



City of Guelph Park Plan Developers Focus Group

Thursday, January 13
1:00-2:30 p.m.

This is the report from a focus group hosted for developers and those in the home building industry, to inform the City of Guelph's Park Plan.

32 people attended the focus group for developers. Participants included six (6) City staff, two (2) consultants, and 25 stakeholders. Two of the stakeholders at the developers' session also attended one of the public sessions. The summary below includes combined input from mentimeter, the Zoom chat and oral conversation. Unlike at the public meetings, only 6 participants elected to use the mentimeter platform, so most of the conversation reflected here occurred orally.

How might recent changes due to COVID etc. affect the City's plans for parks?

- Parks play an important role in fulfilling recreational needs. Places to sit, enjoy a coffee. Passive space. Take the opportunity to reflect and enact some changes. Seating areas, urban squares become more important. Passive activity/experience is still important. COVID elevated the importance of these spaces.
- At the G2G Rail Trail, we have noticed that users are using these recreational spaces for mental and physical health reasons, to be able to escape their homes and immerse themselves in nature.
- Seeing a more people walking (COVID). Trails need to be included in parks. Aging population is doing a lot of walking.
- Speed up implementation
- Need more outdoor space
- Need more trails
- Trails, walking access and connectivity are more important now
- Smaller or individualized play structures to ensure better social distancing

What creative possibilities could keep parks accessible to and enjoyed by Guelph's future residents?

- Urban settings > urban squares. Unique way to provide recreational opportunities that better fit an urban environment.
- Have had success in other jurisdictions (GTA) with building parks on top of stormwater management tanks. Could happen in greenfield situations as well. Able to use the land twice. Dual use parks. Co-facilities with schools (high schools adjacent to parks). Time of use difference. Complimentary uses (buffers) – more park/uses per acre. Passive

parks are important. Guelph doesn't use NHS for parks. Could be used for trails, walking. Leverage and use more where possible. SWM ponds can be built with views, vistas, trails incorporated in design. Utility corridors used for trail connections and recreation opportunities.

- Ditto!
- More experience in GTA. Public squares – land continues to be owned by developer. Maintenance by developer but counts towards parkland. Not seen in Guelph.
- “Use parks to tell our city's story.” Sign boards and trail markers. Incorporate what's left of buildings. Tell the story of a former farm etc. How the city developed in that area. Can enhance our unique sense of place.
 - Our uniqueness and storyboards to enhance the experience of being in our parks. what a great idea
 - Heritage as park area > Old pig barn ruins. Enhanced area with history, story board., sculptures
- Houses (farmhouses) sometimes incorporated into park design, use. Doesn't fit in all parks, but great idea.
 - The superintendents house at the OR would be a great focal point with washrooms, cafe, classroom for the public enjoying the outdoors in a regional landmark heritage site at the Yorklands. Love the ideas about other places...
(This input came from a resident that made a similar comment at a public session)
- All remaining barns should be preserved with parkland around them as there are more than 100 different possible uses for the barns. This is also part of our agricultural history.
- The City should also remember that parks – if well done and creative – can draw tourism visitors to our city which enhances our economy.
- Use of technology to enhance the experience. Guided tours. Indicate where other parks are nearby, connecting trails.
- Trails wander into GRCA land. Trail markers that allow you to understand the fauna, wildlife etc. in the area (protected). Educational tool used to protect parks and greenspace working hard to maintain.
- Regional parks are large, see higher-end recreational activity (sport fields). Richmond Hill, Markham, Milton – put on peripherals of city. Get a large piece of land at a good price, put a lot of complementary uses together.
- Stay on top of recreational trends, bike/skateboard parks, Frisbee golf... don't wait for the community to beg for these things or only add them after every city around us already has them.
- Utilize school lands for parks in the summer when school is not in session.



How should the City approach park development in different parts of the city?

- Repurpose for multiple uses. Infill situations trigger creative process where staff are empowered to work with communities and developers to create unique situations. Encourage creative solutions to squares, different ownerships/management, multiplicity of purpose. Unlock land that may have policies imposed on them. Great suggestions for infill land.
 - *Specific examples?*
 - Guelph Junction Railway > trail in some parts of the city. Natural fit for trails.
- A lot of roadways have large centre medians – no active opportunities. Put that into boulevards to add seating, greenery, trees. Can accommodate cars, enhance street scape, multiuse path. Reimagining different ways of doing things. Challenging to acquire land in urban environments. Need to be more creative at looking at what's available.
- Community gardens – don't have to be big but can have a big impact on the community they serve
- Yoga, goats, small urban farm at the Yorklands.. yay!!
- Maximize parkland use by making agreements with UGDSB to use land during summer months. Some are gated and locked because of insurance. Goes to waste when desperate for sport fields and outdoor space. Increase quality of field by forming partnership.
- UGDSB want to use the Yorklands now but need to have washrooms.... back to the superintendents house with washrooms and classrooms.. Both school boards have endorsed their use of this regional parkland. *(This comment came from a resident that also attended a public session to speak about the Yorklands)*
- Understand the demographics of a neighbourhood to meet its needs. Be willing to update parks at regular intervals, build that into a budget process.
- Use park land dedication dollars (where land dedication is not available) for other parks in the area.

How should the City communicate park planning expectations in order to help you develop your site(s) proactively?

- Communication is a two-way street. Invite people to be part of the process as early on as possible. Internally, departments need to be on the same page. This is not always the case. Other departments need to align to avoid conflicts.
- Parks have a lot of the same elements (trails, signs, play equipment). Are we doing enough to design beautiful parks in Guelph? i.e. Same # of trees, but placed in a different configuration and it becomes a promenade where people want to walk. Can we do better with the resources we have.
 - Let's up our design game
 - Thanks for the ideas about other cities. Evergreen Brickworks is a wonderful space including all the things that we could have in Guelph at the Yorklands. Lots



of space to design for a park that meets the needs of the future. Especially for people who are stressed and have no personal yard space as well as people from away. *(This comment came from a resident that also attended a public session to speak about the Yorklands)*

- Not surprised that land has to be provided when developing, but surprised by all the rules the City has. i.e. land has slope above certain % doesn't count as parkland. Walkway block required for trails. Tree in the middle of the park, area of tree and dripline doesn't count as parkland dedication.
- Most jurisdictions have standard conditions, established early on for parkland dedication. More of a challenge on infill. Can work with the City to accommodate parkland. Ensure process is clear.
- Infill development, specifically in downtown. Dedicating land is not always possible. Fee should go directly to parks in the immediate areas to make improvements. Developers want to know where money is going and that it's being used in the area.
- Illustrate what is currently in place and what is currently missing in each part of the city.
- Illustrate expectations to developers
- Make bylaw requirements clear
- Make bylaw clear

What would help streamline the park approvals process?

- Use the land to its full potential. i.e. Trails, graduated lands, green space, etc. Not all parks need to be flat and wide open.

Would you support developers constructing parks on behalf of the City, if they were funded to do so?

- Yes – 2 people
- No – 2 people

There was little participation on Mentimeter for this question, but the conversation related to the question is captured below.

Comments

- Build stunning parks. Not just grading and seeding, but making the park a focal point of a specialized community. Already paying fee or dedicating land.
- DC as credit for service, with refunds eventually.
- Developer built parks sounds great. Challenge is implementation. DCs, plus pay for the park. Wait to get credits back.



- How to fund that and make it available to developers? Developers have a vested interest in subdivision. Want the best possible place for property owners. Know of developers that wanted to enhance the park, but the process of working with the municipality became too difficult and they walked away. Personally, partnered with local municipality to enhance a City park and expand upon it. Made the park accessible to greater community, improved safety by lighting it at night. Give the developers the opportunity. Great opportunity for parks. Developers spent their own money, enhance the subdivision as a whole, increased home sales. Very proud of the park.
 - *What kind of difficulties? Red tape?*
 - Red-tape, rules, regulations. A bunch of different things.
- Reids subdivision in south end (Westminster Woods). Trails, recreation facility are paid by residents as they're enhanced features of the subdivision. Worked without a lot of issues. Has features that wouldn't be there otherwise. Homeowners pay a monthly fee for the upgraded features. Should be considered in other projects.
 - *Who maintains once built?* Westminster Woods community pays for it.
 - Westminster Woods has a lot of trails. When first designed, developer wanted to use a lot of trails as park dedication, was not permitted. You won't see people in the parks unless there's an event. People are constantly on the trails. Very well used. Greater recreation to the community than the park.
 - *Something about the design?* Design of the trails – accessible (most). Link the entire community. Bisect natural areas as well as being in between lots in the area. Unique experience. Active cycling experience or natural passive experience. Parks are flat land with sport fields people don't use most of the time. Circle the parks on the trails but seldom see people in the park. People value different things for park. Westminster Woods is a great example of how important trails have become.
- Variety of trails is appealing. Paved, accessible. NHS for the observation of wildlife. Important in the city. Great opportunity .

Additional comments

- Please consider including a percentage of parkland dedication as a trail. People love trails, want trails and use them. The Planning Act allows parkland dedication for park and other recreational purposes.
 - Agreed.
- Trails should be no different from parkland. Trails serve the same purpose and function. Recreational activities.
 - ^ G2G actually recognizes our Trail Experience as a 990 Acre Liner Park that connects directly to Guelph.
- Please ensure that any new parkland by-law does not impose parkland dedication or cash-in-lieu of parkland on existing development. Existing development should not be required to prove that the parkland requirement was previously provided. New development will increase the demand for parkland. Existing development does not increase the demand for parkland.



- Please work with the City's infrastructure department so that a trail or walkway will be maintained by them even if the trail or walkway is located in a park. There should not have to be a walkway block provided abutting a park.
- The Planning Act refers to a maximum of 5% parkland dedication (with alternative calculation). The Guelph Parkland By-law allows a maximum of 30% of parkland or cash to be paid for a development site. Please consider the impact to the cost of housing if the full 30% is imposed as a cost.
- The cost of housing without parkland is increased stress and problems especially in times like ours. Developers usually understand that good parks attract buyers.
- The two previous maps have excluded the area known as Yorklands yet it is a highly used area for people to enjoy outdoors away from traffic, to engage with nature and could advantage all developers by having a regional park there. *(This comment came from a resident that also attended a public session)*
- River system. Highlight it. Augmented and developed (metalworks)
- I'd like to feel that we can "get lost in our own backyards."

