



Questions and answers from January 12 and 13 virtual focus group

- 1. Does the definition [of parkland] being used by the City include "indoor recreational space"? The definition used by the 2018 Parkland Dedication Bylaw update included indoor recreational spaces.**

The City defines parks as outdoor space that can contain buildings (e.g. washrooms). Indoor recreational spaces are not parks. Through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Park Plan engagement, the City will update definitions to make them clearer.

- 2. Is the University of Guelph Arboretum considered a park-function area?**

No. The arboretum is private land owned by the University of Guelph. The City is working on a way to recognize private spaces that have recreation value in the city through the Park Plan.

- 3. How does the Park Plan defend parkland in Guelph from developers, that would rather build than provide greenspace?**

The Park Plan is a strategy that helps set a community-approved intention to improve and build upon the City's park system. While privately-owned land can and does get developed, the City relies on the development review process to get more parkland in the city. The [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) and [Official Plan policies](#) allowed by [the Ontario Planning Act](#) require planning and development applications to transfer land to us for parks and public recreation or provide cash-in-lieu of parkland so parks or recreational spaces can be purchased. While it represents just one way of accessing land or funds to purchase land, it does mean that each development contributes to new parks in Guelph.

Our Natural Heritage System policies protect natural heritage areas and features to ensure we have intact ecosystems for future generations.

The City uses [Official Plan policies](#) to determine if there is a need for a park based on access, neighbourhood population, parkland provision targets, recreation needs and demographic information.

Related questions

- What is being done to REDUCE building sites?

- Is land in Guelph prioritized for development instead of THE SAME LAND available for parks?

4. We had a lot of conflict last year about dog parks. Are you planning more off-leash dog parks?

The City will address the need for additional leash-free areas as part of the next phase of work for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. There will be another opportunity for community engagement on park facilities later in 2022 or early 2023.

5. What consideration is being given to ensuring that low-income neighbourhoods are appropriately served with parks? With my kids I have visited many park playgrounds around the city, and it is very apparent that the nicest parks are in the wealthy neighbourhoods. Can staff comment if this is being considered?

Equity and inclusion is an important part of the Park Plan that helps to make sure the City builds infrastructure where it's needed most.

Staff are looking at strategic funding models to fund improvements to existing parks in existing areas, such as better ways to use the City's [City Building Investment](#), a tax-supported funding strategy.

6. Does the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) own parkland within its constituent cities, and would they comprise a suitable partner for developing more parks?

The GRCA owns land within the City of Guelph. Some of these properties are considered parkland as the City manages the land through maintenance agreements. One example is Silvercreek Park where the skatepark is located.

The GRCA is already a partner for developing parks and there may be opportunities for the City to work with the GRCA to develop future parks.

7. I've attended a couple of neighbourhood information sessions by condo builders. How can we know if the plans suggested by the builders for green space open to the public is actually happening?

Information provided by condo builders can be confirmed by the City. The City posts information about [current development applications](#) on the City's website. Developers must provide private green space as part of developments, often in the form of common amenity space, which is not parkland. Please contact planning@guelph.ca with any questions.

8. Has the City approached wealthy people to leave a legacy of supporting parkland contribution?

City staff do not approach private citizens to donate parkland. Should citizens wish to donate land to the City for a park, staff review each application against City policies and determine how best to do this on a case-by-case basis.

9. Could you please make sure that developer input on all of these processes is reported separately from citizen input? Developers have a pecuniary conflict of interest in this matter. Minimizing parkland maximizes profit for developers, although it minimizes quality of life for citizens.

City staff are meeting with the development community separately to understand their perspective on parkland. Summaries will be provided on the project webpage alongside those for public engagement.

10. Who manages the habitat for urban wildlife?

The City manages Natural Heritage Systems on City property, which contains habitat for urban wildlife. Our Official Plan policies set out objectives for protecting the Natural Heritage System and water resources. We use a system-based approach to help protect, manage and ensure the long-term health of the natural environment.

The City's [Natural Heritage Action Plan](#) (NHAP) presents a mission, principles and actions for supporting objectives for the natural heritage system and water resources as established in the City's Official Plan. Several specific recommended actions in the Natural Heritage Plan are related to habitat and wildlife management planning including Action 3, 8 and 11.

City staff have very limited capacity to undertake wildlife management activities in parks and natural areas, and currently intervene to actively manage wildlife only when deemed absolutely necessary because of the nature of a human wildlife conflict situation (e.g., protecting sensitive turtle eggs or limiting goose conflict). The goal of natural areas management is to preserve and enhance habitat for urban wildlife.

City staff do not generally provide animal control. The Guelph Humane Society and their staff do provide animal control and education to residents about living in harmony with wildlife and will assist in injured wildlife situations they can be contacted at 519-824-3091. More information can be found on the [City's webpage](#).

11. Are staff planning to discuss the parkland bylaw at this meeting and if not WHEN will the public be asked for input to the new bylaw that has to be in place? I have questions on the bylaw so shall I save them for experienter public meet?

Community meetings to refresh the [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) will begin in February 2022.

12. Is parkland and parks the same thing? Please define parkland in terms of parks, other green spaces, NHS etc.

Park and parkland are the same and the terms are used interchangeably. Parks are defined areas that primarily support active recreation.

Our Natural Heritage System (NHS) is not considered parkland since its primary function is to protect, maintain and enhance the City's biological, hydrological and geological functions and to sustain local biodiversity. Our NHS policies limit passive recreation opportunities and human use. Some parks have natural heritage features or areas in them as they are part of existing parks and our policies and criteria for parkland have evolved over time.

13. Can you also please review what is currently classified as "recreation"?

There is a broad definition of recreation in our [presentation](#). Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

14. How will you reach out to the many people in Guelph who are NOT able to participate via technology due to cost, access, language, etc.?

There have been numerous other points of contact with the public through other/related engagement activities as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Community Plan and Strategic Plan.

Prior to COVID-19, we were able to collect information from harder to reach groups through intercept surveying in parks, farmer's market, downtown, recreation centres, with school groups and Evergreen Senior's Centre.

We also use other data sources and information interviews with specific groups to help us understand our community needs like using data from Public Health, demographic information, Guelph Community Foundation and many other sources of information.

All communications about this project includes contact information for staff. Anyone with limited access or knowledge of technology is encouraged to email or give staff a call so their feedback can be captured that way.

15. With regard to animating parks with a variety of activities, has the City piloted using portable equipment/infrastructure?

We will address this as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

We currently have [Activation Stations](#) in some of our parks that run free programming for families. We also have used portable skateboard equipment in the past.

16. Are there plans to pave more trails to make them accessible for people on scooters, roller skates etc.?

The City is always looking at ways to continually improve our trail system. The recently-completed [Trails Master Plan](#) provides information about trail design standards and approach.

17. How do we currently prioritize where to place new parks?

The City relies on the development review process to help get more parkland in the city. The [Parkland Dedication Bylaw](#) and [Official Plan policies](#), allowed by [the Ontario Planning Act](#), require planning and development applications to transfer land to us for parks and public recreation or provide cash-in-lieu of parkland so parks or recreational spaces can be purchased.

[Official Plan policies](#) determine if there is a need for a park based on access, neighbourhood population, parkland provision targets, recreation needs and demographic information.

18. Do existing policies outline a minimum number and types of amenities for density of population?

Our previous Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plans in 1997 and 2009 outline existing and proposed service levels for recreation facilities. This is typically shown as number of facilities for a specific number of residents. (e.g., one tennis court per 2,500 residents). The City will review service levels for recreation facilities in the next stage of work for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

19. I heard there was plan for a park along the river (Gordon and Wyndham, currently a strip mall). What's happened to that?

A future park was identified as part of the [Downtown Secondary Plan](#). The City is working on strategies to acquire that land. The City must buy land at market rates and needs to build up the resources to do so.

20. Why don't we have developers to finance parks? After all, we pay for roads, water etc. that allows them to sell their developments at higher prices.

There are rules and regulations as to how much a municipality can require of a developer and the City must follow these rules. Developers pay [Development Charges](#) and are required to provide parkland dedication (land) or cash in lieu of land.

As part the development review process, City staff review applications and determine if land or cash in lieu is required for the development. Any cash in lieu that is received is put in a parkland dedication reserve fund. This money can only be used for the acquisition of land for park or other recreational purposes; erection, improvement or repair of buildings; or the acquisition of machinery for park or other public recreational purposes.

Related questions

- We pay and pay for roads, water, all that with taxpayer money, that benefits development but we can't ask them to give land for citizens enjoyment?
- What is the City's expectation from developers? Are the developers mandated to create park space or pay in lieu? And if they choose to pay in lieu, is the City mandated to use that money toward parks or does it just get absorbed into the coffers?

21. The Lee St. Park is basically the Winegard Public School yard now. Is it part of City parks or school board property?

Lee Street Park is a City-owned park. We are not aware of any official arrangements with the school board. Many parks are adjacent to schools and often property lines are not delineated by obvious infrastructure such as a fence or natural area.

City staff are meeting with the school board to discuss the Park Plan and identify opportunities to work together (i.e. dual use). If the property is owned by the school board then they make the rules, but if it is City-owned, it is a public park and can be used by everyone.

22. As far as I am aware, the City never took advantage of the bonusing allowed for higher density under section 37 of the Planning Act. Instead, we have allowed higher density in some developments. I don't believe we ever passed a bylaw that would have allowed bonusing. Now there is a community benefit charge allowed under section 37 allows 4 percent of the value of the land. Is this a tool we could use to get more parkland? Would this 4 percent allow us to buy more parkland

The [Community Benefits Charge](#) (CBC) is a new development-related revenue tool, which was introduced in the past year through legislative changes by the provincial government. This revenue tool is aimed to support capital costs related to intensification as the legislation limits the CBC only apply to developments of certain density criteria.

To impose this new CBC charge, the City is required to complete a background study like the DC Study to support the charge. This work is currently underway and is expected to be presented to Council in Q3 of 2022.

This tool could be used to develop parkland and will be explored as part of the background study currently underway.