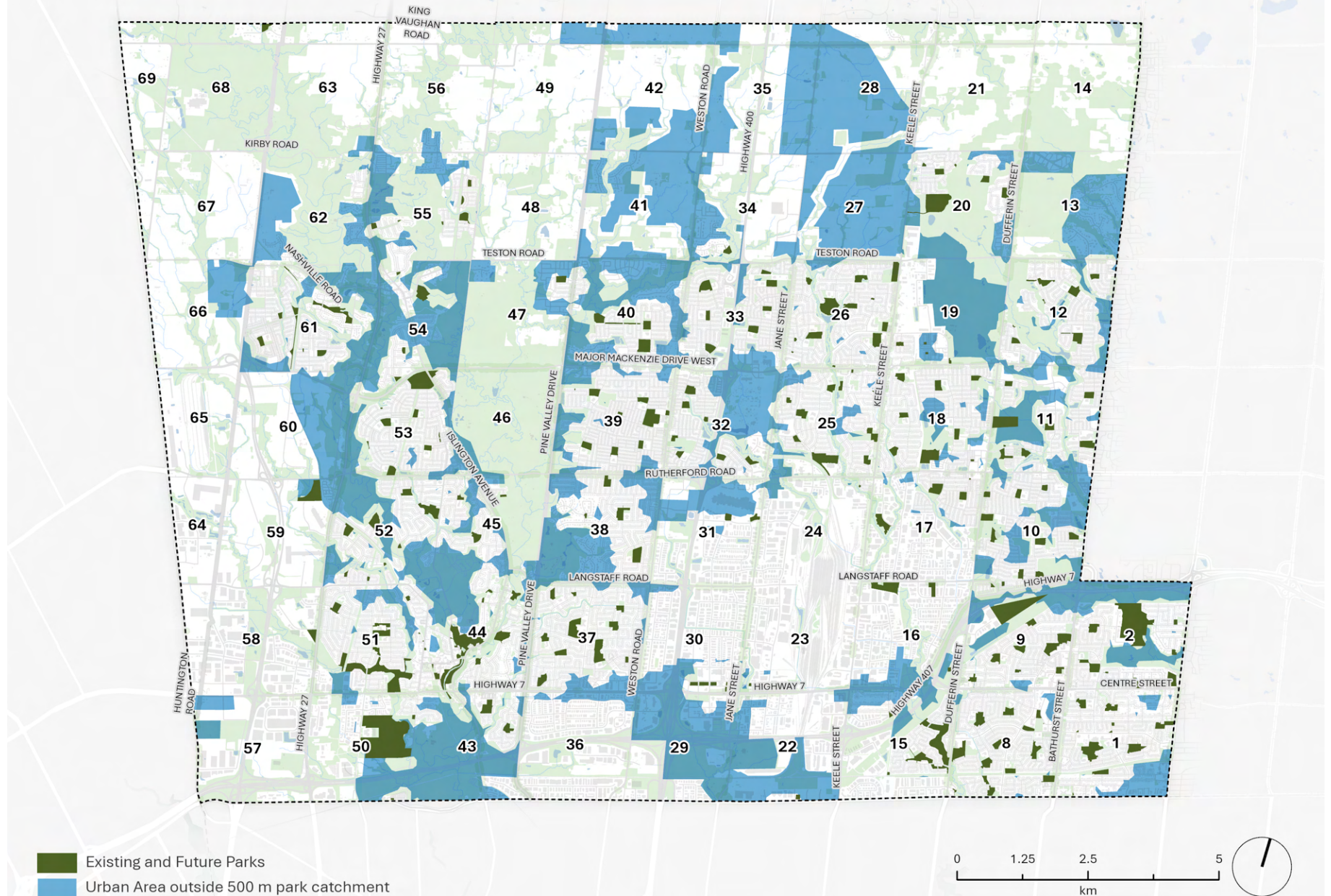


Figure 22: Park catchment gap areas.



6.1.4 Transit User Service Gaps

To identify parkland acquisition areas with transit access, a model was created that extended a 500-metre buffer from each transit stop (YRT, TTC, and GO Transit). Park walking distance catchments were removed from these buffered areas to eliminate areas that already have access to parks.

Therefore, Figure 23 identifies areas that currently have transit access, but are not within walking distance of existing parks. These areas warrant parkland acquisition, given their access to transit.

A significant portion of these gaps are within employment areas and along 400 series highways and arterial roads. There are also gaps identified along the peripheral areas of existing neighbourhoods that border agricultural lands. Specific attention should be placed on areas in transition from employment lands to mixed use residential, since these developing areas will need parks to serve new residents.

Transit Catchment

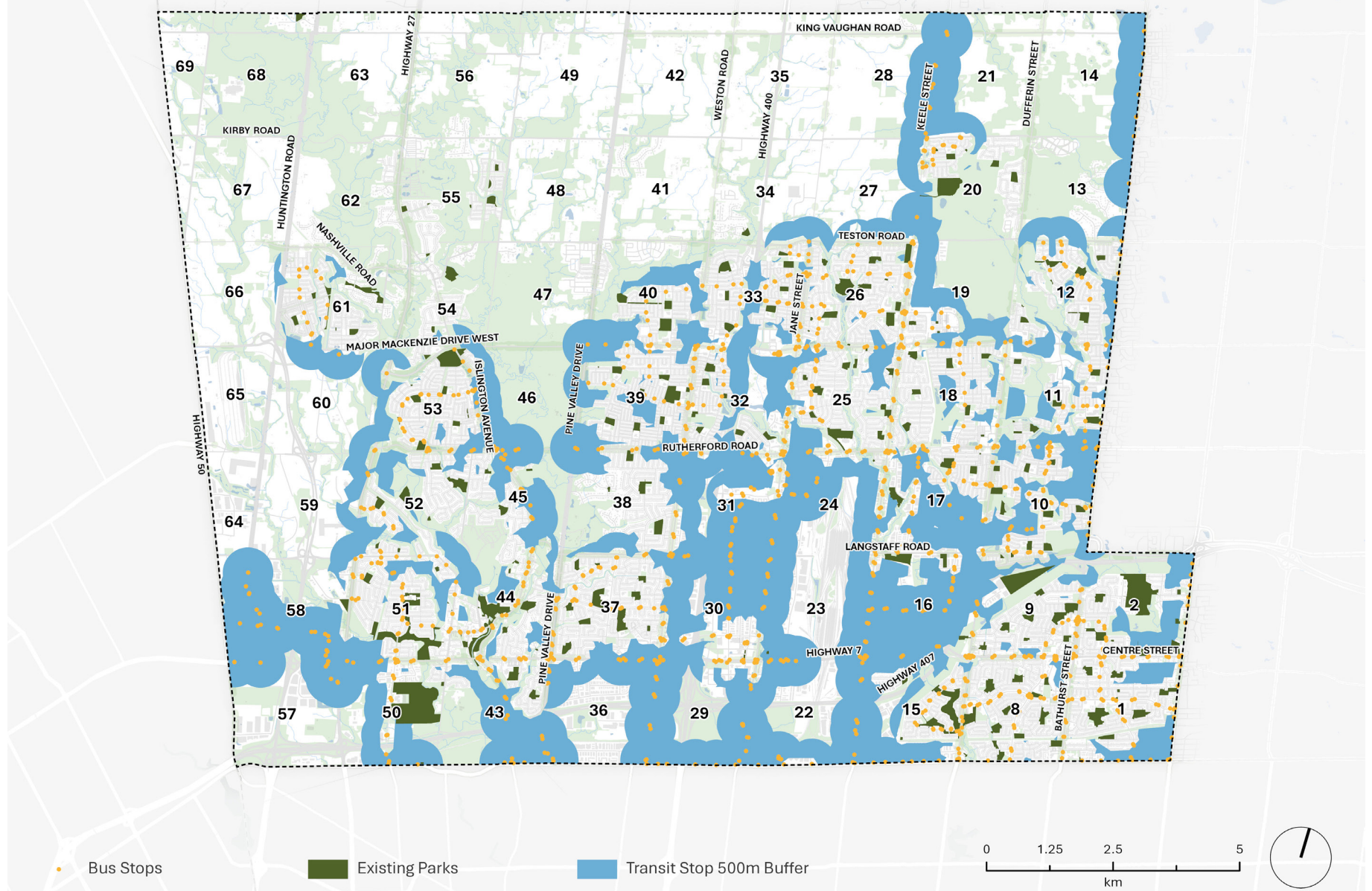


Figure 23: Transit Catchment



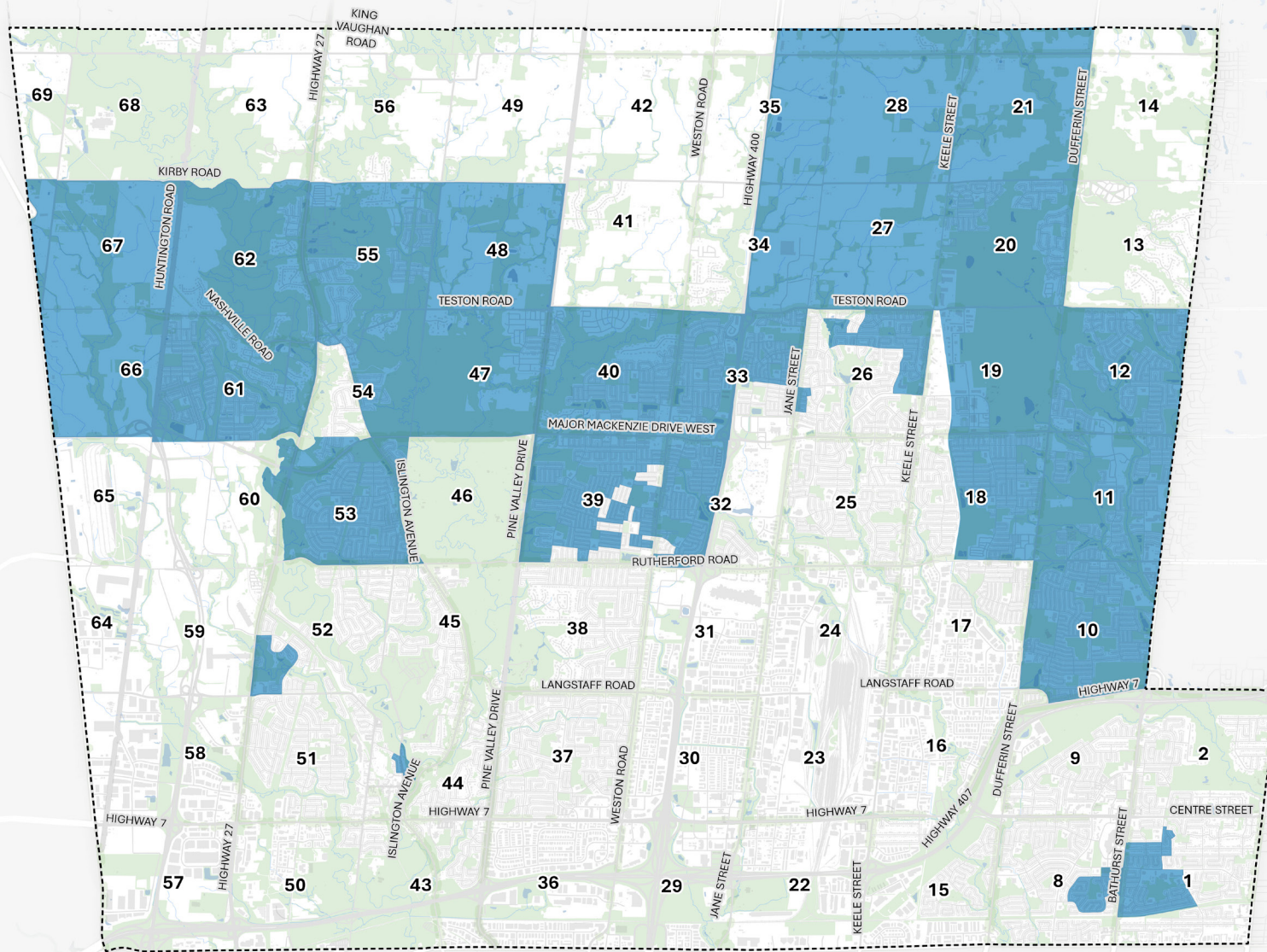
6.1.5 Proportion of Age 19 and Under

Parks provide essential play spaces for teenagers and children, encouraging active lifestyles and providing low-cost opportunities for community gatherings. Parks also provide areas for educational programs and family friendly events. Park provisions in neighbourhoods with children is essential for creating a healthy and active community. This greenspace acquisition criterion is defined as the percentage of population of residents aged 19 or under within a planning block using 2021 census data. Age 19 is used as the cut off due to the available census data. Members of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) highlighted how parks should provide more opportunities for teenagers to socialize in addition to recreation.

A minimum proportion of 25% of the population was determined to be a reasonable amount to indicate areas that may require different parkland and amenity needs. Figure 24 illustrates areas of the city where 25% of the population in dissemination blocks are 19 years old and younger.

As the VMC, Weston 7 and other Strategic Growth Areas build out, it will be important to update this data to know if higher portions of families are living in these areas than expected.

High Proportion of 19 and Younger Population



25% or more of the population is 19 years old and younger

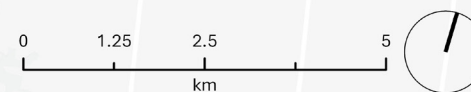


Figure 24: Proportion of the population 19 years old and younger.



6.1.6 Proportion of Seniors Population

By 2051, older adults (65 years and older) will make up the largest portion of Vaughan's population. Ensuring parks are easily accessible to older adults is one component of a range of programs to promote healthy active lives and support age-friendly complete communities.

The metric used to determine a high population of 65 and older is when a dissemination block has 25% or greater of the population 65 and older. 25% was chosen as a reasonable cut off to identify priority areas. Figure 25 illustrates in Vaughan where the percentage of population of residents aged 65 or older exceeds 25% of the population of the planning block. There is a higher seniors population in blocks 1, 8, 15, 31, 37, 43, 44, 45 and 51.

High Senior Population

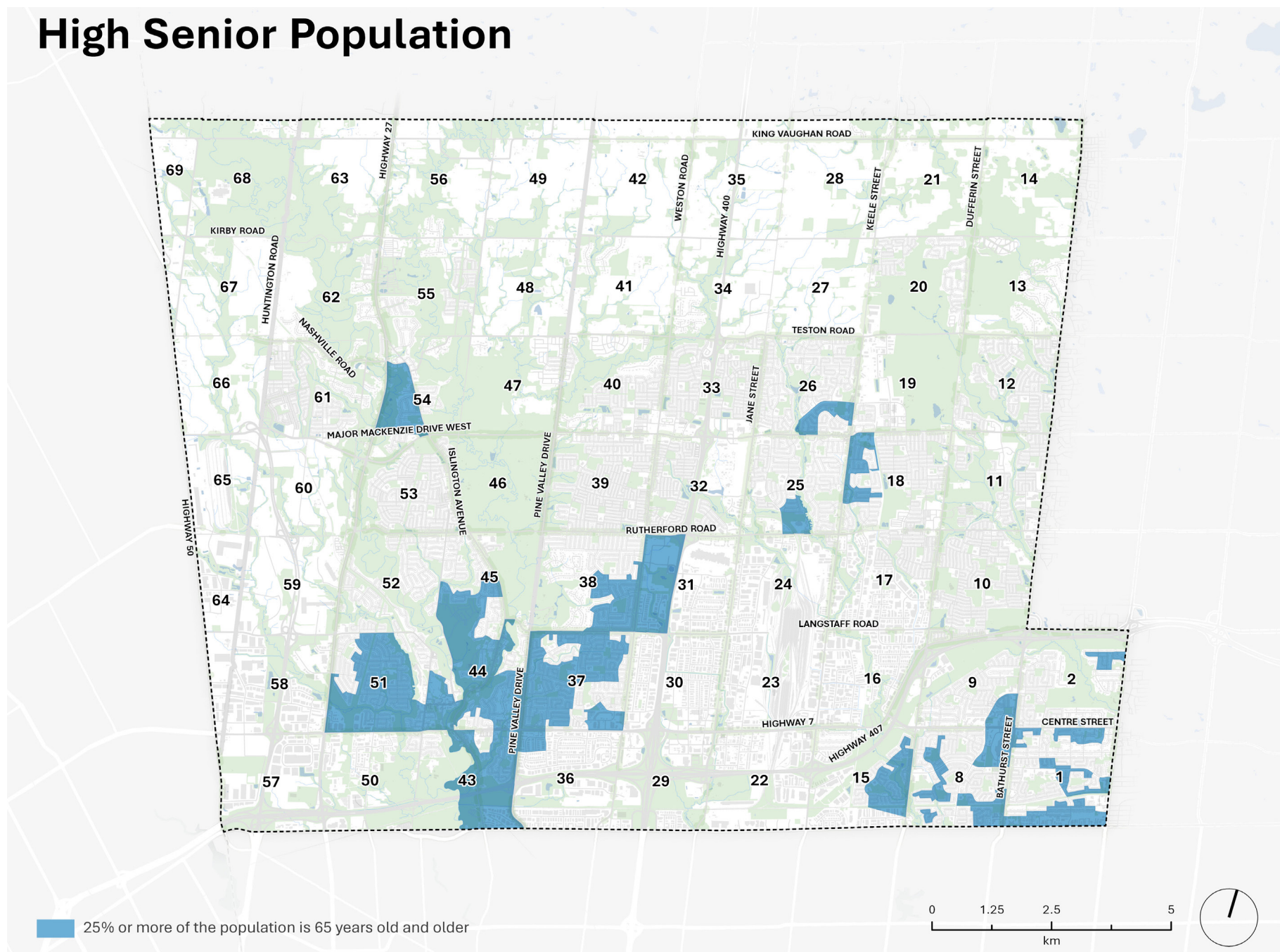


Figure 25: Proportion of population 65 years old and older.



6.1.7 Low Income Areas

Historically, neighbourhoods with lower income residents have not had the same access to high quality parks or private outdoor areas compared to those in wealthier neighbourhoods.

An equity lens was applied to identify planning blocks where there is a greater prevalence of low-income families by using the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) metric. The LICO is a measure used by Statistics Canada that identifies economic families that are expected to spend more than 20% of their income on food, shelter, and clothing compared to the average.

Figure 26 identifies areas in Vaughan where more than 10% of households are considered low-income, using the LICO metric.

Low Income Areas

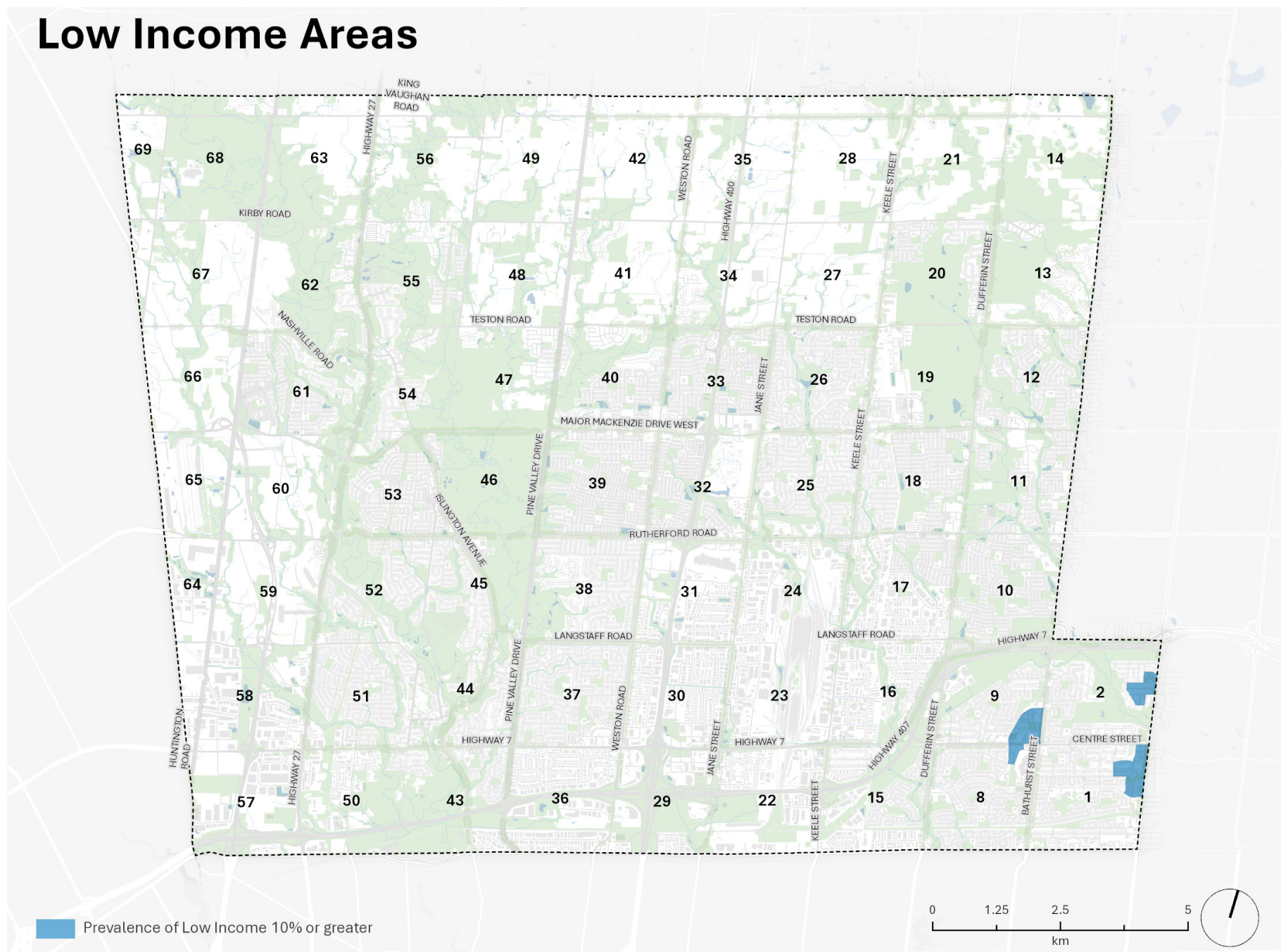


Figure 26: Low income areas



6.1.8 District Parks

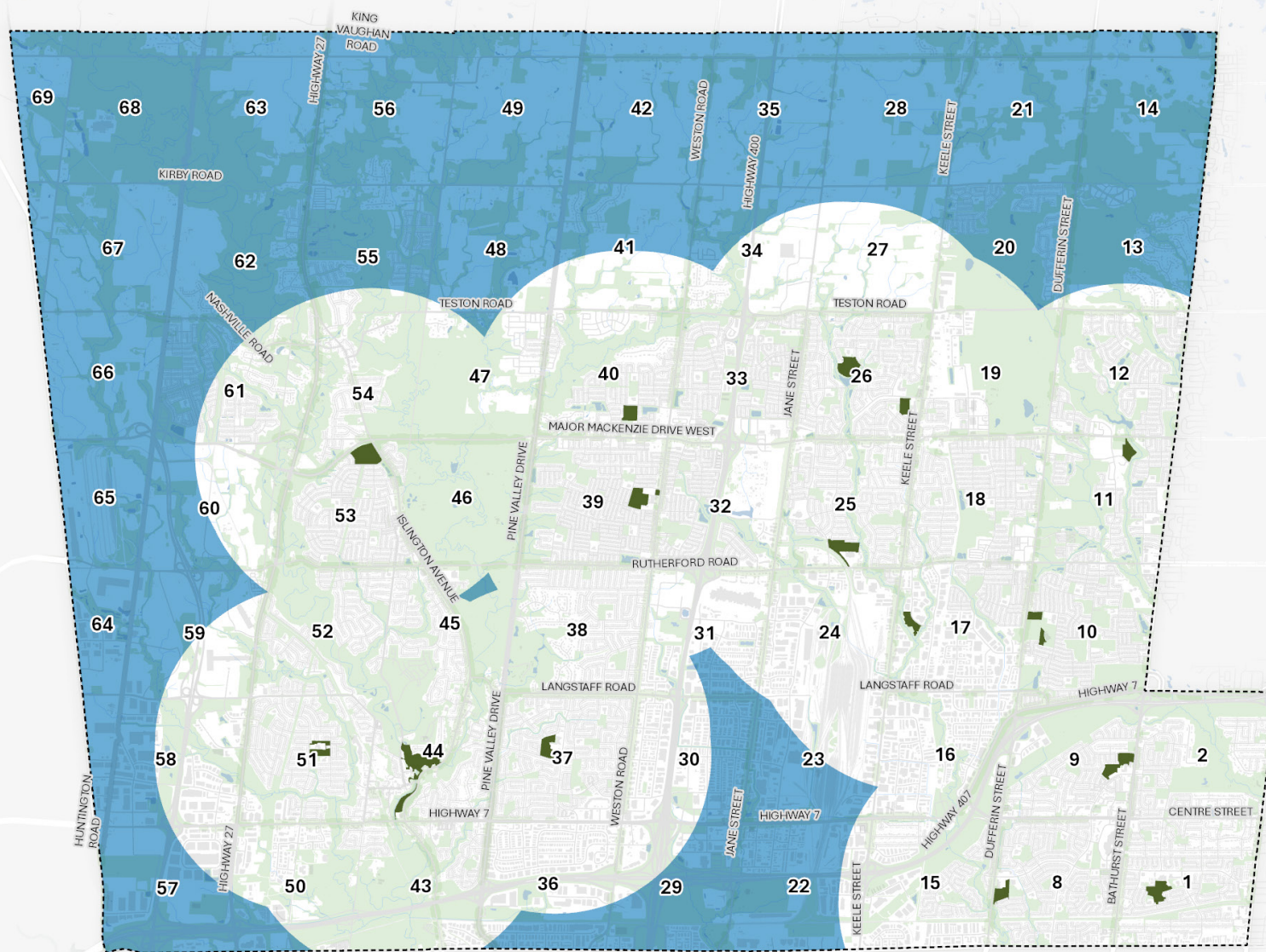
District Parks are intended to serve larger communities with a variety of sports and recreation facilities that are not provided in neighbourhood parks such as community gardens and large format sports fields. They are often paired with community centres and schools to create a community hub for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The City currently aims to provide District Parks within a 2.5 kilometre radius of residents to provide access to District Park amenities. This target remains relevant to provide equitable access to higher order sports fields and facilities.

In order to identify areas in Vaughan that are not already served by District Parks, the GSP created a 2.5 kilometre buffer from each District Park in Vaughan, since District Parks are intended to serve multiple neighbourhoods. Areas outside of this buffer warrant a higher degree of greenspace acquisition since they are not within close proximity to existing District Parks.

Figure 27 illustrates the areas of the city that are not within a 2.5 kilometre radius of a District Park. Some new greenfield areas and Strategic Growth Areas between Jane and Keele Streets, south of Highway 7 are currently outside of a 2.5 kilometre radius of a District Park.

District Park Catchment



- District Parks
- Area outside of 2.5 km District Park Buffer

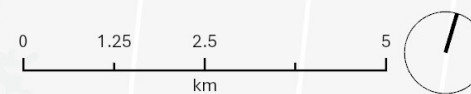


Figure 27: District Park Catchment



6.1.9 Impervious Surfaces

Impervious surfaces, such as concrete and asphalt, make up a large percentage of Vaughan's surface area. These surfaces contribute to the "heat-island effect" which absorbs the sun's heat and re-emits it, increasing the temperature of the air and surface. This can make hot days in the summer even hotter.

Impervious surfaces also decrease Vaughan's defenses against heavy rainfall and floods. Natural permeable surfaces such as grass and marshes, absorb water which helps Vaughan manage its stormwater. Increasing the amount of impervious surfaces in Vaughan is essential for adapting to climate change and making Vaughan a more sustainable city.

A threshold of 50% impervious area is used in the overlay to generate the acquisition priority areas.

The analysis is taken from the impervious surface data from the Southern Ontario Land Resource Information System. Figure 28 illustrates the percentage of impervious surface area per block.

Impervious Surfaces

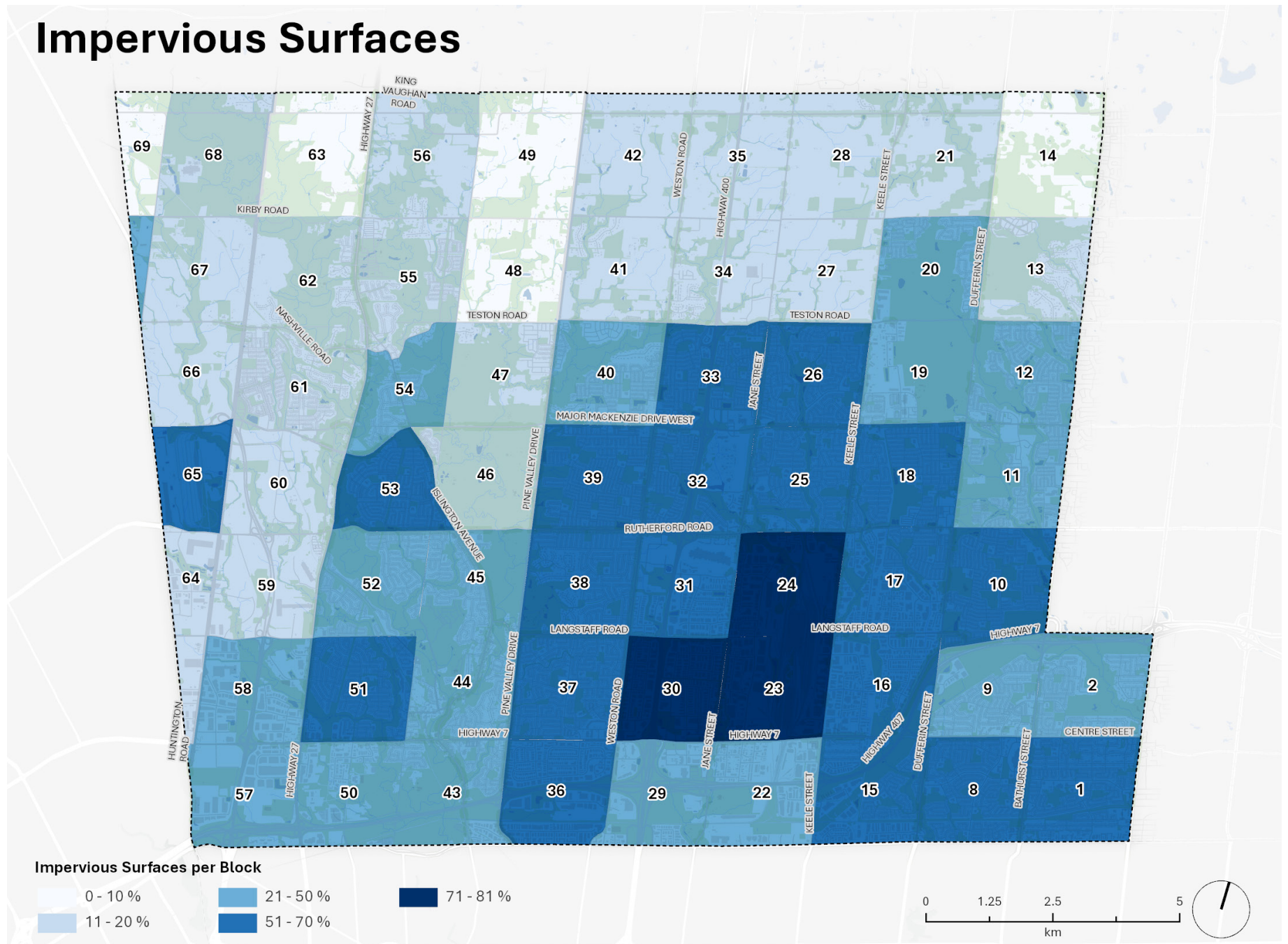


Figure 28: Impervious surface area.

6.2 Acquisition Priority Areas

The nine criteria are overlapped to produce an acquisition priority area map, shown in Figure 29, which identifies areas where four or more criteria overlap with each other. The more criteria that overlap with each other, the higher the area has been identified as a priority based on the selected criteria. The highest priority areas are where the City should focus the most attention to determine if the communities greenspace needs are being met.

Figure 29 highlights areas with:

- » Low parkland provision per person
- » High anticipated population density in 2051
- » Higher proportion of the population 19 years and younger and 65 years and older
- » Poor / limited access to existing parks within 500 metres
- » Higher proportion of low-income residents
- » High percentage of impervious surfaces
- » Areas beyond 2.5 kilometres of a District Park
- » Areas accessible by transit and outside of 500 metres of a park

* The nine criteria were all weighted equally to not emphasize one criterion over another.

Of note, are six planning blocks in Vaughan that exhibited the most area of overlap with five to six layers. These blocks are:

- 1> Block 1
- 2> Block 8
- 3> Block 10
- 4> Block 28
- 5> Block 29
- 6> Block 30

Based on the criteria, the identified planning blocks are the priority areas that warrant further consideration. Although the above listed six blocks have the most area covered by five to six criteria, the six blocks may not be considered as equal priority areas. Additional knowledge and context should be used to narrow the priority areas down further. Block 28 as an example, would not be a high priority at this time since it is expected future development would dedicate land for parks.

While the GSP used these specific nine layers to identify acquisition priority areas in the city based on today's circumstances, these circumstances may change in the future as the city continues to evolve. Future annual updates of the GSP will likely consider revisiting this model's criteria and consider alternative indicators to capture demographic, growth changes and environmental factors. Factoring in criteria weights or updating underlying data will re-prioritize areas of the City for greenspace acquisition and improvement.

Priority Acquisition Areas

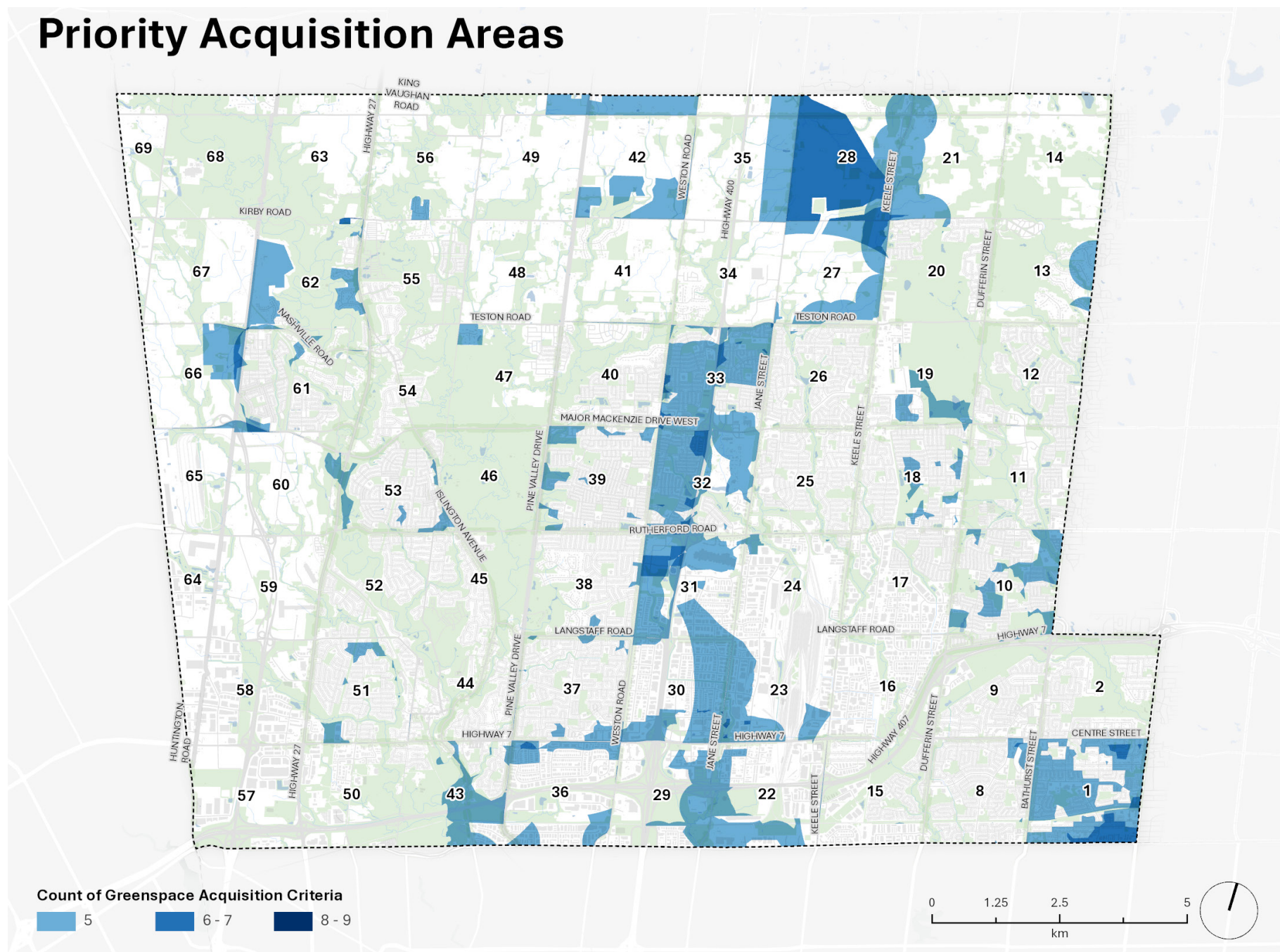



Figure 29: Priority Acquisition Areas



“With mental health top of our minds, we need more peaceful and natural settings in all our communities. Fewer lawn areas and more natural vegetation, meadows, pollinator gardens, wildlife habitat and native shrubs and trees to increase and maintain biodiversity.”

- Vaughan Resident

Chapter 7

Parkland Strategy

The strategy for the planning, acquisition, development and funding of parks sets the City up for future success to meet the needs of residents over the next 30 years. As the needs of residents change over time, the strategy has built in flexibility for the City to adapt and respond to change.

7.1 Parkland Typologies

In response to increased intensification and reductions in parkland dedication during the development process, the City of Vaughan will need modern and adaptable park classifications to meet the needs of its residents. The proposed park typologies are designed to address ongoing growth and development in Vaughan for the next 30 years.

Over time, the City will continue to acquire land intended for new parks and will work with residents to identify future amenities and programming including investigating the addition of washrooms and fountains to all parks. Each park will be subject to its own detailed design and public engagement process. The following sections provide an overview of Vaughan's six park types that the City will acquire over time primarily through parkland dedication and payment-in-lieu. Figure 30 provides a demonstration of parkland typologies.

Vaughan's proposed parkland classifications:

- 1> Destination Parks
- 2> Regional Parks
- 3> District Parks
- 4> Neighbourhood Parks
- 5> Urban Parks
- 6> Public Squares

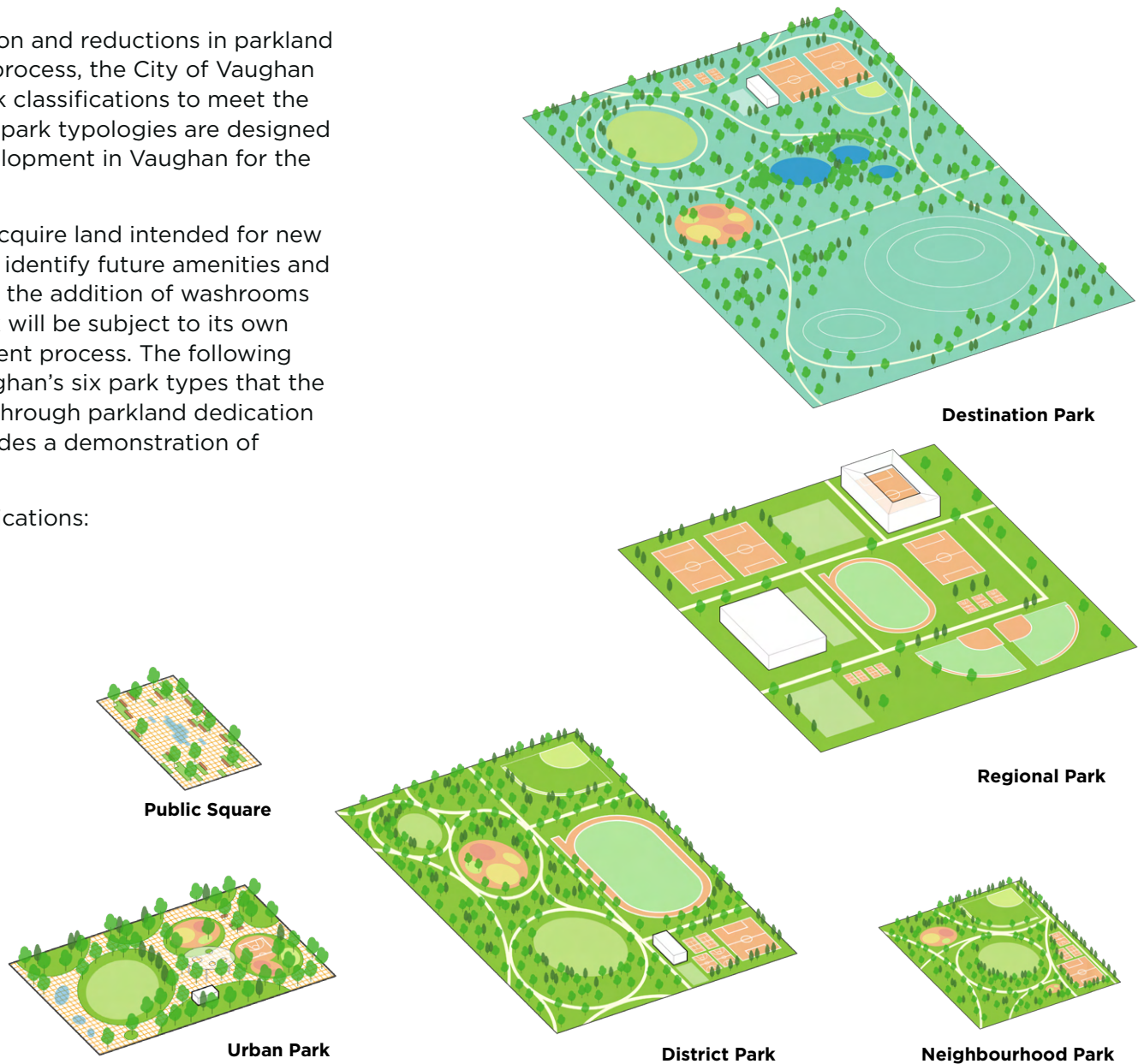


Figure 30: Demonstration of parkland typologies

7.1.1 Destination Park

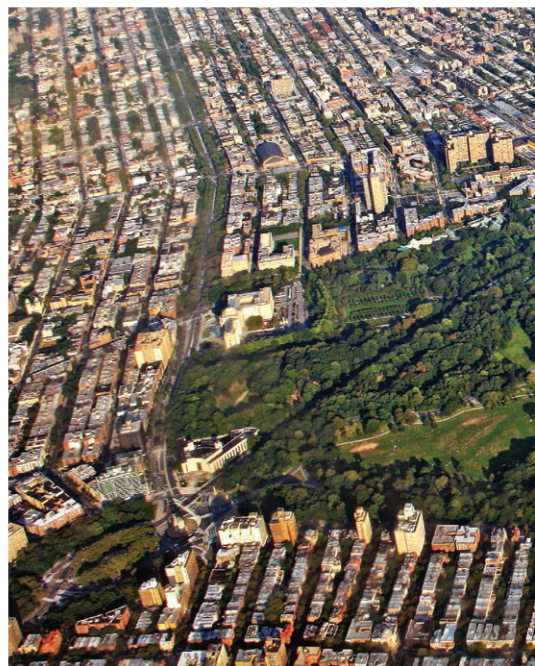
The emergence of destination parks is the result of years of engagement and planning focused on creating unique places that support principles of healthy lifestyles, equity, diversity, ecology, restoration, education, and culture. Destination Parks are signature civic spaces that combine significant natural and cultural heritage resources with unique recreational experiences and provide amenities and attractions designed to draw visitors from a broader geographic area. These parks shall serve as major city-wide attractions, offering specialized facilities and flexible spaces for both daily use and large-scale events. Destination Parks shall promote environmental stewardship, protect natural and cultural resources, be used to host educational programs, and provide spaces for physical activity and passive recreation. These parks shall be accessible year-round via multiple transportation modes and include the necessary facilities and amenities to support extended visits, festivals and city-wide events. Figure 31 illustrates a demonstration of a Destination Park.

Example: North Maple Regional Park



Figure 31: Demonstration of a Destination Park

Intent	These parks shall serve as major city-wide attractions, offering specialized facilities and flexible spaces for both daily use and large-scale events.
Amenities	Offers a range of premium recreational and sports facilities, trails and passive uses, as well as outdoor learning and cultural programming for residents with supportive amenities. Provides opportunities to protect and enhance natural heritage systems.
Frontage & Access	Located on regional roads/streets and primarily arterials.
Parking	On-site.
Degree of Maintenance	This park class may include unique elements requiring specialized maintenance and potentially on-site care takers. Non-standard maintenance costs can be expected for the unique elements and more durable material replacement.
Size	Varies, size would depend on the uniqueness of each park under this classification.



These parks will need to consider uniquely different financing and outreach to be successful. Similar to park conservatories, events and operations can be tied to alternative sources to traditional municipal budgets. NMRP and other Destination Parks have the potential for becoming revenue generators for the City in the long-term. The physical and ecological health of the park is also intrinsically linked to economic development and real estate overtime.

Top Left - Concept Rendering of Puente Hill Landfill Park, LA County; Image Credit: Studio-MLA + Top Right - North Maple Regional Park, Vaughan + Bottom Left - Evergreen Brickworks, Toronto; Image Credit: CCxA + Bottom Right - Prospect Park, NY; Image Credit: Elizabeth Keegin Colley

7.1.2 Regional Park

Regional Parks are expansive recreational and natural areas that serve as hubs for sport, recreation, and leisure. These parks are intended to offer planned outdoor and/or indoor premium lit sport facilities for activities that require larger land areas. Regional Parks function as city-wide destinations and shall be capable of accommodating large-scale events and attractions that draw visitors from outside the local area, such as sport tournaments and passive recreation opportunities, such as multi-use trails. Regional Parks are intended to offer a natural escape while remaining accessible and inclusive to people of diverse interests, ages and abilities. Figure 32 illustrates a demonstration of a Regional Park.

Examples: Vaughan Grove Sports Park, Uplands Park

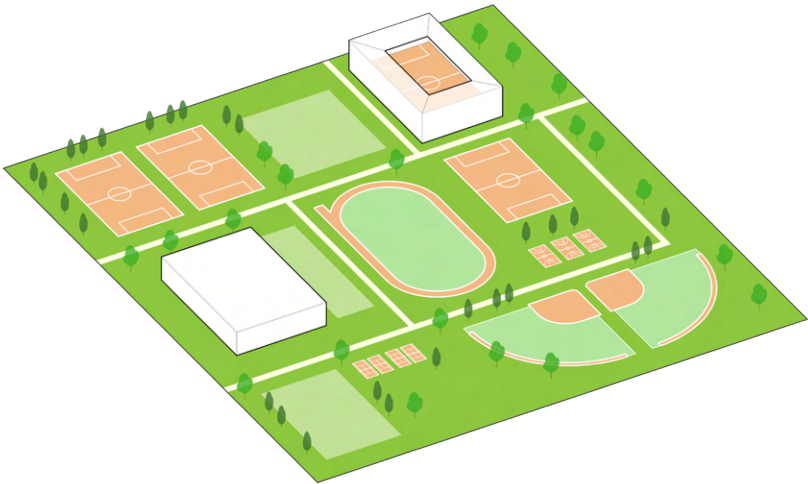
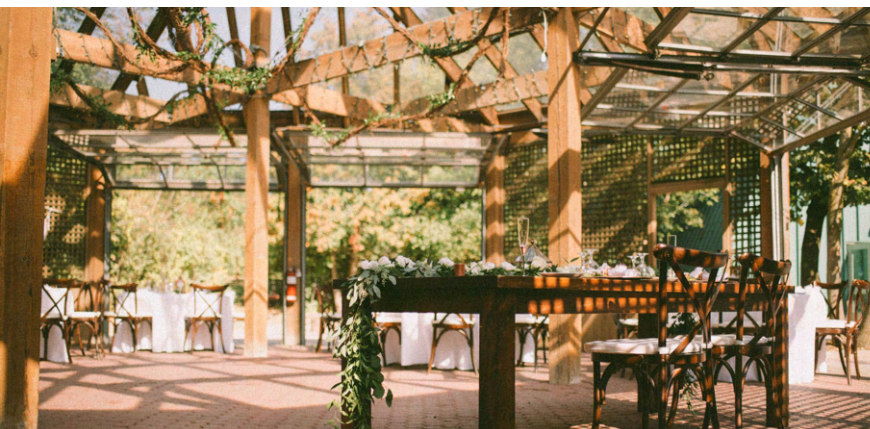


Figure 32: Demonstration of a Regional Park

Intent	Regional parks provide premium floodlit sport fields and recreation hubs, event centers, and environmental destinations. They are designed to attract residents city-wide and regionally for organized events.
Amenities	Clusters of premium lit sports fields, park buildings, district type facilities, recreational trails, event and gathering areas, primary or higher order type facilities. Amenities include bocce courts, premium baseball diamonds, hardball diamonds, soccer fields and artificial turf fields.
Frontage & Access	Located on major streets and primarily arterials.
Parking	On-site.
Degree of Maintenance	Specialized and premium amenities may require a more frequent level of service and maintenance based on higher usage and premiums charged for a higher level of service or specific programming. Other items can follow a standard level of service.
Size	Regional Parks will typically be greater than 15 hectares.



Top left - Kortright Conservation Park, Vaughan + Middle left - Blucher Square, Russia; Image Credit: PIK + Bottom left - Fengpei Canal, China; Image Credit: ZEHO ECO + Right - Al Fay Park, Image Credit: SLA

7.1.3 District Park

District Parks serve to provide a wide range of outdoor sports, recreation, and community activity space, extending their reach beyond the immediate neighbourhoods and supporting the diverse needs of the larger communities within which they are located. District Parks are intended to support communities with varying degrees of urban density and foster a sense of community and social connection by providing access to district level amenities and facilities, such as washrooms and large format sports fields. Figure 33 illustrates a demonstration of a District Park.

Examples: Mackenzie Glen District Park, Chatfield District Park, Sonoma Heights Community Park, Carrville District Park, York Hill District Park.

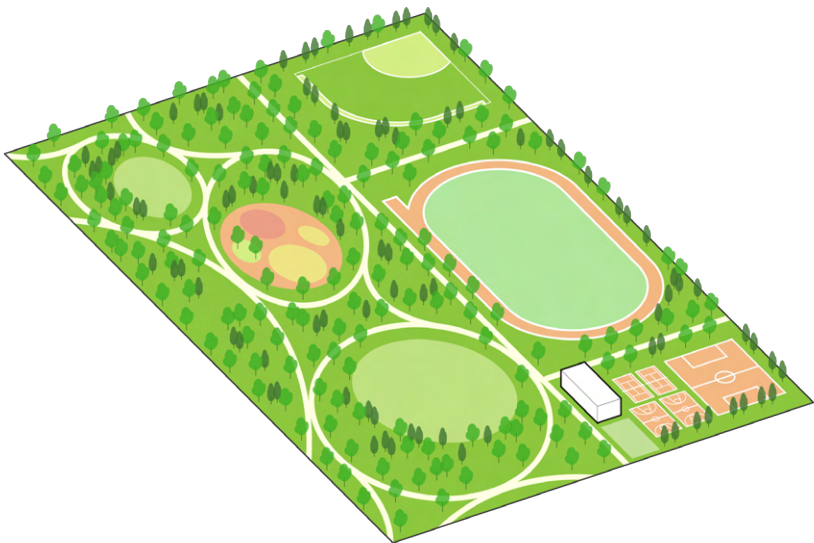


Figure 33: Demonstration of a District Park

Intent	Provide a wide range of outdoor sports, recreation, and community activity space, extending its reach beyond the immediate neighbourhood supporting the diverse needs of the community. Serves residents within 2.5 km catchment.
Amenities	Premium lit sports fields, park washroom building, community gathering and event areas, district type facilities, primary or higher order type facilities, community-based uses such as community gardens and passive recreation. Typically has five or more recreation facilities.
Frontage & Access	Located on collector and arterial roads.
Parking	On-site.
Degree of Maintenance	Standard level of service across District Parks.
Size	District Parks should be greater than 5 hectares.



Top left - Jean Augustine District Park, Vaughan + Top right - Myyrmäki Sports Park, Finland; Image Credit: Loci Landscape Architects + Jesse Owens Park, France; Image Credit: Espace Libre

7.1.4 Neighbourhood Park

Neighbourhood Parks serve as the foundation of our parks and greenspace system in greenfield and low-density neighbourhoods. These parks are intended to support local recreation by providing a balance of active recreational uses and passive recreational uses, promote social gathering and host local community events to foster connections and strengthen community bonds. Figure 34 illustrates a demonstration of a Neighbourhood Park.

Examples: Glen Shields Park, Clearview Park, Maple Airport Park, Hawstone Park, Sunset Ridge Park.



Figure 34: Demonstration of a Neighbourhood Park

Intent	Serves residents within 500 metre walking distance within immediate neighbourhood. Parks located in low-density traditional neighbourhoods.
Amenities	Neighbourhood type outdoor recreation facilities, senior or junior sports fields, play courts, gathering spaces, local type facilities and passive recreation. Typically has three to five outdoor recreation facilities.
Frontage & Access	Two streets, located on collector, local, and minor roads.
Parking	On-road.
Degree of Maintenance	Standard level of service across Neighbourhood Parks.
Size	District Parks should be greater than 0.75 hectares.



Top left - Princeton Gate Playground, Vaughan + Top middle - Magnetensensory Garden, Denmark; Image Credit: Kirstine Autzen + Bottom left - Teardrop Park, NY; Image Credit: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates + Right - 103rd Street Community Garden, NY; Image Credit: SCAPE Landscape Architecture DPC

7.1.5 Urban Parks

Urban Parks are versatile and multifunctional green spaces that shall be designed to serve high-density communities in Strategic Growth Areas. These parks shall provide intensively programmed outdoor spaces that facilitate diverse year-round recreational activities and community events. Urban Parks shall incorporate flexible programming spaces that accommodate day-to-day active and passive recreation, medium to large-scale community events, sport courts, playground facilities and supporting park amenities. These parks shall be designed and constructed to support intensive use through durable and sustainable materials, include robust municipal community amenities and facilities, and ensure long-term functionality and maintainability to meet the unique demands of higher-density neighbourhoods. Urban Parks shall demonstrate commitment to equitable access and inclusive design, year-round activation and programming, environmental sustainability, and community integration. Figure 35 illustrates a demonstration of an Urban Park.

Example: VMC North Urban Park.

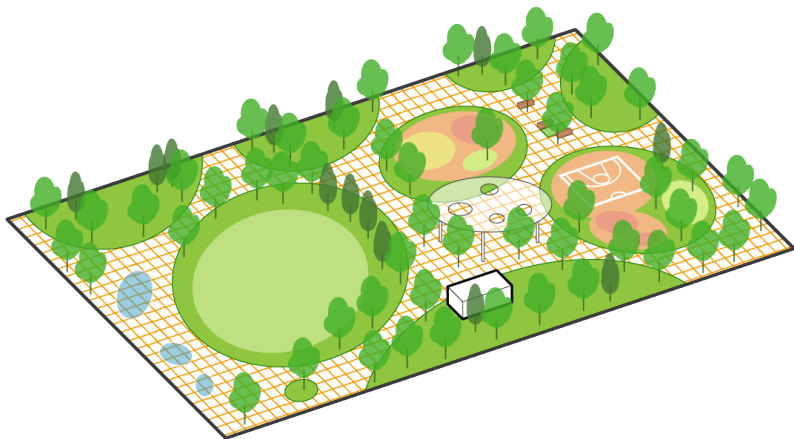
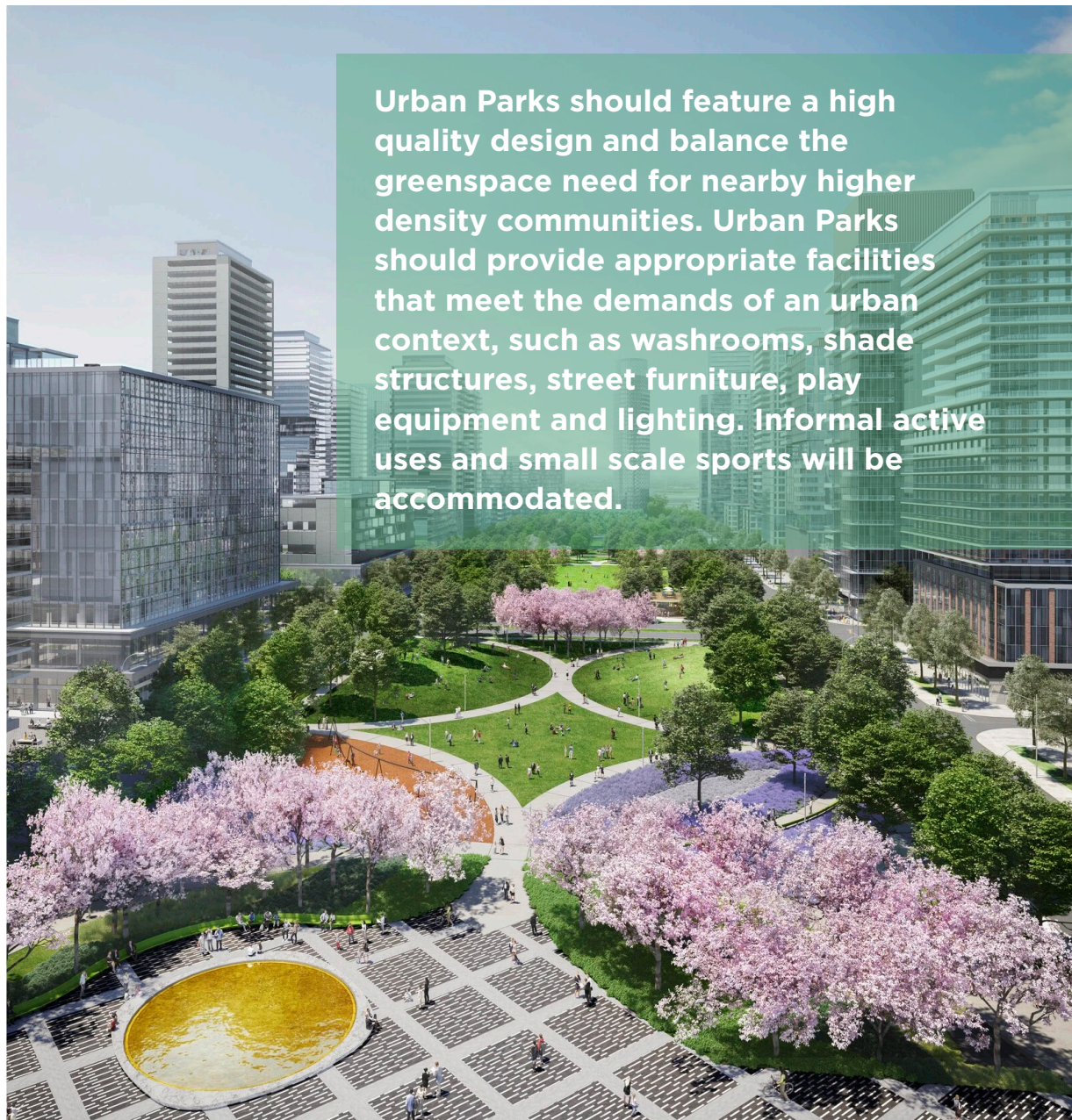


Figure 35: Demonstration of an Urban Park

Intent	Serves residents within 500 metre walking distance of residents within immediate neighbourhood. Generally located in Strategic Growth Areas.
Amenities	Neighbourhood type outdoor recreation facilities, flexible gathering spaces, multi-use courts, public art, etc. Typically has three to five outdoor recreation facilities.
Frontage & Access	Located on at least two public streets, which can include major or minor collectors, local roads, or a combination of a public street and a mews with a public access easement.
Parking	On-road.
Degree of Maintenance	An increased level of service will be required due to the higher level of use.
Size	Urban Parks will be greater than 0.75 hectares.



Top left - Bryant Park, NY; Image Credit: Will Steacy + Middle left - Blake Hobbs Play-Za, NY; Image Credit: SCAPE Landscape Architecture DPC + Bottom left - Myriad Botanical Gardens, Oklahoma City; Image Credit: OJB + Right - rendering of Vaughan Metropolitan Central Park; Image Credit: CCxA

7.1.6 Public Squares

Public Squares are programmed social and civic spaces that shall be designed to serve Strategic Growth Areas. These spaces shall incorporate both passive and active facilities to support diverse community needs and ensure year-round activation. Public Squares shall be strategically located in mixed-use, high-traffic areas adjacent to active frontages such as retail, food and beverage establishments, and public facilities to support neighbourhood-oriented social opportunities. These spaces shall be situated in areas of high pedestrian activity and maintain clear visibility from adjacent streets. Public Squares shall be designed and constructed with durable and sustainable materials to support intensive use, incorporating robust municipal community amenities and facilities to ensure long-term functionality. These spaces may include public art, varied seating opportunities, canopy trees, active recreational facilities, and a balanced mix of hardscape and softscape areas. Public Squares shall be designed to respond to micro-climatic conditions, providing year-round weather protection, while supporting flexible programming for both daily use and organized events. Figure 36 illustrates a demonstration of a Public Square.

Example: Cortellucci Square

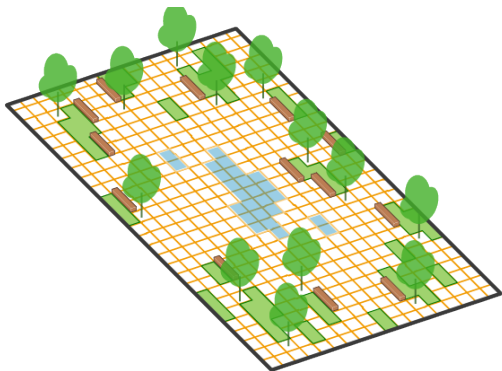
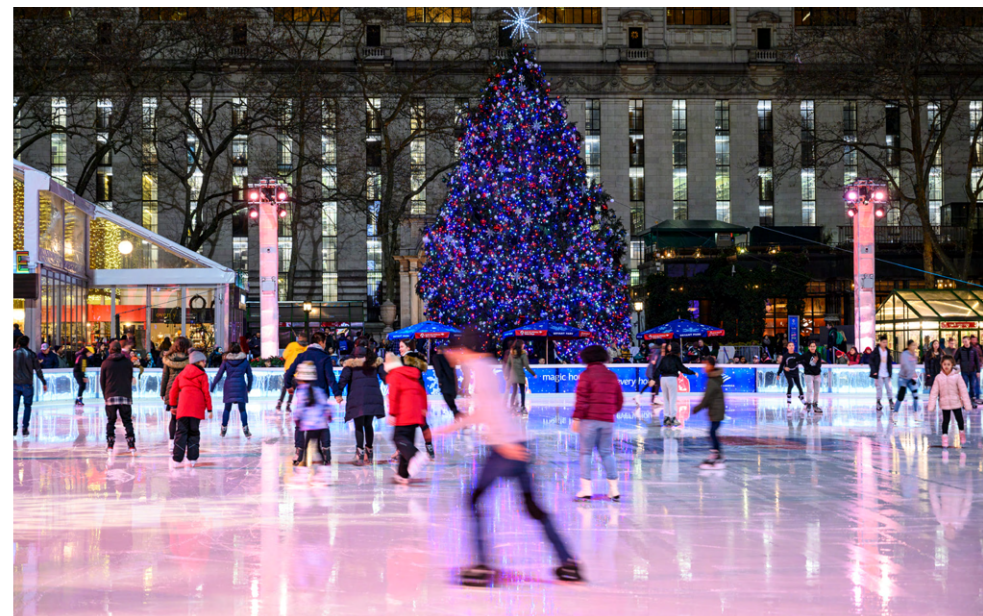


Figure 36: Demonstration of a Public Square

Intent	Located in mixed-use, high-traffic areas and can be adjacent to active frontages such as retail, food and beverage and public facilities, supporting neighbourhood-oriented social opportunities.
Amenities	Neighbourhood type outdoor recreation facilities, flexible gathering and seating spaces, multiuse courts, public art. Typically has two to three outdoor recreation facilities.
Frontage & Access	Two public streets, or mews with public access easement.
Parking	On-road, no on-site parking.
Degree of Maintenance	An increased level of service will be required due to the higher level of use.
Size	Public Squares will generally range from 0.2 to 0.75 hectares.



Top left - Celebration Square, Mississauga; Image Credit: City of Mississauga + Top right - Bryant Park Winter Village, NY; Image Credit: DW labs Incorporated + Bottom left - Zollhallen Plaza, Germany; Image Credit: B Doherty + Bottom right - Union Square, NY; Image Credit: chensiyuan/Wikimedia

7.2 Parkland Provisions

Parkland Provision Ratio

Planning for future greenspace will depend on where and how growth occurs in Vaughan; 57% of Vaughan’s future growth is expected to occur in intensification areas, such as Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, where higher population densities and a mix of land uses will be concentrated. On the other hand, community areas identified in the VOP are expected to accommodate lower density residential development which will require different levels of greenspace provision.

Vaughan currently has a city-wide parkland service target of 2 hectares per 1000 people and maintains 1.99 hectares per 1000 people. As Vaughan’s population continues to grow, its parkland provision level will decrease unless additional parkland is acquired. This is especially true in Primary Growth Centres and the VMC where increased high density population growth will make it difficult to maintain Vaughan’s existing park provision target.

Based on population projections and the existing provision target, Vaughan would need an additional 407 hectares of parkland from 2025 to 2051 to serve its anticipated population growth to 2051. An analysis of anticipated parkland acquisition over the next

25 years considers the amount of parkland currently under City control, the anticipated land to be received through dedication informed by Secondary Plans, and the anticipated amount of land that could be purchased using the Payment-in-Lieu Reserve Fund. Based on analysis conducted in 2024, Table 5 identifies the anticipated City acquisition of 141 hectares of land from 2025 to 2051 through dedication and land purchase. The analysis considered existing legislative caps on parkland dedication and the anticipated amount of creditable POPS. This would leave a gap of 266 hectares to maintain a target at 2 hectares per 1000 people at 2051.

The approach to determining a revised parkland provision ratio is based on a target that is aspirational, yet pragmatic. The City owns lands that are planned for future park development, thus the City will be able to maintain the existing city-wide parkland target of 2 hectares per 1000 in the near future once these lands are constructed. A revised city-wide target of 1.6 hectares per 1000 people by the year 2051 is determined to be a more reasonable target to achieve long-term. Table 5 shows a comparison of the current parkland gap that would be required to be filled to achieve the existing parkland provision ratio and the revised target.

Table 5: Existing parkland gap relative to parkland provision ratio target

	2 hectares per 1000 people target	1.6 hectares per 1000 people target
Hectares of current parkland owned or under City control	745	745
Hectares of anticipated parkland to be acquired by 2051	141	141
Hectares of parkland required to meet target by 2051	1152	922
Parkland gap in hectares	266	36

In summary while the target of 1.6 hectares per 1000 is achievable, it is recommended to maintain a citywide aspirational parkland target of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1000 people.

In addition to a city-wide target, a target aimed at Strategic Growth Areas is necessary to establish a minimum expectation of parkland within these areas. In response, a parkland provision ratio has been established for the VMC and the Primary Centres identified on Schedule 1A of the Draft Vaughan Official Plan 2025. The VMC and Primary Centres are larger Strategic Growth Areas whereas other Strategic Growth Areas identified on draft Schedule 1A would be able to more often rely on nearby parkland to fulfill a parkland ratio target.

The VMC currently provides 0.14 hectares per 1000 people (0.27 hectares per 1000 people if open space is included). Highly urbanized areas in other municipalities feature comparable provision levels below one hectare. While dedicated parkland is strongly encouraged in the VMC, the GSP recognizes that it will be more difficult to acquire dedicated parkland in the VMC and the Primary Centres. The proposed parkland provision ratio has been updated to a minimum target of 0.3 hectares per 1000 people in the VMC and Primary Centres which is more in line with high density intensification areas in other jurisdictions.

These parkland ratio targets reflect changing patterns in development and apply more pragmatic targets for the City to achieve at 2051.

Monitoring provision rates and key data points will be important to track progress and impacts on parkland assembly such as:

- » amount of creditable POPS granted over time
- » rate of intensification
- » encumbered parklands
- » average size of parks conveyed

Additional indicators to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation are outlined in Section 7.5.1.

Parkland Access

Access is an increasingly important criteria when parkland provision ratios cannot be met in high density urban areas. Accessibility to greenspace has been identified through public and stakeholder engagement as the most important target moving forward. Approximately 85% of residents currently live within 500 metres walking distance of a park. It is recommended that Vaughan sets a target to have all residents living in the Urban Area to be within a 500 metre walk to a park, equating to a 5- to 10-minute direct walk of a park, this target city-wide focuses on an equitable distribution of parks.

Another target that should remain is locating District Parks so that all residents live within a 2.5 kilometre buffer of one. While access to all park types is encouraged, District Parks provide a greater range of amenities than smaller parks and create a community hub as a result. Distributing District Parks across the city to include all residents within 2.5 kilometres of one, will help ensure equitable access of the amenities and services offered by District Parks.

Parkland Targets

Target 1: Maintain a citywide parkland target of 2.0 hectares of active parkland per 1000 people in the short-term. By 2051, achieve a city-wide target of 1.6 hectares per 1000 people.

Target 2: Adopt a Strategic Growth Area parkland service target for the VMC and Primary Centres of 0.3 hectares per 1000 people.

Target 3: All residents living in an Urban Area are within a 500 metre walk of parkland by 2051.

Target 4: All residents are within 2.5 km of a District Park.

7.3 Secondary Parkland Arrangements

The most desirable land to acquire for parks are lands that have no encumbrances and can be owned and managed by the City such as those identified in section 7.1. This is the most cost-effective approach to grow Vaughan's parkland network. City-owned lands provide greater flexibility in design and programming in a manner that carefully considers the desire and needs of residents today and into the future.

However, there may be scenarios where it is challenging for the City to acquire unencumbered land for new and active parks. As such the City should use its discretion in exploring alternative options either on or off-site for future development proposals.

7.3.1 Parkland Dedication Credits

Determining parkland dedication credit starts with the principle that the most effective parkland is City-owned land that has no encumbrances. City-owned land that has no encumbrances allows the City to develop and program the parkland as necessary to accommodate the needs of residents today and the future. A second consideration for City-owned land is how much flexibility the land offers for programming and amenity options. At the other end of the spectrum, privately-owned land that offers no benefit to the greenspace system should receive the least amount or no credit at all.

Parkland credit should not be given in the following scenarios:

- » Trails, sidewalks and pathway connections that on their own, do meet one of the five park typologies
- » Lands that should be dedicated as part of the natural heritage system for protection and conservation
- » Encumbered lands that limit the ability to provide recreational amenities
- » Landscape strips

Natural Areas

Vaughan currently has many woodlands and natural areas that form part of the greenspace system. Policies in VOP 2010 and the Draft Vaughan Official Plan 2025 guide the acquisition, protection and development of amenities in natural areas in alignment with Provincial and TRCA plans and policies. Natural areas are dedicated outside of the parkland dedication provisions to the City and TRCA to protect against natural hazards and to preserve the ecological function of these areas. The GSP explored the potential for natural areas to be considered for parkland credit in some circumstances such as the dedication of an Ecological Park in the northwest area of Vaughan in the Greenbelt. Acquiring an Ecological Park through parkland would allow the City to preserve certain natural areas and at the same time provide the following amenities as an example:

- » Provision of active amenities in natural areas should be limited to support residents' access to nature.
- » Amenities that are provided in natural areas should cause minimal disturbance to the area. Acceptable amenities may include pathways, trails, benches, lookouts, and certain garbage receptacles.
- » Opportunities for natural play, meditative walks or circles, and art features should be integrated with natural areas.

Throughout engagement, feedback was received suggesting any park typology could incorporate ecological functions. It is also the practice of the City to not accept woodlands or natural heritage areas as parkland dedication as policies limit the range of amenities that could be provided in the Natural Heritage Network. Based on these two points, it was determined an Ecological Park typology was unnecessary and if the City were to consider parkland dedication in the Greenbelt, the park type of a Regional or District Park would be appropriate. These park types provide the flexibility to provide amenities in alignment with the park type and the natural area policies of the applicable plans and documents.

Strata Park

A Strata Park is a City-owned park that may be encumbered due to being located on top of privately-owned structures, such as parking garages or underground stormwater facilities. Cortellucci Square, shown in Figure 37, is one example of a Strata Park in Vaughan. Strata Parks are typically built in intensification areas where land values are high and developable land is constrained. Although the City may own the park and has flexibility in programming, Strata Parks can be limited by their programming options and ownership agreement between the City and the private land owner. For example, conflicts may arise between the parties when the privately-owned structure needs repairs or improvements that can impact the use of the park. Considerations for Strata Parks include:

- » Strata Parks may not result in full parkland dedication credits.
- » Strata Parks are not to be gated or fenced to maintain public access from abutting streets and pathways at all times.

Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

POPS are often delivered through the development process when developers are unable to dedicate land for park purposes by agreement and/or easement for public access. While POPS are privately owned and maintained, they nevertheless contribute to Vaughan's greenspace system, especially in intensification areas, such as Transit Square shown in Figure 38. Currently, the City regulates POPS with its Official Plan 2010, City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines, Parkland Dedication Guideline and is conducting a dedicated POPS Guidelines Study that will establish guidelines and standards for the design and implementation of POPS, setting criteria for them to be eligible for parkland dedication credits.

The risk in continuing to provide credits to POPS in the absence of a robust policy over time poses a risk to erode the City's ability

to continue to collect and fund healthy payment-in-lieu reserves. While the final design and development of POPS will be guided by the City's POPS Guidelines Study, its delivery should meet the following minimum requirements:

- » POPS are not to be gated or fenced to maintain public access from abutting streets and pathways at all times.
- » POPS are to be designed to have clear visibility and access from public streets.
- » POPS will be built with quality design and thoughtful consideration of its program, use, and relationship with the surrounding context.



Figure 37: Cortellucci Square in the VMC.



Figure 38: Transit Square in the VMC.

Off-Site Parkland Dedication

Traditional unencumbered parkland dedication must be provided on the property of the proposed development. However, the City may accept parkland located off-site to meet parkland dedication requirements at its discretion. The suitability of off-site dedication will be determined by the City on a case-by-case basis. The suitability of off-site dedication will be assessed by staff and consider the following minimum criteria:

- » Land proposed for off-site dedication should be acceptable with the City's requirements
- » Acquisition priority areas should be the focus for off-site land dedications
- » The land value identified for the required parkland dedication from the proposed development site should be equal to the land value of the off-site land dedication site, either in absolute per hectare land cost, or the amount of land to be dedicated at the discretion of the City.

Additionally, the City must consider constrained lands within the Settlement Area Boundary and constrained lands within the Provincially designated Greenbelt/Oak Ridges Moraine. These lands could offer ecologically appropriate alternatives to traditional park categories such as ecological reserves, nature preserves, conservation areas, wildlife sanctuaries, urban forests etc.

Over-Dedication

In scenarios where a development proposes to provide more parkland than required for a project, the City may consider providing a parkland credit to the developer for another project. Figure 39 illustrates an example of over-dedication.

While providing credit for over dedication may not be desirable, it is a tool that can have benefit to the City under the right circumstances, such as wanting a larger park in one particular location rather than two smaller parks. Over-dedication should only be applied in an instance where land is publicly dedicated as unencumbered land and not for POPS.

However, it is crucial to note that these credits work best in areas within a single catchment area or geographic zone. This restriction ensures that the credits are utilized appropriately and do not undermine the parkland requirements of different catchment areas. Since parkland needs and requirements can vary significantly between different catchment areas due to factors like population density, urban development patterns, and recreational demands, applying credits across separate catchment areas could lead to imbalances in parkland distribution and access.

Therefore, restricting the application of credits to parcels within a single catchment area helps maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the parkland dedication process, ensuring each area receives the necessary green space to meet the needs of its residents and visitors.

Subject to approval by the City, parkland over-dedication should be considered under the following:

- » Over-dedication is being applied to lands within an acquisition priority area.
- » Lands provided above and beyond those required by parkland dedication are free of encumbrances and are to be owned and managed by the City.
- » The development project considered for parkland dedication reduction is not in an acquisition priority areas as identified in Figure 29.

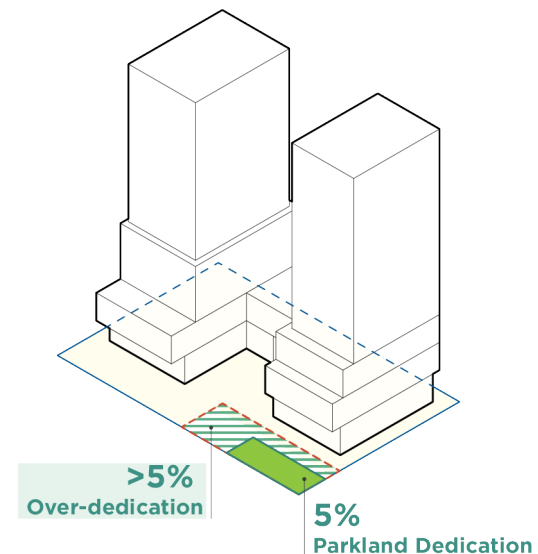


Figure 39: Graphic of over-dedication.

7.4 Implementation Framework

This section outlines consistent criteria to help guide staff and Council when selecting parkland. By clearly communicating the City's intent for parkland acquisition and expansion, this framework supports a more efficient and transparent process for the City and the development community.

7.4.1 Parkland Acquisition

Several factors influence how and when parkland will be acquired, such as the timing of private development applications, intent of the acquisition, size of a parcel, and available funding for the City. Figure 40 along with the acquisition priority map (Section 5.1) is a process flow diagram that is to guide consistent decision-making when determining if parkland dedication or acquisition is required. This tool may be used during development application review, secondary plan development or the implementation of actions in this plan. Opportunistic parkland acquisition will be considered where deemed appropriate and when Vaughan is in a financial position to do so.

The City's Land Acquisition Strategy (2020) outlines parcel-specific acquisition evaluation criteria with a relative scoring system that prioritizes some criteria over others. The existing criteria have been updated based on feedback from staff and are outlined below. The revised criteria in Table 6 should be formally adopted and

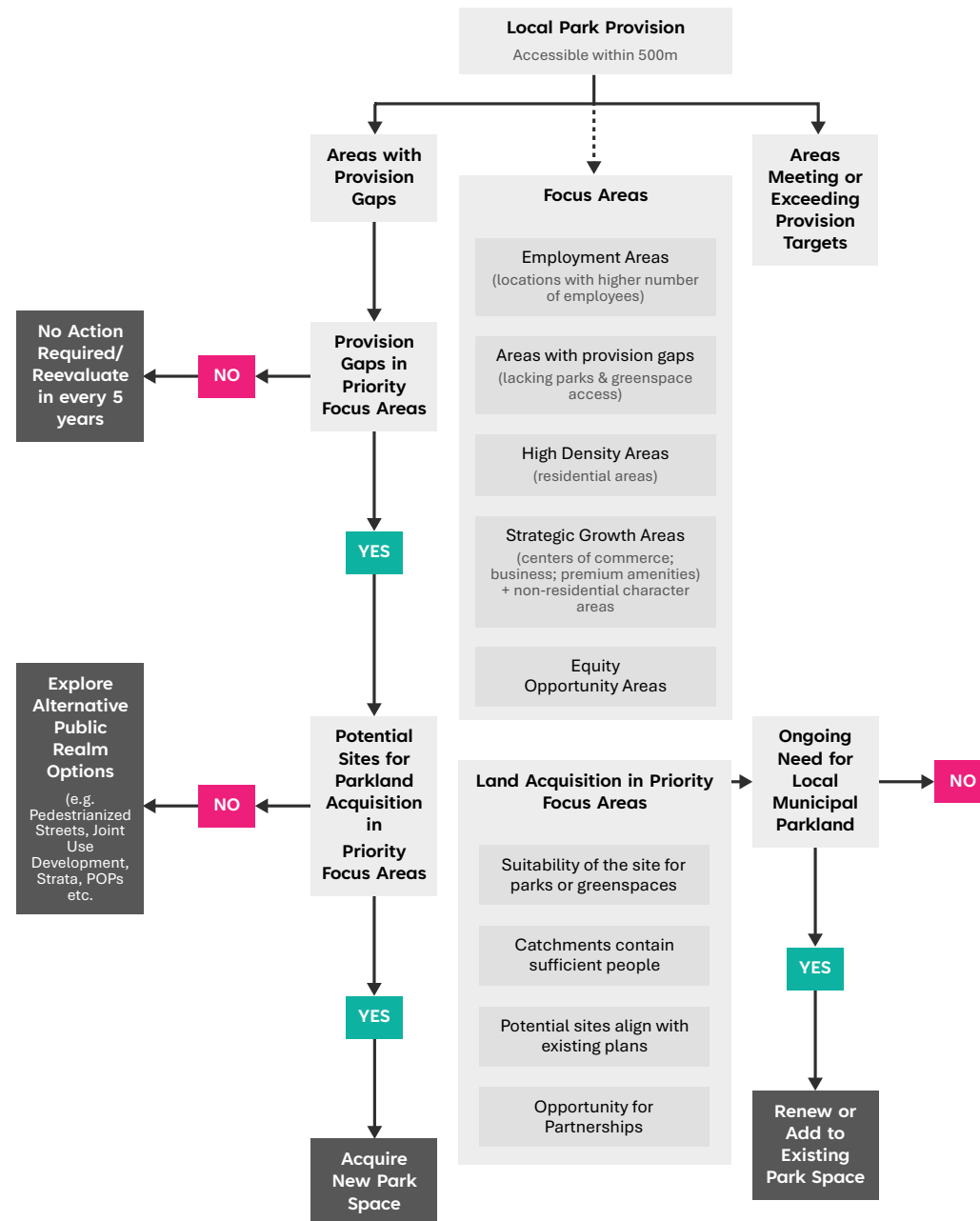


Figure 40: New park acquisition decision-making flow diagram

used to determine City land acquisition locations, and potential off-site dedication locations, in conjunction with the priority acquisition area mapping in the GSP to make specific individual parcel acquisition decisions. The criteria are to be used to differentiate specific parcels from each other, helping identify which parcel may be more desirable to acquire in comparison to others. The criteria are not meant to be used to assess development applications, where the decision is should land (including POPS) be taken or payment-in-lieu based on the decision-making flow diagram.

The scoring method is based on the scoring method provided in the City's Land Acquisition Strategy (2020). Once the City is at the stage of determining a specific parcel to acquire, the scoring is to be used to help determine the preferable parcel to acquire based on available options. The acquisition criteria are generally intended for comparing multiple parcels of land. With all things being equal, the parcel with the higher score is the parcel that should be secured. The criteria may also be used to review land acquisition opportunities in isolation of other options. However, if there is only one parcel that adequately meets the goals of parkland acquisition, setting a minimum threshold to be applied to a single acquisition opportunity is not recommended since an area may be so deficient in parkland that the acquiring parcel that scores low is better than the

Table 6: Parkland acquisition criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Detail	Score
Suitability for Recreational Use, Based on Municipal Service Levels	Offer significant opportunity to provide for both active and passive recreational uses that meet multiple municipal service needs outlined in the CSP.	20
	Offer significant opportunity to provide for active or passive recreational use that meets a municipal service level need outlined in the CSP.	10
	Recreational development potential is limited, development will be challenging or complex.	5
Potential for Improvements of Visual & Environmental Implications	Offer significant opportunity to augment and protect local area landscape's already high scenic quality. Multiple sightlines for urban visual relief.	15
	Offer limited opportunity to augment and protect the local area landscape's already high scenic quality. Sightlines for urban visual relief exist.	10
	Offer the opportunity to augment and protect the local area landscape's greenspace.	5
Geographical/Land Use Consideration	Site topography, grading, and servicing support the intended use for parkland acquisition with no encumbrances.	15
	Site topography, grading, and servicing may require more complex infrastructure but does not conflict with applicable conservation priorities.	5

alternative. In such cases, the City may use its judgment to determine whether the parcel aligns with strategic priorities and acquisition needs.

This framework addresses the need for consistency and transparency in how and when parkland acquisition tools are applied. This sets clear expectations and provides predictability in actions between the City, development community, and land owners.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Detail	Score
Supports a Healthy Community Environment Through Protection of Green Space and Wildlife Preservation	Protects and enhances environmentally significant features. (e.g. Greenbelt Plan lands, Natural Heritage Network (NHN) Lands, Humber River, Black Creek).	20
	Adjacent to environmentally significant features (e.g. Greenbelt Plan lands, NHN Lands, Humber River).	15
	Represents natural restoration and/or tree planting potential and improves green canopy in areas of the city with relatively low tree equity.	5
Supports Population Growth and Sustainable Community Design	Land required to serve a Strategic Growth Area with an existing walkable parkland deficit.	20
	Land required to address an existing parkland deficit in a high-priority area.	15
	Land will support city-wide service levels (e.g., Regional & District Parks) or fill trail gaps to connect priority areas with limited service coverage.	10
Integration with Existing Park and Open Space System	Protects and expands a continuous primary linkage within a city-wide primary trail system in alignment with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.	20
	Protects and provides for a continuous local linkage within a community open space primary trail system in alignment with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.	15
	Provides multiple secondary trail opportunities within the property in alignment with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.	10
	Provides for a single primary trail within the property.	5

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Detail	Score
City-Wide Distribution of Parks and Recreational Facilities	Opportunity to meet a defined local park service level deficiency while enabling significant contribution to the city-wide park system (e.g. Regional Park in NW Vaughan).	20
	Opportunity to meet a defined local park service level deficiency.	15
	Opportunity to enable significant contribution to city-wide park system (e.g. Regional Park in NW Vaughan).	10
	Opportunity to augment existing local park service level provision.	5

7.4.2 Parkland Redevelopment

The recognition that existing parks can be improved and, in some cases, expanded will assist the City in serving new residents, within established and intensifying neighbourhoods. If and when the City is in the position to do so, it may be strategic to expand existing park(s). Key considerations for park expansion and redevelopment are:

- » Parkland service level gaps
- » Anticipated growth
- » Alignment with needs/repurposing potential
- » Outdated amenities or park design

Figure 41 illustrates a re-development flow diagram to guide re-development decisions.

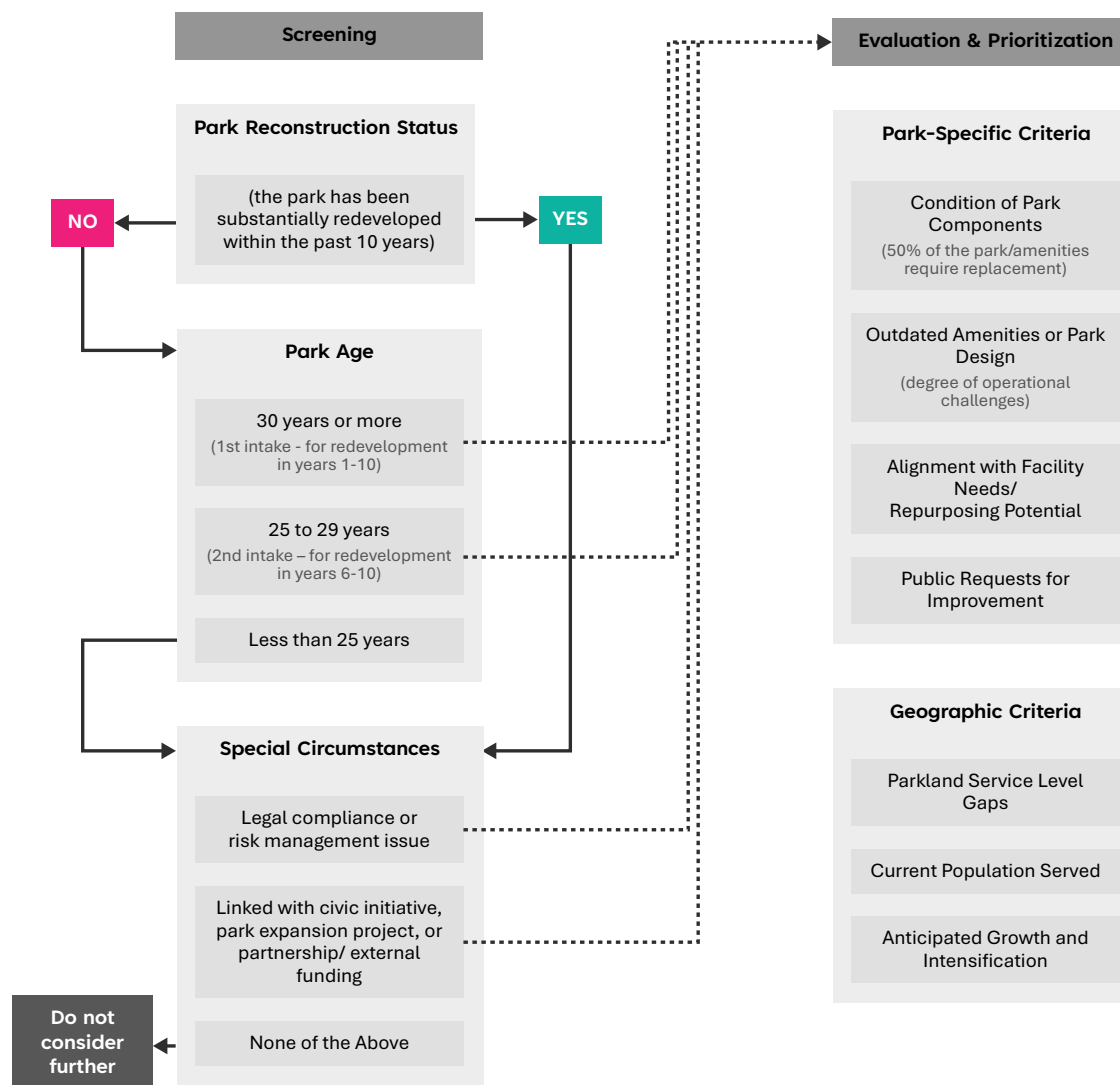


Figure 41: Park re-development decision-making flow diagram

7.4.3 Application to Urban Form

Typical Suburban Transformation

Typical suburban development refers to large tracks of land for low density residential uses typically built between 1970-2010. The transect shown in Figure 42 explores existing communities with commercial and institutional uses. Connections to natural heritage are limited and sometimes isolated from the community. Focus areas applicable to this transect are outlined in green in Figure 43.

Transformation overtime, illustrated in Figure 44, will encourage the intensification of under-utilized lands for development which will introduce new park typologies, including urban parks and public squares, sometimes delivered through POPS and strata parks. These spaces will complement a growing network of green and active streets. Strategic acquisition will help make greenspace assets more accessible. Existing parks should be renewed to meet changing demographic demands. The City will work with other agencies to highlight partnership opportunities including with TRCA and school boards. This could result in the transformation of a smaller park and less connected greenspace system into a larger, well connected greenspace system through the collaboration of multiple land owners coordinating efforts to develop an integrated greenspace system across different ownership.



Figure 42: Existing Conditions Typical Suburban Transect

Focus Areas

Employment Areas
(locations with higher number of employees)

Areas with provision gaps
(lacking parks & greenspace access)

High Density Areas
(residential areas)

Strategic Growth Areas
(centres of commerce; business; premium amenities) + non-residential character areas

Equity Opportunity Areas

Land Acquisition in Priority Focus Areas

Suitability of the site for parks or greenspaces

Catchments contain sufficient people

Potential sites align with existing plans

Opportunity for Partnerships

Figure 43: Future Conditions Greenspace Acquisition Checklist

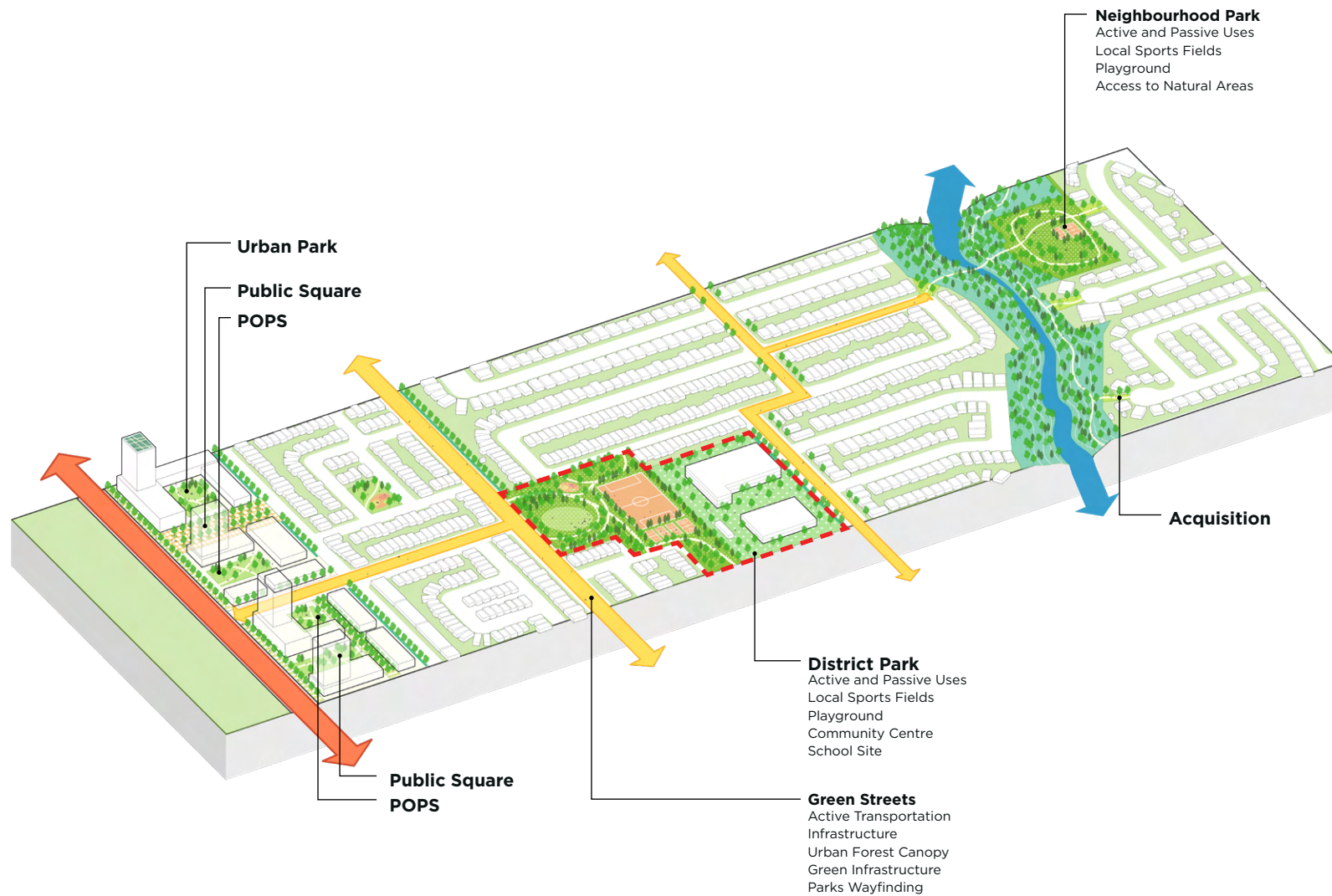


Figure 44: Future Conditions Typical Suburban Transect

Intensification and Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) Transformation

Protected MTSA sites and intensification sites are typically based upon regional transportation stations hubs. Currently these sites are designed to maximize parking for peak use times, rendering much of these sites as surface parking. To illustrate this emerging condition the following case study is modelled after the potential future growth of the Maple GO MTSA, illustrated in Figure 45. This includes a surplus of parking provided by additional large format commercial and employment land uses that are in close proximity to the station. The modelled future growth of the Maple GO MTSA is for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect the Maple GO Station Secondary Plan. Focus areas applicable to this transect are outlined in green in Figure 46.

The future of these sites, illustrated in Figure 47, presents new development opportunities for the City to reach growth targets, while also increasing the overall parks footprint of the city. New parks will need to provide immediate access to active and passive park uses. Some large format commercial uses may choose to stay, however, remaining parking supply can be provided through sustainable models. The overall circulation of the site will be stitched together by a hierarchy of green and active streets, with better connections to neighbouring parks and open spaces.

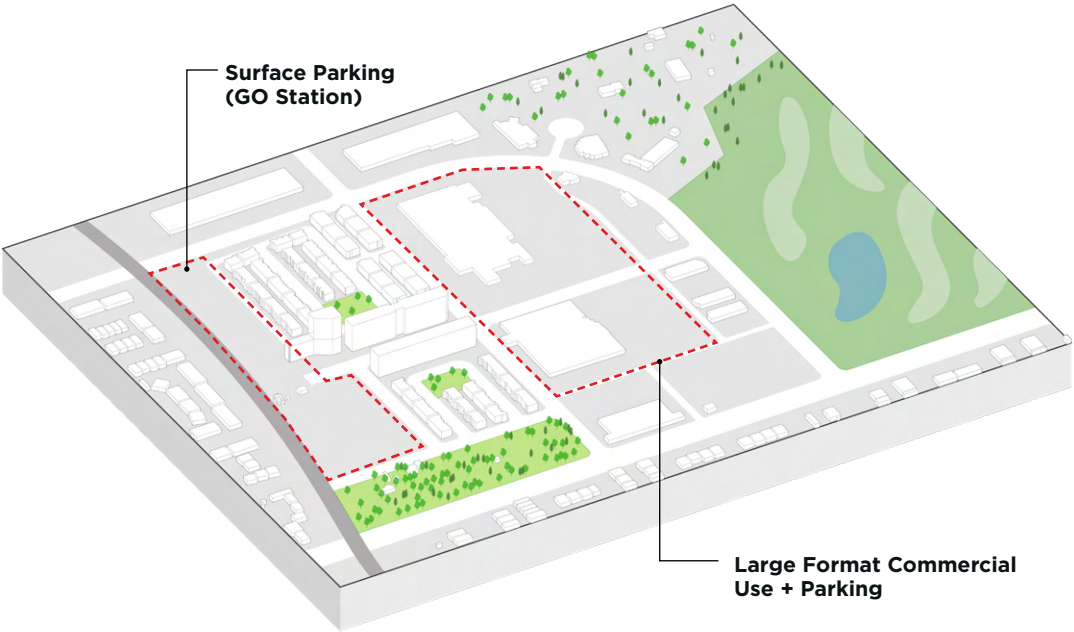


Figure 45: Existing Conditions MTSA Transect

Focus Areas

Employment Areas
(locations with higher number of employees)

Areas with provision gaps
(lacking parks & greenspace access)

High Density Areas
(residential areas)

Strategic Growth Areas
(centres of commerce; business; premium amenities) + non-residential character areas

Equity Opportunity Areas

Land Acquisition in Priority Focus Areas

Suitability of the site for parks or greenspaces

Catchments contain sufficient people

Potential sites align with existing plans

Opportunity for Partnerships

Figure 46: Future Conditions Greenspace Acquisition Checklist

Future development surrounding the GO MTSA is suggestive for uses of framing the greenspace. The future development shown represent current or future development applications and is for illustrative purposes.

Public Square

Public Square (Transit Plaza)

Neighbourhood Park

- » Active and Passive Uses
- » Local Sports Fields
- » Playground
- » Access to Natural Areas

Regional Park

- » Active and Passive Uses
- » Access to Natural Areas
- » Cultural Events and Amenities
- » Ecological Succession

Urban Square

Green Parking

Green Streets

- » Active Transportation Infrastructure
- » Urban Forest Canopy
- » Green Infrastructure
- » Parks Wayfinding

City of Vaughan

Existing Employment Area Transformation

Significant portions of the city have been developed as employment/industrial areas. These areas are often designed to have large parking/loading areas and low rise large format buildings, illustrated in Figure 48. Throughout some parts of the city, these buildings and sites are reaching their constructed lifespan and renewal is being considered. Areas surrounding the VMC offer particularly unique opportunities to see a physical transformation in the natural environment. Historic practices of channelizing natural heritage through these subdivisions are also part of a complete regrading and road patterning that has removed most greenspace from these areas. Focus areas applicable to this transect are outlined in green in Figure 49.

The greenspace transformation of these areas should be based upon reestablishing the Green + Blue Network which give the framework for various scales of parkland interventions, as illustrated in Figure 50. This would happen concurrently as the intensification occurs and land use demands shift to providing residential uses overtime. Like other case studies, higher density development will provide new park typologies, including urban parks and public squares. Neighbourhood and District level parkland including passive and active uses, can be established adjacent to these reclaimed natural heritage areas. The re-naturalization of these parts of the watershed will help the city focus acquisition and dedication strategies to addressing the needs of an emerging community overtime.

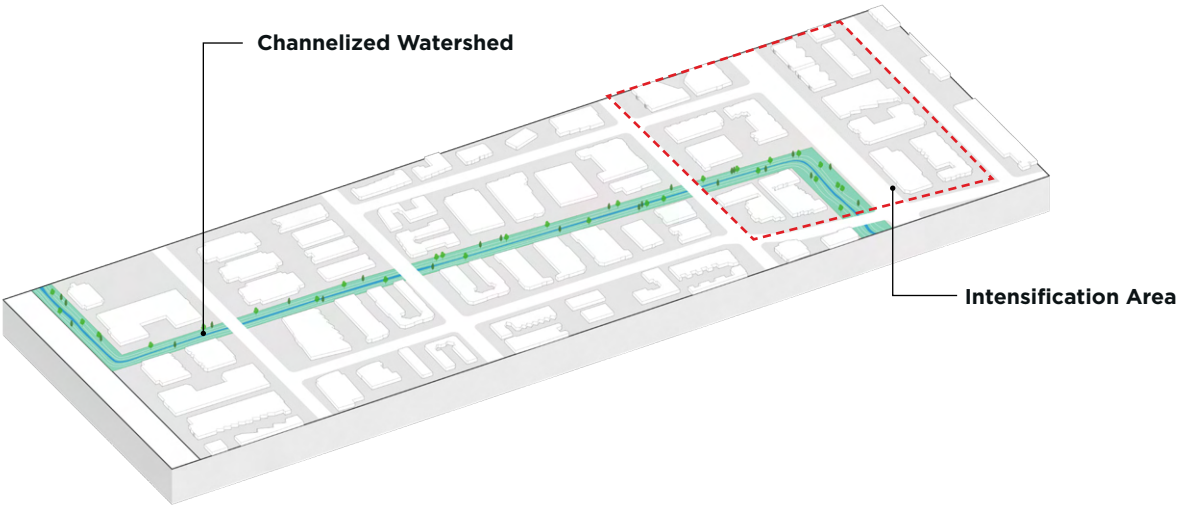


Figure 48: Existing Conditions Typical Employment Area Transect

Focus Areas

Employment Areas
(locations with higher number of employees)

Areas with provision gaps
(lacking parks & greenspace access)

High Density Areas
(residential areas)

Strategic Growth Areas
(centres of commerce; business; premium amenities) + non-residential character areas

Equity Opportunity Areas

Land Acquisition in Priority Focus Areas

Suitability of the site for parks or greenspaces

Catchments contain sufficient people

Potential sites align with existing plans

Opportunity for Partnerships

Figure 49: Future Conditions Greenspace Acquisition Checklist

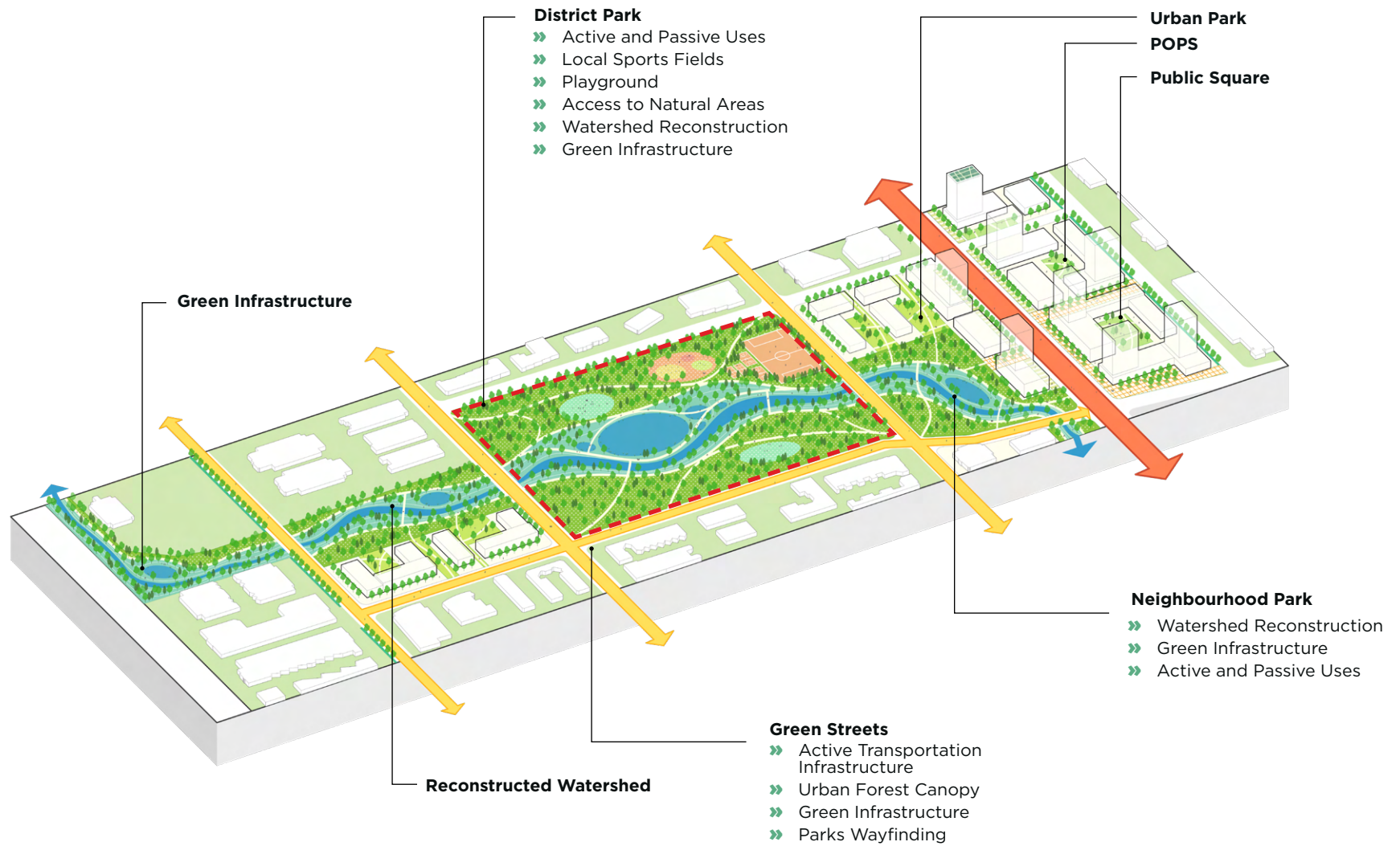


Figure 50: Future Conditions Typical Employment Area Transect

7.5 Financial Strategy

Achieving the vision of the GSP is going to require staff resources and capital and operating funding. This financial strategy has been developed to assist in decision-making and propose a range of solutions to help reduce the anticipated funding gap. Some of the funding tools mentioned in this section will require further exploration to determine how the tools would be best applied in Vaughan's context.

7.5.1 Parkland Acquisition Financial Gap

The following factors are used to determine the financial gap for parkland acquisition, a detailed list of assumptions is contained in Appendix 5:

- » Anticipated 2051 population of 575,900 people
- » Existing balance of the Payment-in-Lieu Reserve Fund
- » Average cost of land per hectare
- » Anticipated amount of land to be dedicated and amount of payment-in-lieu to be collected to 2051 based on assumed residential, commercial and employment land forecasts
- » Assumptions on the percentage of PIL compared to land dedication
- » Assumptions of the amount of purpose built rental and affordable housing
- » The parkland ratio target

The balance of the Payment-in-Lieu Reserve Fund is \$87,187,768 as of Q2 2024 and the citywide parkland ratio target is assumed to be 1.6 hectares per 1000 people. To calculate the average cost of land, a land value is determined for different development types and then used to create a blended land value rate to be used as the cost of acquisition.

Over the next 27 years, the locations where the City will need to acquire land will vary depending on the City's priorities and the eventual outcomes of specific development applications. A blended average land value of \$9.35 million is used to calculate the financial gap.

In total, 3,100.92 hectares of land are projected to be developed to 2051. This forecast is based on numbers from the Draft Vaughan Official Plan 2025, 2022 York Region Official Plan, the 2021 Vaughan Development Charges Study, and a development forecast completed for Metrolinx. Based on the projected development to occur to 2051, an estimated yearly average of \$24,497,382 will be provided as payment-in-lieu.

A high level analysis indicates an estimated annual shortfall of \$12,457,661 would exist in achieving a parkland ratio target of 1.6 hectares per 1000 people.

The land needs analysis is influenced by many factors and assumptions and should be updated annually to monitor the City's progress toward meeting its 2051 citywide parkland target. The following indicators will require monitoring to update the land needs analysis on an annual basis:

- » The average cost of land for the different land use types (i.e., residential, commercial, industrial);
- » The amount of land absorbed/redeveloped annually;
- » The amount of creditable POPS granted over time;
- » The forecasted growth to 2051;
- » The number of hectares of parks;
- » The balance of the PIL Reserve Fund;
- » The percentage of land dedication compared to PIL for the different land use types; and
- » The annual affordable housing stock approved.

7.5.2 Parkland Development Financial Gap

Over 70% of the funding for parks construction is provided through Development Charges (DCs) with the remaining funding coming via infrastructure reserves and grants. At the end of 2023, the closing balance of the city-wide Development Charges Reserve Fund was \$529.8 million. Parks accounts for a small proportion of the fund under the Community Services Development Charge Reserve.

In the current DC Charges By-law 109-2022, Development Charges are based on expending approximately \$220 million on eligible parkland, amenity and trail development and improvements, in addition to recreation facilities to 2031.

Cuts in DCs and the recent ability of the development community to defer DCs for two years will impact the capital plan and budget beyond the 2025 budget. Further analysis by the City is needed to understand the overall impacts to capital plans.

In the first half of this decade, an annual capital budget in the range of \$30-\$45 million has been maintained to deliver capital projects such as Martin Tavares Park, Saigon Park, future phases of North Maple Regional Park, VMC North Urban Park, Yonge Steeles central park, and a number of urban parks and local neighbourhood parks.

7.5.3 Operations and Maintenance

Over 90% of parks operations and maintenance funding comes from property taxes in the City of Vaughan, and a small portion, under 5%, comes from user fees. As additional parks and amenities are constructed, additional staffing resources will be required to maintain service levels as well as additional equipment. In addition to funding the acquisition, construction, and lifecycling of parks, the City will need to keep pace with the maintenance of operations in alignment with the increase in parks. Parks in the Strategic

Growth Areas are also going to require higher operational funding per square metre of park compared to parks in low density areas. The City will need to make these budget adjustments as well as address the funding gap in the acquisition and construction of parks.

7.5.4 Funding Tools

Due to legislative changes over the past several years, funding the necessary parkland acquisitions to meet parkland targets with the Payment-in-Lieu Parkland Reserve Fund (PIL Fund) is anticipated to become more complex. Additionally, the reduction in Development Charges will also make it more difficult to fund the construction of new parks in a timely manner. Therefore, it will be important to prioritize the PIL Fund for land acquisition rather than the construction of parks and to find alternative sources of revenue for the construction of parkland. It is noted that currently, the PIL Fund is primarily used for the purchasing of parkland and the Development Charges Fund is used for the construction of parkland. The following alternative parkland funding tools are recommended for use by the City. Some of these tools, such as Sponsorships, Grants and Advertising can help enhance the quality and programming of parks, but would not aid in resolving the funding gap for land acquisition.

Sponsorships and Donations

Sponsorships and/or donations to expand and improve the greenspace system can help the City in reducing the financial gap and enhancing its greenspace system in line with its population growth. An example of sponsorship would be providing money for a particular programming component such as an educational walk, another example would be naming rights. A donation could be in the form of money similar to sponsorship or in the form of land. Examples of donations would be providing money without specifying its particular use or bequeathing land after a death.

Using the Council-approved Incoming Sponsorship and Donation Policy, Parks and Greenspaces should be added to the inventory list via a Council report that outlines how the funding may be received and spent, what benefits may be granted from the receipt of such funding, and the development of funding agreement templates.

Grants

Grants will become more critical in the future, and more staff resources should be dedicated to working with the Economic Development Department in finding and applying for grants under the Council-approved Grant Funding Policy. Grants may be used for the construction of parkland, recreation facilities, and open spaces. For example, the City has applied to the Ontario Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund for both capital improvements and new builds and received funding from Tree Canada and the Canada Community Building Fund at the Federal level.

Property Taxes

As other methods of funding shrink, it may become necessary to use property taxes to maintain the service level desired by residents. If multiple City building priorities can be achieved while acquiring parkland, it may be palatable to Council and Vaughan citizens that property taxes are used as a funding source for parkland development and/or acquisition.

Community Benefit Charges

Parks could be added into the City's Community Benefits Charges (CBC) By-law 201-2022. This would allow money collected through the CBC By-law 201-2022 to be used for parkland enhancements beyond the level of service funded through development charges. A downside to this tool, is the CBC funding is capped based on land value and therefore no additional money would be collected

with the inclusion of parks. To date, no money has been collected from CBCs in Vaughan due to the recency of the by-law.

Special Taxes

Ontario municipalities can impose special tax levies to fund specific projects. Municipalities can use the funds collected by these levies to pay for parkland acquisition in high density growth areas. Once parkland has been acquired and built, the levy would be rescinded. The City of Vaughan and the Town of Halton Hills have recently used this strategy for raising funds for building new hospitals to accommodate their population growth.

Vaughan also implements a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), the funds from this tax are to be used to enhance tourism and attract overnight stays to Vaughan. As outlined earlier in the GSP, certain types of parks attract tourism to the city and therefore it would be reasonable to identify the MAT as a potential funding source for parks.

There are other examples of special levies or taxes that have been applied on items non-related to parks but the funds collected will in part be used for parks funding. An example has been the inclusion of a special tax levy on off-street parking areas to fund improvements to stormwater management system, which can include parks and greenspaces. The City of Toronto developed a report to explore the financial implications of introducing a commercial parking levy in 2024, that is projected to raise \$100 million to \$150 million annually for the City of Toronto based on its existing off-street parking supply and proposed two-tier rate. However the levy would require coordination with the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) and the Government of Ontario.

Advertising

Advertising is separate from sponsorships and donations and could take place in the form of advertising on benches and on signage in greenspaces. Modest advertising opportunities in greenspaces could provide some additional revenue that could be used to enhance greenspaces.

Green Bonds

Under sections 401 and 402 of the Municipal Act, single-tier and upper-tier municipalities may issue debentures and prescribed financial instruments to finance capital expenditures. The City of Toronto has issued yearly Green Bonds since 2018 to help finance transformative climate action projects. These Green Bonds have each generated \$200 million to \$400 million and are used to support projects primarily relating to transportation (roads, transit, and active transportation) but also support greenspace projects, such as the Scarborough Waterfront Project. The Scarborough Waterfront Project will protect the Scarborough Bluffs from environmental effects and create a system of greenspaces along the shoreline between East Point Park and Bluffer's Park. Since the City of Vaughan is a lower-tier municipality, it would have to work with York Region to develop and issue a bond to fund greenspace-related projects, such as the Scarborough Waterfront Project.

A photograph of a park with a playground in the background and flowering trees in the foreground. The foreground is filled with branches of a tree with small, light pink blossoms. In the background, a playground with a red slide and a wooden structure is visible, surrounded by green grass and other trees. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

“Vaughan is becoming more urban, and it is important to think about greenspaces for its future urban residents”

- Engagement Respondent

Chapter 8

Strategic Actions

The successful implementation of the GSP will require the City to implement strategic actions over the next 30 years. These actions will help monitor the progress of achieving GSP targets, be more proactive in the acquisition of land and the development of partnerships, and explore alternative options for parks funding.

8.1 Strategic Actions

Achieving the Plan's vision and goals will be largely realized through private development, civic investment, and strategic partnerships across City departments, as well as with government agencies and community groups.

Table 7 contains the strategic actions to be implemented to help achieve the vision and goals of the GSP. The strategic actions are grouped into the following themes:

- » Acquisition
- » Data
- » Policy
- » Service Level
- » Partnerships

Acquisition actions focus on methods to acquire additional parkland.

Data actions focus on improving the quality and availability of City greenspace data to help make informed decisions.

Policy actions focus on amendments to existing policies, the creation of new policies and the inclusion of policies in the Vaughan Official Plan 2025. These policy actions relate to parkland acquisition, dedication, planning and construction, and funding of greenspaces.

Service Level actions focus on enhancements to internal processes

and collaboration, and adjustment to operations and maintenance in alignment with the vision of the GSP.

Finally, actions related to Partnerships focus on strengthening existing relationships with agencies and finding new partners to work together with to build upon Vaughan's greenspace system.

In addition to the themes, each action is noted as an on-going, short-, medium-, and long-term to indicate the relative time that will be required to achieve the action. The budget impacts to achieve each action are noted as requiring staffing, operating and/or capital resources and the departments responsible for carrying out the action are noted.

Lastly, the GSP goal that is being addressed by each action is also identified.

Partnerships

The City and its residents benefit from the amazing efforts from community organizations, schools, and various institutions. Working in partnership with these groups, the City is able to leverage knowledge, skills, and resources that may be currently unavailable. The City's relationship with organizations and institutions could present opportunities to further explore targeted delivery of services and shared use of spaces:

- » TRCA (e.g., environmental stewardship and education)
- » York University
- » York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board (e.g. shared use agreements)
- » York Region
- » Vaughan Community Health Centre
- » Vaughan YMCA (recreation and wellness delivery)
- » Utility agencies such as Hydro One and Enbridge (e.g., infrastructure corridors)
- » Other private partnerships (e.g., sponsorships)

The City should continue to explore opportunities to fund land acquisition, programming and amenity development through partnerships.

Table 7: GSP – Strategic Actions

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
1. Identify parkland priorities in conjunction with the Community Spaces Plan.	On-going	-	Facilities and Parks Delivery Development and Parks Planning	Diverse Greenspace Experiences	Acquisition
2. Establish a cross-corporate steering committee to lead the acquisition of parkland and the implementation of Circuit 51.	Short-term	Staffing, Operating, Capital	Facilities and Parks Delivery Legal Services Development and Parks Planning Real Estate Policy Planning and Special Programs Financial Planning and Development Finance	Greenspace Expansion	Acquisition
3. Develop a formal city-wide land banking policy and guidelines to proactively acquire land that may be used for parkland or may be exchanged for parkland particularly within Urban Areas guided by the updated Land Acquisition criteria (Table 2 in Appendix 6).	Short-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning Real Estate	Sustainable Funding	Acquisition
4. Identify City owned lands with limited development potential that may be suitable for park use and mandate prioritizing residual land from municipal infrastructure projects to be used as parkland if the land is determined to be suitable for parkland use.	On-going	Staffing, Operating, Capital	Facilities and Parks Delivery Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management Development and Parks Planning	Greenspace Expansion	Acquisition

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
5. Explore acquisition and non-acquisition based options if future parkland dedication amounts are not sufficient to maintain the recommended city-wide target. (i.e., interim parks, street parks).	Medium-term	Staffing, Operating, Capital	Development and Parks Planning Facilities and Parks Delivery	Greenspace Expansion	Acquisition
6. Seek to proactively acquire excess school sites as they become available.	On-going	Capital	Development and Parks Planning Facilities and Parks Delivery Real Estate	Greenspace Expansion	Acquisition
7. Develop and maintain one spatial park and asset database that all departments have access to. Determine which business unit will be responsible for stewarding a central parkland and greenspace database.	Short-term	Staffing, Operating	Facilities and Parks Delivery Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management	Equitable Access	Data
8. Maintain and use the parkland priority acquisition mapping tool, developed through the Greenspace Strategic Plan, to provide data on a live priority locations list.	Short-term	Staffing, Operating	Facilities and Parks Delivery Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management Development and Parks Planning	Equitable Access	Data
9. Present an annual monitoring report to Council indicating how the City is meeting the parkland provision level targets and where priority areas may be identified.	On-going	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning	Equitable Access	Data

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
10. Develop a Public Use and Park Observation program that monitors park usage to inform facility needs and social impacts of parks.	Short-term	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery Operations and Maintenance	Equitable Access Diverse Greenspace Experiences Adaptable Spaces	Data
11. Examine current staffing levels and consider hiring new roles dedicated to collecting, building, and maintaining a real-time parkland and greenspace database, and develop key measures and indicators to continue to report on evidence-based research and recommendations.	Short-term	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery	Equitable Access Greenspace Expansion	Data
12. Prepare a Council-approved Income Sponsorship and Donation Policy that outlines how the funding may be received and spent, what benefits may be granted from the receipt of such funding, and the development of funding agreement templates and outline how to redirect funds obtained from “parkland naming rights, sponsorships, and donations” to parkland redevelopment or parkland enhancement.	Short-term	Staffing	Economic Development	Sustainable Funding	Policy

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
13. Incorporate Greenspace Strategic Plan proposed policies into the Vaughan Official Plan 2025 as per Table 1 in Appendix 6.	Short-term	-	Policy Planning and Special Programs Facilities and Parks Delivery	Greenspace Expansion Equitable Access Diverse Greenspace Experiences Celebrate Culture Increased Tree Canopy Adaptable Spaces Climate Resilience Sustainable Funding	Policy
14. Update the City's Parkland Conveyance and Dedication Payment-in-Lieu By-law to reflect the Planning Act changes, updated policies, and provide clarity on non-creditable lands to include blocks with limited public access and programming such as buffer blocks and linear open space.	Short-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning Policy Planning and Special Programs	Sustainable Funding	Policy
15. Prepare a Park Construction Standards Manual (including standards for new park classifications) to consolidate all existing standards and guidelines and reflect current best practices in park design and update the Developer Build Park Policy (07.02.05) to guide park design and implementation and facilitate developer-built parks.	Short-term	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery	Adaptable Spaces Climate Resilience	Policy

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
16. Develop a citywide over-dedication and parkland credit transfer policy, to be based on the value of land within a local and defined geographic area (i.e., planning block or secondary plan limits) as per Appendix 4.	Short-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning Facilities and Parks Delivery Policy Planning and Special Programs	Greenspace Expansion	Policy
17. Develop a formal policy that establishes parameters for Payment-in-lieu Parkland Reserve Fund expenditures to be prioritized for parkland acquisition and identifies a cap on funding park parkland redevelopment and enhancements.	Short-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning Financial Planning and Development Finance	Sustainable Funding	Policy
18. Amend the Community Benefits Charges (CBC) By-law to include park enhancement funding.	Short-term	Staffing	Financial Planning and Development Finance Development and Parks Planning	Sustainable Funding	Policy
19. Review and update the City's Zoning By-law and other necessary by-laws to allow for specific commercial activities in parks that are compatible with and do not interfere with park uses such as food and beverage vendors, and concessions but limits private recreational uses.	Medium-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning	Diverse Greenspace Experiences Celebrate Culture	Policy
20. Review and update the City's Local Service Policy to include additional elements that are part of developer requirements and not eligible for Development Charge such as Strata Parks and Public Squares.	Medium-term	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery Financial Planning and Development Finance	Sustainable Funding	Policy

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
21. Update the Greenspace Strategic Plan every five years to review provision levels and update action plans.	Medium-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning	All	Policy
22. Review and update existing and future parks operations service levels (staff resourcing, technical expertise, park inspection and maintenance requirements) in light of new park classifications and emerging requirements developed through the GSP (e.g., invasive species, culturally important species, maintenance of urban parks, sustainability best practice etc.)	Short-term	Staffing, Operating	Facilities and Parks Delivery Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations	Adaptable Spaces Climate Resilience	Service Level
23. Align the implementation of actions across City plans that are relevant to greenspaces and advancing Circuit 51 including Urban Forest Management Plan, Woodland Management Strategy, Green Directions Vaughan, Community Spaces Plan, VMC Parkland Strategy action plans, and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.	Short-term	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operation	Diverse Greenspace Experiences Increased Tree Canopy Adaptable Spaces Climate Resilience Sustainable Funding	Service Level
24. Ensure park design and programming promotes plant diversity and pollinator species; provides green infrastructure; focuses on incorporating low-impact development features such as bioswales, and rain gardens; supports increasing the urban forest canopy, and contributes to achieving nature-based targets that enhance biodiversity and promote climate resiliency pursuing park certifications for sustainable initiatives such as SITES.	On-going	Staffing, Operating, Capital	Facilities and Parks Delivery	Increased Tree Canopy	Service Level

Action	Timing	Resources	Departments	GSP Goal	Theme
25. Prioritize multi-use, inclusive, and accessible park designs and adopt flexible approaches to park programming to allow parks to pivot to meet the needs of residents.	Short-term	Staffing, Capital	Facilities and Parks Delivery	Adaptable Spaces Equitable Access	Service Level
26. Incorporate Indigenous culture and presence in parks and greenspace design through art, community gardens, native plantings, and historical interpretive signage that are rooted in Indigenous knowledge that commemorate presence in areas with a long history.	Ongoing	Staffing	Facilities and Parks Delivery	Celebrate Culture	Service Level
27. Build public awareness and understanding of the benefits of the City's greenspace network through outreach and engagement programs that could include events, pop-up, school partnerships, or recreation activities in collaboration with other departments.	Short-term	Staffing	Recreation Services Communication, Marketing and Engagement	Diverse Greenspace Experiences Celebrate Culture	Partnerships
28. Collaborate with identified strategic partners for the acquisition, shared use, and programming of parkland (e.g., Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, school boards, public agencies).	On-going	Staffing, Operating, Capital	Development and Parks Planning Facilities and Parks Delivery	Greenspace Expansion Equitable Access Diverse Greenspace Experiences Celebrate Culture Sustainable Funding	Partnerships
29. Establish a funding, acquisition and programming partnership model with community agencies, user groups, and advocacy organizations to creatively find ways to increase park provision, naturalization, stewardship, and programming.	Long-term	Staffing	Development and Parks Planning Financial Planning and Development Finance	Sustainable Funding	Partnerships

