



2009 future directions

Future Directions for Parks and Natural Areas
Draft Interim Report - September 2009





PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS MASTER PLAN

DRAFT INTERIM REPORT

September 2009

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Community Services Department, City of Mississauga



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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan

The provision of parks and their inherent recreation facilities and programs are essential elements of sound planning, and are important to individual and community health and well being. As well parks and the broader system of open space lands which include greenbelts, valley and stream corridors, and natural areas are essential to the overall ecological health of the City and the surrounding watersheds, and to the quality of life for residents.

Mississauga has engaged in strategic planning for parks and recreation services for some years through its various parks and recreation master plans. The *Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan* is a component of Future Directions, which is a series of studies that are examining indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, programs, parks and natural areas, and libraries. This document represents the Interim Report for the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan.

The *Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan* is closely tied to the Future Directions *Recreation Master Plan* in that it responds to the forecasts for recreation facilities and leisure activities that are supported within the landbase of the open space system which includes parks and natural areas. The two studies have shared common components of data collection / evaluation of socio-demographics and forecasted change; and community consultation.

When finalized the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan will serve to guide the City's decisions regarding sustainable planning and management of parks and natural areas assets for continued enjoyment by its residents and visitors. It will receive a major review

on a five-year basis together with the other components of Future Directions.

Master Plan Context

The 2009 update of the *Future Directions* studies is preceded by extensive planning related to the City's growth and development, and which establish expectations for the future of the parks and open space system. These documents include: the *Waterfront Parks Strategy (2008)*; *Sustainable Living: A Growth Management Strategy for Mississauga*; and, the City's *Strategic Plan* and *Strategic Action Plan (2009)*.

The Strategic Plan is the foundation for the City's policies and decision-making, including those related to parks and environmental planning.

In the City's Strategic Plan, the five '**Strategic Pillars for Change**' consist of:

- ⇒ Developing A Transit-oriented City
- ⇒ Ensuring Youth, Older Adults and New Immigrants Thrive
- ⇒ Completing our Neighbourhoods
- ⇒ Cultivating Creative and Innovative Businesses
- ⇒ Living Green

Two of the Strategic Pillars for Change in the Strategic Plan are particularly applicable to the parks and natural areas, as follows:

Completing our Neighbourhoods

Direction – Our Future Mississauga is a city that co-exists in harmony with its ecosystems, where natural areas are enhanced, forests and valleys are protected, the waterfront connects people to

Lake Ontario, and communities are nurtured so that future generations enjoy a clean, healthy lifestyle.

Principle – Mississauga is a city that nurtures a unique quality of life within each neighbourhood, where residents value the beauty and variety of the natural environment, engage in active transportation and support a rich, healthy and prosperous social and cultural mosaic through all stages of the life cycle.

Strategic Goals

- ⇒ Develop Walkable, Connected Neighbourhoods –
- ⇒ Build Vibrant Communities
- ⇒ Create Great Public Spaces
- ⇒ Celebrate our Community
- ⇒ Provide Mobility
- ⇒ Build and Maintain Infrastructure
- ⇒ Nurture “Villages”
- ⇒ Maintain a Safe City
- ⇒ Create a Vibrant Downtown

Living Green

Direction – Our Future Mississauga is a beautiful, sustainable city with safe neighbourhoods that support a strong, connected and vibrant community - a place where all can live, work and prosper. People can play as a child, walk to meet a friend, fall in love, raise a family and grow old.

Principle – Mississauga is a city that values its shared responsibility to leave a legacy of a clean and healthy natural environment.

Strategic Goals

- ⇒ Lead and Encourage Environmentally Responsible Approaches

- ⇒ Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments
- ⇒ Promote a Green Culture

Key Issues for the Future Provision, Use and Management of Parks and Natural Areas

Through the review of trends there were several key issues that emerged which frame our evaluation of parks, green spaces and natural areas in the City of Mississauga and underscore recommendations related to future needs. These are outlined below.

Concept of Sustainability: Urban planning concepts and approaches that are related to sustainability and, therefore, to parks provision include densification/infill, complete communities, smart growth (both physically and economically), integrated communities, consideration of social and cultural values, active transportation and food sustainability through urban farming. The ultimate aim of these approaches is to halt/reverse a no longer tenable approach to urbanization, which requires a change in the function and form of urban communities. Consequently, the function, form and management of parks will change in a corresponding manner. A systems approach also implies a “loop” within which parks and natural areas are themselves sustainable while simultaneously contributing to the sustainability of the urban area as a whole. Protection of finite natural area resources and focused enhancement efforts combined with management for both environmental and economic sustainability are important objectives for the parks and natural areas system.

Demand for Urban Parks and Natural Areas: Whether through necessity or as a result of cultural and social choices, trends suggest that in the future people will be spending more time in their local communities, which will increase use of public parks, open space and natural areas. Providing these spaces in existing, built-up urban areas

will be a challenge. This will necessitate a flexible approach to provision that will ensure a range of different public spaces that will fulfill the varied role of parks.

Evolving Concept of Parks: While parks and natural areas are still primary components of the larger open space system, other parts of the “public realm” are now recognized as important contributors to sustainable urban communities. These include parks, plazas and streetscapes. The recent Project for Public Spaces (PPS) in the City Centre area embodies these concepts in its approach to “placemaking” or the creation of successful and sustainable community places. Intensification of existing built-up areas will increase pressure on available parks and natural areas to meet social and recreational needs and opportunities to introduce new large parks may be limited. This will necessitate a more creative approach to the provision of a variety of spaces that fulfill the roles of parks, including modest “infill” of both green and non-green public open space, parks dedications associated with larger redevelopment projects, and redesign and redeployment of underutilized parks or school sites in areas that can support community facilities. It will also be necessary to look to the private sector for creative ways to integrate spaces other than traditional parks for social and environmental benefit, including: ‘green’ streets and lanes, rooftop gardens, and public amenity spaces.

Vision Statement

A mandate for the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan is the development of a Vision and Guiding Principles to direct development, use and management of the system. The City has done extensive visioning in very recent years in conjunction with the Waterfront Parks Strategy, the Downtown 21 Master Plan, and Our Future Mississauga, and a number of community preferences and interests were put forward for parks and natural areas within these

exercises. The resultant documents were reviewed for relevant goal statements or principles that could advise the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan visioning.

These documents and public input on parks and recreation were reviewed, and the following Vision Statement is proposed for the Parks and Natural Areas system.

The Mississauga parks and open space system offers clean, safe, well-funded and managed parks, natural areas, greenspaces, trails, recreation areas and cultural sites. Natural features are protected, restored and enhanced for ecological health and the benefit of future generations. Parks include a diverse range of enjoyable and attractive places that build the City’s profile, enhance neighbourhoods, encourage active lifestyles, and stimulate community interaction.

In support of the Vision, the City’s parks and natural areas will be developed and managed based on the following **Principles**:

Environmental Sustainability

Long-term sustainability of the natural systems through connection, protection, restoration and enhancement of natural areas will be a priority. Planning and management of parks and recreation facilities will strive for a harmonious relationship between people and nature, and will be supported by educational programming and encouragement of community stewardship.

Promoting Quality of Life

The parks and natural areas system will comprise diverse, vibrant, and social places that allow residents to interact and support a range of activities that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for residents and a desirable experience for visitors.

Supporting Community Connections

The needs of residents will be provided for through parks and natural areas that support recreation for all ages and abilities, and are accessible, affordable, and culturally rich. They will serve to integrate communities socially and be physically linked by a multi-modal system of transportation.

Quality and Innovation in Design

The design of parks and amenity areas will be based on high quality at best value, and lowest impact on the environment, and will incorporate innovative products and technologies that are durable and sustainable.

Responsible Management

Management practices for parks, open space and natural areas will recognize and respect the natural environment, provide a consistently high standard of care and maintenance to ensure the well-being of users and the protection of resources, and be fiscally responsible.

1.5 Future Directions for Parks Planning and Development

Parks As Key Elements of Placemaking

The City's Strategic Goal: Completing Our Neighbourhoods speaks to the provision of 'safe neighbourhoods that support a strong, connected and vibrant community - a place where all can live, work and prosper'.

Parks have long been considered key components of community planning, and Mississauga's residential areas have been built around a system of parks, schools and greenspaces. The traditional view of

parks - that they provide open space for recreational facilities and programs - is still widely embraced by the public in these areas. This need will continue into the future, and parks will need to evolve as they are implemented or redeveloped to provide facilities to meet the community needs and preferences.

As the City moves toward a denser, urban context using more contemporary thinking in city-building, other considerations will need to be applied to the design of parks and open spaces. Parks and public spaces are identified as key elements in 'placemaking' for their contributions to city greening; aesthetically pleasing spaces; enlivened streets; and healthy, social communities. Mississauga's commitment to this is evidenced by the successful engagement of residents and staff in: *Building Mississauga around Places: A Vision for City Centre Parks and Open Spaces in the 21st Century*; and the City's ongoing *Downtown 21* work.

Parks and open spaces provide social benefits in addition to their tangible contributions to City beautification, recreation / leisure pursuits, and public health. Research and action has demonstrated that parks and greenspaces can help build and strengthen community ties by bringing people together in communal places - including those who may feel marginalized by ethnicity or class - to recreate, attend public events, or to volunteer on community projects.

The opportunities that arise in redevelopment/intensification projects will typically provide more limited opportunities for public parks and open spaces than in the past. Consequently, while infill development/intensification will tend to focus more on parks as contributors to 'quality of life' than on active recreation needs, there will also need to be a corresponding emphasis on paths and bikeways that link new development areas to more active recreation areas within the larger City-wide network.

Recommendation #1

- ⇒ Continue the process of Placemaking as the standard approach to City-building initiatives to ensure the creation of complete communities that work economically, aesthetically and socially to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods. For parkland this will entail the establishment of well designed, attractive, safe, and comfortable public and private spaces that encourage people of all ages to engage in social and civic interaction through both casual and programmed activities.

Protecting and Enhancing Ecological Systems

Mississauga is also blessed with a rich system of river and stream corridors, and woodland areas that comprise its Natural Areas System. These greenbelt lands for the most part comprise the 'common grounds' that support both ecological functions and public uses. Participation by local residents in trails and unstructured outdoor recreation activities is growing and there will be increasing demand for year-round access to the greenways to support these interests. First and foremost however, they are important ecological systems that serve as the 'lungs of the City', helping to restore and recycle the air, and supporting important animal and plant communities.

Recommendation #2

- ⇒ Continue to embody the principles of ecosystem planning in the land-use planning process, whereby natural areas and systems are appropriately protected and integrated into the built environment and enhanced to ensure overall health of the natural environment, and people, into the future.

Recommendation #3

- ⇒ Within the system of parks and natural areas, continue to strive for a 'green', livable, and sustainable City - with the provision of parks and open spaces that are readily accessed by residents, and designed to accommodate a range of active and passive recreation uses in harmony with the natural environment.

Quality of Planning and Design

In order to achieve stated objectives for sustainable and complete communities, planning of the future parks system will need to consider not only the quantity and distribution of parks, but the quality and diversity of the outdoor environment needed to meet residents expectations and objectives for the public realm, as outlined in City-building studies such as the *Mississauga Plan Review: Sustainable Living, A Growth Management Strategy for Mississauga*.

This will entail continued attention to how City planning is conducted and the implementation of processes similar to those recently undertaken for the City Centre to achieve the innovation and excellence in planning and design that is called for throughout the City, as growth continues.

Recommendation #4

- ⇒ Similar to the Downtown 21 Master Plan, continue to develop integrated open space / urban design plans for all new areas of redevelopment and intensification on a 'precinct' basis. For parks, and public and private spaces, the plans should address the location, form and characteristics to ensure common design philosophies. Accompanying guidelines should be prepared to address landscape and urban design elements, sustainability measures, and identify programming and facilities that are

appropriate to community demographics and urban living. The plans and design guidelines will guide planning and policy decisions and development negotiations at subsequent planning stages and will assist in internal prioritizing of staff and financial resources to address parks design and development in sequence with other planned initiatives.

Recommendation #5

- ⇒ Excellence and innovation in design and construction technologies should be key objectives for all new parks planning and development to ensure that the public and private open spaces are developed on the basis of high quality, reasonable cost solutions, that imbed objectives for sustainability and offer long-term durability. For private development sustainable design will be directed by the City of Mississauga Green Development Strategy, and its Green Building Standards.

Recommendation #6

- ⇒ To achieve the City's objectives and new directions for new development areas, the planning and approvals process must be undertaken as a coordinated, multi- departmental approach. In this regard there needs to be continued and increased efforts by the City toward inter-departmental dialogue and cooperation in all matters pertaining to community and infrastructure planning design.

Parkland Classifications

Amongst other objectives, in adopting the current open space classifications the *Mississauga Plan* seeks to establish a public open space system with a diversity of recreational and natural environment experiences, and to 'provide a system of public open space areas

which can adapt to changing needs and preferences for recreational facilities and opportunities'. These remain valid objectives into the future to guide parks planning and development.

The current park categories in use in the City's Official Plan are City Park (proposed to become Destination Park) and Community Park. City Parks are largely comprised of 'found' cultural and natural resources that represent the City's natural and cultural heritage, or unique or major facilities that serve all City residents, such as the golf courses, and the waterfront. Community Parks are intended to accommodate recreation interests for the local residential area through provision of sports fields for organized use, space/equipment for unorganized activities and passive use, preservation of woodlands, multi-purpose year round activities (where feasible), visual relief and aesthetic qualities.

These current park classifications are reasonable categories to achieve the stated objectives for 'placemaking' in areas of growth and intensification, providing that the category of Community Park is redefined as including all types of parks, including small urban parks and public squares that may offer different forms of leisure pursuits that appeal to urban dwellers and contribute to the urban form, e.g. shaded seating areas, sculpture gardens, 'internet' parks, cafés.

Greenbelt comprises significant natural areas and lands constrained by natural hazards that are restricted from development. These non-park lands may offer opportunities for trails and passive recreation activities that are compatible with the natural areas, but are not included in the per capita calculation of parkland.

Recommendation #7

- ⇒ The parkland and open space classifications comprising Destination Park, Community Park, and Greenbelt are

appropriate categories to be used to describe the hierarchy of City-owned open space lands, providing that the category of Community Park is redefined as including all types of local-serving parks, including small urban parks and squares.

If historic assumptions as to what a 'Community Park' is preclude this, consider reinstating a smaller park unit, such as 'Local Park' or 'Neighbourhood Park' to capture the range of new urban parks that will be needed. The City should review its current inventory listing to ensure that the classification assigned to each park fits its intended and actual use.

Parkland Provision Standards

The use of per capita provision standards based on population as a means of determining parkland requirements is a widely accepted practice throughout North America. A review of parkland provision in municipalities across Ontario indicates that standards and actual supply vary widely.

The dense, core areas of Toronto (and its pre-amalgamation municipalities) have a significantly lower per capita supply than the greenfield, suburban communities that are still growing. However the trend even in these municipalities is that the overall standard of supply is declining in urbanizing areas. This is primarily due to changes in the Development Charges Act in the late 1990s which eliminated opportunities to levy for parkland, leaving municipalities largely reliant on allowable dedications under the Planning Act.

As a city that is nearly built-out to its urban boundaries, and now facing additional growth through intensification, Mississauga's target of 1.2 ha. per 1000 population for new residential areas is realistic in

that it approximates the provision level that can be achieved within allowable dedications under the Planning Act which equates to a population based standard of approximately 1.0 ha. / 1000 population.

The objective for the provision of parks within 800m has been largely met across the City, with a few gaps in coverage where physical barriers exist, and the Service areas as a whole are well supplied relative to the provision standards for new areas. Action steps in the City's Strategic Plan include measures to encourage a more walkable and connected city form by establishing maximum block sizes with a perimeter of 400m for all nodes and corridors in new development areas. In this regard, maintaining an 800m provision standard for parks, which would approximate a two-block walk, is still a realistic target. Notwithstanding, open space areas may be located at less than this distance to achieve urban design objectives.

Recommendation #8

- ⇒ Maintain the current tableland parkland standard of 1.2 ha. per 1000 population, with access to parks within an 800m distance in residential areas as a minimum standard for new development areas. This standard does not include non-park open spaces such as hazard lands and natural areas, which may be acquired for conservation purposes.

Parkland To Meet Growth Needs

Population growth in Mississauga has been more rapid than anticipated in the last Future Directions with the forecasted 2031 population essentially achieved in 2009. The City's recent Growth Plan conformity exercise has identified additional population growth of at least 80,000 persons by 2031, to be achieved through infill and redevelopment initiatives concentrated in several key nodes and along major corridors. Placemaking principles are calling for reduced dependency on cars, and the establishment of new neighbourhoods

that are aesthetically designed, with a range of parks and community amenities in walking distance. The Planning Districts have largely, with the exception of the City Centre (which sits at approximately 0.60 ha. / 1000 pop.), met or exceeded the provision standard of 1.2 ha. / 1000 population. Many of the growth areas will be serviced by parks within the 800m service standard. However, the provision of new parks and public spaces will be an important part of achieving other community form and urban design objectives, and enhancing the quality of life in dense urban areas.

Although the parks provision standard that has been achieved varies across the City's neighbourhoods, and will continue to do so, it will be important to maintain existing provision levels to the extent possible through new parkland acquisitions. In particular in the City Centre, and other underserved neighbourhoods that may be identified, growth and intensification should not allow the amount of parkland to slide below the existing provision level.

Recommendation #9

- ⇒ Continue to plan for a range of public spaces that may not match traditional park types, including urban squares and linear greenspace to support trails and greening strategies, combined with increased opportunities for a variety of activities that support urban 'downtown' living.

Recommendation #10

- ⇒ As part of planning studies to implement Growth Management recommendations, e.g. District Plans, Community Plans - a community-based assessment should be used to establish where and how much parkland should be included in redevelopment areas, in consideration of desired urban form, and proximity to existing parkland and facilities, together with demographics, socio-economic factors, and projected growth.

- ⇒ Parkland levels should continue to be based on the provision of a minimum of 1.2 ha. / 1000 population, and areas that currently fall below this standard, such as the City Centre, should not be allowed to slide any further.

Recommendation #11

- ⇒ Apply all available tools such as density bonusing, alternate provision standards allowed under the Planning Act, and enabled by elements of the official plan and zoning by-laws, to optimize parkland securement opportunities.

Recommendation #12

- ⇒ As the City progresses with its growth plans, the successful application of the current provision standards to infill and redevelopment areas should be monitored, and again reviewed at the next *Future Directions* plan update.

Open Space on Private Lands

In denser, urban areas private, landscaped open space often plays a key role in the character of an area, typically integrated to create an attractive setting for the building, provide amenities for the occupants, and to augment the public realm. As redevelopment and infilling occurs in Mississauga open space areas provided by private development such as urban squares, roof gardens, and landscaped amenity areas will constitute an important part of sustainability measures and the urban design character of new communities. They should be considered important elements toward 'placemaking', City greening and the provision of public or private amenity space. However, privately owned open space should be considered supplementary to, and not a replacement for the required provision of public parks and open space.

Recommendation #13

- ⇒ Open space on private lands including urban squares, roof gardens, and landscaped amenity areas, will constitute an important part of the urban design character of new communities, City greening initiatives, and the provision of public and private amenity space. Privately owned open space should be encouraged in new urban infill and redevelopment areas but should be considered supplementary to, and not a replacement for, the required provision of public parks and open space. Private open space should be reviewed on a site by site basis, with clear guidelines for implementation through policy and urban design guidelines.

Cash in Lieu of Parkland

The City has a Corporate Policy and Procedure to direct the dedication of land, cash in lieu of land, or a combination of land and cash. The policy identifies how land dedications and cash in lieu payments for parks purposes are made, and the nature and type of acceptable land dedications. The policy reiterates the standards of the Official Plan, and is consistent with the provisions of the Planning Act in the application of a parkland yield, or cash payment, calculated on the basis of, the greater of, either 5% of the land area, or 1 ha. for every 300 dwelling units.; or, 2% of the developable land area for commercial / industrial land.

The determination of when to take parkland dedications vs. when to take cash-in-lieu of parkland is not articulated in the policy. This question is of particular importance in new growth areas, where traditional parkland yields may be challenging.

Recommendation #14

- ⇒ The following criteria should be considered in deciding when to take a cash in lieu payment:
 - where the area being developed or redeveloped has sufficient parkland to accommodate projected population growth and forecasted recreation needs within existing standards
 - where the City identifies land in a more appropriate or accessible location that has been, or is to be, acquired by the City
 - where there the site cannot provide land that is either usable or functional (e.g. not large enough or of sufficient quality) for parkland purposes
 - where the taking of parkland from the site may reduce the number of dwelling units or the floor space of a development or redevelopment such that it renders the development or redevelopment unfeasible

The current use of cash-in-lieu (CIL) funds is guided by a corporate decision that directs 60% toward land acquisition and 40% toward facilities and equipment, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act. The funds are accrued in a reserve fund, and in the case of the land acquisition reserves, are used for strategic acquisitions that build the parks and natural areas on a city-wide basis. There is no provision made at present for a specified portion of the CIL funds to remain within the area where the funds are generated. Accrual of funds to a city-wide reserve is common practice for developing municipalities that derive adequate parkland yields from dedications. However this may not be the case in areas of infill and intensification and mature municipalities have developed policies to address area-specific use of a specified portion of the collected CIL funds.

For Mississauga, ensuring city-wide and local needs are both of importance. However, in order to ensure that adequate parkland is provided to meet objectives for sustainable, livable communities in growth areas, it may be necessary to assemble / acquire land through purchase when there are limited opportunities for dedications. The City may wish to develop and formalize a strategy for use and allocation of CIL funds that addresses balancing both city-wide needs and interests for land acquisition, as well as ensuring that local parkland needs are provided for in growth areas.

Recommendation #15

- ⇒ Consider the development of a cash-in-lieu allocation strategy to direct the use and apportioning of CIL funds, with a view to balancing both parkland needs in growth areas as well as city-wide interests for the acquisition of waterfront parkland and natural areas.

Parkland Acquisition Strategy

An acquisition strategy and evaluation criteria are key to the identification of priorities for strategic land acquisitions that are essentially competing for the same resources. The City has embarked on a process of monitoring opportunities for strategic land acquisitions to meet target objectives for parkland and recreation facilities across the Service Areas, and to complete gaps in the publicly owned system of natural areas and greenbelt lands, using accrued cash-in lieu funds that are earmarked for land acquisition.

The draft acquisition strategy and evaluation criteria were reviewed and discussed with staff as part of the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan. The parkland acquisition evaluation criteria was slightly modified to better align with the identified priorities of this plan which include: strategic acquisitions to support the natural areas system; the waterfront; and to ensure growth needs are met.

Recommendation #16

- ⇒ It is recommended that the City continue with its current approach to identifying strategic land acquisitions, and through endorsement of this Plan adopt evaluation criteria and a ranking system which includes priorities for acquisition of lands that: protect and enhance Natural Areas; .
 - support the Waterfront Strategy;
 - support completion of the trails system;
 - support population growth and sustainable community design (where no / limited opportunities for parkland dedications exist).

(refer to Appendix A for Parkland Acquisition Evaluation Criteria and Ranking).

Parkland Requirements to Support Outdoor Recreation Facilities

The 2009 Recreation Facilities Master Plan for Future Directions recommends that in the short term the City seek opportunities within the existing supply to address the existing deficit and identified 5-year needs for outdoor fields through: efficiencies in time utilization, improving existing fields; greater collaboration with school boards to utilize board properties; and replacement of some natural fields with artificial turf (1 artificial turf field can equal 3 natural turf fields). The opportunities to achieve this will need to be carefully evaluated to find suitable sites within the existing landbase and to make sure that additional hours of usage, lighting of fields or parking do not impact local neighbourhoods.

There is considerable population growth anticipated to 2031 through development in the Core areas and Nodes (as identified in the Growth Management Study), with further growth projected beyond this time. Although demographic trends will influence demand for sports fields

over the long-term, it is anticipated that future growth will result in a demand for some additional outdoor fields (although likely at a slower pace, or as a downward per capita trend for some sports). Over the long-term, not all of the outdoor field demands may be met in the existing land supply, and any new parks developed in association with new urban infill development are not likely to be of a size that support sports fields.

The City has a large landbase of parkland in Milton arrayed along the Ninth Line, which was acquired as a landbank to address future major sportsfield needs. These lands represent the best opportunity for any consolidation of fields and other facilities into a sports park that could support more intensified uses including tournament play, should the need be there. As well one or more of these sites could support a park or parks that offer a wide range of city-serving facilities such as group picnicking, BMX bike course, skatepark, or events space either in conjunction with, or separate from outdoor fields. Development of such a park could also potentially relieve the pressure on the valley parks to support new activities.

Recommendation #17

- ⇒ Monitor the success of implementing the *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan recommendations that call for the provision of sports fields to address the current backlog and the 5-year forecasted need, by improving or adding facilities in existing parks or through allocation / usage policies.

Recommendation #18

- ⇒ In association with the monitoring of the provision of sports fields, review and assess the need for the Ninth Line parks landbase to accommodate some of the current backlog or future forecasted major outdoor facilities needs. Evaluate on a site specific basis, opportunities for the Ninth Line park blocks to accommodate other desired recreation and leisure

services and facilities to alleviate pressures on existing parkland and on the valley parks and open space. These may include an additional events park and / or picnic park; a location for a BMX circuit, off-leash area, or a site to accommodate 'urban agriculture initiatives' such as allotment gardens or a community food-share initiative.

Recommendation #19

- ⇒ Maintain the inventory of Ninth Line park blocks pending a comprehensive review of the capability of the existing parkland and facilities supply to accommodate the major recreation facilities identified in *Future Directions*, as well the opportunities for the landbase to accommodate any new recreation and leisure needs, as the City may be willing to provide.

Waterfront Parks

Mississauga has extensive frontage on Lake Ontario. The waterfront includes an enviable system of more than 22 parks, with several new ones planned, many connected by the Waterfront Trail that extends as a connected pathway for a considerable distance through the parks. Use and management of the waterfront parks is directed by a Waterfront Parks Strategy, which was completed in 2008. Consequently, the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan does not specifically address the waterfront parks as a separate component although they are implicitly included within the discussion of the open space system, and have some issues that are common to other parks.

Recommendation #20

- ⇒ Continue to further develop and enhance the Waterfront Park system using the 2008 Waterfront Parks Strategy as the guiding document.

Upgrading of Existing Parks

There will be an ongoing need for systematic upgrading of older parks in Mississauga to address aging facilities, and to ensure that parks continue to meet the recreational and social needs of current and future residents. Park utilization is directly related to the quality, attractiveness and comfort of the space and the suitability of facilities to prospective park users. Well-utilized and busy parks are key factors in deterring vandalism, and negative behaviour.

Future Directions: Recreation Master Plan has identified the need for more local-serving recreation amenities, in particular those that are focused on children and youth. As new parks are developed or older ones rejuvenated, they should be considered for their capacity to support casual un-programmed activities such as multi-purpose courts, outdoor fitness equipment, community gardens, and informal playing fields for pick-up games. Determination of these needs should continue to be made in consultation with local residents, as well as through a review of the demographic make-up of the community.

As well there is a growing use of parks as outdoor social spaces resulting from cultural choices and increased trends toward recreating close to home. This is evident in Mississauga through the well-attended City-run and community events, increased bookings of picnic shelters, and the casual use of large parks, and to some extent even smaller parks in newer neighbourhoods, for family and community gatherings. It is expected that now and for the foreseeable future, the provision of social space at a neighbourhood or community level will need to be considered in the development or redevelopment of all parks and spaces, and in the identification of new locations to support events and large group activities.

Recommendation #21

- ⇒ In addition to implementing the recommendations of *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan for projected recreation facilities, continue to engage the public in all parks development and redevelopment projects to ensure that community preferences and interests are integrated together with recommended facilities.

Recommendation #22

- ⇒ In the design of all new parks, and the rejuvenation of older parks, consider use by all-ages and abilities, design for safety using CPTED principles, and the provision of facilities and amenities that support social interaction and unstructured recreation and leisure activities. These may include, as appropriate: shaded seating areas, child and youth-oriented play facilities, outdoor fitness equipment, informal playing fields, picnic / BBQ facilities, checker / chess tables, and community allotment gardens.

Recommendation #23

- ⇒ Establish a prioritized list of older parks for redevelopment. Triggers for priorities may include: implementing the recommendations of *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan for redeployment of underutilized sports fields, life cycle replacement of facilities, changing community demographics, or identified needs through growth plans. Identify annual budgets for systematic parks redevelopment / upgrading within the 10-year capital plan, based on identified priorities, and develop and implement plans.

Trails and Pathways

Both the 2004 and 2009 Future Directions surveys indicated very strong community support for more trail development - both in terms of increasing connectivity/coverage and adding amenities to support expanded use such as improved wayfinding, more rest areas, washrooms, exercise stations, activity separation, universal accessibility, and snow clearance and warming stations for year-round cycling and walking.

Relative to the cost of other recreation facilities, trails offer a relatively low per person cost, appeal to a wide-range of users and offer high returns in health benefits and resident satisfaction. As such trails offer one of the best values for dollars invested. The City should review trails-related budgets and the delegation of responsibility for trails across various departments, to develop a coordinated, appropriately funded approach to designing, building and maintaining these amenities.

Recommendation #24

- ⇒ The 2001 Mississauga Multi-use Recreational Trail Study continues to be a valid master plan document to guide strategic planning and implementation of a multi-use trail system. However an update is required to reflect accomplishments in the ensuing years, and to confirm / validate outstanding gaps in the system in light of other work, including the ongoing Cycling Master Plan. The update should not just focus on multi-use paved trails but on all trail types that the City has within its inventory or might consider e.g.: walking/hiking only trails. The study should: confirm the trail inventory; provide a hierarchy of recreational trail types to direct trail development; provide design standards that address trail construction, design for accessibility in appropriate locations, safety and lighting of trails, and

sustainability measures; establish maintenance standards and protocols; and provide guidelines for a set of consistent wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signs within an overall park signage system.

Recommendation #25

- ⇒ The public's focus on trails and pathways, and the work needed to support this use and maintain/protect existing resources suggests that the City should review trails-related budgets and the delegation of responsibility for trails across various departments, to develop a more coordinated, appropriately funded approach to designing, building and maintaining trails and related amenities. For example: plans for developing recreational trails and cycling routes should be coordinated with higher order transit and traffic plans through the Cycling Master Plan or an update of the Multi-use Recreational Trail Study (2001).

Recommendation #26

- ⇒ For new trails development in natural areas, or improvements that will initiate or intensify use of existing trails (e.g. expansion or paving), undertake a site specific evaluation process using information contained in the Natural Areas Survey and field assessment to evaluate vegetation, habitat and conditions to determine compatibility of the project, together with corresponding best practices in management. This evaluation should be developed in association with Conservation Master Plans for major natural areas (see recommendations under Management and Use of Natural Areas) and may serve to preclude or close routes through woodlots and other environmentally sensitive areas, given the potential for long-term degradation.

Recommendation #27

- ⇒ Consider how to optimize physical accessibility and use of the trail/pathway system opportunities with consideration of: four-seasons activities, accessible design, lighting of trails, addition of fitness equipment along trails, contracting equipment rental services (i.e., bikes, roller blades, cross-country skis etc.) in parks and/or at trail heads. This will require a review of service levels to establish a program for capital improvements and/or increased operating budgets to support expanded or new uses (see recommendations on Parks Management and Maintenance regarding review of service levels).

Programs and Activities

There is considerable community interest and potential for expanded parks-based programming in Mississauga, including more year-round outdoor activity and a wider range of programming in different areas (e.g., arts, nature education, heritage, etc.).

Future parks-based programming should be based on a co-ordinated strategy that identifies and assigns priorities to needs in various communities across the City (e.g., at risk areas, teens, older adults), develops programs to respond to these needs, and relates program planning to potential local park improvements and/or redevelopment.

Consideration should be given to developing and programming parks as “outdoor community centres” to support an intensified programming function, while making better use of parks resources. This would require considering a formal programming function in design/development or redevelopment projects.

Recommendation #28

- ⇒ Parks-based programming opportunities should be used to inform parks development / redevelopment. In developing a coordinated strategy the recommendations of the Recreation Master Plan, Youth Strategy, Older Adult Plan, and the Arts and Culture Master Plan should be considered to identify and establishing programs that address the needs of various communities and demographic groups.

Recommendation #29

- ⇒ Programs should be offered either directly by the City programming staff or through appropriate partnerships with community organizations, sponsors, volunteers and other agencies such as the school boards, District Health Unit, private instructors, regional agencies, YMCA, etc.

Recommendation #30

- ⇒ Parks should be developed and programmed as “outdoor community centres”, the goal of which would be to establish a regular outdoor program schedule - much like that at indoor community centres - comprising both indoor programming moved outdoors and programs that are specific to outdoor settings. Providing these “outdoor community centres” will require considering a formal programming function in parks design/development or redevelopment projects. Consider establishing a ‘family of community centres’ as satellites to a community centres, schools or libraries for program delivery.

Developing the Education Function

Parks and natural areas have considerable potential to support community and social objectives through the way in which they are purposed, designed, built and programmed. The City’s overall

directions points to development/redevelopment approaches that will increase/enhance proximity and access to parks, natural areas, trails, green streets, and public spaces. This alone will improve affordability for all residents, regardless of means.

Capitalizing on existing resources for education programming can result in short-term results that do not necessarily require significant investments in infrastructure or service delivery. Interpretative signage along trails is one example of this, and expansion of these types of programs is supported by the City's overall directions.

Public input also suggested that there is a need to increase the level of awareness of parks and recreation resources in the City, together with increased publicity of events and activities that take place in parks, with a particular targeting of newcomers to the City.

Recommendation #31

- ⇒ The municipality's commitment to conservation, sustainability, community gardens, environmental protection, restoration and stewardship, and heritage preservation should be demonstrated in its park programming including: demonstration projects, interpretation and, in appropriate instances, hands-on participation. These types of programs can be provided without (or with minimal) program staff, and might also provide the basis for program partnerships with community organizations, and private or non-profit sector specialists in these fields.

Recommendation #32

- ⇒ Investigate and implement opportunities for improved awareness and publicizing of parks resources, together with programs, events and activities that take place in parks, including consideration of improvements to portals on the

City's web site, and integration with information technology improvements proposed for library and recreation services.

Community Gardens

Community gardens are projects that are initiated and run by formal volunteer organizations, with City support. These projects provide the group's members with a common garden that serves both an education and community support function. Allotment gardens, by contrast, are leased by individuals for their own use.

Community gardens can meet multiple objectives in the areas of education about healthy eating and gardening, providing no or low-cost fresh foods, socializing, community-building and project ownership. They provide gardeners with physical activity and, to the extent that they reduce dependence on transported foods, they also contribute to a reduced carbon footprint. There is also growing interest in protecting agriculture in the GTA, and discussion is extending to furthering opportunities for urban agriculture of all forms. Although similar in the "collective" philosophy underlying community gardens, urban farm projects are much larger in scale.

Recommendation #33

- ⇒ The City should continue to support opportunities for managed community gardens in partnerships with community-based organizations, and in accordance with an established set of policies and guidelines to ensure that they are located and managed appropriately.

Recommendation #34

- ⇒ Future community garden locations should be directed away from valleylands and into tableland areas due to the need for servicing and safe, easy access as well as potential conflicts

with natural areas objectives, e.g. concerns over invasive species.

Recommendation #35

- ⇒ In addition to the parks and open space system, vacant or under-utilized municipally owned land and building lots, and rooftops, should be considered as potential sites for community gardens or allotment gardens. Partnering with schools in gardening projects should also be investigated. Incorporating a community garden should be a standard consideration in redevelopment/infill project planning.

Recommendation #36

- ⇒ If trends and interests in urban agriculture continue to grow, with community partnerships to support it, consider a potential site or sites to accommodate City-serving, large-scale allotment gardens or 'an urban agriculture' site, e.g. Pinchin property, Ninth Line site, or Britannia Farm site.

Special Event Spaces

In Mississauga special event spaces include both parks and non-park areas, such as the Civic Square that accommodate special events.

Consultation with the community revealed that there are too few appropriate venues for special events, particularly at the neighbourhood/community level, and that there is concern that resources need to be more equitably distributed between developing City-wide and local venues.

The City's overall strategic directions and action plans point to a clear interest in revitalizing communities and neighbourhoods through a variety of redevelopment/enhancement activities. Events and other community-driven activities are opportunities that can be used to

involve residents in projects that will support community-building and neighbourhood-level "placemaking" in parks and other public spaces.

Due to the varied requirements of events and their potential impacts on green parks, it is both appropriate and desirable to locate events that do not specifically benefit from parkland in other suitable public spaces. A Special Events Strategy should be prepared that provides clear direction on the location of outdoor festivals or events based on associated site capacity and facility criteria.

Recommendation #37

- ⇒ It is both appropriate and desirable to locate events that do not require parkland in other suitable public spaces. Generally, the use of the waterfront for special events should be limited to events that benefit specifically from a waterfront setting. Waterfront parks used for special events should specify the types of events that will be accommodated, and should designate one or two areas within the larger system in which events will be accommodated.

Recommendation #38

- ⇒ Strategies that are focused on developing accessible nodes, destinations and gathering places throughout the City should consider the inclusion of "special event" venues at key locations in each community. Events and other-community driven activities can be used to involve residents in projects that will support community-building and neighbourhood-level "placemaking" in parks and other public spaces.

Recommendation #39

- ⇒ In preparing a Special Events Strategy, the City should consider work completed by staff that provides initial direction in locating outdoor festivals or events based on associated site capacity and facility criteria, to ensure the

appropriateness of the location. Specific parks and types of parks within the City-wide system that can support events of different sizes and types should be identified, using a hierarchy of event types, e.g. major outdoor festivals/events; minor outdoor festivals/events; and neighbourhood outdoor festivals/events. The work should be coordinated with the identification of service level standards needed to support events in parks (refer to Future Directions for Parks Management and Maintenance).

Leash-free Areas

Off-leash areas are an accepted form of recreation in urban areas, allowing both dogs and owners to exercise freely in areas that are inviting, safe, and managed to avoid conflicts with other park users. The City works in association with its community partners to provide off-leash areas for supervised dogs within its parks and open space system.

In collaboration with community partners Mississauga is developing a series of policies and guidelines that will help to inform site searches for potential new off-leash areas, and direct their management and use.

This work should be advanced and should address the following: location, design features & operating protocols; consultation with the local community to encourage interest in and commitment to the off-leash area; any needed updating of City by-laws to provide the regulatory environment for those who disregard off-leash areas and park rules; ongoing communication and public education using positive messaging to encourage compliance with off-leash policies and by-laws.

Recommendation #40

- ⇒ The City should continue efforts to support leash-free opportunities within parks in collaboration with affiliated community-based organizations, and in accordance with established policies and guidelines to find, establish, maintain, organize and monitor use of specific areas where dog owners can safely exercise and socialize their pets without infringing on natural areas or the rights and sensibilities of people without dogs.

Memorial Tree and Bench Program

The City offers a memorial tree and bench program within its parks system. The program is highly popular in the waterfront parks and other scenic locations where a favourite quiet spot or view can be selected by the family. However, as a result the program is over-subscribed in some locations to the extent that it can compromise the design integrity of the park. As well, some desired locations, such as along woodland trails or a river's edge, may not be functionally sustainable due to potential for vandalism or damage by flooding.

This type of program might be better served by developing several planned locations for memorial benches and trees in suitable parks, or developing memorial walls or paving areas as design elements so that efforts can be managed to be sustainable.

Recommendation #41

- ⇒ Consider developing several planned locations for memorial benches and trees in suitable parks, or developing memorial tree groves, memorial walls or paving areas as design elements so that these efforts can be managed to be sustainable.

Supporting Culture, Heritage and Tourism

Typically, communities express strong interest in developing tourism as an economic driver. Parks can offer the potential to grow tourism in several areas: sport-tourism, horticultural-tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism. Tourism or increased tourism is not, however, a guaranteed by-product of parks provision, however interesting or unique the parks may be. To be successful and compete with the private sector or other regional attractions, parks-based tourism requires the support of a focused strategy together with the following in-house competencies: understanding of the market, service quality management, leisure pricing policy, leisure marketing, tourism and resource economics, finance and tourism management.

The role of parks and natural areas in place-based cultural tourism depends on the cultural experiences that make up the community's "sense of place" and where they are located (e.g., a heritage site in a park, a publicly-owned geological site). Therefore in considering its opportunities for parks-based tourist destinations, Mississauga should undertake studies to establish the appropriate themes and concepts that define its cultural character. Prior to embarking on any specific initiatives or projects for parks-based (or other) types of recreational tourism, the City will need to undertake market assessment and economic feasibility studies.

Recommendation #42

- ⇒ In considering its opportunities for parks-based tourist destinations, Mississauga should undertake studies to establish the appropriate themes and concepts that define its cultural character. Prior to embarking on any specific initiatives or projects for parks-based (or other) types of recreational tourism, the City will need to undertake market assessment and economic feasibility studies. These tourism studies should address the feasibility for specific sites to

serve as tourist destinations, and should include an assessment of the following variables: the potential for the site to function as a tourist destination in the industry's definition of the term; the anticipated market in relation to the site's potential draw and other competing destinations; the need for municipal investment in planning/development to achieve the site's tourism potential; the likely trade-offs that will be required in meeting community needs for recreation/leisure if the site is put to tourism uses; and, a business plan outlining all capital and operational costs and potential revenues to develop and run the site as a major tourist destination.

Recommendation #43

- ⇒ A parks/recreation-based tourism facility or site must be appropriately staffed and funded on an ongoing basis to succeed in generating revenues and minimizing costs.

Partnerships

The partnerships suggested in the City's directions and actions plans are largely those that are "natural" to the resources or services being considered (e.g., partnering with conservation authorities in protecting valley lands). This is a partnership built around common interests, other examples of which at the municipal level include civic culture, community building, historic preservation, and natural history. The City collaborates with a number of community organizations for the delivery of specialized programs and facilities to meet community interests, including community gardens, leash-free areas, and accessible playgrounds, and these types partnerships should continue to be cultivated.

However, attracting new partners to participate in providing community parks, natural areas, trails, greenways and parks-based programming will require recreation professionals to advocate for/educate on the true, wide-ranging benefits of these resources and services. Documented evidence of the benefits that accrue to other sectors of the community (e.g., real estate industry, preventive health care sector, private corporations etc.) will be needed to attract and maintain their involvement and support.

Recommendation #44

- ⇒ The City should continue to support and cultivate partnerships with a number of community organizations for the delivery of specialized programs and facilities to meet community interests.

Recommendation #45

- ⇒ The City's interest in redevelopments that integrate park sites with a variety of other facilities and services to support nodes/destinations will require new and more complex partnerships and corresponding resources from each party to make them successful.

Recommendation #46

- ⇒ In order to attract new, non-traditional partners (e.g. organizations in the fields of health and social services) to participate in delivery of parks and recreation services, the City will need to serve as an advocate for, and demonstrate evidence, of the true, wide-ranging benefits of parks, natural areas, and outdoor physical activity. This may be a new role for Community Services that requires documenting relevant statistics through research activities aimed at eventually developing a Mississauga-specific data base of benefit indicators, ideally in collaboration with other parks-related agencies.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries are part of the cultural and fabric of the City, they typically include heritage features, and are frequented as sources of information for historical or genealogical research which is important to link past and future generations. As such they should be considered valued cultural resources rather than liabilities, although ways should be sought to cost effectively manage them so they remain attractive elements of the urban environment.

The City of Mississauga currently maintains ten cemeteries with only four still in active use. Perpetual upkeep, maintenance and long-term operation of closed or abandoned cemeteries is mandated in Ontario by the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act meaning that the commitment and annual costs span an indeterminate time period. Although maintenance is of reasonable cost relative to other types of open space, the City is exploring ways to reduce maintenance efforts and contain costs at the closed cemeteries without the appearance of abandonment. These include initiatives such as reduced mowing program, including planting of hardy shrubs and plants, and selective control of regenerating vegetation.

Other cities, particularly in dense urban areas where there is limited parkland, are capitalizing on the concept that cemeteries are cherished greenspace, and are managing their cemeteries by maintaining or adding trails, strolling paths and gardens. Holding weddings or wedding photograph sessions in attractive cemeteries is an emerging trend which can offer revenue potential, if permitted. Other initiatives being employed include self-guided or paid walking tours in historic cemeteries, and summer concerts.

As well trends and social preferences in cemeteries suggest a need for appropriately designed and managed cemeteries and memorial

spaces that can accommodate a wide range of religious, cultural and social traditions.

Recommendation #47

- ⇒ The City should, through its Cemetery Operations Business Analysis, continue to consider its needs and options for a new cemetery and other initiatives that can meet current trends in the bereavement industry and the cultural preferences of its residents.

Recommendation #48

- ⇒ In response to strategic goals for 'living green', the City should consider ways in which maintenance and management of cemeteries can be conducted in sustainable and 'eco-friendly' ways.

Recommendation #49

- ⇒ The City should consider opportunities to reduce the cost-dependency of closed cemeteries in ways that will maintain their heritage attributes, and allow for them remain attractive, and (to the extent possible) usable greenspaces.

1.6 Future Directions for Parks Management and Maintenance

Service Levels

Based on discussions with City staff and consultation with the public, maintenance issues and levels of service are, and will continue to be, a primary concern for Mississauga parks. The City currently allocates annual budgets for parks and open space maintenance based on a uniform 'dollars per hectare' basis. Residents are calling for increased levels of service in: snow clearing, pathway lighting, garbage removal, frequency of washrooms, and washroom conditions. Safety is also a growing concern, due in part to perceptions of parks as unsafe places. As well there is a need to design parks with a view to sustainability, using durable, vandal resistant materials.

There is an expectation for quality of park experience and service levels that are tied to Mississauga's profile, which include corporate expectations of the City's image as well as the views of its residents. In order to achieve this, there will need to be a commitment to funding for parks operations and maintenance that will entail not only a commitment to stable, annual funding for the maintenance of existing parks, but corresponding increases in the allocation of resources to accommodate new parks as they come on stream.

Mississauga has a number of parks, typically the City Parks, that have higher needs due to unique features, high levels of usage - which result in higher cost maintenance activities, more wear and tear, and /or more frequent basic maintenance needs such as waste management or grass cutting. Various, these include the Waterfront Parks, sports parks, horticultural parks such as the Rhododendron Gardens, and Riverwood; parks with extensive designed landscapes; and parks and sites where events are held, e.g. the Civic Square. Expectations and objectives have also been set that as new parks are

developed in infill, denser built form environments they will be more urban in nature. This typically involves more designed elements with increased amounts of hardscape and landscape features that are more costly to maintain than typical community parks. Conversely, much of the greenbelt lands are would have lower per acreage maintenance costs.

In order to achieve this, the City should consider undertaking a review of the 'actual cost' of the maintenance of parks based on their function and attributes, with a view to a more refined cost model and potential re-allocation of annual operational funding for parks based on types of facilities and / or usage. To facilitate tracking of information and resource allocation a series of internal categories should be considered. For example, defining levels of park maintenance based on usage and features: Level 1 parks receiving 'highest level of maintenances' and Level 5 being 'minimum level'.

Recommendation #50

- ⇒ Continue to monitor and review current staff and capital resource allocation using in-place and planned methodologies and tracking tools, e.g. the Hansen system. When sufficient data has been collected on existing operations, review the 'actual cost' of the maintenance of all parks and open space based on their function and attributes, and identify an appropriate hierarchy of service levels for the parks and open space system, e.g.: Level 1 parks receiving 'highest level of maintenances' and Level 5 being 'minimum level' with a defined level of maintenance within each category based on daily, weekly, monthly tasks.

Recommendation #51

- ⇒ Based on the service level review develop a refined cost model for parks maintenance that is tied to service levels and reflective of specific maintenance needs of different park types based on facilities, functions and / or usage.

Sustainable Management Practices

Conservation of the natural environment is important to Mississauga residents and Living Green is a Strategic Goal of the City's corporate strategic plan. This assumes protection of the City's natural environment through stewardship, partnerships; and best practices in ecosystem and environmental management. As part of its green strategy the City has embarked on an Environmental Master Plan that will consider all aspects of the corporation's business and operational practices.

The City has expressed interest in the management of parks to promote environmentally friendly practices. With respect to parks development and management this translates into the development and implementation of best practices to address environmental sustainability in all aspects of park maintenance and operations activities, and the creation and/or integration of natural environment areas within parks to enhance unstructured recreational experiences.

These types of measures typically include the application of environmentally friendly practices such as: reduced mowing regimes to promote / support naturalization efforts; reduction or bans on use of pesticides and herbicides; use of 'green' vehicle fleets; use of eco-friendly cleaning products, de-icing agents, natural fertilizers and renewable horticultural products such as compost, and wood chips recycled from yard waste programs, use of drought tolerant and native trees, perennials and shrubs instead of higher maintenance horticultural species and annual flowers.

Many of these initiatives have been initiated, or are undertaken already by the City, but need to be focused and prioritized to ensure that optimum benefit is received from them.

Recommendation #52

- ⇒ Continue to investigate and implement environmentally friendly practices such as: reduced mowing regimes to promote / support naturalization efforts; 'prudent avoidance' of pesticides and herbicides; use of 'green' vehicle fleets; use of eco-friendly cleaning products, de-icing agents, natural fertilizers and renewable horticultural products such as compost, and wood chips recycled from yard waste programs, use of drought tolerant and native perennials / shrubs / trees in public parks and streets.

Recommendation #53

- ⇒ In conjunction with the implementation of sustainable management practices there needs to be a comprehensive and strategic *communications strategy* that outlines goals for the preservation of the natural environment, and educating on/promoting the values of stewardship. At a strategic level this could be undertaken in conjunction with the City's ongoing overall Environmental Master Plan, and consider opportunities for cross-messaging through partner agencies and community-based organizations. On a site specific basis it should include informative and educational signage that focuses on positive messages.

1.7 Future Directions for Natural Areas

Overview

Mississauga's natural areas consist of three major landform types; valley land, tableland and wetland. The Credit River and Etobicoke Creek are the main valley land features, and are characterized by wooded slopes and wetlands. These natural features are generally well connected by virtue of the linearity of landform. Natural heritage features and areas of the City are known as the *Natural Areas System*. Although some of the natural areas are of higher quality than others, a fundamental premise is that all remnant natural areas are part of a system, and the total or partial loss of any one of them diminishes the entire system.

Over the past twelve years the City of Mississauga has studied and monitored the natural heritage resources through a *Natural Areas Survey* that was initiated in 1996 to identify the City's best remaining natural features. The Natural Areas Survey is updated annually as to conditions of the natural areas.

Despite recent gains in the biodiversity as a result of naturalization efforts in several of the City's natural areas, the fundamental trend across all of Mississauga's natural areas is a decline in overall quality. This decline is largely thought to be a result of increased human disturbance and changes in hydrology resulting from development (NAS 2008).

Identification and Protection of the Natural Areas System

The trends emerging from the review of issues of Natural Areas in Mississauga, as contained within the related documents, suggest that there is a strong need for continued and increased efforts to protect and increase the proportion of the City occupied by natural habitats. There is also a need to better understand and evaluate the existing natural heritage system in order to inform decisions surrounding priorities for natural areas protection, land acquisition and enhancement initiatives.

The City through its Natural Areas Survey has identified the natural heritage system that informs the environmental policies of the Official Plan. However, more contemporary approaches to natural heritage system identification and evaluation are widely used by other municipalities and supported by the Provincial Policy Statement, and the work of conservation agencies. As well CVC, TRCA and the Region of Peel have all undertaken studies that could serve to inform protection, securement and enhancement of natural areas in Mississauga. It would be beneficial for the City to align its work with current provincial policy environment, and the work of its partner agencies.

In this regard, a comprehensive Natural Heritage System study is needed that expands on the work undertaken through the Natural Areas Survey, and suggests ways to harmonize the activities of the City in concert with the Conservation Authorities, and the Region in the approach to natural area evaluation and greenlands securement. The updated natural heritage system should be incorporated in the Official Plan, together with any needed updates to environmental policies.

Recommendation #54

- ⇒ Undertake a comprehensive Natural Heritage System study to expand on the work undertaken through the Natural Areas Survey, with a view to harmonizing the activities of the City in concert with the Conservation Authorities, and the Region in the approach to natural area evaluation, natural heritage system identification, securement of lands for natural area protection, and identifying enhancement strategies.

Recommendation #55

- ⇒ Protect the remaining natural areas in the City's Parks and Natural Areas with objectives to manage, maintain or increase biodiversity. Of particular importance is the protection and subsequent management of all woodlands, wetlands and successional habitats wherever possible.

Recommendation #56

- ⇒ Continue to collaborate with the CVC, TRCA, Region of Peel Greenlands Securement Team, and other City departments in the identification of priorities for land acquisition, enhancement and stewardship initiatives to support a linked greenspace system.

Recommendation #57

- ⇒ Acquisitions to support / bolster the natural areas system should be a parkland acquisition priority for the City, particularly given the increased emphasis on, and expectations for access and use to natural areas. First order priority sites will be significant natural areas that are interconnected to the broader natural system comprised of the valleylands and the Lake Ontario waterfront, and lands that reinforce or fill gaps in the Natural Areas System, as identified through the NAS, or subsequent study.

Recommendation #58

- ⇒ As a priority, forests and natural areas need to be assessed for degree of vulnerability to withstand negative impact from encroachment.

Recommendation #59

- ⇒ Work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to develop an environmental response network and protocol to anticipate and effectively manage potential future biological (i.e. invasive species) and non-biological threats (i.e. natural disasters).

Restoration and Enhancement

To facilitate implementation of objectives outlined in the NAS, there will be a need to align the planning, design and use of parks to be consistent. It is recommended that the City prepare detailed management plans including Conservation Plans for parks that are adjacent to or include Natural Areas with a view to directing management and maintenance activities, and enhancing the potential contribution to the natural heritage system. The Credit River Valley Master Plan is one such initiative that the City has committed to.

Recommendation #60

- ⇒ Initiate Conservation Plans for natural areas with consideration to prioritizing natural areas based on significance, representation, site and condition, and those of greatest value. The Conservation Plans should include, but not be limited to: access, encroachment, appropriate activities, non-native plant control, and restoration initiatives. Restoration initiatives could be started on two or three natural areas for a period of two to three years, and natural areas could then be dealt with on a rotational basis that focuses on those natural areas at greatest risk.

Recommendation #61

- ⇒ Identify locations within other existing and future parks for naturalization/restoration initiatives to increase natural cover. Naturalization (creation of natural habitat from manicured parkland) projects undertaken by the City should involve both the planting/seeding of native species and the control of non-native species.

Recommendation #62

- ⇒ Work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to develop a City-wide strategy for control of invasive plant species to improve ecological values. This should include management in natural areas as well as providing encouragement and a mechanism for the City and the community to work together toward the removal of invasive species and preventing the planting of invasive, non-native species.

Recommendation #63

- ⇒ Encourage the Conservation Authorities to undertake surveys of rare and significant fauna and flora species, together with the formulation of recovery plans and strategies. Apply the Terrestrial Natural Heritage System approach and data to assist with the formulation of recovery plans for species and vegetation communities at risk.

Recommendation #64

- ⇒ Employ Best Management Practice (BMP) guidelines for environmental management plans in areas with intensive recreational activities or municipal services.

Stewardship, Public Outreach and Education Programs

The City will need to continue to work with its partners and community organizations to build profile for the Natural Areas System, encourage stewardship initiatives, focus volunteer efforts and expand the outreach program into the community.

Recommendation #65

- ⇒ Continue efforts to designate the Credit River as a Canadian Heritage River System so that it will have national prominence to foster public education, awareness and action around its conservation.

Recommendation #66

- ⇒ In concert with community-based stewardship initiatives, continue efforts toward public education in the conservation and management of natural areas to discourage careless and improper use. This should include the development of a consistent and informative system of signage for parks and natural areas that identifies features and attributes of the natural heritage system, outlines appropriate behaviour, and profiles enhancement initiatives. The information should focus on positive messages and not on prohibition.

Recommendation #67

- ⇒ Strengthen current partnerships with the Conservation Authorities and the Region, and develop new ones with other organizations to foster an integrated approach to natural heritage management and implementation of strategies.

Recommendation #68

- ⇒ Involve children and youth in the outreach programs to encourage sustained commitment to environmental stewardship, e.g. in collaboration with schools and through

community-based environmental programs, or recreation programs.

Integration of Natural Area Initiatives

Based on the preceding Strategic Directions, integration of natural area initiatives across all City departments is essential to achieving the strategic directions and goals.

Recommendation #69

- ⇒ Facilitate the implementation of Mississauga's Million Trees planting program with community partners, with timing as identified in the Strategic Plan. Priority locations should be tied to restoration / enhancement opportunities to bolster Natural Areas.

Recommendation #70

- ⇒ Coordinate natural area and park management efforts with the planned Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan.

Recommendation #71

- ⇒ Review planning tools such as Zoning By-laws, subdivision design guidelines, site plan approval requirements and landscape and engineering standards to ensure that new urban areas support the Natural Area objectives.

Section 1: Introduction

The provision of parks and their inherent recreation facilities and programs are essential elements of sound planning, and important to individual and community health and well being. As well parks and the broader system of open space lands which include greenbelts, valley and stream corridors, and natural areas are essential to the overall ecological health of the City and the surrounding watersheds.

Mississauga has engaged in strategic planning for parks and recreation services for some years through its various master plans. The *Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan* is a component of *Future Directions*, which is a series of studies that are examining indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, programs, parks and natural areas, and libraries. The master plans will collectively provide the City with an understanding of what is important to residents; reflect their recreational, social, cultural, informational and educational needs; and establish a clear direction for strategies to address the City's future growth and development over the next few decades.

The Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan is closely tied to the Future Directions Recreation Master Plan in that it responds to the forecasts and projects for recreation facilities and leisure activities which are supported within the landbase of the open space system which includes parks and natural areas. The two studies have shared common components of data collection and evaluation of current socio-demographics and forecasted change; and community consultation.

This document represents the Interim Report for the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan. It is informed by two background documents: Trends in Urban Parks, Greenspaces and Natural Areas, A Backgrounder to Future Directions: Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan; and the Planning Context report, which summarizes the socio-demographic and results of community consultation.

The Plan and its recommendations will be reviewed, discussed and refined with City staff, and will be reviewed with the public in September. Subsequent stages of the study will address financial implications and an evaluation tool to assist the City in prioritizing the findings and recommendations of the study, over the next five years with a twenty-five year outlook.

When finalized the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan will serve to guide the City's decisions regarding sustainable planning and management of parks and natural areas assets for continued enjoyment by its residents and visitors. It will receive a major review on a five-year basis together with the other components of Future Directions.

The 2009 update of the *Future Directions* studies are preceded by extensive planning studies related to the City's growth and development, several of which establish expectations for the future of the parks and open space system. These documents include: the *Waterfront Parks Strategy (2008)*; *Sustainable Living: A Growth Management Strategy for Mississauga*; and, the City's *Strategic Plan and Strategic Action Plan (2009)*.

The Strategic Plan is the foundation for the City's policies and decision-making, including those related to parks and environmental planning.

In the City's Strategic Plan, the five 'Strategic Pillars for Change' consist of:

- Developing A Transit-oriented City
- Ensuring Youth, Older Adults and New Immigrants Thrive
- Completing our Neighbourhoods
- Cultivating Creative and Innovative Businesses
- Living Green

Two of the Strategic Pillars of Change in the *Strategic Action Plan* are particularly applicable to the parks and natural areas.

Completing our Neighbourhoods

Direction – Our Future Mississauga is a city that co-exists in harmony with its ecosystems, where natural areas are enhanced, forests and valleys are protected, the waterfront connects people to Lake Ontario, and communities are nurtured so that future generations enjoy a clean, healthy lifestyle.

Principle – Mississauga is a city that nurtures a unique quality of life within each neighbourhood, where residents value the beauty and variety of the natural environment, engage in active transportation and support a rich, healthy and prosperous social and cultural mosaic through all stages of the life cycle.

Strategic Goals

- ⇒ Develop Walkable, Connected Neighbourhoods
- ⇒ Build Vibrant Communities
- ⇒ Create Great Public Spaces
- ⇒ Celebrate our Community
- ⇒ Provide Mobility
- ⇒ Build and Maintain Infrastructure

- ⇒ Nurture "Villages"
- ⇒ Maintain a Safe City.
- ⇒ Create a Vibrant Downtown

Living Green

Direction – Our Future Mississauga is a beautiful, sustainable city with safe neighbourhoods that support a strong, connected and vibrant community - a place where all can live, work and prosper. People can play as a child, walk to meet a friend, fall in love, raise a family and grow old.

Principle – Mississauga is a city that values its shared responsibility to leave a legacy of a clean and healthy natural environment.

Strategic Goals

- ⇒ Lead and Encourage Environmentally Responsible Approaches
- ⇒ Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments
- ⇒ Promote a Green Culture

Section 2: Planning Context

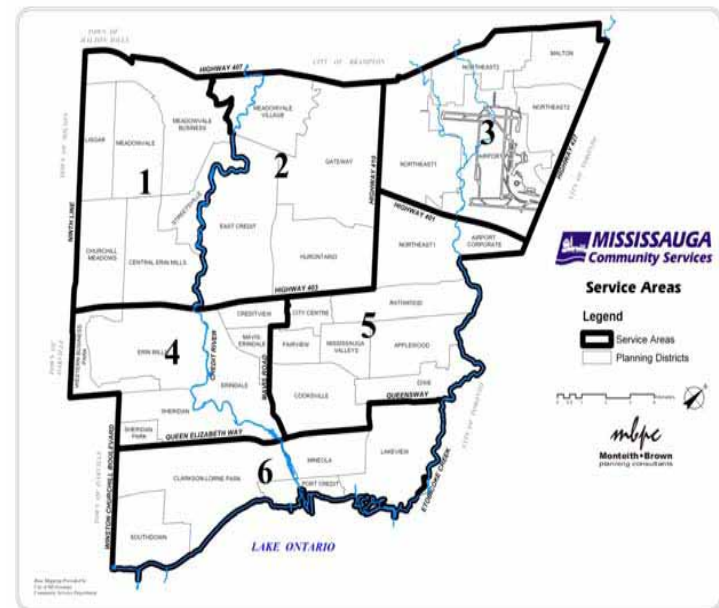
This section of the report summarizes current and future population data for the City as a whole and for the six service areas. A background report to the Master Plan entitled Planning Context for Future Directions 2009 contains additional detail on the characteristics of Mississauga's population.

2.1 Population and Socio-Demographic Profile¹

Since the 2006 Statistics Canada Census data were released, population projections have been prepared for the City of Mississauga by Hemson Consulting Inc. Current estimates for the population of the City of Mississauga in the year 2009 are 727,700 people. For each of the City's six Service Areas, as shown on the map below, current population is estimated as follows:

Table 2.1: Service Areas							
Year	SERVICE AREAS (Population in '000s)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2009	159.0	155.5	38.4	100.3	189.8	84.7	727.7

Sources: Statistics Canada 2001, Hemson Consulting Inc. 2009, and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants 2009



Mississauga Service Areas

Source Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

¹ Reproduced and summarized from Monteith Brown's Demographic Report prepared for the Master Plan. March 2009.

Age Structure

According to Statistics Canada Census data, the population of the City of Mississauga stood at 665,565 people in the year 2006. This represented a ten-year increase of 22.8% (121,185 people) from 1996, and a five-year increase of 5.1% (32,565 people) from 2001. In 2006, the median age of the City's population was 37.7 years and for the Province it was 39.0 years, indicating that Mississauga currently has a slightly younger population than Ontario as a whole.

Between 1996 and 2006, Mississauga's population aged. Key shifts in the age structure were:

- the population of 35 to 54 year olds and the 55+ year age group increased, both numerically and as proportions of total population
- although the size of the population group aged 20 to 34 years old fluctuated, it represents a decreasing percentage of the City's total population
- the 10 to 19 year old age group has shown steady increases in numbers, while representing a consistent percentage of Mississauga's total population

These population trends can be expected over the long-term as a result of the continued aging of the "baby-boomers", coupled with longer life expectancy.

2.2 Population Forecasts²

The City's total population is expected to increase from a current estimate of 727,700 to 811,100 people by the year 2031, which represents an increase of 83,400 people. Projections totals are shown in the following tables, in 5-year intervals, by Service Area and the City. Table 2.2 shows actual population changes and Table 2.3 shows relative change.

Year	Table 2.2: Numeric Population Projections						
	SERVICE AREA						CITY
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2001	117,500	119,600	41,500	104,000	165,900	84,500	633,000
2009	159,000	155,500	38,400	100,300	189,800	84,700	727,700
2011	162,300	158,700	38,300	100,300	192,400	85,000	737,000
2016	167,100	163,700	37,700	100,000	202,000	86,100	756,600
2021	169,900	166,600	37,300	100,900	211,300	87,800	773,800
2026	172,800	169,100	37,000	103,300	221,600	89,700	793,500
2031	175,500	171,300	37,000	104,200	231,300	91,800	811,100

Sources: Statistics Canada 2001, Hemson Consulting Inc. 2009, and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants 2009
 Note: Numbers have been rounded

² Reproduced and summarized from Monteith Brown's *Demographic Report* prepared for the Master Plan. March 2009.

Table 2.3: Proportionate Population Projections							
Year	SERVICE AREA						CITY
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2009-2011	2.08%	2.06%	0.26%	0.00%	1.37%	0.35%	1.28%
2011-2016	2.96%	3.15%	1.57%	0.30%	4.99%	1.29%	2.66%
2016-2021	1.68%	1.77%	1.06%	0.90%	4.60%	1.97%	2.27%
2021-2026	1.71%	1.50%	0.80%	2.38%	4.87%	2.16%	2.55%
2021-2026	1.56%	1.30%	0.00%	0.87%	4.38%	2.34%	2.22%
2009-2031	10.38%	10.16%	3.65%	3.89%	21.87%	8.38%	11.46%

Sources: Statistics Canada 2001, Hemson Consulting Inc. 2009, and Monteith Brown Planning Consultants 2009
 Note: Numbers have been rounded.

While overall population is expected to grow by 11% between 2009 and 2031, the rate of growth in each of five Service Areas differs considerably, while population in Service Area 3 is expected to decline by 4%. Service Area 5 will experience the largest proportionate growth at 22%, largely reflecting intensification associated with the City Centre as well as other nodes. Service Areas 4 and 6 will see the lowest relative growth, at 4% and 8% respectively.

2.3 Population Characteristics³

Language and Ethnicity

According to the 2006 Census, the majority of Mississauga residents (65%) speak English most often spoken at home. A non-official language (i.e. other than English and French) was noted by 29%.

Almost half (49%) of Mississauga’s population identifies as a visible minority as compared to 23% in Ontario. Visible minorities in 2006 included: South Asian (20%); Chinese (7%); Black (6%); Filipino (7%); Arab (3%); Southeast Asian (2%) and Latin American (2%). In terms of language, the top five unofficial languages by Service Area in 2006 were:

Service Area	Table 2.4: Top Five Unofficial Languages Spoken 2006
1	Urdu (4%), Polish (2%), Cantonese (2%), Chinese (2%), Spanish (2%)
2	Punjabi (4%), Urdu (4%), Cantonese (4%), Chinese (3%), Vietnamese (3%)
3	Punjabi (22%), Urdu (3%), Gujarati (3%), Italian (2%), Hindi (2%)
4	Urdu (3%), Polish (3%), Chinese (2%), Tagalog (1%), Cantonese (1%)
5	Polish (5%), Urdu (3%), Tagalog (2%), Arabic (2%), Spanish (2%)
6	Polish (3%), Portuguese (1%), Spanish (1%), Italian (1%), Tagalog/Cantonese (1% each)

³ Reproduced and summarized from Monteith Brown’s *Demographic Report* prepared for the Master Plan. March 2009.

Among the population 15 years of age and older, 61% were first generation Canadians, 20% were second generation Canadians and third generation Canadians comprised 19%.

Household Income

The median income of Mississauga residents in 2005 from all households was \$71,393 compared to the Province at \$60,455 (based on Statistics Canada 2006 Census). As median income is not easily determined by Service Area, average household income was used for comparison from a distribution point of view. As the following table shows, the average household income varies substantially across the City's six (6) Service Areas:

Service Area	Average Income
1	\$94,208
2	\$88,036
3	\$62,126
4	\$101,967
5	\$68,014
6	\$102,156

Despite the higher average median income in Mississauga, the percentage of persons with low income before taxes was 16% for Mississauga compared to 15% for Ontario in 2006.

Household Formation and Family Structure

In 2006, the average household size in Mississauga was 3.1 persons, and province-wide it was 2.6 persons. Mississauga's average household size has remained consistent since the 2001 Census while the average household size has increased at the provincial level (from 2.4 persons in 2001). For all census families, the average number of persons was 3.2 in Mississauga and 2.6 for Ontario.

Lone parent families represented 15% in Mississauga in 2006 compared to 16% for the province. These numbers represent an increase from 14% and 15% in 2001, for Mississauga and Ontario respectively.

2.4 Existing Parkland Supply

When existing and planned sites are considered, the City owns and/or manages close to 2,700 hectares of open space lands within approximately 500 sites. These include: city-serving and community-serving parks; greenbelt lands associated with the natural system, which support recreation uses; non-accessible open space areas; and cemeteries. Refer to **Figure 1**, following.

Mississauga has an excellent geographic distribution of parkland having largely achieved its target objective for the provision of parks within 800m of all residential areas over its six Service Areas.

The City's park system is reflective of the time period over which the City has developed and includes historic open space associated with the original villages and communities that pre-dated the City's existence, together with connected park and greenspace systems in the planned 'new' community like Erin Mills which was a model for community planning when it was first designed in the 1970s, and whose build-out has extended up to recent years.

The following chart summarizes the existing supply of parks and open space within the classifications commonly used by the City.

Table 2.6: City-wide Supply of Parks and Open Space

CITY PARKS	455.401	HA.
COMMUNITY PARKS	1257.796	HA.
TOTAL PARKS	1713.197	HA.
GREENBELT	919.632	HA.
NON-ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE	73.2	HA.
TOTAL OPEN SPACE	992.832	HA.
CEMETERIES	7.09	HA.

Current population estimates for the City in the year 2009 are 727,700 people. When the total amount of parkland (excluding other open space types) is considered, the per capita supply is approximately 2.35 ha. per 1000 pop., which is down from the 2.6 ha. / 1000 pop. identified in 2004 Future Directions, but beyond the 1.2 ha. target objective identified in the current Official Plan.

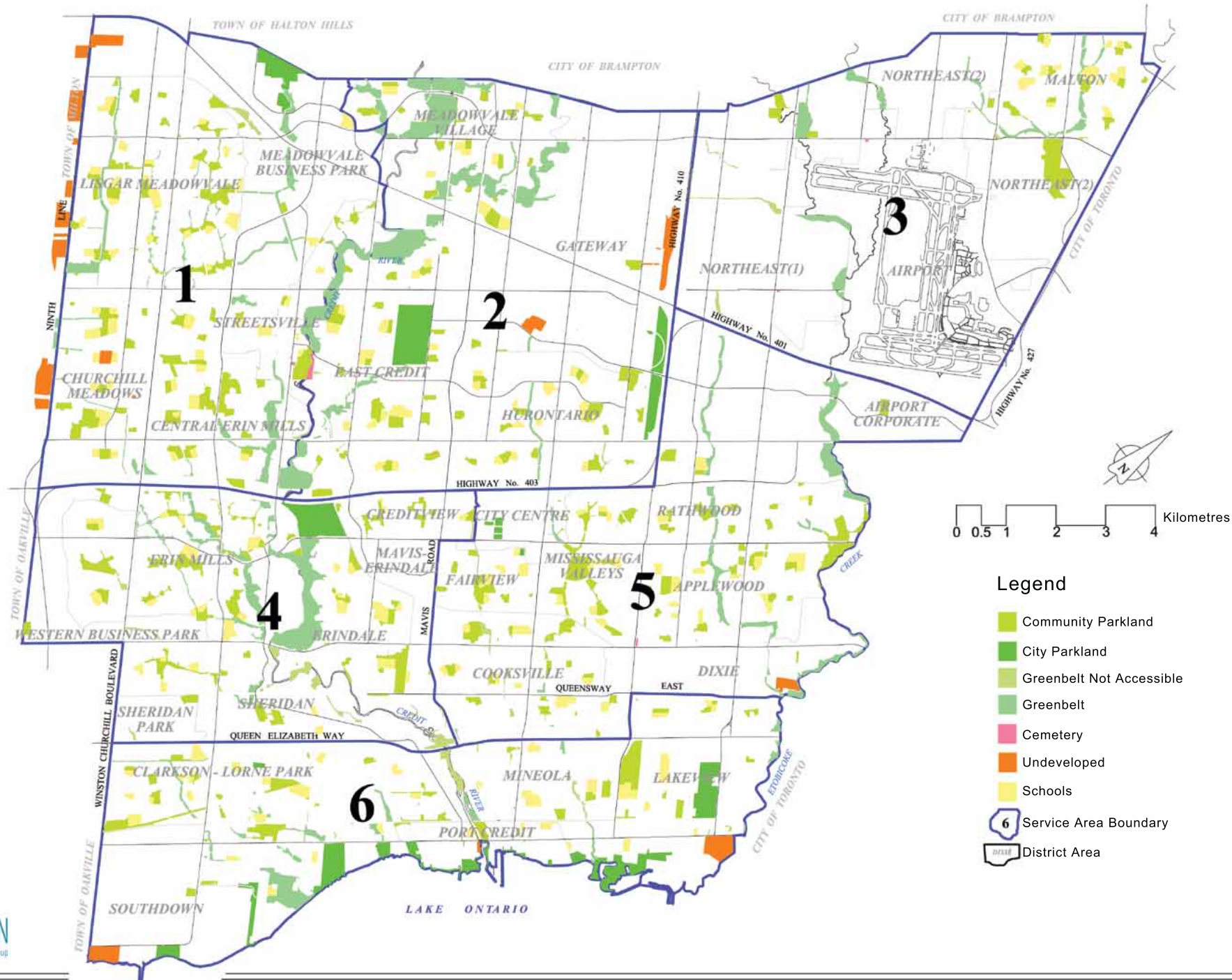


Figure 1: Parks and Open Space System

Section 3: Trends and Directions

The following sections outline the benefits of urban parks, greenspaces and natural areas and summarize current and emerging trends in their planning and development. These are further discussed in the background document entitled *Trends in Urban Parks, Greenspaces and Natural Areas: A Backgrounder to Future Directions - Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan*.

Mississauga's response to identified trends as demonstrated by current initiatives, actions and goal statements in the City's relevant strategic plans is also identified in the section on Trends.

3.1 Benefits of Urban Parks, Greenways and Natural Areas

Traditionally, urban parks and natural areas have functioned primarily as recreation places and contributors to the community and neighbourhood aesthetics. Although they still perform these important roles, urban parks are also being viewed as a means to achieving broader policy objectives in the areas of public health benefits, environmental benefits, child and youth development, community building, and economic benefits as summarized below.

Public Health Benefits: All residents can accrue the physical and psychological health benefits of urban parks and natural areas. Parks support physical activity, which is a key contributor to health, and there is strong evidence that proximity to parks is related to increased physical activity.

There are also many psychological health benefits associated with parks, greenways and natural areas. Contact with the natural world alone - including limited visual exposure to trees and grass - is

beneficial to health, as is the contact and interaction with other people that park use affords.

Environmental Benefits: Parks and greenspaces also contribute naturally to the overall environmental health of a city through such measures as: mitigating air pollution, counteracting the urban "heat island" effect, increasing the amount of permeable surface area, filtering run-off, and providing habitat for plants and wildlife. As part of an overall move toward sustainability, the open space system should be viewed as the City's investment in "green infrastructure" for the ecological value that it provides, even if never used. Maintaining healthy ecosystems and protecting the health of existing natural areas is particularly important in view of pressures to develop available land and increase densities within the existing urban fabric.

Child and Youth Development: Parks and natural areas provide opportunities - from an early age - to develop personal physical, social, intellectual and spiritual capacities, and life skills. Outdoor play, in particular, is important to healthy childhood growth and development. Parks provide venues for learning in a relaxed, fun atmosphere, and experiencing nature is key to instilling a philosophy of stewardship. Ensuring the availability of public parks and natural areas throughout the urban area supports a more equitable distribution of the physical and psychological benefits that they generate.

Community Building: The personal physical and psychological benefits of having access to parks can accrue collectively to contribute to overall community building. Research indicates that residents of neighborhoods with common green spaces are more likely to enjoy stronger social ties, and a sense of community, than those in neighbourhoods that lack these amenities. Parks can also serve as catalysts to creating "social capital" or "collective efficacy", through resident involvement in their provision. The personal

investment, social ties, and sense of community ownership that such a project creates can carry forward to other initiatives, and can lead to increases in the community's safety, cleanliness, vibrancy and image.

Economic Benefits: It is widely recognized through increased real estate values and marketing of new housing developments that there is a financial benefit to properties that are located in proximity to these amenities. As well having access to parks and trails contributes to a higher quality of life, which often factors in where businesses choose to locate.

Tourism is a key component of Ontario's service economy and municipalities are interested in securing their market share. Parks and recreation facilities are often cited a primary opportunities. Parks may not in themselves generate revenues or profit, unless they charge gate fees, and even then may struggle this can but can serve as visitor draws and generate spin-off economic benefits related to short-term or extended stays. In particular, cultural based tourism and horticultural tourism have been demonstrated to be of interest to residents and visitors from other countries, and to older segments of the population.

3.2 Key Issues for the Future Provision, Use and Management of Parks and Natural Areas

Through the review of trends there were several key issues that emerged which frame our evaluation of parks, green spaces and natural areas in the City of Mississauga and underscore recommendations related to future needs. These are outlined below.

Concept of Sustainability: Sustainability recognizes the inextricable links between: 1) the various components of urban communities, and 2) the present and future. In this view, parks and natural areas

comprise elements in an integrated network of systems that - in order to be sustainable over the long-term - require a comprehensive approach to planning, design, development, and operations.

Urban planning concepts/approaches that are related to sustainability and, therefore, to parks provision include densification/infill, complete communities, smart growth, integrated communities, active transportation and food sustainability through urban farming. The ultimate aim of these approaches is to halt or reverse a no longer tenable approach to urbanization, which requires a change in the function and form of urban communities. Consequently, the function and form of parks will need to change in a corresponding manner.

A systems approach also implies a "loop" within which parks and natural areas are themselves sustainable while simultaneously contributing to the sustainability of the urban area as a whole. Protection of finite natural area resources and focused enhancement efforts combined with management for both environmental and economic sustainability are important objectives for the parks and natural areas system.

The anticipated effects of climate change may impact how parks and natural areas are developed and used in the future. Ways in which to curb the impacts of increased flooding, improve stormwater infiltration, enhance carbon sequestration, and offset the urban heat island effect through vegetation management and reforestation will be important considerations.

Future Demand for Urban Parks and Natural Areas: Some experts predict that an inevitable global decline in oil production will radically change the way we live by putting an end to current travel patterns. If long-distance commuting and travel decline, people will end up spending more time at home and pressure on local parks will increase accordingly. A concurrent trend that may also result in greater

reliance on local community services is the shrinking incomes of Canadians who are not among the wealthy. If this trend continues, a growing proportion of Canadians will have less disposable income to purchase leisure services and may put greater pressure on publicly provided parks, open spaces and natural areas to meet their needs for rest, relaxation, recreation and socializing.

Many cities around the world look to their local parks and public spaces as social gathering areas. This trend has been apparent in Toronto for some time, but is only emerging in the new cities of the GTA as housing subdivisions have become more dense, lots have become smaller, and new cultural groups have moved in.

Whether by necessity or choice, therefore, trends suggest that people will be spending more time in their local communities, which will increase the need for access to public parks, open space and natural areas. Providing these in existing, built-up urban areas - some of which will accommodate increased densities - will benefit from approaches to provision that can provide a range of public spaces that fulfill the roles of parks.

Evolving Concept of Parks: While parks and natural areas are still key components of the larger open space system, other parts of the “public realm” are now recognized as important contributors to sustainable urban communities. The recent Project for Public Spaces (PPS)¹ embodies these concepts in its approach to “placemaking” or creating successful community places whether they are parks, plazas or streetscapes. These “other” public spaces will likely play a greater future role in ensuring continued access to green spaces and park-like places, and in the development of attractive communities that can offer a high quality of life. Existing urban areas will experience

¹ www.pps.org

increasing pressure on available parks and natural areas as population growth and migration contributes to increasing urbanization and population densities increase due to more compact development/infill, which is key to arresting urban sprawl. This will necessitate a more creative approach to the provision of a variety of spaces that fulfill the roles of parks, including modest “infill” of both green and non-green public open space, park dedications associated with larger redevelopment projects, and redesign and redeployment of underutilized parks or school sites in areas that can support community facilities.

It will also be necessary to look to the private sector for creative ways to integrate spaces other than traditional parks for social and environmental benefit, including: ‘green’ streets and lanes, rooftop gardens, and public amenity spaces.

3.3 Key Trends and Mississauga’s Response to Trends

3.3.1 Introduction

The following tables summarize trends in the provision, use and management of parks, green spaces and natural areas as identified in more detail in the Trends Backgrounder discussion paper prepared for the Future Directions Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan.

Through discussions with staff and Councillors and a review of current practices and the many studies and initiatives, both past and ongoing, that the City has embarked on, it is apparent that the City has already done a considerable amount in response to these trends. As well, many of the current approved and ongoing strategic planning documents contain goal statements, principles and action items that support implementing the services envisioned by these trends.

Documents most relevant to this exercise, and which are noted in the response include:

- ↪ Our Future Mississauga: Strategic Plan, and Action Plan
- ↪ The Mississauga Plan (existing Official Plan)
- ↪ Waterfront Parks Strategy
- ↪ Older Adult Plan
- ↪ Youth Strategy
- ↪ Arts and Culture Master Plan

As well the City has a number of programs and initiatives planned or in-place that respond to the identified trends. These are also highlighted.

It should be noted that many of the City's strategies and initiatives respond to multiple trends and categories, however, to avoid redundancy, have typically only been mentioned once under the category deemed most relevant.

3.3.2 Trends Analysis

Our Trends analysis is presented under the following headings:

1. **Urban Parks and Open Space**
2. **Social and Community Benefits of Parks and Parks Programming**
3. **Protection of the Natural Environment**
4. **Economic Benefits of Parks**
5. **Cemeteries**
6. **Maintenance and Management of Parks and Natural Areas**
7. **Parkland and Open Space Securement and Acquisition**

Table 3.1: Trends in Urban Parks and Open Space	
Trend #1: Recognizing that Parks are Important Elements of Placemaking in Built-up Areas	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ creating new opportunities for parks and public spaces as redevelopment takes place ➤ redeveloping vacant lots into parks/public spaces/community amenity areas ➤ redeveloping / enhancing existing parks to suit the new urban form and desired uses and for improved public health and ecological benefit ➤ improving/redeveloping school green space for community use ➤ greening urban environments – parks, street/laneways, rooftop gardens, living walls. ➤ recognizing the contributions of, and encouraging landscaped private open space 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Parks and public spaces are identified as key elements in 'placemaking' for their contributions to City greening; aesthetically pleasing spaces; enlivened streets; and healthy, social communities. Green spaces, provide a social focus, enhance people's perception of their neighbourhood and parks provide citizens with opportunities to socialize.</p> <p>Evidence shows that having a park, playground or open space within walking distance of one's home is associated with better health, and this holds true regardless of age, income, ethnic status or most other demographic variables.</p> <p>This positive correlation between public health, social benefit and health of the natural environment makes it critical to continue to organize the built environment so that a sufficient quantity and variety of parks, opens spaces and natural areas are provided in intensifying urban areas.</p> <p>Increasing the amount of greenspace and improving existing spaces through infilling of parks, together with a shift from a focus on organized sports to unstructured recreation opportunities will be important considerations as the urban fabric intensifies.</p> <p>Intensification may also bring additional pressures to locate underground parking or geothermal facilities under parks or greenspace which can increase park development costs (e.g. higher cost to on-slab development, limit facility development, or compromise health of trees).</p>

Trend #1: Recognizing that Parks are Important Elements of Placemaking in Built-up Areas (cont'd)

Mississauga's Response

Current directions for improving proximity or access to parks are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals contained in the *Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan*:

SP3-SG2: link areas that offer social, cultural, and recreation experiences accessible to all

SP3-SG1: develop compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods in which residents can engage safely in all aspects of their everyday life within walking distance, and in which projects are tested against "pedestrian first"

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting these goals include:

Connect Our City

Action 10: Encourage walking by establishing maximum block sizes, with a perimeter of 400m for all nodes and corridors, to help achieve a more walkable and connected city form

Develop Walkable Connected Neighbourhoods

Action 1 Complete neighbourhoods with accessible public squares. We will identify and implement suitable locations to complete neighbourhoods and support community-building with an easily accessible public square.

Action 3 Design streets around the idea of "pedestrian first." We will develop "complete streets" within nodes and corridors by putting a "pedestrian first" filter on projects.

Create Great Public Spaces

Action 8: Establish a "Central Park" for our downtown. We will develop Riverwood as the "Central Park" for our downtown to create a world class amenity

Trend #2: Providing Linked, Destination-Oriented Trails and Paths	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ municipalities are striving for an urban green network of trails accessible to all ages and abilities (supplemented by road-based routes where needed) 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Compact urban development, and safe, accessible cycling and walking routes to destinations enable people to integrate physical activity into their daily routine (i.e., active transportation), or as a recreational activity.</p> <p>To the extent that they can - trails/cycling paths/bike routes can reduce car travel and its associated negative impacts (e.g., air pollution, respiratory problems, congestion) and save energy.</p>
<p>Mississauga's Response</p> <p>Current directions for the built environment, trails and pathways are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals contained in the <i>Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan</i>:</p> <p>SP1-SG1: reducing automobile use and developing mixed-use development SP1-SG4: additional links in the street network and active mobility choices SP3-SG2: link areas that offer social, cultural, and recreation experiences accessible to all</p> <p>Action Plans from <i>Our Future Mississauga</i> supporting these goals include:</p> <p>Connect Our City <i>Action 6:</i> Shorten travel time to a transit stop. We will complete the pedestrian and cycling network in nodes and corridors within 500 m (a 10-minute walk) of all transit stops <i>Action 9:</i> Improve the transportation network for pedestrians, cyclists and automobiles</p> <p>Develop Walkable Connected Neighbourhoods <i>Action 14</i> Create more bike-friendly facilities. We will build more cycling facilities, meaning more on-street bike lanes and off-street trails</p> <p>Ensure Affordability and Accessibility <i>Action 2</i> Designate older adult clusters in mixed use areas - to provide better access to services</p> <p>Build Vibrant Communities <i>Action 5:</i> Capitalize on the Credit River to foster all-season activities, including a continuous walking and/or cycling trail along its entire length</p>	

Trend #2: Providing Linked, Destination-Oriented Trails and Paths (Mississauga’s Response, cont’d)

Principles in the *Older Adult Plan* that speak to this trend are:

OAP-P3: travelling within Mississauga is possible for all

Current / planned initiatives in the City include:

- The 2001 *Mississauga Multi-use Recreational Trail Study* was developed to guide strategic planning and implementation of a multi-use trail system
- The *Cycling Network Master Plan and Implementation Strategy* which focuses on road-based facilities and linkages is currently underway

Table 3.2: Social and Community Benefits of Parks and Park Programs

Trend #3: Increasing Access to Unstructured Activities

Examples

- parks, trails and natural areas offer access to physical activity and recreation without individual subsidies;
- ensuring there are no hidden costs to participate/use services
- providing easy access to rivers, lakes and forests on the periphery of the city
- making city streets active leisure zones suitable for children’s play and socialization by older people
- providing facilities in parks that encourage low-cost, unstructured activities; e.g. splashpads, multi-purpose courts, skateparks, off-leash areas, community gardens
- providing opportunities for social activities such as picnic areas, BBQs, small/large group gathering areas

Rationale

The mandate of municipalities includes ensuring all residents have affordable access to services, and parks. Greenways and natural areas can provide quality public at a reasonable cost, supporting families in their efforts to provide their children with positive experiences, in individual and family-oriented activities. With increasingly involved and busy lifestyles people are looking for outdoor activities that can be undertaken at their leisure, and which compliment other interests, e.g. nature, gardening, dogs.

Cultural preferences, and a growing proportion of Canadians with less disposable income to purchase leisure services will put greater pressure on publicly provided parks, open spaces and natural areas to meet their needs for rest, relaxation, recreation and socializing.

Parks offer children and youth programming opportunities to help with self-identity, and sense of belonging as an antidote to social alienation, vandalism, violence and the social costs associated with these issues.

Trend #4: Supporting Outdoor Activities for Child/Youth Development, Older Adults, Multicultural Groups	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ broad-based consultations with users during the planning and design process, and involvement in park operations ➤ developing user-sensitive strategies ➤ ensuring good ideas from the community are incorporated in design, construction and operations 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Parks, greenways and natural areas provide the infrastructure for a public health approach to eliminating sedentary lifestyles, obesity and related health problems. There is a prevalence of obesity among children and youth, and some ethnic groups are observed to have higher than average obesity rates.</p> <p>The more time young children spend outdoors, the higher their activity levels. Being outdoors is found to be the most powerful correlate of physical activity, and access to facilities, parks and activities is positively associated with physical activity levels among children and adolescents.</p> <p>The presence of flora and fauna, and experiencing natural processes are considered valuable parts of daily living, especially in urban centres, and exposing children/youth to nature is necessary to foster stewardship.</p> <p>For older adults, parks are key to connecting them to other people and the community-at-large, which is key to psychological/emotional well-being. Physical activity helps individuals maintain their physical and mental health as they age, and is important to maintaining independence. Convenient walking trips from home to destinations such as stores, parks and trails, the perception of having safe and aesthetically pleasing surroundings for walking and ready access to green spaces are associated with increased physical activity levels among older people.</p> <p>Newcomers can benefit from the opportunities parks provide for needed social interaction/community contact and spaces that support cultural activities.</p>

<p>Trend #5: Parks Projects as Community Revitalizers</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ community supported initiatives such as the development of community gardens, and off-leash areas can provide projects for sustained community involvement while supporting leisure interests ➤ redeveloping parks that serve as central walking, resting, and meeting places can help revive failing or threatened commercial areas 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Parks projects can re-establish and expand positive outdoor recreation experiences, and provides a reason to use the park for constructive activity. They can help develop community/social capital through engagement of all sectors including youth, families, seniors, different ethnic groups, different socio-economic groups etc.</p> <p>Community groups have become increasingly effective stewards and advocates for their parks. They can revitalize parks from fearful, empty places into places for community programs and celebration</p>
<p>Trend #6: Developing the Education Function</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ using municipal initiatives in other areas such as heritage preservation, environment, horticulture, wildlife conservation, natural storm water management, etc. as the basis for program development ➤ viewing all parks and open spaces as opportunities for innovation, demonstration and experimentation in leading edge design, development and programming ➤ increasing the supply of interpretive, arts, heritage and culture programs in parks 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>A philosophy that embraces sustainability requires a social shift in thinking about traditional patterns of urban growth and living, and embracing our role as stewards of the environment with a view to developing new behavioural norms. Education is critical to realizing this shift and can comprise both formal and informal programming; outdoor recreation is one of the best approaches to environmental education - a key to long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Parks offer children the benefits of direct experience with nature - the motivation to explore, discover, and learn about their world - and provide a valuable resource for closing the educational achievement gap in communities.</p>

Trends #3-6: Supporting Outdoor Activities for Child/Youth Development, Older Adults, Multicultural Groups; Parks Projects as Community Revitalizers; Developing the Education Function

Mississauga's Response

Current directions that support unstructured use of parks and facilities by all-ages and cultures are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in the *Strategic Plan*:

SP3-SG3: provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy great parks, plazas and unique natural environments - walk or bike to a park, to the waterfront, river, creeks, natural areas, along beautiful streets and trails

SP3-SG5: provide choices for walking, cycling, using transit or active modes of transportation because it is convenient, connected and desirable

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting these goals include:

Ensure Affordability and Accessibility

Action 2 Designate older adult clusters in mixed use areas - to provide better access to services

Promote a Green Culture

Action 10: Implement an educational program that promotes living green

Attract and Retain Youth

Action 12: Create "cool places" to attract youth and young adults (ages 12 -24), in nodes and corridors; Mississauga has already created some of these places in Streetsville, and along the waterfront, but more are needed

Nurture Diverse Cultures

Action 16: Encourage multicultural festivals and events. We will assist in the growth of existing multicultural festivals and culturally-diverse events, like Carassauga, and encourage new ones

Action 17: Develop opportunities for residents to learn about different cultures

Trends #3-6: Supporting Outdoor Activities for Child/Youth Development, Older Adults, Multicultural Groups; Parks Projects as Community Revitalizers; Developing the Education Function

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Key directions in the *Waterfront Parks Strategy* that support unstructured use of parks and facilities include:

- WPS-GP4: waterfront will be a year-round destination that provides passive and active activities built on the strength of a waterfront location
- WPS-GP7: physical environment will be designed to foster comfort and safety and will accommodate people of all abilities and ages
- WPS-KS9: approve more passive, land based recreation uses and, over the long term, remove facilities dedicated to specific recreation uses (e.g., sports fields) from the waterfront

Directions in the *Older Adult Plan* that support unstructured use of parks and facilities by all-ages and cultures include:

- OAP-P5: active living and lifelong learning enhance older adults' quality of life
- OAP-P7: public spaces, places and programs are age-friendly

Actions plans from the *Older Adult Plan* supporting these directions include:

- expand direct older adult programming in the prime time hours at park
- fully implement City of Mississauga Accessibility Plan
- update 2007 Mississauga Accessibility Design Handbook to include design of trail signs
- wayfinding, and encouraging use of trail system through appropriate signed information (e.g., length, grade, surface material, etc.)
- develop a checklist for development plan review to determine barriers that may exist for older adults, and can be addressed through revisions
- marketing and communications, including: campaign to promote benefits of starting local parks-based groups, such as walking clubs and tai chi
- encourage groups to organize unstructured, inexpensive activities to increase community physical activity and socializing media campaign emphasizing that learning and physical activity can start at any age
- work with community organizations and service providers to increase older adult programming, particularly in under-served areas; top priority areas are Mississauga Valley, Cooksville, Malton, Applewood, Rathwood and Hurontario; high priority areas are Clarkson, Meadowvale, Erin Mills

Trends #3-6: Supporting Outdoor Activities for Child/Youth Development, Older Adults, Multicultural Groups; Parks Projects as Community Revitalizers; Developing the Education Function

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Current / planned initiatives in the City that support unstructured activities and the community and social benefits of parks include:

- The City has developed off-leash areas in collaboration with the community (Leash-free Mississauga), and has established guidelines and policies for identifying future off-leash sites
- The City has developed community gardens at Mississauga Valley Park in collaboration with Eco-source Mississauga which provide community social benefits, promote urban agriculture and foster environmental awareness
- Earth Day and Earth Week Events
- Ongoing Litternot group clean ups and Litterventions by corporate groups/schools/community groups and individuals
- Graffiti transformation murals trais engaging the community and in some cases direct community involvement e.g. Parkway Green Mural painted by children, teens and senior citizens
- Corporate Global Community Days where corporate groups do beautification projects in parks
- Completion of the Youth study in an effort to make the City a 'youth-friendly' community through its programs, activities and facilities
- Wal-Mart at Play: public/private partnership offering after school drop-in activities at community centres to highlight benefits of play, enhance social integration, and reduce stress on families

Trend #7: Promoting Four Seasons Use of Parks, Greenways and Natural Areas

Examples

- landscaping and planting to minimize wind chill and snow drifting
- increasing aesthetic appeal of outdoor spaces and amenities through design
- snow removal on selected trails/paths together with planned retention on others to support activities
- programs in natural areas that focus on winter nature/wildlife education
- provision of outdoor skating rinks
- contracting private operators to rent equipment / run concessions in parks

Rationale

Increasing winter use of parks, greenways and natural areas can:

- 1) expand supply of low-cost opportunities for individuals to be active year-round
- 2) optimize opportunities for all age groups and abilities to be active outdoors,
- 3) optimize the use of parks and open space resources.

Implementation can present significant cost challenges. However the costs need to be considered relative to the health and social benefits, and in comparison to resources allocated to single purpose outdoor facilities, oriented to a narrow range of users.

Trend #7: Promoting Four Seasons Use of Parks, Greenways and Natural Areas

Mississauga's Response

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting four seasons use of parks include:

Build Vibrant Communities

Action 5: Capitalize on the Credit River to foster all-season activities, including a continuous walking and/or cycling trail along its entire length

Create Great Public Spaces

Action 9: Maximize the year-round potential of golf courses. We will open up public golf courses for winter recreation (e.g. cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other winter activities)

Key directions in the *Waterfront Parks Strategy* include:

WPS-GP4: waterfront will be a year-round destination that provides passive and active activities built on the strength of a waterfront location

WPS-KS10: program and design to include interpretation, to promote respect for the environment from the perspective of natural and cultural environmental history; consider expanding seasonal use by providing wind protection, warming stations, snow and ice removal, and park use and events

Current / planned initiatives in the City include:

- The City has implemented winter clearing of the Waterfront Trail through Port Credit. Although undertaken to improve mobility this is supported by local residents for its opportunities to increase physical activity in the winter
- The City provides a number of seasonal outdoor ice rinks, managed in collaboration with community organizations

<p>Trend #8: Supporting Arts, Culture and Heritage Programming</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provision of facilities in parks to support use by arts groups ➤ outdoor theatre and music in the park ➤ Earth Art - outdoor environmental art installations (RBG, Burlington) ➤ ephemeral art, outdoor art installations made with organic materials that will eventually decompose (Stanley Park, Vancouver) ➤ capitalizing on heritage assets ➤ designating new/expanding existing heritage resources through acquisition, partnerships, agreements, etc. ➤ supporting special events by developing public event spaces that are both green and non-green 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Parks can provide exhibit, rehearsal and performance space, and parks-based arts and culture programs/activity can help artists and arts organizations develop new audiences (APA). It can increase accessibility of the arts to community-at-large, provide educational experiences for children and youth, and play an integral role in the revitalization of a park. Arts/culture is one of the best ways to express the spirituality of the land, thereby encouraging environmental stewardship (CPRA).</p> <p>Manmade cultural heritage resources define a community’s history and identity, and describe its uniqueness in the “global village” that increasingly demonstrates uniformity. In the urban context, maintaining a visible presence and continuity of a community’s heritage requires preservation and re-purposing of heritage buildings and landscapes. There is an increasing public support for these efforts.</p> <p>Growing interest in large events which may be community and/or visitor oriented, including sporting events (e.g., runners marathons), arts and culture events (e.g., festivals, outdoor art exhibits, performances), community picnics, etc. has resulted in the need for correspondingly large spaces to accommodate these activities.</p>
<p>Mississauga’s Response</p> <p>Current directions that support arts, culture and special events are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in the <i>Strategic Plan</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SP3-SG2: link areas that offer social, cultural, and recreation experiences accessible to all SP3-SG5: promote our past, take pride in our diversity and celebrate our uniqueness through innovation and art SP3-SG9: vibrant downtown core as the civic and cultural soul of the city and strong economic center 	

Trend #8: Supporting Arts, Culture and Heritage Programming

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting these directions include:

Celebrate Our Community

Action 11: Celebrate the heritage of the Credit River. We will designate the Credit River as a Canadian Heritage River System - so that it will have national prominence to foster public education, awareness and action around its conservation

Nurture Diverse Cultures

Action 16: Encourage multicultural festivals and events. We will assist in the growth of existing multicultural festivals and culturally-diverse events, like Carassauga, and encourage new ones

Action 17: Develop opportunities for residents to learn about different cultures

Nurture 'Villages'

Action 19: We will explore opportunities to recognize and / or revitalize lost historical villages. e.g. Clarkson, Cooksville, Dixie, Erindale, Lakeview, Lorne Park, Malton, Meadowvale, Port Credit and Streetsville by conserving heritage building stock (placement on the city's heritage register), and enlivening the village areas (e.g. incentives for adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, special event programming)

Action 20: Fix our historic facades. We will implement a cultural heritage façade improvement incentive program

Key directions in the *Waterfront Parks Strategy* include the following **Guiding Principles:**

WPS-KS10: program and design to include interpretation, to promote respect for the environment from the perspective of natural and cultural environmental history

WPS-ID3: as a significant city-wide resource, waterfront parks should be managed in a manner consistent with the City's "Placemaking" initiative, requiring a management structure geared towards providing parks programming and events, and active community engagement

Current / planned initiatives that support arts, culture and special events include:

- An *Arts and Culture Master Plan* is under development to help define a common vision for arts, culture and heritage integration
- City is developing a policy to allow collecting development charges levy for public art
- "tree sculpture program" to commemorate the community's natural or cultural heritage
- "commemorative tree/bench program" that contributes to recognition or identification of local residents
- City partners with community organizations developing and delivering educational programs and activities relating to environmental stewardship advocacy, horticulture, arts and culture, etc., along with numerous annual events including My Mississauga events at Civic Square, Bread and Honey Festival, Southside Shuffle, Carrassauga, Shakespeare in the Park, etc.

Table 3.3: Trends in Protection of the Natural Environment	
Trend #9: Improving the Ecological Contribution of Urban Parks and Open Space	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ using parks and natural areas to help preserve essential ecological functions and to protect biodiversity ➤ preserving natural habitats and ecosystems through native landscaping and site-sensitive design ➤ developing comprehensive natural area plans, and identifying opportunities for enhancement ➤ enhancement through naturalization in parks and open space lands ➤ preserving or actively acquiring urban woodlots and land to provide habitat linkages and corridors ➤ management practices such as exotic / invasive species plant suppression and planting programs that restore or improve the diversity of the plant community 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Maintaining healthy ecosystems and protecting the health of environmentally sensitive areas in urban areas is particularly important in view of pressures to develop available land and increase densities.</p> <p>In addition to the public health benefits of parks and natural areas, parks and open spaces themselves offer environmental benefits as part of the City's investment in "green infrastructure" and provide ecological value, even if never used.</p> <p>The collective efforts of urban municipalities to naturalize open space lands, restore and enhance ecological areas, and employ environmentally-sound maintenance and management practices will be important contributors toward overall improved and sustained health of the broader watershed.</p>
Trend #10: Ensuring that Recreation is Compatible with Environmental Conservation	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ aligning permitted recreation uses with the carrying capacity of the park/natural area ➤ designing solutions to allow both recreation and conservation objectives to co-exist ➤ implementing programs that promote both conservation and recreation, e.g. volunteer tree planting ➤ developing trails through natural areas in appropriate locations and using environmentally sustainable practices ➤ precluding public use of highly sensitive areas or at times that are sensitive seasons for habitat 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Effective management of natural areas ensures the health benefits they provide to residents (e.g., improved air quality, safe drinking water, disaster prevention) as well as protecting the areas' intrinsic and ecological health. There is increasing demand for responsible land stewardship and assigning priority to ecological/environmental protection over recreation uses</p> <p>Development of structured trails and routes through natural areas can provide environmental benefit by directing use to appropriate locations and limiting random trail use. There is a need to rationalize the increasing and diversifying use of natural areas and greenways for activities, e.g. community gardens, off-leash areas, BMX biking.</p>

<p>Trend #11: Increasing Tree Canopy, Urban Forests and Plantings</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enhancing local wind patterns in cities using vegetation for strategic shading and cooling ➤ replacing / increasing street tree planting and greening of urban environments ➤ naturalization / reforestation of parks, valleylands and other open space 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Maintaining healthy City ecosystems requires management and enhancement of the entire urban forest toward a sustainable state, including street trees, woodlands and other vegetated areas.</p> <p>Greening strategies in existing parks and open space, and strategic location of new parks and open space linkages can expand the green infrastructure and provide connections for ecosystem functions.</p>
<p>Trend #12: Incorporation of Sustainable Site Design Measures</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ use of green technologies and sustainable design measures in site design and stormwater management, e.g. filter strips, bioswales, water quality ponds ➤ LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) buildings, site and neighbourhood design standards have become the benchmark for sustainable design 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Sustainable design includes landscape and site design measures to mitigate micro/macro climate change, lessen heat island effect, trap pollutants, help preserve native species, conserve energy and water, reduce stormwater runoff and use rainwater, improve air quality, and provide shading and cooling.</p>

Trends #10-12: Improving the Ecological Contribution of Urban Parks and Open Space; Ensuring that Recreation is Compatible with Environmental Conservation; Increasing Tree Canopy, Urban Forests and Plantings; Incorporation of Sustainable Site Design Measures

Mississauga's Response

Current directions in natural environment protection/enhancement are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in *Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan*:

SP3-SG6: deliver infrastructure in a sustainable way

SP5-SG1: lead and promote utilization of technologies and tactics to conserve energy and water, reduce emissions and waste, improve our air quality and protect our natural environment

SP5-SG2: be responsible stewards of the land by conserving, enhancing and connecting natural environments

SP5-SG3: lead a change in behaviours to support a more responsible and sustainable approach to the environment

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting these directions include:

Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments

Action 4: Plant one million trees in Mississauga. We will create an environmental legacy by implementing Mississauga's Million Trees Planting Program. Trees will be planted by City departments on public property, as well as by individual volunteers, community groups, students, organizations and businesses throughout the remainder of the city. Proposed implementation is 100,000 Trees planted per year (public and private plantings)

Action 5: Implement a city boulevard beautification program to foster civic pride and raise environmental awareness – with a focus on native species plantings, to beautify our streets in an environmentally responsible way

Action 6: Pro-actively acquire and/or enhancing land along the waterfront and in natural areas for recreational and ecological value - Moving forward, we will create partnerships with conservation authorities, other levels of government and non-profit land trust organizations to acquire, protect and rehabilitate

Promote a Green Culture

Action 89: We will Implement an educational program that informs and promotes “living green” in all City facilities, schools and businesses.

Trends #10-12: Improving the Ecological Contribution of Urban Parks and Open Space; Ensuring that Recreation is Compatible with Environmental Conservation; Increasing Tree Canopy, Urban Forests and Plantings; Incorporation of Sustainable Site Design Measures

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Key directions in the *Waterfront Parks Strategy* include:

Guiding Principles

WPS-GP1: protection, preservation and restoration of existing natural systems will be prioritized (i.e., environment first)

WPS-GP2: a balanced approach that provides places for people and respects the environment will guide all park development decisions

WPS-GP3: to achieve a truly sustainable parks system, the needs of the natural environment must be balanced with the desires of the community, society, culture and economics

WPS-GP5: parks will incorporate meaningful design of high quality at best value, the lowest possible impact on the surroundings and innovative products and technologies that support sustainable

Key Strategies

WPS-KS1: physical connections recognized as critical to the health and sustainability of the park system

WPS-KS2: need to be cognizant of natural heritage connections and relationships that shape park programming and works accordingly

WPS-KS4: shoreline has many elements including aquatic habitats and fisheries buffers, terrestrial habitats and shoreline-related hazards; strategy speaks to understanding shoreline and natural shoreline restoration opportunities

WPS-KS5: promote "green" technologies such as permeable parking areas with bio-swales, and alternative energy services

WPS-KS9: approve more passive, land based recreation uses and, over the long term, remove facilities dedicated to specific recreation uses (e.g., sports fields) from the waterfront

WPS-KS10: program and design to include interpretation, to promote respect for the environment from the perspective of natural and cultural environmental history

WPS-KS10: more naturalization, given the "environment first" principle and to ease resource pressures for parks management; design landscaping for sustainability; seasonality; and interpretation

WPS-GP2: needs of all people using waterfront must be provided for through a parks system that is accessible, affordable and diverse

WPS-KS7: develop a signage hierarchy to clearly delineate signage related to direction, interpretation, naming and use

Trends #10-12: Improving the Ecological Contribution of Urban Parks and Open Space; Ensuring that Recreation is Compatible with Environmental Conservation; Increasing Tree Canopy, Urban Forests and Plantings; Incorporation of Sustainable Site Design Measures

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Current / planned initiatives pertaining to natural environment include:

- City annually updates its Natural Areas System Survey (2008); priority is to update Schedule 3 of the Natural Areas Survey and develop the 'how-to' of implementable actions
- update of Environmental Policies as part of Official Plan update;
- *Greenlands Strategy*, collaborative effort between City, Region, Conservation Authorities on region-wide natural heritage strategy
- strategic sites for acquisition to meet natural heritage objectives are identified in the criteria

Current / planned initiatives pertaining to natural environment (cont'd):

- there are approximately 250,000 street trees in Mississauga; City is undertaking an urban tree inventory and an *Urban Canopy Study*, planned for 2010
- Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), established in 2007 to offer advice and recommendations to Council on environmental matters
- parks related initiatives include protection and expansion of natural areas, environmentally-friendly transportation alternatives, promoting relevant green development (e.g., rooftops gardens)
- *Environmental Master Plan*; start-up target mid-2009
- *Green Development Strategies* to guide private development, and *Green Building Standards* – underway
- *Credit Valley Park Plan*: Master Plan to direct goals, objectives and uses of the park lands along the Credit River Valley, including park concept plans, budget estimates for future development of Streetsville Memorial, Pinchin property, Erindale Park and acquired lands
- Coordination of / support for community stewardship activities including: planting days, clean-up activities, Take Back The Woodlots

Table 3.4: Trends in the Economic Benefits of Parks	
Trend #13: Parks As Contributors to Quality of Life	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is documented evidence in the real estate market of corresponding increases in land value for properties in proximity to parks and trails ➤ New communities promote the lifestyle benefits of living close to parks and environmental areas. 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Residents looking to relocate, and developers seeking to invest in a community increasingly identify positive benefits to being in close proximity to parks and open space.</p> <p>Quality of life can also be a factor in where businesses decide to locate</p>
Trend #14: Parks As Contributors to Tourism Development	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mississauga’s Riverwood is intended as a showcase park to encourage visitation to the City, and the Waterfront Park system is widely used by non-residents ➤ Edwards Gardens; the Royal Botanical Gardens, Butchart Gardens, Victoria; are examples of garden parks that attract visitors from outside their own region ➤ Sport-tourism parks can be major visitor draws and generate related economic benefits. ➤ Eco-tourism capitalizes on the potential of natural/ecologically significant places to attract visitors, although usually confined landscapes that are unique or highly scenic 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Tourism is a key component of a service economy and communities are interested in securing their market share. Parks may not in themselves generate revenues or profit, but can serve as visitor draws and generate spin-off economic benefits related to short-term or extended stays.</p> <p>Cultural tourism is an area of potential growth in Canada, based on limited development here to date. Communities that pursue place-based cultural tourism come to know and value their culture more fully, ensuring its preservation and stewardship for the benefit of citizens and tourists alike</p> <p>Horticultural tourism is a growing interest for visitors from other countries and as populations age, although many prominent ‘garden parks’ struggle financially.</p>

Trends #13-14: Parks As Contributors to Quality of Life; Parks As Contributors to Tourism Development

Mississauga's Response

Current directions in tourism development are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals *Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan*:

Action Plans from *Our Future Mississauga* supporting these directions include:

Build Vibrant Communities

Action 41: We will develop 1 major tourist attraction (historical, cultural, environmental) every 10 years

Current / planned park related initiatives in the City that encourage visitation are:

- Ongoing phased development of Riverwood Park; other City Parks such as the Waterfront Parks, Rhodedendron Gardens, Kariya Park, BraeBen and Lakeview golf courses, local museums
- Civic and Library Square rejuvenation as a key downtown focal point to enhance ability to deliver events and year-round programming
- My Mississauga events, Carrassauga, Southside Shuffle and other major events
- Participation in and National Winner of the 2008 Communities in Bloom award
- Ongoing phased development of Riverwood Park; other City Parks such as the Waterfront Parks, Rhodedendron Gardens, Kariya Park, BraeBen and Lakeview golf courses, local museums
- Civic and Library Square rejuvenation as a key downtown focal point to enhance ability to deliver events and year-round programming
- My Mississauga events, Carrassauga, Southside Shuffle and other major events
- Participation in and National Winner of the 2008 Communities in Bloom award
- dedicated wedding photography parks are attractions
- tree sculpture program has become an attraction
- murals have become an attraction e.g. Port Credit salmon/lighthouse mural

<p>Trend #15: Partnerships in Provision</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ building partnerships around common interests (e.g., civic culture, community building, environmentalism, historic preservation, natural history, trail development) or overlapping interests in service delivery (e.g., elementary or high schools, police departments, universities, environmental organizations etc.) 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Many, integrated objectives in parks and natural areas development require corresponding partnerships to implement effectively, and the costs cannot reasonably be borne by municipalities alone. The benefits of parks, greenways and natural areas accrue to many different sectors of the community, giving them a vested interest in being partners to future provision and/or protection.</p>
<p>Mississauga's Response</p> <p>Current directions in partnerships are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in <i>Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan</i>:</p> <p>Key Strategies in the <i>Waterfront Parks Strategy</i> are: WPS-KS2: need to be cognizant of natural heritage connections and relationships that shape park programming and works accordingly; presents opportunity to build on existing and new partnerships to help support ongoing and new initiatives</p> <p>Action Plans from <i>Our Future Mississauga</i> supporting these directions include:</p> <p>Maintain A Safe City <i>Action 60:</i> We will make City facilities available for after-school activities in high-risk areas.....based on involvement with partners such as school boards and the private sector</p> <p>Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments <i>Action 85:</i> We will acquire and restore land along the waterfront and natural areas to maximize natural system connections and public access. Moving forward we will create partnerships with Conservation Authorities, other levels of Government, and non-profit Land Trust organizations to acquire land, re-naturalize creeks, valley systems and waterfronts for recreational use and ecological value</p> <p>Promote a Green Culture <i>Action 89:</i> We will implement an educational program that informs and promotes 'living green' in all City facilities, schools and businesses, in partnership with school boards, University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM) and other educational institutions</p>	

Trend #15: Partnerships in Provision

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Current / planned park related initiatives in the City involving partnerships include:

- support for, and partnerships with numerous affiliated non-profit community organizations on community gardens; off-leash areas; special needs, natural heritage stewardship and enhancement; arts and culture; heritage; boating and aquatics; multi-culturalism; sports (list of organizations is too numerous to mention, visit Mississauga.ca/Residents/Recreation and Parks/Community Groups)
- partnerships for park site development, e.g. Riverwood, BraeBen Golf Course
- partnerships for programming and service delivery, e.g. Wal-Mart At Play, sports organizations
- Ellis Leuschner Challenge Park located on hydro lands is example of a partnership that helped create City's "mountain bike skills park"
- support for and partnerships with community organizations for festivals and events (e.g. Carassauga, Southside Shuffle, and others)

Table 3.5: Trends in Cemeteries Provision

Trend #16: Going Green

Examples

- Royal Oak Burial Park in Saanich, British Columbia was first cemetery in Canada to offer 'green burials'
- Cobourg 'green' cemetery first in Ontario

Rationale

Green is fashionable. People are looking for ways to save money and reduce environmental impacts in all aspects of life, including funeral practices.

Burials have come back into favour, with increased interest and lobbying for 'green' burials, which are defined as: no embalming, biodegradable caskets, interment in woodlands or other naturalized landscapes; smaller or no grave markers; no plot purchases.

Trend #17: Cultural Influences	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ demand for both cremation and burials remains high ➤ more direct involvement by family members in pre-burial or cremation rituals and processes; some require space / facilities ➤ many people, of all cultures, prefer private scattering of ashes and are using public lands and waterways 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Cultural preferences and influences are being considered in cemetery and funeral service provision in response to an increasingly multi-cultural population</p>
Trend #18: Cemeteries as Greenspace	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mount Pleasant in Toronto; Streetsville Public Cemetery provide walking paths, gardenesque qualities ➤ marriages in cemeteries, e.g. Williamsburg Cemetery, Kitchener 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Following a tradition that began in Victorian England, historic and mature cemeteries in North America's cities have continued to be an important part of the urban open space system, often the largest greenspace in areas which would otherwise be considered underserved by parkland</p>
<p>Trends 16 – 18: Mississauga's Response</p> <p>Current directions related to trends in cemeteries are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in <i>Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SP5- SG1: lead and promote utilization of technologies and tactics to conserve energy and water, reduce emissions and waste, improve our air quality and protect our natural environment SP5-SG3: lead a change in behaviours to support a more responsible and sustainable approach to the environment <p>Current / planned initiatives in the City that support trends in cemeteries include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of a Business Case for Cemeteries (currently being updated) which investigates facilities and land needs, including potential for new site, opportunities for 'green' burial services, naturalization of cemeteries, and responses to other cultural trends • Naturalization efforts in closed / pioneer cemeteries to reduce management costs, provide more aesthetic and natural habitat qualities • Use of Streetsville Public Cemetery for passive use, trails • Memorial tree and bench program 	

Table 3.6: Trends in the Maintenance and Management of Parks and Natural Areas	
Trend #19: Cost as a Constraint	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ need stable, annual funding tied to service levels ➤ recognition of the value and benefit of the investment in parks ➤ community partnerships and stewardship initiatives to supplement municipal resources 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Financial constraints are consistently cited by municipalities as major barriers to both parkland securement and the effective and responsive maintenance of parks</p> <p>Parks are viewed as fully funded services with low or no opportunity for revenue generation and are therefore targets for budget restrictions, cost reduction or budget deferral for projects</p>
Trend #20: Risk Management Considerations	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ good monitoring, regular inspections, and appropriate signage will be increasingly important practices 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Risk management and liability issues will continue to impact on the future provision of opportunities for outdoor leisure.</p>
Trend #21: Integration of Sustainable Practices	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ sustainable site design and building, practices e.g. LEED standard ➤ user participation in learning about and caring for the surrounding environment ➤ identify / apply environmentally friendly maintenance practices to parks maintenance and management ➤ use of drought tolerant and native plant species instead of horticultural species and annual flowers 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Cities that support and encourage sustainability are changing to green technologies in their design / development practices for indoor/outdoor facilities and amenities</p> <p>Routine municipal parks maintenance is increasingly including the efforts.</p>

Trends #19-21: Cost as a Constraint; Risk Management Considerations; Integration of Sustainable Practices

Mississauga's Response

Current directions in maintenance are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals in *Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan*:

- SP3-SG6: deliver infrastructure in a sustainable way
- SP5- SG1: lead and promote utilization of technologies and tactics to conserve energy and water, reduce emissions and waste, improve our air quality and protect our natural environment
- SP5-SG3: lead a change in behaviours to support a more responsible and sustainable approach to the environment

Key Strategies in the *Waterfront Parks Strategy* are:

- WSP-GP6: best management practices for the waterfront parks and open spaces that will recognize and respect the natural environment while providing a continuously high standard of care and maintenance
- WPS-KS10: more naturalization, given the “environment first” principle and to ease resource pressures for parks management; design landscaping for sustainability; seasonality; and interpretation
- WPS-ID3: as a significant city-wide resource, waterfront parks should be managed in a manner consistent with the City’s “Placemaking” initiative, requiring a management structure geared towards providing parks programming and events, and active community engagement

Current / planned initiatives in the City that support trends in maintenance and management include:

- moving to the HANSEN system of time management and tracking; will provide current/useful information on activities, time spent and response time to inform resource allocation
- *Resource Allocation study* ongoing- reviewed resource allocation and workload distribution for parks services
- Coordination of / support for community stewardship activities including: planting days, clean-up activities, Take Back The Woodlots
- City created a Natural Areas Coordinator position for community liaison, partnerships, volunteers
- Hiring of new / replacement forestry staff

Table 3.7: Trends in the Securement and Acquisition of Parks and Open Space	
Trend #22: A Shift Toward Qualitative Standards	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ need to define and plan for a range of public spaces that may not match traditional park types, including urban squares and linear greenspace to support trails and greening strategies ➤ identification of strategic opportunities to create new public green space within the built-up city e.g. closed school sites, brownfield development sites, and vacant lots ➤ application of tools such as density bonusing, alternate provision standards to optimize parkland securement opportunities ➤ engagement of the development community in the provision of both private and public amenity space that serves both urban design and leisure purposes 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>The City of Mississauga has reached, or is close to reaching build-out of greenfields. As prescribed by provincial growth management strategies, the next wave of development is planned to be achieved through intensification and infilling.</p> <p>As this moves forward, the ability to consistently and evenly apply traditional quantitative parkland standards based on conventional park dedications will be limited. However as the urban areas densify more residents will be living in housing types that offer little in the way of private open space. This will serve to increase demand for publicly accessible spaces, and put pressure on existing parks and greenspaces in the area.</p>
Trend #23: Recreation Opportunities of Greenways/Open Space	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ use / enhancement of natural areas and other open space lands such as hydro corridors, Parkway Belt lands, to accommodate a variety of uses 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Creating parkland through the development process using statutory parkland dedications and other allowable planning tools is the most common way of achieving parkland.</p> <p>Reduced opportunities through development charges and dedications have led to a declining per capita landbase for many GTA municipalities. Consequently, many cities, including Mississauga, look to the valleylands and other public open space for an additional landbase on which to provide active and passive recreation</p>

<p>Trend #24: Legacy Donations and Other Securement</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ land donations / trusts ➤ eco-gifts: charitable donations of ecologically sensitive land under the Federal Ecological Gift Program ➤ easements: a legally binding agreement giving land management and use/development rights to a conservation entity, while the landowner gains tax benefits 	<p>Rationale</p> <p>Capitalizing on public interest in environmental and heritage conservation, some municipalities have been able to supplement parkland through such means as land donations, land trusts, eco-gifts or easements.</p>
<p>Trends #22-24: A Shift Toward Qualitative Standards; Recreation Opportunities of Greenways/Open Space; Legacy Donations and Other Securement</p> <p>Mississauga's Response</p> <p>Current directions in securement are established by the following strategic directions, principles and goals from <i>Our Future Mississauga Strategic Plan</i>:</p> <p>Action Plans from <i>Our Future Mississauga</i> supporting these directions include:</p> <p>Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments</p> <p><i>Action 85:</i> We will acquire and restore land along the waterfront and natural areas to maximize natural system connections and public access</p> <p>Key Strategies in the Waterfront Parks Strategy are:</p> <p>WPS-ID2: eight criteria for providing direction to the municipality on expansion of waterfront parkland as opportunities arise</p>	

Trends #22-24: A Shift Toward Qualitative Standards; Recreation Opportunities of Greenways/Open Space; Legacy Donations and Other Securement

Mississauga's Response (cont'd)

Ongoing / planned initiatives by the City related to securement include:

- Background Staff Report (May2008) identifies gaps in service coverage and opportunities for securement of parkland to complete gaps and meet Future Directions recommendations, as well as securement of greenbelt land and natural areas to meet natural heritage objectives. Includes criteria for prioritizing acquisitions.
- City has updated the Natural Areas System Survey (2008) and identified additional sites for greening and acquisition; priority is to update Schedule 3 of the Natural Areas Survey and develop the 'how-to' of implementable actions.

Section 4: Vision for Parks and Natural Areas

4.1 Summary of Community Ideas and Interests

A number of consultation and outreach efforts were undertaken collaboratively with the Future Directions Recreation Master Plan team to better focus community attention on issues associated with recreation and parks service delivery. The results are summarized in the sections following.

4.1.1 Master Plan Household Survey Results for Parks and Natural Areas¹

To assist in the preparation of the City of Mississauga’s Recreation Master Plan and Parks & Natural Areas Master Plan, a statistically significant household telephone survey of Mississauga residents was conducted in February and March of 2009. The following highlights the results of the survey that are relevant to the Master Plan for Parks and Natural Areas.

Satisfaction and Priorities

Mississauga residents show strong satisfaction with the maintenance levels in the City’s parks, natural areas, river valleys, trail and pathways. Comparable majorities of respondents were either somewhat satisfied/very satisfied with the levels of maintenance at City parks, natural areas and river valleys, and on trails and pathways - 84% and 82%, respectively.

¹ Reproduced from full report prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants

Maintenance of City Parks, Natural Areas & River Valleys	%	Maintenance of City Trails and Pathways	%
Very satisfied	37	Very satisfied	30
Somewhat satisfied	47	Somewhat satisfied	52
Not very satisfied	11	Not very satisfied	13
Not at all satisfied	4	Not at all satisfied	1

Respondents suggested the following improvements most frequently, in view of their reported dissatisfactions with parks, natural areas, river valleys and/or trails:

- Accessible pathways/features (43%)
- Benches (27%)
- Awareness / mapping (22%)
- Garbage / recycling bins (16%)
- Courts - tennis or basketball (16%)
- Maintenance (15%)
- Litter / vandalism control (12%)
- Safety/security (7%)

Approximately one-fifth (21%) of the responses fell into the “other” category, and these are listed below, by number of responses:

- More / better lighting for parks and trails (14)
- More off-Leash dog parks (9)
- Incorporate more natural features like ponds, river valleys, grassy areas and vegetation (8)
- Improve surfaces for trails and pathways (8)

- By-laws and regulations should be enforced consistently (4)
- Better winter trail maintenance (4)
- Better clean up for dogs (4)
- Separate or wider lanes for bikes (3)
- Control Canadian geese (3)
- More play opportunities for kids and toddlers (2)

Collectively, these suggested improvements focus on existing, rather than new, infrastructure, and interest in improving the quality/usability/experience of the existing parks and open space system.

The following figure shows respondents' opinions on the direction the City should take in assigning priorities to its efforts in various areas of parks-related services. Among all service areas, those in which the largest proportions of respondents indicated the need to "do more" were parks along the waterfront, passive parks or parks with natural areas, and trails and pathways. These three categories were also the only ones that half or more of the respondents noted the need to "do more" and this tendency is in keeping with broader trends in public interest in parks/trail development. Other parks-related services in which the largest proportion of respondents reported the need for the City to "do more" included group picnic and gathering spaces (49%), parks for active sports (45%), splash pads (43%), outdoor swimming (43%), and basketball courts (41%).

Table 4.2: Opinions on Assigning Priorities to Service Areas

Facility/Activity	Do	Keep	Do	Don't
parks along the waterfront	1%	33%	59%	7%
passive parks or parks with natural areas	1%	38%	53%	8%
trails and pathways	0%	42%	50%	7%
group picnic and gathering spaces	1%	41%	49%	8%
youth/teen centres	2%	29%	46%	22%
parks for active sports	0%	42%	45%	12%
splash pads	3%	34%	43%	20%
outdoor swimming	4%	35%	43%	18%
basketball courts	2%	34%	41%	23%
tennis courts	2%	40%	40%	17%
youth outdoor soccer	2%	39%	36%	24%
youth baseball	2%	38%	28%	31%
adult outdoor soccer	3%	42%	25%	30%
golf	9%	38%	24%	29%
adult indoor soccer	5%	39%	23%	33%
skateboarding	11%	38%	21%	30%
cricket	9%	35%	21%	33%
adult baseball	5%	41%	17%	37%
extreme sports like BMX biking	14%	38%	13%	34%

Use of City parks, Natural Areas or River Valleys

Respondents indicated the following as the top one, two or three activities in which they like to engage when visiting City parks, natural areas or river valleys:

- Walk (58%)
- Playground (24%)
- Enjoy Views/Nature (19%)
- Cycle (12%)
- Informal Sports (11%)
- Walk the Dog (11%)
- Picnic/Social Gathering (10%)
- Organized Sports (6%)
- Other (4%)
- Fish (2%)
- Ice Skating (2%)
- Special Events/Festivals (2%)
- Swimming/Spray Pad (2%)
- Toboggan (1%)
- The majority of respondents had used active parks (71%), natural areas (66%) and/or trails and pathways (66%) in the past year, and the largest proportions of these users had used them once a week or more during a single season. Summer is by far the most popular season for respondents to use parks, natural areas or river valleys. The three most popular times of the day for the use of parks, natural areas and river valleys is weekend afternoons, weekday evenings, and weekday afternoons.
- Households most likely to use active parks also have children under 19 years of age were more likely to report using an active park within the past 12 months, had used an indoor facility within the past 12, and/or expressed a willingness to pay for more or new recreation facilities.

- Households that speak other languages in addition to English were more likely to report using a natural area in the past 12 month relative to households that speak English only.
- Households that had used an indoor facility within the past 12 months, and households with an annual income of \$80,000 or more before taxes, were more likely to have used trails or pathways within the past 12 months.

Transportation

- The proportions of people that walked (35%) or drove (37%) to City parks, natural areas or river valleys are almost the same, and together almost equal the percentage of those that drive (76%) to indoor facilities.
- 29% of respondents had used a City trail to get to a City park or facility, 18% had used them to travel to shops, and 17% had used them to get to school. Households with children under 19 years of age were more likely to use a City trail or pathway to get to school or a bus stop.

Barriers to Participation

- “Lack of time to get involved” was reported by 42% of respondents as the most likely barrier to using City parks, natural areas or trails, followed by “other responsibilities that keep you - or members of your household - from doing things” (41%), and “a lack of public washrooms” (41%). Households with children age 19 years and under are more likely to report these barriers. Only the last of these barriers, however, is within the City’s capacity to mitigate.

- Households living in Service Area 5 are more likely to report “a lack of parking or public transit” as being a deterrent to use (when compared to households in Service Areas 1, 3, and 6).
- Households in Service Area 5 are more likely to report “a concern over safety” as being a deterrent to using a City park, natural area, or trail (when compared to households in Service Area 1).
- In all cases, the majority of respondents (at least 54%) indicated that the factor being considered was “not at all or not very likely” to deter their use of these spaces.

4.1.2 Focus Groups

Community Stakeholder Search Conference

A community stakeholder focus group was held, attended by approximately 40 participants. Questions related to ‘things Mississauga is doing well’, and satisfaction with existing parks and suggested areas for improvement were asked, together with questions relating to recreation facilities and programs.

Comments relating to facilities and programs are addressed in the Future Directions Recreation Master Plan.

Non-facilities related park concerns were limited. Dominant themes included:

- service de-centralization and a greater focus on community needs;
- improving transit and bikeways to specialized, major facilities;

- need for unstructured recreation opportunities, both indoor/outdoor;
- creative ideas to engage youth;
- four seasons use of parks was noted, including winter clearing of main trails, along with providing more washrooms in parks.

Parks and Natural Areas Focus Group

This session was attended by five individuals (out of more than 25 invitees) representing the Rattray Marsh Protection Association, Credit Valley Anglers, Sierra Club and Port Credit BIA.

Questions asked included ‘what is Mississauga doing well?’ and ‘where are the needs / opportunities for improvement?’

Key points emerging from this discussion were:

- general satisfaction with existing parks and trails, particularly the waterfront
- doing well in quantity of parks but not as well with natural areas. Need to continue with strategic acquisitions to complete gaps in the Natural Areas System, in particular river / stream corridors
- environment first approach to public uses in the valleylands, with uses to be compatible with ecological objectives
- interest in continuous waterfront trail, and dedicated bike lanes along Lakeshore Road; “European” style cafes in Port Credit; would serve to slow traffic, increase walking and cycling
- improvements to public washrooms: need accessible, safe, vandal-proof washrooms open year-round, both in parks and along trails; focus on perennials, native shrubs and wildflowers. (e.g., the Riverwood wildflowers)

- need to consider the life cycle and durability of materials used in parks to ensure that money is well spent
- critical to have follow-up funds to support the action items in the Master Plan
- potential improvements in Streetsville: relocating City works depot in Memorial Park, and replacing it with passive parkland and trails, and multi-use space;
- addressing stresses on Credit Valley through Streetsville and removal of barriers to allow recreational / trail uses, and river valley restoration
- trails and historic and natural heritage interpretation programs to be developed/further developed in prime valleylands
- potential to “green” the environment by developing centre boulevard parks along roads (e.g., University Ave, in Toronto)
- need to publicize parks better. People don’t know what is out there, where parks are.
- need more shaded seating, street trees
- need to consider the unrealized economic benefits of parks and green spaces, as it relates to increase in wellness and decrease in health costs
- need more interesting environments

Participants were also asked to comment on their Vision for the Parks and Natural Areas, with the following representing key comments:

- need to consider how to get parks out of some of the natural areas. The 14% vegetation cover target should be a minimum. Activities such as ball diamonds, works yards do not belong in the valleys. There are plenty of other locations.
- need to consider greening of road network, integration of sustainable design measures in schoolyards, parks, new development areas

- need aggressive moves to protect the Credit River Valley, and make critical links. The valley belongs to the river. Need to look at the ‘big picture’ and how to make the connections
- need to identify the Vision and stand firm. ‘Nature based activities’ need nature

Natural Heritage Stakeholder Round Table Discussion

City staff and partner agencies involved in the preservation and management of the City’s natural heritage system were invited to a Round Table Discussion, with representation from Toronto Region Conservation, Credit Valley Conservation, the Region of Peel Greenlands Securement Team, and the City of Mississauga (Parks, Planning, Forestry). The following list summarizes the major issues and priority needs to be considered in the Master Plan, as identified at the Roundtable.

- continuing rapid population growth in the City results in loss of tableland woodlots; public use of natural areas puts a strain on the natural heritage system
- while public interest in a connected trail system is strong, managing trail development and other public uses in the natural areas will be critical to maintaining ecological health
- identify and protection of migratory routes and stopovers is critical; the lakeshore is a major bio-regional corridor along the water, important for migratory movement (non-terrestrial); CVC has identified a desirable target of 14% natural cover; need to consider the contribution that urban areas can make to the overall watershed improvements - having a threshold helps but connectivity is most important
- need to relate parks and natural areas; consider their relationship, and fit opportunities and objectives for both into the total land base
- need rationale and criteria for acquisition of natural areas

- need a comprehensive naturalization plan for natural areas, based on strategic priorities
- growing interest in urban agriculture and balancing this activity with park uses is an issue
- need to consider the social capital of green space as it relates to health and wellness, and sustainability in design of both urban areas and parks

4.1.3 Internal Stakeholder Meetings

A number of small group, and one-on-one meetings were held with municipal representatives, including Councillors and staff. Key themes that were identified are noted below:

- need an enlarged definition of “parks” to include social gathering places. Parkland/gathering places need to be proximate and responsive to the needs of local communities, especially as intensification “reduces” available amenities - if not actually through loss of land/open space then relatively, as more people use existing, limited open space
- restrictions posed by existing built-up areas and infrastructure will require a move to “urban models” of community facility development in re-development areas rather than on green sites
- advocate view that parks and natural areas are intrinsic to good health and well-being, fitness, sustainability, and are important to ecological health. Currently seen as being 100% funded by tax dollars, in comparison to revenue generators such a Community Centres
- need higher levels of financial commitment to the well-used, higher quality parks instead of per acre resource allocation. There is disparity in maintenance levels between districts. Service levels creeping up due to increased demands and

- interest in supporting expanded park/trail use, without corresponding criteria (e.g., winter snow clearing on trails; access to washrooms year-round; pathway lighting are all in demand)
- need to do more with existing parklands by redeveloping / upgrading to suit local and changing demographics, and effectively incorporate other open space lands, as appropriate, (e.g., school sites)
- need tools to prioritize parks and natural areas acquisitions, Need to prioritize through criteria in the Master Plan to provide a framework for endorsement
- parks development / redevelopment projects also require prioritization and need consistent sources of funding
- presently no overall, general standards for park development, redevelopment, other than derived through Master Plans for unique sites such as Riverwood
- promote and practice sustainability in design and management of parks;
- pro-actively seek ways of protecting and enhancing natural areas, e.g. through prioritized naturalization programs, management of public uses which may include defining off-limit areas
- promote environmental stewardship and define City’s contributions to stewardship in terms of best practices for parks and natural area management, storm water management areas
- need to consider how to layer activities when space is at a premium, for example SWM and passive recreation uses
- large market among newcomers for learn-to-swim and learn-to-skate programs, especially for children who, if not taught basic skills will not graduate to hockey, figure skating, competitive swimming etc.; there are limited outdoor, park-based opportunities to develop/practice these skills

- integrate various components of culture and heritage into a broader, comprehensive view/vision, made explicit through interpretation and education; although there is considerable focus on newcomers wanting cultural/heritage services related to their native cultures, there also seems to be keen interest among these groups in learning about Canadian culture/heritage
- need stronger, centralized community liaison for events, and new locations to host them to alleviate pressures on neighbourhoods. Groups are continually looking for permits and access to park space
- trails/pathway development should focus on existing infrastructure, to complete a linked, City-wide system that supports active transportation for various types modes of transport (e.g., cycling, roller-blading, walking etc.)
- need continued integration among municipal departments/functions to coordinate related activities/services, as city-planning becomes more systemic
- move away from “formula” approaches to acquisition, supply, design and development of parks and open spaces to qualitative assessments as part of placemaking exercises and the building of complete communities; continued consultation with the community is key
- focus and assign priorities to programming efforts, and develop parks-based programming, which in turn, will direct park function and form in development/redevelopment - e.g., balance City and community or neighbourhood-oriented programs/special events; establish and pursue program development priorities for at-risk areas/groups, youth, older adults; appropriate programming and areas for expanded year-round use; strategic acquisition, etc.
- build on the “outdoor community centre” concept for expanded use/programming of parks, natural areas and trails
- address need to maintain and develop a volunteer base for programming, and the need to balance revenue vs. non-revenue generating programs, as park programs to date are not key revenue-generators

4.1.4 Public Meetings

Following staff and Council review, the findings and recommendations of the Interim Report will be discussed at a series of public meetings to be held in September across the six Service Areas.

4.2 Proposed Vision and Principles

4.2.1 Vision

A mandate for the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan is the development of a Vision and Guiding Principles to direct development, use and management of the system

The City has done extensive visioning in very recent years in conjunction with the Waterfront Parks Strategy, the Downtown 21 Master Plan, and Our Future Mississauga, and a number of community preferences and interests were put forward for parks and natural areas within these exercises. The resultant documents were reviewed for relevant goal statements or principles that could advise the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan visioning.

The following Pillars for Change from the City's Strategic Plan are most relevant to Parks and Natural Areas.

Strategic Pillar for Change: CONNECT – Completing Our Neighbourhoods

Our Future Mississauga is a beautiful, sustainable city with safe neighbourhoods that support a strong, connected and vibrant community - a place where all can live, work and prosper. People can play as a child, walk to meet a friend, fall in love, raise a family and grow old.

Strategic Pillar for Change: GREEN - Living Green

Our Future Mississauga is a city that co-exists in harmony with its ecosystems, where natural areas are enhanced, forests and valleys are protected, the waterfront connects people to Lake Ontario, and communities are nurtured so that future generations enjoy a clean, healthy lifestyle.

In consideration of these goal statements and past and ongoing input from the community regarding parks and natural areas, the following **Vision Statement** is proposed for the Parks and Natural Areas system.

The Mississauga parks and open space system offers clean, safe, well-funded and managed parks, natural areas, greenspaces, trails, recreation areas and cultural sites. Natural features are protected, restored and enhanced for ecological health and the benefit of future generations. Parks include a diverse range of enjoyable and attractive places that build the City's profile, enhance neighbourhoods, encourage active lifestyles, and stimulate community interaction.

4.2.2 Principles

To assist in the development of guiding principles for parks and natural areas, the Principles developed for the Waterfront Parks Strategy in 2008 were reviewed for relevancy to the parks and natural areas system as a whole.

The Nine Principles for the Waterfront Parks are:

- Environment First
- Finding a Balance
- Sustainability

- Vibrant Place
- Design Excellence and Innovation
- Management
- Safe, Secure and Accessible
- Park as a Good Neighbour
- Inclusive Process

Through the course of discussions with staff and participants at the parks focus group it was concluded that that the Waterfront Principles were largely relevant, but could be further synthesized into fewer. As well the following suggestions were made at the focus group.

- The concept of finding a ‘balance’ between recreation uses and natural environment suggests pitting nature against recreation uses. Balance in a natural area should be based on scientific criteria. Consider using the word ‘harmony’ with the needs of the natural areas instead.
- Consider integrating the word ‘enhancing’. The Credit River is one of the fastest recovering systems due to stewardship efforts. Need to promote that.
- ‘Sustainability’ should speak to supporting activities that are appropriate to the location.
- Under ‘Design Excellence’ consider life cycle issues and the selection of materials that can withstand uses.

It is proposed that in support of the Vision, the City’s parks and natural areas will be developed and managed based on the following Principles:

The Vision and Principles will be further refined following input received at the Public in September.

Table 4-3: Guiding Principles for Parks and Natural Areas
Environmental Sustainability
Long-term sustainability of the natural systems through connection, protection, restoration and enhancement of natural areas will be a priority. Planning for recreation and facility provision/operation will strive for a harmonious relationship between people and nature, and will be supported by educational programming and encouragement of community stewardship.
Promoting Quality of Life
The parks and natural areas system will comprise diverse, vibrant, and social places that allow residents to interact and support a range of activities that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for residents and a desirable experience for visitors.
Supporting Social and Cultural Connections
The needs of residents will be provided for through a parks and natural areas system that supports recreation for all ages and abilities, is affordable, and culturally rich.
Quality and Innovation in Design
The design of parks and amenity areas will be based on high quality at best value, and lowest impact on the environment, and will incorporate innovative products and technologies that are durable and sustainable.
Responsible Management
Management practices for parks, open space and natural areas will recognize and respect the natural environment, provide a consistently high standard of care and maintenance to ensure the well-being of users and the protection of resources, and be fiscally responsible.

Section 5: Future Parkland Requirements

5.1 Overview

Mississauga effectively planned its growth and has achieved an admirable system of parks and outdoor recreation facilities that, for the most part, meet resident expectations. Ensuring continued service in parks delivery for the future requires that areas undergoing infilling and redevelopment will continue to be provided with the same, or better than quality of parks that are available today to residents.

As well, older parks will require upgrading and facilities replaced. These improvements should be made with a view to addressing current and emerging recreation trends and identified local needs, and to enhance the design quality, and social and environmental attributes of the park to meet contemporary expectations.

Mississauga's parks are supplemented by an expansive natural heritage system largely concentrated on the valleys of the Credit River, the Etobicoke Creek and their tributaries, which fall within the jurisdictions of Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto Region Conservation respectively. A section of the northwest area of the City falls within the Sixteen Mile Creek watershed, under the Halton Region Conservation jurisdiction. The Credit River in particular is a significant river system and is proposed to be designated as a Canadian Heritage River to commemorate and recognize its natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

These environmental lands are largely owned by the conservation authorities and managed by the City for trails and nature-oriented passive recreation uses, together with their ecological attributes and functions as riverine systems and floodways. Managing the shared use of these lands for both environmental and recreational benefits is

a key consideration for the future, and an important objective identified by the public.

The City parks and open space offer a diverse range of activities and amenities, from sports to gardens, to cultural events and heritage features, within attractive and well-managed settings. Trends suggest that parks may be more frequently, and intensely used, by all ages into the future with high priority placed on activities that are low or no-cost, and which allow for spontaneous rather than planned use.

The City's extensive and well connected off-road trails support jogging, walking, cycling, inline skating, and potentially cross country skiing. The majority of surveyed residents indicated that trails use was their number one recreational activity, and completion of a connected system of trails and linkages to parks and natural areas were important objectives identified in the public consultation.

5.2 Current Parkland Standards and Classifications

In considering parkland requirements to address current and future needs, it is important to place the system of parks within the context of the broader hierarchy of open space types. The City's Official Plan, the *Mississauga Plan* establishes the parks and open space classifications which are in use today, and which have guided community planning in recent years.

The open space classifications comprise public parks - currently classified in two categories consisting of Destination Parks and Community Parks. Public parkland may include components of the Natural Areas System to provide opportunities for enjoyment, appreciation, and protection of nature. Other public open space lands comprise Greenbelt, and Cemeteries.

Private Open Space, which is generally considered to include lands that are used for private cemeteries, conservation, nursery gardening, agriculture, and golf courses, is also acknowledged for its contributions to non-intensive, outdoor uses. However these lands are not necessarily accessible to the public.

Parkland standards that have guided new community planning are:

- Provision standard for 1.2 ha. per 1,000 population for residential districts;
- Parks should be generally accessible for residents within 800 metres from their homes, and be centrally located within a residential neighbourhood as possible.

The park classifications and standards were confirmed in the 2004 Future Directions Recreation and Parks Master Plan. The open space types and their attributes are summarized below:

Table 5.1: City of Mississauga Open Space Classification System
Public Open Space
Destination Parks (formerly City Park)¹
Accommodate recreation interests of City residents through the provision of major facilities (e.g. golf courses), the preservation of unique historical, cultural, or significant natural areas. They may also meet the need for community-level parkland or serve an area greater than the City. City parks may serve a unique function such as a waterfront park, major tournament sports park, or special use park.

¹ 2004 Future Directions for Recreation and Parks (formerly City Park)

Community Parks²

Intended to accommodate recreation interests for the local residential area through provision of sports fields for organized use, space/equipment for unorganized activities and passive use, preservation of woodlands, multi-purpose year round activities (where feasible), visual relief and aesthetic qualities.

Greenbelt³

Lands designated Greenbelt are generally associated with natural hazards or significant natural areas where development is restricted to protect people and property from damage and to provide for the conservation of the natural heritage features and areas. Permitted uses include passive recreation activities where they are compatible with the viability of the natural area, while respecting appropriate buffers from watercourses and valley slopes.

Cemeteries⁴

Cemeteries and related facilities form part of the Open Space network. As cemeteries constitute an open space use, consideration will be given to public cemeteries being used for passive open space purposes.

Private Open Space⁵

Uses are generally non-intensive outdoor uses such as: private cemeteries, conservation, nursery gardening, agriculture, and golf courses, is also acknowledged for its contributions to non-intensive, outdoor uses. However these lands are not necessarily accessible to the public.

² ibid

³ Mississauga Plan

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

5.3 Parkland Requirements to Address Growth

Future Directions uses Service Areas for planning and tracking the provision of recreation facilities and services, based on logical geographic boundaries that consider smaller community planning unit boundaries imbedded within, as well as physical barriers. The parkland supply in 2009 for each of these service areas is shown on Table 5.2, following, for City and Community parks (including parks under development, and un-allocated parks).

Table 5.2 also identifies future parkland requirements for each of the Service Areas using population forecasts. Three planning horizons are used up to 2031 using forecasted growth that considers infilling and redevelopment within a number of nodes throughout the City. As well new development is expected to occur along several of the major corridors in the City, the population forecasts for which have not yet been estimated.

The exercise indicates that, using the provision target of 1.2 ha. of parkland per 1000 pop. for residential areas, the current supply of parkland will generally support infill population growth within the Service Areas to 2031. The exception to this is Area 5 which currently has the lowest per capita supply relative to the rest of the City. Growth in this area is anticipated to be high as a result of the development of the City Centre. If no new parkland was developed, there would be a modest shortfall at some point before the 2031 horizon.

This exercise is useful only in that it provides a basis for quantitative assessment of current and future parkland as a baseline. With growth anticipated to take place through redevelopment in several concentrated areas, and with the current interest in 'placemaking' to achieve attractive, livable communities, the question of how much

parkland, and where, should be considered as part of the community planning and design exercise for each of the growth areas. Opportunities to acquire parkland at the same ratio as in the past may be limited by development parcel size and desired urban form. However it should be expected that new parks, although potentially different from the traditional community park, will continue to need to be added in new development areas in order to meet the leisure and recreation needs of current and new populations. To meet these objectives, assessment of parkland needs in growth areas will need to be undertaken on a planning district or 'precinct' basis.

As well, the City has strategic objectives to continue to add to the parks and open space landbase as opportunities arise in order to: facilitate public access and improve views and 'windows' to the waterfront; protect cultural heritage resources; and to protect and expand natural features and systems.

(see following page for Table 5.2)

Year	Table 5.2: Summary of Parkland Supply by Service Area						
	SERVICE AREA						CITY
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Existing Supply							
2009 pop.	159,000	155,500	38,400	100,300	189,800	84,700	727,700
City	45.16	125.27	-	59.99	6.23	218.75	
Community	369.26	194.001	91.81	199.47	252.192	151.056	
TOTAL	414.42	319.27	91.81	259.46	258.42	369.81	
Ha. / 1000	2.6	2.05	2.39	2.58	1.36	4.36	
Total Future Parkland Supply Requirements (using 1.2 ha. / 1000 population, per OP standards for new residential areas)							
2016	167,100	163,700	37,700	100,000	202,000	86,100	756,600
HA.	200.52	196.44	89.64	120.0	242.04	103.2	
2021	169,900	166,600	37,300	100,900	211,300	87,800	773,800
HA.	203.88	199.92	44.76	241.08	253.56	105.36	
2031	175,500	171,300	37,000	104,200	231,300	91,800	811,100
HA.	210.6	205.56	44.4	125.04	277.56	110.16	

Sources: Existing parkland supply is based on inventory data provided by the City (May 2009)

Section 6: Future Directions for Parks

6.1 Role of Parks and Open Space in City-Building

6.1.1 Parks as Key Elements of Placemaking

The City's Strategic Pillar for Change: Completing Our Neighbourhoods speaks to the provision of 'safe neighbourhoods that support a strong, connected and vibrant community - a place where all can live, work and prosper'.

Parks have long been considered key components of community planning, and Mississauga's residential areas have been built around a system of parks, schools and greenspaces. The traditional view of parks - that they provide open space for recreational facilities and programs is still widely embraced by the public in these areas. This need will continue into the future, and parks will need to evolve as they are implemented or redeveloped to provide facilities to meet the community needs and preferences that have been identified in the recreation needs analysis of the Recreation Master Plan and subsequent Future Directions documents.

However, as the City moves toward a denser, urban context using more contemporary thinking in city-building, other considerations will need to be applied to the design of parks and open spaces. Parks and public spaces are identified as key elements in 'placemaking' for their contributions to City greening; aesthetically pleasing spaces; enlivened streets; and healthy, social communities. Mississauga's commitment to this is evidenced by the successful engagement of residents and staff in: *Building Mississauga around Places: A Vision for City Centre Parks and*

Open Spaces in the 21st Century; and the City's ongoing *Downtown 21* work, which includes plans for new public open space areas, and rejuvenation of Civic Square and Library Square in the City Centre, and the Kariya Park / Lakeview School complex south of Burnhamthorpe Road. These efforts toward rejuvenation and re-purposing of existing parks and the establishment of new public spaces within an enhanced urban fabric will need to be continued in Cooksville and Malton, and other planned growth areas of the City, as intensification and redevelopment takes place.

Parks and open spaces provide social benefits in addition to their tangible contributions to City beautification, recreation / leisure pursuits, and public health. Research and action has demonstrated that parks and greenspaces can help build and strengthen community ties - by bringing people together in communal places - including those who may feel marginalized by ethnicity or class - to recreate, attend public events, or to volunteer on community projects. Supporting these objectives, often referred to as 'social capital' or 'community capital', is becoming an important factor in City planning particularly in those with a diverse and multi-ethnic social make-up such as Mississauga.

Improving proximity and access to parks and natural areas, and providing linked, destination-oriented trails and paths are key "infrastructure" to supporting participation in programs and casual activities. A central issue in achieving these objectives in a largely built-out city like Mississauga is the capacity to essentially "revise" the existing urban form to one based on a new model. Assuming available financing, the City will be in a position to redevelop its own properties to better reflect and demonstrate its strategic Pillars of Change and accompanying goals. For the most part, however, re-orienting the City's built form will entail capitalizing on opportunities to retrofit as private sector re-development projects come forward. As an incremental process based largely on factors

outside of the City's direct control, it will be a challenge to arrive at an optimal, coordinated, and connected parks/trail system - particularly if the opportunities that arise are not well suited to creating the larger system. In addition, the opportunities that arise in redevelopment/intensification projects will more typically provide only limited areas for public parks and open spaces. While infill development/intensification will tend to focus more on parks as contributors to 'quality of life' than on active recreation needs, there will need to be a corresponding emphasis on paths and bikeways that link new development areas to more active recreation areas within the larger City-wide network.

Recommendation #1

- ⇒ Continue the process of Placemaking as the standard approach to City-building initiatives to ensure the creation of complete communities that work economically, aesthetically and socially to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods. For parkland this will entail the establishment of well designed, attractive, safe, and comfortable public and private spaces that encourage people of all ages to engage in social and civic interaction through both casual and programmed activities.

6.1.2 Protecting and Enhancing Ecological Systems

Mississauga is also blessed with a rich system of river and stream corridors, and woodland areas that comprise its Natural Areas System. Although some areas of the Natural Areas system are non-accessible, much of the publicly owned lands are characterized as parkland or greenbelt within the open space system, and are used for passive recreation, including trails, nature-based activities, and picnicking. As such, the greenbelt lands for the most part comprise the 'common grounds' that support both ecological functions and

public uses. Participation by local residents in trails and unstructured outdoor recreation activities is growing and there will be increasing demand for year-round access to the greenways to support these interests. First and foremost however, they are important ecological systems that serve as the 'lungs of the City', helping to restore and recycle the air, and supporting important animal and plant communities. In this regard, protection and enhancement of the natural attributes of the greenbelt lands is paramount toward protecting the City's overall Natural Areas System, and the accommodation of public uses will need to be undertaken in a manner that is compatible with ecological objectives.

The connection between quality of life, public health and proximity to urban parks or natural areas is receiving attention from community developers throughout the Greater Toronto Area who promote lifestyle in their efforts to make their neighborhoods attractive in today's competitive markets. In an infill scenario, with smaller private lots and an increase in the number of multi-storey living units, year-round access to a park or other green space will become increasingly important to residents who are conscious of healthy living, or are simply seeking pleasant, outdoor spaces to escape the confines of their living areas. In particular, middle and lower income residents will be seeking opportunities for unstructured, low cost recreation activities close to home or easily accessible by transit.

Recommendation #2

- ⇒ Continue to embody the principles of ecosystem planning in the land-use planning process, whereby natural areas and systems are appropriately protected and integrated into the built environment and enhanced to ensure overall health of the natural environment, and people, into the future.

Recommendation #3

- ⇒ Within the system of parks and natural areas, continue to strive for a 'green', livable, and sustainable City - with the provision of parks and open spaces that are readily accessed by residents, and designed to accommodate a range of active and passive recreation uses in harmony with the natural environment.

6.2 Quality of Planning and Design

In order to achieve stated objectives for sustainable and complete communities, planning of the future parks system will need to consider not only the quantity and distribution of parks, but the quality and diversity of the outdoor environment needed to meet residents expectations and objectives for the public realm, as outlined in City-building studies such as the *Mississauga Plan Review: Sustainable Living, A Growth Management Strategy for Mississauga*.

This will entail continued attention to how City planning is conducted and the implementation of processes similar to those recently undertaken for the City Centre to achieve the innovation and excellence in planning and design that is called for throughout the City, as growth continues.

Recommendation #4

- ⇒ Similar to the Downtown 21 Master Plan, continue to develop integrated open space / urban design plans for all new areas of redevelopment and intensification on a 'precinct' basis. For parks, and public and private spaces, the plans should address the location, form and characteristics to ensure common design philosophies.

Accompanying guidelines should be prepared to address landscape and urban design elements, sustainability measures, and identify programming and facilities that are appropriate to community demographics and urban living. The plans and design guidelines will guide planning and policy decisions and development negotiations at subsequent planning stages and will assist in internal prioritizing of staff and financial resources to address parks design and development in sequence with other planned initiatives.

Recommendation #5

- ⇒ Excellence and innovation in design and construction technologies should be key objectives for all new parks and facilities planning and development to ensure that the public and private open spaces are developed on the basis of high quality, reasonable cost solutions, that imbed objectives for sustainability and offer long-term durability. For private development sustainable design will be directed by the City of Mississauga Green Development Strategy, and its Green Building Standards.

Recommendation #6

- ⇒ To achieve the City's objectives and new directions for new development areas, the planning and approvals process must be undertaken as a coordinated, multi-departmental approach. In this regard there needs to be continued and increased efforts by the City toward inter-departmental dialogue and cooperation in all matters pertaining to community and infrastructure planning design.

6.3 Provision and Development of Parkland

6.3.1 Parkland Classifications

Parkland standards and their application have changed over Mississauga's history as its various communities evolved, developed and ultimately blended into the City that it is today.

Amongst other objectives, in adopting the current open space classifications the *Mississauga Plan* seeks to establish a public open space system with a diversity of recreational and natural environment experiences, some of which are designed for special use groups'; and to 'provide a system of public open space areas which can adapt to changing needs and preferences for recreational facilities and opportunities'.

These remain valid objectives into the future to guide parks planning and development. However, the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan is mandated to review the current provision standards and park classifications with a view to ensuring that they are still applicable and that recreational needs and preferences can be met going forward into the future as the City intensifies and moves toward a mature state.

The key categories in use in the City's Official Plan are Destination Park (formerly City Park) and Community Park. The current standards reflect a past consolidation of classifications in the City that previously included a fuller range of park types that included City Parks, Community Parks, Neighbourhood Parks and Parkettes. These classifications, in common use across North America, originated with the development of planned suburban communities, each with service radii and development criteria to ensure the provision of a hierarchy of parks and facilities corresponding to

community planning units. In some cities, including Mississauga, the finer grain of park classification fell out of favour when changes were made to the way development charges could be collected and allocated, and it became increasingly difficult to provide the full hierarchy of parks, all with meaningful sizes and within allowable parkland dedications.

'City' parkland is widely used in municipal park classifications and is largely comprised of 'found' cultural and natural resources that represent the City's heritage, or unique or major facilities that serve all City residents, such as the golf courses, and the waterfront, and as such are not typically tied to provision standards. Mississauga has recently proposed a change to the classification of City Park, favouring the term Destination Park. This is an appropriate classification to reflect the purpose of these parks, and should continue to be used to define any future acquisitions or new parks that have these characteristics.

The classification of Community Park, together with objectives for the provision of a minimum of 1.2 ha. / 1000 population for residential areas, and access to a park within 800m of residential, has successfully directed the provision of parkland in growth areas for some years. The parkland and open space classifications comprising Destination Park, and Community Park are reasonable categories to achieve the stated objectives for 'placemaking' in areas of growth and intensification, providing that the category of Community Park is redefined as including all types of parks, including small urban parks and public squares that may offer different forms of leisure pursuits that appeal to urban dwellers and contribute to the urban form, e.g. shaded seating areas, sculpture gardens, 'WIFI' parks, cafés. If historic assumptions preclude this, the City should consider reinstating a smaller park unit, such as Local Park or Neighbourhood Park (which is consistent with the

Strategic Plan Goal of Completing Neighbourhoods) to capture the range of new urban parks that will be needed.

In the classifications identified in the City's Official Plan Greenbelt comprises significant natural areas and lands constrained by natural hazards that are restricted from development. New permitted uses are generally limited to municipal servicing and infrastructure, flood and erosion control works, stormwater management and passive recreation activities which are compatible with the natural area. The primary function of Greenbelt lands is the protection of people and property from damage and conservation of natural heritage features, therefore Greenbelt lands are not included in the calculation of the existing or forecasted per capita parkland supply or standard.

Recommendation #7

- ⇒ The parkland and open space classifications comprising Destination Park, Community Park, and Greenbelt are appropriate categories to be used to describe the hierarchy of City-owned parks and open space lands, providing that the category of Community Park is redefined as including *all types of local-serving parks, including small urban parks and squares*. The City should review its current inventory listing to ensure that the classification assigned to each park fits its intended and actual use.

If historic assumptions as to what a 'Community Park' is preclude this, consider reinstating a smaller park unit, such as 'Local Park' or 'Neighbourhood Park' to capture the range of new urban parks that will be needed.

6.3.2 Parkland Provision Standards

The use of per capita provision standards based on population as a means of determining parkland requirements is a widely accepted practice throughout North America. A review of parkland provision in municipalities across Ontario indicates that standards and actual supply vary widely. The dense, core areas of Toronto (and its pre-amalgamation municipalities) have a significantly lower per capita supply than the greenfield, suburban communities that are still growing. However the trend even in these municipalities is that the overall standard of supply is declining in urbanizing areas. This is primarily due to changes in the Development Charges Act in the late 1990s which eliminated opportunities to levy for parkland, leaving municipalities largely reliant on allowable dedications under the Planning Act.

As a city that is nearly built-out to its urban boundaries, and now facing additional growth through intensification, Mississauga's target of 1.2 ha. per 1000 population for new residential areas is realistic in that it approximates the provision level that can be achieved within allowable dedications under the Planning Act which equates to a population based standard of approximately 1.0 ha. / 1000 population.

For comparison purposes, Mississauga's provision targets and supply were evaluated against those of several Ontario cities with similar populations, and/or facing similar issues of growth and intensification (refer to Table 6.1, following). Only Ontario municipalities were compared since provincial planning standards and policies and historic community development differ across Canada. In all comparisons, only tableland parkland that supports the development of recreation facilities was considered, and not non-park open space such as greenbelts or natural areas that are set aside for purposes other than recreation.

Table 6.1: Comparison of Municipal Park Provision Standards

City	Pop. (2006 census unless otherwise noted)	Provision Standard (to direct growth)	Actual Provision Level (tableland parkland, excl. greenbelt, valleyland and other non-park open space)	Minimum Service Radius / Walking Standard
Ottawa ¹	812,129	2.0 ha./1000 population	3.30 ha. / 1,000 population	N/A
Mississauga ²	727,000 ³	1.2 ha./1,000 population	2.35 ha./1,000 population	Min. 800 m service radius to residential
Hamilton ⁴	504,559	2.1 ha./1,000 population	5.27 ha./1,000 population	Min. 800 m service radius to residential
London	352,395	3 ha./1,000 population	2.30 ha./1000 population	Min. 800 m service radius to residential
Brampton ⁵	425,000	1.7 ha./1,000 population	1.59 ha./1,000 population*	Min. 400m service radius to residential (change to 600m is contemplated)

¹ Population: Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Parkland and standards: City web site

² City of Mississauga. Future Directions for Parks and Natural Areas. 2009.

³ 2009 estimate

⁴ Population: Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Parkland and standards: City web site

⁵ dMA Planning & Management Services, ENVision The Hough Group. City of Brampton Parks, Culture and Recreation Master Plan. 2007.

At 1.2 ha. of tableland parkland per 1000 pop. Mississauga's overall standard in the Official Plan for new areas is lower than the compared municipalities, although the City's actual parkland provision levels are in line with, or exceed that of others. Unlike other municipalities, Mississauga's OP standard recognizes the allowable dedications under the Planning Act.

Provision standards should be considered a minimum standard for the purposes of establishing a baseline for negotiations for parkland in new development areas, and should not override other considerations such as: providing a suitable landbase to accommodate recreational facilities; ensuring an equitable distribution and access to parks in all neighbourhoods; and providing quality parks that respond to both local socio-demographics and city-wide interests.

The objective for the provision of parks within 800m has been largely met across the City, with a few gaps in coverage where physical barriers exist, and the Service areas as a whole are well supplied relative to the provision standards for new areas. Action steps in the City's Strategic Plan include measures to encourage a more walkable and connected city form by establishing maximum block sizes with a perimeter of 400m for all nodes and corridors in new development areas. In this regard, maintaining an 800m provision standard for parks, which would approximate a two-block walk, is still a realistic target. Notwithstanding, open space areas may be located at less than this distance to achieve urban design objectives.

Recommendation #8

- ⇒ Maintain the current tableland parkland standard of 1.2 ha. per 1000 population, with access to parks within an 800m distance in residential areas as a minimum standard for new development areas. This standard does not include non-park

open spaces such as hazard lands and natural areas, which may be acquired for conservation purposes.

6.3.3 Parkland to Meet Growth Needs

Population growth in Mississauga has been more rapid than anticipated in the last Future Directions with the forecasted 2031 population essentially achieved in 2009. The City's recent Growth Plan conformity exercise has identified additional population growth of at least 80,000 persons by 2031, to be achieved through infill and redevelopment initiatives concentrated in several key nodes and along major corridors. Placemaking principles are calling for reduced dependency on cars, and the establishment of new neighbourhoods that are aesthetically designed, with a range of parks and community amenities in walking distance. The Planning Districts have largely, with the exception of the City Centre (which sits at approximately 0.60 ha. / 1000 pop.), met or exceeded the provision standard of 1.2 ha. / 1000 population. Many of the growth areas will be serviced by parks within the 800m service standard. However, the provision of new parks and public spaces will be an important part of achieving other community form and urban design objectives, and enhancing the quality of life in dense urban areas.

Although the parks provision standard that has been achieved varies across the City's neighbourhoods, and will continue to do so, it will be important to maintain existing provision levels to the extent possible through new parkland acquisitions. In particular in the City Centre, and other underserved neighbourhoods that may be identified, growth and intensification should not allow the amount of parkland to slide below the existing provision level.

As well, demographic trends suggest that age-friendly design will become significant considerations for new communities into the future. And, as evidenced by a surprising yield of children and youth

in the City Centre area, many new families to Mississauga are opting to live in higher density developments. This suggests that parks in growth areas will need to be more than decorative urban design elements, and that design for all-ages and interests will be paramount.

To facilitate this there will be a need for strategic moves in park planning for infill / redevelopment areas, including:

- need to consider the contextual framework of existing parks, greenspace, trails and community facilities and plan intensification at a community level, rather than on a site by site basis, to optimize access to existing amenities
- a move toward more qualitative or performance-based approaches to parkland needs assessment that consider the interests and preferences of target demographics in new housing (based on identified trends, forecasts and tracking)
- need to define and plan for a range of public spaces that may not match traditional park types, including urban squares and linear greenspace to support trails and greening
- application of all available tools such as density bonusing, alternate provision standards and other incentives enabled by elements of the official plan and zoning by-laws, to optimize parkland securement opportunities
- enhancement of existing parks and green space to accommodate more people and an increased variety of uses
- in tandem with intensification plans, identify strategic opportunities to create new public green space within the built-up city including: closed school sites, brownfield development sites, and vacant lots;

and to establish / utilize greenway connections through ravines and utility corridors to link to existing parks and major facilities

- engagement of the development community in the provision of both private and public amenity space that serves both urban design and leisure purposes

Consequently, the City will need to continue to monitor and evaluate parkland needs at a district or 'precinct' plan level, and not just on a Service Area or City-wide basis. This will facilitate the achievement of target provision levels for growth areas, and to ensure that urban design interests and social and recreation needs of the new populations are met through existing or new parks and public spaces. As the City continues to grow and evolve, the 'puzzle' that comprises the landbase of parks and open space to support leisure and recreation needs is never complete.

Recommendation #9

- ⇒ Continue to plan for a range of public spaces that may not match traditional park types, including urban squares and linear greenspace to support trails and greening strategies, combined with increased opportunities for a variety of activities that support urban 'downtown' living.

Recommendation #10

- ⇒ As part of planning studies to implement Growth Management recommendations, e.g. District Plans, Community Plans - a community-based assessment should be used to establish where and how much parkland should be included in redevelopment areas, in consideration of desired urban form, and proximity to existing parkland and facilities, together with demographics, socio-economic factors, and projected growth.

Parkland levels should continue to be based on the provision of a minimum of 1.2 ha. / 1000 population, and areas that currently fall below this standard, such as the City Centre, should not be allowed to slide any further.

Recommendation #11

- ⇒ Apply all available tools such as density bonusing, alternate provision standards allowed under the Planning Act, and enabled by elements of the official plan and zoning by-laws, to optimize parkland securement opportunities.

Recommendation #12

- ⇒ As the City progresses with its growth plans, the successful application of the current provision standards to infill and redevelopment areas should be monitored, and again reviewed at the next *Future Directions* plan update.

6.3.4 Open Space on Private Lands

In denser, urban areas private, landscaped open space often plays a key role in the character of an area, typically integrated to create an attractive setting for the building, provide amenities for the occupants, and to augment the public realm. As redevelopment and infilling occurs in Mississauga open space areas provided by private development such as urban squares, roof gardens, and landscaped amenity areas will constitute an important part of sustainability measures and the urban design character of new communities. They should be considered important elements toward 'placemaking', City greening and the provision of public or private amenity space. However, privately owned open space should be considered supplementary to, and not a replacement for the required provision of public parks and open space.

Recommendation #13

- ⇒ Open space on private lands including urban squares, roof gardens, and landscaped amenity areas, will constitute an important part of the urban design character of new communities, City greening initiatives, and the provision of public and private amenity space. Privately owned open space should be encouraged in new urban infill and redevelopment areas but should be considered supplementary to, and not a replacement for, the required provision of public parks and open space. Private open space should be reviewed on a site by site basis, with clear guidelines for implementation through policy and urban design guidelines.

6.3.5 Cash in Lieu of Parkland

The City has a Corporate Policy and Procedure to direct the dedication of land, cash in lieu of land, or a combination of land and cash. The policy identifies how land dedications and cash in lieu payments for parks purposes are made, and the nature and type of acceptable land dedications. The policy reiterates the standards of the Official Plan, and is consistent with the provisions of the Planning Act in the application of a parkland yield, or cash payment, calculated on the basis of, the greater of, either 5% of the land area, or 1 ha. for every 300 dwelling units.; or, 2% of the developable land area for commercial / industrial land.

The determination of when to take parkland dedications vs. when to take cash-in-lieu of parkland is not articulated in the policy. This question is of particular importance in new growth areas, where traditional parkland yields may be challenging. In determining when to take a parkland dedication, cash-in-lieu thereof, or a combination, on any given development site, the City should first consider whether sufficient parkland exists in the areas to address the projected

increased population; whether new sites to serve the area can be adequately assembled through parkland dedications; or whether new lands will need to be purchased using parkland acquisition reserve funds.

Recommendation #14

The following criteria should be considered in deciding when to take a cash in lieu payment:

- where the area being developed or redeveloped has sufficient parkland to accommodate projected population growth and forecasted recreation needs within existing standards
- where the City identifies land in a more appropriate or accessible location that has been, or is to be, acquired by the City
- where there the site cannot provide land that is either usable or functional (e.g. not large enough or of sufficient quality) for parkland purposes
- where the taking of parkland from the site may reduce the number of dwelling units or the floor space of a development or redevelopment such that it renders the development or redevelopment unfeasible

The current use of cash-in-lieu (CIL) funds is guided by a corporate decision that directs 60% toward land acquisition and 40% toward facilities and equipment, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act. The funds are accrued in a reserve fund, and in the case of the land acquisition reserves, are used for strategic acquisitions that build the parks and natural areas on a city-wide basis. There is no provision made at present for a specified portion of the CIL funds to remain within the area where the funds are generated. Accrual of funds to a city-wide reserve is common practice for developing municipalities that derive adequate parkland yields from dedications. However this may not be the case in areas of infill

and intensification and mature municipalities have developed policies to address area-specific use of a specified portion of the collected CIL funds.

For Mississauga, ensuring city-wide and local needs are both of importance. However, in order to ensure that adequate parkland is provided to meet objectives for sustainable, livable communities in growth areas, it may be necessary to assemble / acquire land through purchase when there are limited opportunities for dedications. The City may wish to develop and formalize a strategy for use and allocation of CIL funds that addresses balancing both city-wide needs and interests for land acquisition, as well as ensuring that local parkland needs are provided for in growth areas.

Recommendation #15

- ⇒ Consider the development of a cash-in-lieu allocation strategy to direct the use and apportioning of CIL funds, with a view to balancing both parkland needs in growth areas as well as city-wide interests for the acquisition of waterfront parkland and natural areas.

6.3.6 Parkland Acquisition Strategy

An acquisition strategy and evaluation criteria are key to the identification of priorities for strategic land acquisitions that are essentially competing for the same resources. The City has embarked on a process of monitoring opportunities for strategic land acquisitions to meet target objectives for parkland and recreation facilities across the Service Areas, and to complete gaps in the publicly owned system of natural areas and greenbelt lands, using accrued cash-in-lieu funds that are earmarked for land acquisition.

The draft acquisition strategy and evaluation criteria were reviewed and discussed with staff as part of the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan. The parkland acquisition evaluation criteria was slightly modified to better align with the identified priorities of this plan which

include: strategic acquisitions to support the natural areas system; the waterfront; and to ensure growth needs are met.

Recommendation #16

⇒ It is recommended that the City continue with its current approach to identifying strategic land acquisitions, and through endorsement of this Plan adopt evaluation criteria and a ranking system which includes priorities for acquisition of lands that:

- protect and enhance Natural Areas;
- support the Waterfront Strategy;
- support completion of the trails system;
- support population growth and sustainable community design (where no / limited opportunities for parkland dedications exist).

(refer to Appendix A for Evaluation Criteria and Ranking).

6.3.7 Parkland Requirements to Support Outdoor Recreation Facilities

The 2009 Recreation Facilities Master Plan for Future Directions projects outdoor recreation facilities over a 5-year term, with requirements focused on addressing current field deficit. It recommends that in the short term the City seek opportunities within the existing supply to address the deficit and projected needs, including: efficiencies in time utilization, improving existing fields; greater collaboration with school boards to utilize board properties for the provision of suitable community fields; and replacement with artificial turf (1 artificial turf field can equal 3 natural turf fields). Assuming this can be achieved, the 5 year projected needs would be met through the existing landbase and facility supply. However these objectives are not without their challenges as many of the existing community parks and school sites may not be suited to expansion of

fields or intensification that effectively would increase the hours of field usage, or necessitate the lighting of fields or addition of parking. These issues will need to be carefully considered in reviewing and selecting existing park sites to accommodate new demands for field sports.

Although the outdoor recreation assessment primarily addresses a 5-year horizon, from a land supply perspective future population growth beyond 2014 will also need to be considered. There is considerable population growth anticipated to 2031 through development in the Core areas and Nodes (as identified in the Growth Management Study), with further growth projected beyond this time period as the development of the Corridors are realized (with as yet unassigned population forecasts). Although demographics and age factors will influence demand for sports fields over the long-term, it is anticipated that future growth will result in a demand for some additional outdoor fields (although likely at a slower pace, or as a downward per capita trend for some sports).

Not all of this demand may be met in the existing land supply, and any new parks developed in association with new urban infill development are not likely to be of a size that support sports fields. The City has an extensive landbase of parkland in Milton arrayed along the Ninth Line, which was acquired as a landbank to address future major sportsfield needs. Although not central to any population growth, these lands represent the best opportunity for any consolidation of fields and other facilities into a sports park that could support more intensified uses including tournament play, should the need be there. As well one or more of these sites could support a park or parks that offer a wide range of city-serving facilities such as group picnicking, BMX bike course, skatepark, or events space either in conjunction with, or separate from outdoor fields. Development of such a park could also potentially relieve the pressure on the valley parks to support new activities.

As well, on or more of the Ninth Line sites could, in conjunction with, or separately, be used for allotment gardens or community garden space if of interest to nearby residents. This could extend to a more comprehensive 'urban agriculture' approach that would allow for larger allotments for food production, e.g. the FarmStart operation on the historic McVean Farm property in Brampton, owned by TRCA. Another potential site that might support urban agriculture is the Britannia Farm lands owned by the Peel District School Board.

In considering where, and how much, of the Ninth Line lands should be held in reserve, consideration should be given to the physical characteristics of the landbase and factors such as: the site's potential to address adjacent neighbourhoods that are under-served with parkland or may be subject to growth plans; access to existing or future transit; and the presence of buildings or natural features or systems that might present constraints or opportunities for land development. Sites close to or containing natural features might serve as passive use, picnic parks.

At the last update of the City's Background Staff Report, a substantial amount of this landbase was identified as unallocated or potentially surplus to identified recreational needs. The recommendations in Future Directions do not call for the immediate use of the Ninth Line lands to meet outdoor sports field needs over a 5-year term. Notwithstanding this analysis, however, with anticipated growth of at least 80,000 to 2031, it is likely that some of this land should be held in reserve for future recreation and leisure needs.

Recommendation #17

- ⇒ Monitor the success of implementing the *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan recommendations that call for the provision of sports fields to address the current backlog and

the 5-year forecasted need, by improving or adding facilities in existing parks or through allocation / usage policies.

Recommendation #18

- ⇒ In association with the monitoring of the provision of sports fields, review and assess the need for the Ninth Line parks landbase to accommodate some of the current backlog or future forecasted major outdoor facilities needs. Evaluate on a site specific basis, opportunities for the Ninth Line park blocks to accommodate other desired recreation and leisure services and facilities to alleviate pressures on existing parkland and on the valley parks and open space. These may include an additional events park and / or picnic park; a location for a BMX circuit, off-leash area, or a site to accommodate 'urban agriculture initiatives' such as allotment gardens or a community food-share initiative.

Recommendation #19

- ⇒ Maintain the inventory of Ninth Line park blocks pending a comprehensive review of the capability of the existing parkland and facilities supply to accommodate the major recreation facilities identified in *Future Directions*, as well the opportunities for the landbase to accommodate any new recreation and leisure needs, as the City may be willing to provide.

6.3.8 Waterfront Parks

Mississauga has extensive frontage on Lake Ontario. The waterfront includes an enviable system of more than 22 parks, with several new ones planned, many connected by the Waterfront Trail that extends as a connected pathway for a considerable distance through the parks. Use and management of the waterfront parks is directed by a Waterfront Parks Strategy, which was completed in 2008.

Consequently, the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan does not specifically address the waterfront parks as a separate component although they are implicitly included within the discussion of the open space system, and have some issues that are common to other parks.

Recommendation #20

- ⇒ Continue to further develop and enhance the Waterfront Park system using the 2008 Waterfront Parks Strategy as the guiding document.

6.3.9 Upgrading of Existing Parks

There will be an ongoing need for systematic upgrading of older parks in Mississauga to address aging facilities, and to ensure that parks continue to meet the recreational and social needs of current and future residents. Park utilization is directly related to the attractiveness and comfort of the space and the suitability of facilities to prospective park users. Well-utilized and busy parks are key factors in deterring vandalism, and negative behaviour.

As well, in addition to field sports that will be allocated based on a Service Areas assessment, the Recreation Master Plan identified a need for more local-serving recreation amenities, in particular those that are focused on children and youth. These include basketball and multi-purpose courts, which have been evaluated on a geographic distribution basis of 1 km; and playgrounds which have been evaluated on an 800 m service radius, coincidental with the 800 m target for park provision contained within the City's park standards. The application of a geographic distribution considers access from residential neighbourhoods by walking or cycling, while considering physical barriers such as major roads, railways, river valleys, etc. The most notable gap areas for playgrounds within the service radii were identified in Future Directions as occurring in Service Areas #1, #2,

#3, and #5, with the added suggested for at least one additional barrier-free playground to be established (in addition to the two planned for the north and east).

The Recreation Master Plan also recommends the provision of spaces and amenities that encourage physical activity, wellness and informal use opportunities in parks for all ages and abilities. As older parks are rejuvenated, they should be considered for their capacity to support casual un-programmed activities such as multi-purpose courts, outdoor fitness equipment, community gardens, and informal playing fields for pick-up games. Determination of these needs should continue to be made in consultation with local residents, as well as through a review of the demographic make-up of the community.

The trend toward the use of parks as outdoor social spaces is evident in Mississauga through the well-attended City-run and community events, increased bookings of picnic shelters, and casual use of large parks, and to some extent even smaller parks, in newer neighbourhoods for family and community gatherings. In the future, the provision of social space at a neighbourhood or community level will need to be considered in the development or redevelopment of all parks and spaces, and in the identification of new locations to support events and large group activities.

Larger existing parks, particularly those where underutilized field areas are to be removed or redeployed, as well as new parks still to be developed in the northwest corner of the City should be considered for their potential to support both larger social gatherings (e.g. for picnics, BBQs), together with supporting amenities.

Recommendation #21

- ⇒ In addition to implementing the recommendations of *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan for projected recreation facilities, continue to engage the public in all parks

development and redevelopment projects to ensure that community preferences and interests are integrated together with recommended facilities.

Recommendation #22

- ⇒ In the design of all new parks, and the rejuvenation of older parks, consider use by all-ages and abilities, design for safety using CPTED principles, and the provision of facilities and amenities that support social interaction and unstructured recreation and leisure activities. These may include, as appropriate: shaded seating areas, child and youth-oriented play facilities, outdoor fitness equipment, informal playing fields, picnic / BBQ facilities, checker / chess tables, and community allotment gardens.

Recommendation #23

- ⇒ Establish a prioritized list of older parks for redevelopment. Triggers for priorities may include: implementing the recommendations of *Future Directions* Recreation Master Plan; redeployment of underutilized sports fields; life cycle replacement of buildings or park facilities; response to health/safety issues based on a formal inspection program; changing community demographics; introduction of new/ancillary functions (e.g., storm water management); identified needs through growth plans. Identify sustained annual budgets for systematic parks redevelopment / upgrading as part of the 10-year capital forecast, based on the identified priorities, and develop and implement plans.

6.4 Trails and Pathways

Both the 2004 and 2009 Future Directions surveys indicated very strong community support for more trail development - both in terms of increasing connectivity/coverage and adding amenities to support expanded use such as improved wayfinding, more rest areas, washrooms, exercise stations, activity separation, universal accessibility, and snow clearance and warming stations for year-round cycling and walking. Relative to the cost of other recreation facilities, trails offer a relatively low per person cost, appeal to a wide-range of users and offer high returns in health benefits and resident satisfaction. As such trails offer one of the best values for dollars invested.

Use trends, and the public's interest in trails and pathways, suggests a need to consider how to optimize physical accessibility and use of the trail/pathway system including consideration of: four-seasons activities, accessible design, lighting of trails, addition of fitness equipment along trails, contracting equipment rental services (i.e., bikes, roller blades, cross-country skis etc.) in parks and/or at trail heads.

This will require a review of service levels to establish a program for capital improvements and/or increased operating budgets to support expanded or new uses (see recommendations on Parks Management and Maintenance regarding review of service levels). At the same time, supporting physical accessibility and use of the system, particularly in winter, will require a review of service levels to establish a program for repairs / upgrades, capital improvements and operating/maintenance practices to support expanded use. Increased trail use in natural areas will, in turn, require corresponding management practices to protect these areas. New trails development or improvements that will initiate or increase trail use in natural areas (e.g. expansion or paving) will require an evaluation

process to determine the compatibility of the project with the natural systems. Information contained in the Natural Areas Survey and field assessments should be used to evaluate vegetation, habitat and conditions to determine suitability for trails, and may preclude routes through woodlots and other environmentally sensitive areas, given the potential long-term degradation.

The 2001 Mississauga Multi-use Recreational Trail Study continues to be a valid master plan document to guide strategic planning and implementation of a multi-use trail system. However an update is required to reflect accomplishments in the ensuing years, and to confirm / validate outstanding gaps in the system in light of other work, including the ongoing Cycling Master Plan.

It is understood that future trails/pathway development in Mississauga will focus on existing infrastructure, to provide a City-wide system that supports both recreational use and active transportation for various types modes of transport (e.g., cycling, roller-blading, walking etc.). This may require time to establish as access to privately held lands is needed in some areas needed to link segments.

The *Cycling Master Plan and Implementation Strategy*, which is now underway, focuses on road-based cycling systems (e.g. off-road boulevard trails, bike lanes, signed routes) connecting to greenway multi-use paths. The goal is to provide a comprehensive network comprising:

1. a major grid of bike lanes and multi-use boulevard trails
2. community-scale facilities such as local roads and shared lanes
3. off-road recreational trails

The work being done through the Cycling Master Plan will need to be integrated with higher order transit plans if an integrated system is to be built and cycling routes and pathways are to be connected to other

future nodes/destinations. Active transportation initiatives should also be coordinated with plans to simultaneously improve public transit if traffic lanes are to be replaced with bike lanes, to preclude increased congestion. Ancillary facilities/services to make intermodal transport a reasonable option (e.g., secure bicycle parking, bike racks on buses, etc.) will also be considerations.

Given the public's focus on trails and the work needed to support an integrated system of trails and bikeway initiatives suggests that the City should review trails-related budgets and the delegation of responsibility for trails across various departments, to develop a more coordinated, appropriately funded approach to designing, building and maintaining these amenities.

Recommendation #24

- ⇒ The 2001 Mississauga Multi-use Recreational Trail Study continues to be a valid master plan document to guide strategic planning and implementation of a multi-use trail system. However an update is required to reflect accomplishments in the ensuing years, and to confirm / validate outstanding gaps in the system in light of other work, including the ongoing Cycling Master Plan. The update should not just focus on multi-use paved trails but on all trail types that the City has within its inventory or might consider e.g.: walking/hiking only trails. The study should: confirm the trail inventory; provide a hierarchy of recreational trail types to direct trail development; provide design standards that address trail construction, design for accessibility in appropriate locations, safety and lighting of trails, and sustainability measures; establish maintenance standards and protocols; and provide guidelines for a set of consistent wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signs within an overall park signage system.

Recommendation #25

- ⇒ The public's focus on trails and pathways, and the work needed to support this use and maintain/protect existing resources suggests that the City should review trails-related budgets and the delegation of responsibility for trails across various departments, to develop a more coordinated, appropriately funded approach to designing, building and maintaining trails and related amenities. For example: plans for developing recreational trails and cycling routes should be coordinated with higher order transit and traffic plans through the Cycling Master Plan or an update of the Multi-use Recreational Trail Study (2001).

Recommendation #26

- ⇒ For new trails development in natural areas, or improvements that will initiate or intensify use of existing trails (e.g. expansion or paving), undertake a site specific evaluation process using information contained in the Natural Areas Survey and field assessment to evaluate vegetation, habitat and conditions to determine compatibility of the project, together with corresponding best practices in management. This evaluation should be developed in association with Conservation Master Plans for major natural areas (see recommendations under Management and Use of Natural Areas) and may serve to preclude or close routes through woodlots and other environmentally sensitive areas, given the potential for long-term degradation.

Recommendation #27

- ⇒ Consider how to optimize physical accessibility and use of the trail/pathway system opportunities with consideration of: four-seasons activities, accessible design, lighting of trails, addition of fitness equipment along trails, contracting

equipment rental services (i.e., bikes, roller blades, cross-country skis etc.) in parks and/or at trail heads. This will require a review of service levels to establish a program for capital improvements and/or increased operating budgets to support expanded or new uses (see recommendations on Parks Management and Maintenance regarding review of service levels).

6.5 Supporting Social and Community Trends

6.5.1 Programs and Activities

There is considerable community interest and potential for expanded parks-based programming in Mississauga, including more year-round outdoor activity and a wider range of programming in different areas (e.g., arts, nature education, heritage, etc.). Aside from direct City programs like day camps and sponsored activities such as 'At Play' (Walmart-supported), programs are volunteer-driven with the municipality's assistance. This situation presents two challenges for expanding parks-based programming: the pool of volunteers to run programs is limited and will decline further as the population ages, and the limited revenue-generating opportunities associated with parks and parks programs. City staff indicated, for example, that the Litter Not program alone provides substantial contributions in sweat equity. No revenue accrues from this effort and there are opportunity-costs associated with using volunteers for this program.

Future parks-based programming, therefore, should be based on a co-ordinated strategy that identifies and assigns priorities to needs in various communities across the City (e.g., at risk areas, teens, older adults), develops programs to respond to these needs, and relates program planning to potential local park improvements and/or redevelopment. Individual programs would be offered either directly by the City or through an appropriate partnership with sponsors,

volunteers and other agencies such as the school boards, District Health Unit, private sector providers, regional agencies, YMCA, etc. As in the past, the City's role would focus on facilitating these partnerships and supporting others in their program delivery. A key function of municipalities in gaining and solidifying non-traditional partnerships, however, is their role in collecting data and providing evidence on the health and social benefits of parks, natural areas, and outdoor physical activity. Municipal parks and recreation departments are increasingly adopting this role of 'evidence-based advocacy' to secure outside sources of support in program development and delivery. Ideally, this advocacy function will increase program funding from non-municipal sources and so assist in redirecting limited volunteer resources to new program development. The City of Mississauga recognizes the need to advocate the importance and benefits of recreation to potential service users, and this is simply an extension of this role to develop program supply.

Consideration should be given to developing and programming parks as "outdoor community centres" to support an intensified programming function, while making better use of parks resources. This would require considering a formal programming function in design/development or redevelopment projects. This may be as simple as providing a sheltered area (or areas) for outdoor programs to be held "rain or shine", or a warming station as a base for winter programs. Currently City staff may opt to hold programs outdoors, there is no formal "outdoor program slate". This is an area that will need to be developed, and the experience of staff or other providers in running outdoor programs can be used as input to the future design of park spaces to accommodate this use. The goal, however, would be to establish a regular outdoor program schedule - much like that at indoor community centres - comprising both indoor programming moved outdoors and programs that are specific to outdoor settings. The park programs could be satellites of indoor community centres, schools or libraries, whereby they become a 'family of community

centres' comprised of both indoor and outdoor facilities. An option to city-run program provision in parks is working with a commercial provider. An example of this is 'Best Body Bootcamp' which currently offers programs at ten locations in parks throughout the City of Toronto. This approach would provide the City with "pilot projects" as the basis for future program development.

The City will also need to determine the operating costs of expanded parks-based programming and the need for revenue-generating programs to help finance this growth. This may mean moving away from programming that is "all things to all people" while, at the same time, offering high-quality programs that are targeted to specific markets (e.g., youth, older adults, families, etc.) Program planning, therefore, will be important and resources will be needed to develop specific, locally-based program objectives with public input, identify desired outcomes, and monitor and evaluate outcomes to determine if desired objectives are achieved.

As noted above, optimizing the use of parks in winter for both formal programming and casual activity will require a review of service levels to establish a program for capital improvements and operating/maintenance practices to support expanded use. For example, the City owns thirteen heritage buildings in parks that are currently leased to community organizations. With appropriate improvements and corresponding maintenance, these buildings could offer the potential for facility/site-based heritage programming, or serve as interpretive sites or comfort or way-stations along a trail system. Similarly, increasing arts and culture programming in parks may require capital/maintenance investment in outdoor facilities (e.g., installing infrastructure for public art exhibits). Opening up municipal golf courses in winter use to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing (as suggested in the Strategic Plan – Action Plan) will also generate additional work that needs to be reflected in the City's service levels and associated budget. Special consideration will be needed to

ensure physical accessibility to winter program sites for those with mobility issues.

Recommendation #28

- ⇒ Parks-based programming opportunities should be used to inform parks development / redevelopment. In developing a coordinated strategy the recommendations of the Recreation Master Plan, Youth Strategy, Older Adult Plan, and the Arts and Culture Master Plan should be considered to identify and establishing programs that address the needs of various communities and demographic groups.

Recommendation #29

- ⇒ Programs should be offered either directly by the City programming staff or through appropriate partnerships with community organizations, sponsors, volunteers and other agencies such as the school boards, District Health Unit, private instructors, regional agencies, YMCA, etc.

Recommendation #30

- ⇒ Parks should be developed and programmed as “outdoor community centres”, the goal of which would be to establish a regular outdoor program schedule - much like that at indoor community centres - comprising both indoor programming moved outdoors and programs that are specific to outdoor settings. Providing these “outdoor community centres” will require considering a formal programming function in parks design/development or redevelopment projects. Consider establishing a ‘family of community centres’ as satellites to a community centres, schools or libraries for program delivery.

6.5.2 Developing the Education Function

Parks and natural areas have considerable potential to support community and social objectives through the way in which they are purposed, designed, built and programmed. The City’s overall directions points to development/redevelopment approaches that will increase/enhance proximity and access to parks, natural areas, trails, green streets, and public spaces. This alone will improve affordability for all residents, regardless of means.

Capitalizing on existing resources for education programming can result in short-term results that do not necessarily require significant investments in infrastructure or service delivery. Interpretative signage along trails is one example of this, and expansion of these types of programs is supported by the City’s overall directions. The municipality’s commitment to conservation, sustainability, environmental protection, restoration and stewardship, and heritage preservation offers a wealth of opportunity to expand programming through demonstration projects, interpretation and, in appropriate instances, hands-on participation. These types of programs can be provided without (or with minimal) program staff, and might also provide the basis for program partnerships with private or non-profit sector specialists in these fields.

Public input also suggested that there is a need to increase the level of awareness of parks and recreation resources in the City, together with increased publicity of events and activities that take place in parks, with a particular targeting of newcomers to the City. This could be accomplished through improved and ‘single window’ portals for parks and recreation activities on the City’s web site, as well as dovetailing with other recreation and leisure services such as technology improvements for library services.

Recommendation #31

- ⇒ The municipality's commitment to conservation, sustainability, community gardens, environmental protection, restoration and stewardship, and heritage preservation should be demonstrated in its park programming including: demonstration projects, interpretation and, in appropriate instances, hands-on participation. These types of programs can be provided without (or with minimal) program staff, and might also provide the basis for program partnerships with community organizations, and private or non-profit sector specialists in these fields.

Recommendation #32

- ⇒ Investigate and implement opportunities for improved awareness and publicizing of parks resources, together with programs, events and activities that take place in parks, including consideration of improvements to portals on the City's web site, and integration with information technology improvements proposed for library and recreation services.

6.5.3 Community Gardens

Community gardens are projects that are initiated and run by formal volunteer organizations, with City support. These projects provide the group's members with a common garden that serves both an education and community support function. Allotment gardens, by contrast, are leased by individuals for their own use. Although similar in the "collective" philosophy underlying community gardens, urban farm projects are much larger in scale.

Community gardens can meet multiple objectives in the areas of education about healthy eating and gardening, providing no or low-cost fresh foods, socializing, community-building and project ownership. They provide gardeners with physical activity and, to the

extent that they reduce dependence on transported foods, they also contribute to a reduced carbon footprint.

There is also growing interest in protecting agriculture in the GTA, and discussion is extending to furthering opportunities for urban agriculture of all forms. This has led to the inception of organizations such as FarmStart who have established a community-based agriculture initiative at the McVean Historic farm in Brampton, owned by TRCA.

The City has partnered with a community-based organization to develop the "Garden of the Valley" community garden at Mississauga Valley Park, which contains thirty-nine plots. The City and its partners are working together to develop locational criteria and potential locations for new community gardens within the municipal parks and open space system. It is understood that some neighbourhoods do not view community gardens as an appropriate use of parkland, which has impeded acceptance of these types of parks-based projects. While education and direct involvement are potential ways to gain support for community gardens in parks, other sites should be considered as options for these initiatives. Vacant municipally owned land and building lots, and rooftops, may offer suitable sites for gardens and the City's policy now includes non-parkland for consideration as community gardens. There may also be opportunities to partner with schools in gardening projects. In redevelopment/infill projects, incorporating a community garden could be a standard consideration in the planning process. Costs to the City and/or potential partners for these types of project will be the organizational, financial and technical support that will be needed on an ongoing basis, to establish and maintain a high quality project.

Recommendation #33

- ⇒ The City should continue to support opportunities for managed community gardens in partnerships with

community-based organizations, and in accordance with an established set of policies and guidelines to ensure that they are located and managed appropriately.

Recommendation #34

- ⇒ Future community garden locations should be directed away from valleylands and into tableland areas due to the need for servicing and safe, easy access as well as potential conflicts with natural areas objectives, e.g. concerns over invasive species.

Recommendation #35

- ⇒ In addition to the parks and open space system, vacant or under-utilized municipally owned land and building lots, and rooftops, should be considered as potential sites for community gardens or allotment gardens. Partnering with schools in gardening projects should also be investigated. Incorporating a community garden should be a standard consideration in redevelopment/infill project planning.

Recommendation #36

- ⇒ If trends and interests in urban agriculture continue to grow, with community partnerships to support it, consider a potential site or sites to accommodate City-serving, large-scale allotment gardens or 'an urban agriculture' site, e.g. Pinchin property, Ninth Line site, or Britannia Farm site.

6.5.4 Special Event Spaces

Special event spaces can include both parks and non-park areas, such as plazas that accommodate special events. In Mississauga, Civic Centre Square is the focus of City-wide special events that are part of the larger "My Mississauga" program. The City is redeveloping the public spaces around the Civic Centre based on its *Building*

Mississauga around Places: A Vision for City Centre Parks and Open Spaces in the 21st Century. The Vision reflects the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) consultation process, and articulates "placemaking" principles. (PPS)⁶ aims to create successful community places whether they are parks, plazas or streetscapes, through its "placemaking" approach. The Civic Centre project comprises redeveloping two City Centre squares and developing a new downtown park. Accordingly, other potential event sites may be identified as planning is undertaken for other growth areas.

Due to the varied requirements of events and their potential impacts on green parks, it is both appropriate and desirable to locate events that do not specifically benefit from parkland in other suitable public spaces. This approach frees parkland for park-based uses and also reduces environmental degradation that can occur from overuse. While holding large special events in parks usually requires some accommodation of the park to support the event, public plazas can be deliberately designed as special events venues. The design and development can anticipate at the outset the need for infrastructure, reduce potential conflicts with neighbouring uses, consider access/egress requirements, and offer flexibility in uses. Although it may be appropriate to continue to pursue events in waterfront parks to reflect their unique attributes and City-wide role in recreation, the use of the waterfront for special events should generally be limited to events that benefit specifically from a waterfront setting. Waterfront parks used for special events should specify the types of events that will be accommodated, and should designate one or two areas within the larger system in which events will be accommodated.

As well, consultation with the community revealed that there are too few appropriate venues for special events, particularly at the

⁶ www.pps.org

neighbourhood/community level, and that there is concern that resources need to be more equitably distributed between developing City-wide and local venues. Strategies that are focused on developing accessible nodes, destinations and gathering places throughout the City should consider the inclusion of “special event” venues at key locations in each community. At the local level, however, particular attention must be paid to mitigating potential conflicts with neighbouring uses through siting and design.

The City’s overall strategic directions and action plans point to a clear interest in revitalizing communities and neighbourhoods through a variety of redevelopment/enhancement activities. Events and other community-driven activities are opportunities that can be used to involve residents in projects that will support community-building and neighbourhood-level “placemaking” in parks and other public spaces.

Work undertaken in recent years by City staff⁷ has provided some initial direction on defining outdoor festivals and events and matching park venues to particular types of events. Factors or descriptors that delineate types of events are identified together with the facilities and servicing needed to support them. This work should be considered in the development of a City Special Events Strategy, and should be further elaborated – to the extent possible – to create mutually exclusive criteria that will provide City staff and potential users explicit direction on where various types of outdoor festivals and special events can locate vs. where they cannot locate. Specific parks and types of parks within the City-wide system that can support events of different sizes and types should be identified, using a hierarchy of event types, e.g. major outdoor festivals/events; minor outdoor festivals/events; and neighbourhood outdoor festivals/events.

⁷ City of Mississauga Recreation and Parks. *Event Standards Analysis*. November 2004.

The Special Events Strategy should be coordinated with the identification of service level standards needed to support events in parks, together with a corresponding allocation of resources (refer to Future Directions for Parks Management and Maintenance).

Recommendation #37

- ⇒ It is both appropriate and desirable to locate events that do not require parkland in other suitable public spaces. Generally, the use of the waterfront for special events should be limited to events that benefit specifically from a waterfront setting. Waterfront parks used for special events should specify the types of events that will be accommodated, and should designate one or two areas within the larger system in which events will be accommodated.

Recommendation #38

- ⇒ Strategies that are focused on developing accessible nodes, destinations and gathering places throughout the City should consider the inclusion of “special event” venues at key locations in each community. Events and other-community driven activities can be used to involve residents in projects that will support community-building and neighbourhood-level “placemaking” in parks and other public spaces.

Recommendation #39

- ⇒ In preparing a Special Events Strategy, the City should consider work completed by staff that provides initial direction in locating outdoor festivals or events based on associated site capacity and facility criteria, to ensure the appropriateness of the location. Specific parks and types of parks within the City-wide system that can support events of different sizes and types should be identified, using a hierarchy of event types, e.g. major outdoor festivals/events; minor outdoor festivals/events; and neighbourhood outdoor

festivals/events. The work should be coordinated with the identification of service level standards needed to support events in parks (refer to Future Directions for Parks Management and Maintenance).

6.5.5 Leash-free Areas

Off-leash areas are an accepted form of recreation in urban areas, allowing both dogs and owners to exercise freely in areas that are inviting, safe, and managed to avoid conflicts with other park users. The City works in association with its community partners to provide off-leash areas for supervised dogs within its parks and open space system. Leash-free Mississauga is a community-based organization that operates on an annual membership basis, and has been a key partner in the development of the City's off-leash areas. Parks that currently have, or are planned to have, leash-free areas are: Jack Darling Park, Lakeside Park, Parkway Belt, Etobicoke Valley, Garnetwood, Quenippenon Meadows, and Totoredaca.

The off-leash areas are supported by the City and have been achieved through community fund-raising. Based on anecdotal information collected through this study, there has been a reduction in incidences of dogs running free since the off-leash areas were developed.

In collaboration with community partners Mississauga is developing a series of policies and guidelines that will help to inform site searches for potential new off-leash areas, and direct management and use to ensure that dog owners and other park users can socialize and recreate together without infringing on one another. In advancing this work the following should be considered:

Location, design features & operating protocols: Not all parks, greenspaces and waterfront areas will be suitable for off-leash areas. Clear design parameters, policies and agreements are needed to

articulate the exclusions, restrictions and requirements for finding new locations for, and operating of off-leash areas.

Public consultation: New sites should be reviewed and discussed with the local community to encourage interest in and commitment to the off-leash area.

By-laws: City by-laws should be updated as needed to support an off-leash policy in order to provide the regulatory environment for those who disregard off-leash areas and park rules.

Education and Communications: Compliance with off-leash policies and by-laws will be achieved through ongoing communication and public education using positive messaging through signage, word-of-mouth, and accompanied by monitoring and enforcement. The City should continue to work with Leash-free Mississauga to achieve this.

Recommendation #40

- ⇒ The City should continue efforts to support leash-free opportunities within parks in collaboration with affiliated community-based organizations, and in accordance with established policies and guidelines to find, establish, maintain, organize and monitor use of specific areas where dog owners can safely exercise and socialize their pets without infringing on natural areas or the rights and sensibilities of people without dogs.

6.5.6 Memorial Tree and Bench Program

The City offers a memorial tree and bench program within its parks system. The program is highly popular in the waterfront parks and other scenic locations where a favourite quiet spot or view can be selected by the family. However, as a result the program is over-subscribed in some locations to the extent that it can compromise the

design integrity of the park. As well, some desired locations, such as along woodland trails or a river's edge, may not be functionally sustainable due to potential for vandalism or damage by flooding. This type of program might be better served by developing several planned locations for memorial benches and trees in suitable parks, or developing memorial walls or paving areas as design elements so that efforts can be managed to be sustainable.

Recommendation #41

- ⇒ Consider developing several planned locations for memorial benches and trees in suitable parks, or developing memorial tree groves, memorial walls or paving areas as design elements so that these efforts can be managed to be sustainable.

6.5.7 Supporting Culture, Heritage and Tourism

Typically, communities express strong interest in developing tourism as an economic driver. Parks can offer the potential to grow tourism in several areas: sport-tourism, horticultural-tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism. Tourism or increased tourism is not, however, a guaranteed by-product of parks provision, however interesting or unique the parks may be. To be successful and compete with the private sector or other regional attractions, parks-based tourism requires the support of a focused strategy together with the following in-house competencies: understanding of the market, service quality management, leisure pricing policy, leisure marketing, tourism and resource economics, finance and tourism management.

The negative impacts of tourism on park resources are typically due to weak tourism policy, and inadequate management and staffing, as

a result of insufficient budgets.⁸ A parks and recreation-based tourism function, therefore, must be appropriately funded to succeed in generating revenues and minimizing costs.

One of the most difficult aspects of park-based tourism efforts in Mississauga may be clearly defining its markets and ensuring they are sufficiently large to justify investments in planning and developing the resources. Competition is strong among communities in the GTA for tourism dollars, and each community in the area has similar objectives in acquiring a market share of this spending. It is also important to make the distinction between tourist parks and facilities, and City-serving parks and facilities that may attract regional users as well as serving local residents.

Tourist parks/facilities and community parks/facilities are typically oriented differently, and cannot fulfill a dual service function. Mississauga, for example, is interested in making its waterfront a major tourist destination. It should, therefore, offer an attraction that will be unique among all the waterfront developments along the GTA shoreline. However, such an attraction (e.g., a recovered, historic sunken ship or Hamilton's *'HMS Haida'*) is not likely to be something that will simultaneously meet community and regional-level demand for waterfront activity on an ongoing basis as would a fishing pier, or a waterfront centre such as Burlington's. Another important consideration is the need to protect limited park resources, such as waterfront areas, to ensure residents' needs are met. Eco-tourism initiatives such as a major trail and trailhead, or a suspended 'tree walk' as have been suggested for the Credit River system must balance protection of the natural/ecological resource with the

⁸ Eagles, Paul J. *International Trends in Park Tourism*. Paper prepared for EUROPARC 2001. October 3 to 7, 2001. Matrei, Austria. Edition 4: 17 September 2001.

potentially negative impacts of tourist visits and ancillary uses required to support tourism which typically include parking, picnic grounds and comfort stations.

There is a growing trend toward place-based cultural tourism which can be described as tourism that capitalizes on a destination's unique identity, cultural character, and "sense of place", which is the characteristic that most distinguishes one destination from another and makes each place distinctive, authentic, and memorable. A place-based cultural tourism product might best be described as a *tapestry of place*, which comprises the destination's people, history, folklore, cuisine, natural and built heritage, art and music, language and traditions - along with its festivals, heritage sites, and the other "usual" cultural experiences that a visitor might expect. Collectively, the tapestry reveals a unique destination.⁹

The role of parks and natural areas in place-based cultural tourism depends on the cultural experiences that make up the community's "sense of place" and where they are located (e.g., a heritage site in a park, a publicly-owned geological site). Therefore in considering its opportunities for parks-based tourist destinations, Mississauga should undertake studies to establish the appropriate themes and concepts that define its cultural character. Prior to embarking on any specific initiatives or projects for parks-based (or other) types of recreational tourism, the City will need to undertake market assessment and economic feasibility studies. These tourism studies should address the feasibility for specific sites to serve as tourist destinations, and should include an assessment of the following variables: the potential for the site to function as a tourist destination in the industry's definition of the term; the anticipated market in relation to the site's

potential draw and other competing destinations; the need for municipal investment in planning/development to achieve the site's tourism potential; the likely trade-offs that will be required in meeting community needs for recreation/leisure if the site is put to tourism uses; and, a business plan outlining all capital and operational costs and potential revenues to develop and run the site as a major tourist destination.

Recommendation #42

- ⇒ In considering its opportunities for parks-based tourist destinations, Mississauga should undertake studies to establish the appropriate themes and concepts that define its cultural character. Prior to embarking on any specific initiatives or projects for parks-based (or other) types of recreational tourism, the City will need to undertake market assessment and economic feasibility studies. These tourism studies should address the feasibility for specific sites to serve as tourist destinations, and should include an assessment of the following variables: the potential for the site to function as a tourist destination in the industry's definition of the term; the anticipated market in relation to the site's potential draw and other competing destinations; the need for municipal investment in planning/development to achieve the site's tourism potential; the likely trade-offs that will be required in meeting community needs for recreation/leisure if the site is put to tourism uses; and, a business plan outlining all capital and operational costs and potential revenues to develop and run the site as a major tourist destination.

Recommendation #43

- ⇒ A parks/recreation-based tourism facility or site must be appropriately staffed and funded on an ongoing basis to succeed in generating revenues and minimizing costs.

⁹ Throne, Steven. *Place as Product - A Place-Based Approach to Cultural Tourism*. 2008

6.5.8 Partnerships

The partnerships suggested in the City's directions and actions plans are largely those that are "natural" to the resources or services being considered (e.g., partnering with conservation authorities in protecting valley lands). This is a partnership built around common interests, other examples of which at the municipal level include civic culture, community building, historic preservation, and natural history. The City collaborates with a number of community organizations for the delivery of specialized programs and facilities to meet community interests, including community gardens, leash-free areas, and accessible playgrounds, and these types partnerships should continue to be cultivated.

The City's interest in redevelopments that integrate park sites with a variety of other facilities and services to support nodes/destinations will require new and more complex partnerships with school boards, libraries, social service agencies, transit authorities, etc. The increasing complexity of these partnerships will require partner agencies to commit sufficient resources to ensuring they are effective, workable arrangements throughout their terms. Potential pitfalls must also be anticipated and addressed if the partnership is to be successful. Areas that are typically of concern include shortfalls in capacity to do the required work, maintaining a sustained commitment over the life of the agreement, strategies that are revealed to be flawed and not revisited, insufficient returns in relation to expectations, and failure to communicate.

As discussed above, attracting new partners to participate in providing community parks, natural areas, trails, greenways and parks-based programming will require recreation professionals to advocate for/educate on the true, wide-ranging benefits of these resources and services. Documented evidence of the benefits that accrue to other sectors of the community (e.g., real estate industry,

preventive health care sector, private corporations etc.) will be needed to attract and maintain their involvement and support. The City should establish its role in collecting and documenting this evidence over time and/or in facilitating others to take on this task. Considerable research exists on the benefits of parks, natural areas and trails which should be reviewed and consolidated as a first step to building an evidence base to be used to inform and persuade potential partners. Evidence specifically related to partners of interest should be the focus of research activities, and these findings can also be used to establish a framework for collecting primary, Mississauga-specific data on benefit indicators. In our view, a project of this nature would be an appropriate collaborative effort between the City and other parks-related agencies that also stand to gain from these efforts.

Recommendation #44

- ⇒ The City should continue to support and cultivate partnerships with a number of community organizations for the delivery of specialized programs and facilities to meet community interests.

Recommendation #45

- ⇒ The City's interest in redevelopments that integrate park sites with a variety of other facilities and services to support nodes/destinations will require new and more complex partnerships and corresponding resources from each party to make them successful.

Recommendation #46

- ⇒ In order to attract new, non-traditional partners (e.g. organizations in the fields of health and social services) to participate in delivery of parks and recreation services, the City will need to serve as an advocate for, and demonstrate evidence, of the true, wide-ranging benefits

of parks, natural areas, and outdoor physical activity. This may be a new role for Community Services that requires documenting relevant statistics through research activities aimed at eventually developing a Mississauga-specific data base of benefit indicators, ideally in collaboration with other parks-related agencies.

6.6 Cemeteries

The City of Mississauga currently maintains ten cemeteries. Four are in active use, as follows: Streetsville Public, Eden, Moore's and Erindale. Dating to the 1890s, Mississauga's Streetsville Public Cemetery is located overlooking the east bank of the Credit River, and is claimed to be one of the most beautiful, well landscaped cemeteries in Southern Ontario. The cemetery has recently added two new columbarium and a memorial garden.

The balance of the City's cemeteries comprise historic or closed cemeteries associated with the former municipal entities that made up Mississauga. Perpetual upkeep, maintenance and long-term operation of closed or abandoned cemeteries is mandated in Ontario by the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act meaning that the commitment and annual costs span an indeterminate time period. Comprised primarily of grass-cutting and vegetation maintenance, the annual costs of maintaining Mississauga's closed cemeteries appear relatively minimal in comparison to other expenditures for maintenance and upkeep of municipal facilities. Cemeteries are part of the cultural and fabric of the City, they typically include heritage features, and are frequented as sources of information for historical or genealogical research which is important to link past and future generations. As such they should be considered valued cultural resources rather than liabilities, although ways should be sought to cost effectively manage them so they remain attractive elements of the urban environment.

As a result of these issues Mississauga is exploring ways to reduce maintenance efforts and contain costs at the closed cemeteries without the appearance of abandonment. At the historic King Cemetery, which was active until 1960, revitalization has included a reduced mowing program, including planting of hardy shrubs and plants, and selective control of regenerating vegetation.

The City is also, through a Cemetery Operations Business Analysis, considering establishing a new cemetery to meet what is expected to be an ongoing and growing demand for bereavement services, and which in turn can equate to a source of revenue and an investment opportunity. Part of the rationale for a new site is to help offset management costs of the others through economy of scale. The study is being used to evaluate options for the City's future provision of cemetery services and to deliver a balanced strategic plan. The draft report addresses a number of industry trends and is currently being augmented to more directly address cultural influences and needs in the City.

Other cities, particularly in dense urban areas where there is limited parkland, are capitalizing on the concept that cemeteries are cherished greenspace, and are managing their cemeteries by maintaining or adding trails, strolling paths and gardens. Holding weddings or wedding photograph sessions in attractive cemeteries is an emerging trend which can offer revenue potential, if permitted. Other initiatives being employed include self-guided or paid walking tours in historic cemeteries, and summer concerts.

A growing trend in the cemetery business is the concept of 'green burials' which are defined as: no embalming, biodegradable caskets, interment in woodlands or other naturalized landscapes rather than traditional managed landscapes; smaller or no grave markers; no plot purchases. While any cemetery should be able support a 'green

burial', the concept is best supported on sites that can offer scenic, natural settings.

As a simpler approach, support for the 'greening' and sustainable management of cemeteries can be addressed through industry practices, such as: use of eco-friendly products and materials; less reliance on horticultural plant species; composting of live greenery, flowers and grass clippings; banning or recycling artificial wreaths and ornamentation; reduction in use of pesticides and herbicides, along with other 'environmental measures' typical of parks, and municipal best practices.

Although funeral preferences have trended toward cremation in recent decades, Mississauga's diverse multi-cultural make-up suggests that demand for both burials and cremations will continue to be seen as a result of distinct religious and cultural preferences toward one or the other. Cultural traditions are also resulting in more direct involvement by family members in pre-burial or cremation rituals and processes; more regular visitation by large family groups, sometimes with rituals or ceremonies that require space / facilities; and use of valleylands and watercourses for holding of funeral services and scattering of remains.

These trends suggest a need for appropriately designed and managed cemeteries that can accommodate a wide range of religious, cultural and social traditions, along with exploring the possibility of a Memorial Forest or arboretum which aligns with the environmental pillar of the City's Strategic Plan. These initiatives will need to be coordinated together with the education of residents toward managing activities that do not conform to regulatory policies, and municipal by-laws for use of parks and open space areas.

These trends are aligned with the City's Strategic Pillar for Change 'Living Green', which includes Strategic Goals for: "Lead and

Encourage Environmentally Responsible Approaches"; "Conserve, Enhance and Connect Natural Environments, and "Promote a Green Culture".

Additional information on trends in cemeteries planning and management is provided in the report entitled Trends in Urban Parks, Greenspaces and Natural Areas: A Backgrounder to the Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan.

Recommendation #47

- ⇒ The City should, through its Cemetery Operations Business Analysis, continue to consider its needs and options for a new cemetery and other initiatives that can meet current trends in the bereavement industry and the cultural preferences of its residents.

Recommendation #48

- ⇒ In response to the Strategic Pillar for Change 'Living Green', the City should consider ways in which maintenance and management of cemeteries can be conducted in sustainable and 'eco-friendly' ways.

Recommendation #49

- ⇒ The City should consider opportunities to reduce the cost-dependency of closed cemeteries in ways that will maintain their heritage attributes, and allow for them remain attractive, and (to the extent possible) usable greenspaces.

6.7 Parks Management and Maintenance

6.7.1 Service Levels

Based on discussions with City staff and consultation with the public, maintenance issues and levels of service are, and will continue to be, a primary concern for Mississauga parks. The City currently allocates annual budgets for parks and open space maintenance based on a uniform 'dollars per hectare' basis which for 2009 is established at \$2,800 per acre (\$6,916 per hectare).

Residents are calling for increased levels of service in: snow clearing, pathway lighting, garbage removal, frequency of washrooms, and washroom conditions. As the population ages, and with diminishing personal resources (in the near term due to the economic downturn but carrying into the future as a growing percentage of the population faces reduced retirement incomes), trends suggest many more people will be taking vacations close to home, particularly in areas like Mississauga where there are lots of daytripping opportunities such as the waterfront, other specialty parks, and numerous annual events. This will place increasing pressure on key parks to be clean, well maintained, available year-round, and serviced by basic amenities such as washrooms, waste removal facilities, and 'age-friendly' or fully accessible, pathways.

Safety is also a growing concern, due in part to perceptions of parks as unsafe places (particularly in the evenings) in areas where youth are the dominant user group, where there is evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and where there are actual reported incidents. This suggests that there will need to be an increased focus on the safety aspects of design and maintenance of parks and trails. As well there is a need to design parks with a view to sustainability, using durable, vandal resistant materials.

The City is currently responding to these issues and interests with such initiatives as snow-clearing of the Waterfront Trail in Port Credit; reviewing washroom hours of operation and policies, and developing policies and standards to direct decisions where to provide supplementing lighting in key parks. Although clearing of the Waterfront Trail is undertaken for mobility reasons, it has, by resident accounts, resulted in an increase in usage during the winter months which has the added benefit of improving opportunities for personal physical activity year-round. In recognition that improving the personal health of Ontarians reduces public health care spending, and that health is tied to year-round physical activity, there will be increased for municipalities to provide these opportunities. Providing trails is widely recognized as a means of increasing access to low-cost, self-directed opportunities for physical fitness, and is a top priority for Mississauga residents. Path clearing in winter may be one of the simpler solutions to achieve personal levels of fitness, although not without its implications on resource allocation.

With increasing competition for personal finances, and calls for accountability at all levels of government, it should be expected that Mississauga residents will desire to become more involved in decision-making, and priority assignment of municipal funds. This has typically occurred in association with the planning and design of parks, but currently, and for the future as financial resource allocation is contemplated, this probably extend to dialogue on the prioritization of parks and natural areas maintenance and management efforts.

There is an expectation for quality of park experience and service levels that are tied to Mississauga's profile, which include corporate expectations of the City's image as well as the views of its residents. In order to achieve this, there will need to be a commitment to funding for parks operations and maintenance that will entail not only a commitment to stable, annual funding for the maintenance of existing parks, but corresponding increases in the allocation of resources to

accommodate new parks as they come on stream. Expectations and objectives have been set that as new parks are developed in infill, denser built form environments they will be more urban in nature. This typically involves more designed elements with increased amounts of hardscape and landscape features. These types of parks typically have corresponding requirements for higher levels maintenance to address their unique features and to match their profile and role as part of the aesthetics of the urban environment. As well, Mississauga has a number of parks, typically the City Parks, that have higher needs due to unique features, high levels of usage - which result in more wear and tear, and /or more frequent basic maintenance needs such as waste management or grass cutting. These include the Waterfront Parks, horticultural parks such as the Rhododendron Gardens, and Riverwood; parks with extensive designed landscapes; and parks and sites where events are held, e.g. the Civic Square.

To address these issues some urban municipalities are applying, or considering the adoption of, defined service levels for each park and open space area, based on the above considerations. For example, defining levels of park maintenance based on usage and features: Level 1 parks receiving 'highest level of maintenances' and Level 5 being 'minimum level'. Some models extend to include designations of 'state of the art' for sites that are of the highest profile.

In order to achieve this, the City should consider undertaking a review of the 'actual cost' of the maintenance of parks based on their function and attributes, with a view to a more refined cost model and potential re-allocation of annual operational funding for parks based on types of facilities and / or usage. To facilitate tracking of information and resource allocation a series of internal categories should be considered.

For example much of the greenbelt lands would have lower per acreage maintenance costs, while the following types of parks would

be considered higher maintenance, suggesting a need for a higher per acreage allocation of resources:

- the waterfront parks
- major sports parks
- horticultural parks (e.g. Riverwood, the Rhododendron Gardens)
- urban parks: parks with substantial hardscape and decorative landscape components, (e.g. Civic Square)
- events sites – parks, locations where events are held

Facilities and amenities which support and encourage access to the out-of-doors are adopting sustainable building practices including: sensitivity to the ecology of the building site, use of recycled and recyclable materials; use of finishes which promote a healthy environment; use of locally derived material; use of active solar, wind and water systems to fulfill energy requirements, where possible; use of ecologically sensitive wastewater treatment systems, where possible; and a high degree of user participation in learning about and caring for the surrounding environment.

Recommendation #50

- ⇒ Continue to monitor and review current staff and capital resource allocation using in-place and planned methodologies and tracking tools, e.g. the Hansen system. When sufficient data has been collected on existing operations, review the 'actual cost' of the maintenance of all parks and open space based on their function and attributes, and identify an appropriate hierarchy of service levels for the parks and open space system, e.g.: Level 1 parks receiving 'highest level of maintenances' and Level 5 being 'minimum level' with a defined level of maintenance within each category based on daily, weekly, monthly tasks.

Recommendation #51

- ⇒ Based on the service level review develop a refined cost model for parks maintenance that is tied to service levels and reflective of specific maintenance needs of different park types based on facilities, functions and / or usage.

6.7.2 Sustainable Management Practices

Conservation of the natural environment is important to Mississauga residents and Living Green is a Strategic Goal of the City's corporate strategic plan. This assumes protection of the City's natural environment through stewardship, partnerships; and best practices in ecosystem and environmental management. As part of its 'Living Green' objectives the City is planning to undertake an Environmental Master Plan that will consider all aspects of the corporation's business and operational practices.

The City has expressed interest in the management of parks to promote environmentally friendly practices. With respect to parks development and management this translates into the development and implementation of best practices to address environmental sustainability in all aspects of park maintenance and operations activities, and the creation and/or integration of natural environment areas within parks to enhance unstructured recreational experiences.

These measures include:

- reduced mowing regimes to promote / support naturalization efforts (in consideration of other by-laws that enforce nuisance weed and property standards, and the need for parks to be 'good neighbours' to adjacent properties)
- a continued commitment toward 'prudent avoidance' of pesticides and herbicides, to the extent possible, and considering the need to

sustain ecological systems against the negative impacts of insect and disease infestations

- use of 'green' vehicle fleets
- park operations compliance with the City's Smog Response Plan during smog alerts
- use of eco-friendly cleaning products, de-icing agents, natural fertilizers and renewable horticultural products such as compost, and wood chips recycled from yard waste programs
- use of drought tolerant and native perennials / shrubs instead of higher maintenance horticultural species and annual flowers
- use of urban tolerant, drought and disease resistant native tree species on public streets and parks to support objectives to increase the urban forest
- incorporating concept of Zero Waste into parks

Many of these initiatives have been initiated, or are undertaken already by the City, but need to be focused and prioritized to ensure that optimum benefit is received from them.

With the heightened publicity today on environmental issues there is growing public acceptance of needed solutions to effect change. However, some environmentally-based decisions and initiatives can be misinterpreted. For example efforts to reduce mowing limits are often perceived as neglect. While the public can may understand valley restoration initiatives, there is less acceptance of these types of activities if they occur in managed parks abutting residential areas. In conjunction with management efforts there needs to be a comprehensive and strategic communications strategy that outlines goals for the preservation of the natural environment, and educating on/promoting the values of stewardship. This could be undertaken in conjunction with the planned Environmental Master Plan and consider

opportunities for cross-messaging through partner agencies and community-based organizations. On a site specific basis there it should include informative and educational signage that focuses on positive messages.

As part of its environmental strategies, the City should also consider opportunities to make park users more responsible for maintenance. For example the establishment of 'litter free parks', whereby people take their litter and garbage away with them to recycle. The benefits of the project include: increased awareness on individual impacts on the environment and encouragement of concepts to reduce, reuse, and recycle; reduced maintenance costs; and (presumably) clean parks with reduced waste management issues. Similar to the concept of "pack it in, pack it out" used in provincial parks, this is most likely to be successful only in the natural environment parks, and even then not in areas of high usage for activities like picnicking. In higher use, more public areas it may be more appropriate to manage waste by providing recycling, composting and garbage disposal units.

Redirection of resources can create opportunities for increased levels of service in other areas of parks maintenance and management. Some of these initiatives will have higher initial costs associated with them, while others such as reducing mowing limits may allow for redeployment of resources to other areas of need. The City is considering implementing tools such as the Hansen Maintenance and Management - currently utilized by Forestry - in Parks operations, to be able to better evaluate its allocation of personnel and financial resources.

The results of these processes, together with the identification of required park service levels (both current and forecasted) should be used to identify / inform an evaluation of staffing and capital resource needs, with a corresponding re-alignment of resources, allocation with

a view to informing annual budget requests within the capital program.

Recommendation #52

- ⇒ Continue to investigate and implement environmentally friendly practices such as: reduced mowing regimes to promote / support naturalization efforts; 'prudent avoidance' of pesticides and herbicides; use of 'green' vehicle fleets; use of eco-friendly cleaning products, de-icing agents, natural fertilizers and renewable horticultural products such as compost, and wood chips recycled from yard waste programs, use of drought tolerant and native perennials / shrubs / trees in public parks and streets.

Recommendation #53

- ⇒ In conjunction with the implementation of sustainable management practices there needs to be a comprehensive and strategic *communications strategy* that outlines goals for the preservation of the natural environment, and educating on/promoting the values of stewardship. At a strategic level this could be undertaken in conjunction with the City's planned Environmental Master Plan, and consider opportunities for cross-messaging through partner agencies and community-based organizations. On a site specific basis it should include informative and educational signage that focuses on positive messages.

Section 7: Natural Areas and Features

7.1 Overview of Mississauga's Natural Areas and Features

Mississauga's natural areas consist of three major landform types; valley land, tableland and wetland. The Credit River and Etobicoke Creek are the main valley land features, and are characterized by wooded slopes and wetlands. These natural features are generally well connected by virtue of the linearity of landform. Historically these features have been well protected from development and, consequently, the proportion of valley lands has been increasing over the past decade from 78.3% to 80.1% of all the designated natural area space found within the City of Mississauga (NAS 2008). Mississauga's tableland natural areas are also characterized primarily by wooded regions, but tend to be discrete islands with limited connectivity to other remnant natural features. Tablelands accounted for 15.2% of the natural areas and wetlands within the City include marshes, bogs, fens, swamps, and open-water areas represented 4.7% of Mississauga's natural areas in 2008.

Over the past twelve years the City of Mississauga has studied and monitored the natural heritage resources through a *Natural Areas Survey* that was initiated in 1996 to identify the City's best remaining natural features. Initially, these natural areas consisted of 144 sites. Since the initial survey, 13 sites have been removed from the natural areas designations, 14 added and 8 combined, for a total of 138 Natural Areas in 2008 (Refer to **Figure 2**). These sites are generally considered to be in "fair condition", meaning that they have moderate disturbances (few trails, limited dumping, some trampling, etc) and an average number of non-native flora species typical of what can be expected in an urban natural area. The Natural Areas Survey is

updated annually as to conditions of the natural areas, with approximately 25% of areas surveyed.

Despite recent gains in the biodiversity as a result of naturalization efforts in several of the City's natural areas, the fundamental trend across all of Mississauga's natural areas is a decline in overall quality. This decline is largely thought to be a result of increased human disturbance and changes in hydrology resulting from development (NAS 2008).

7.2 Planning and Policy Context

Existing Natural Areas policies in the Mississauga Official Plan focus on five key elements: Environment; Public Open Spaces; Lake Ontario Waterfront; Private Open Spaces; and Greenbelt areas.

The overarching goal is to "*protect and maintain significant natural heritage systems; promote pollution prevention and reduction; ensure land use compatibility; protect people and property from hazards; and conserve and re-use natural resources.*" This includes promoting an ecosystem approach to planning and being proactive in the management and protection of natural areas and features.

The Natural Heritage policies found in the City of Mississauga Official Plan are comprehensive, and touch on most of the key areas of concern when dealing with Urban Natural Areas; however, there is a lack of in-depth consideration to the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors, both along the Lake Ontario shoreline and linking terrestrial communities.

Natural areas acquired by Mississauga are designated either Public Open Space or Greenbelt. Where Public Open Space contains or abuts the Natural Areas System, the policies for the Natural Areas System apply. The potential for Public Open Space areas to expand

or connect the Natural Areas System is encouraged, to ensure that sensitive areas, particularly woodlands, are maintained. Significant treed areas throughout Mississauga are, wherever possible, incorporated into the Public Open Space network. Where appropriate, these areas are retained in a natural condition or are permitted to regenerate to assume a natural state.

Lands designated Greenbelt are generally associated with natural hazards or significant natural areas where development is restricted to provide for the conservation of natural heritage features and areas. The Greenbelt is determined on a site by site basis and is defined by the greater of the "regulatory storm" floodplain, the "top of bank" and/or combined influence of the stable slope line/stable slope allowance, erosion allowance, and the average annual recession rate, including the hazards associated with Lake Ontario. The limits of Greenbelt lands are determined in consultation with the City and appropriate Conservation Authority and/or through studies.

Natural heritage features and areas of the City are known as the *Natural Areas System*. The *Natural Areas System* consists of Significant Natural Sites, Natural Sites, Natural Green Space; Special Management Areas; Linkages; and Residential Woodlands. Although some of the natural areas are of higher quality than others, a fundamental premise is that all remnant natural areas are part of a system, and the total or partial loss of any one of them diminishes the entire system. The location and extent of all of these areas are conceptually illustrated on Schedule 3 of the Official Plan: Environmental Areas. For illustrative purposes, Significant Natural Sites, Natural Sites and Natural Green Spaces have been grouped together and shown as Natural Areas.

7.3 The Natural Area System

The key documents included in this overview include the *City of Mississauga Natural Areas Survey (2008)*, *City of Mississauga Existing Natural Heritage Policies (Official Plan)*, *Toronto Region Conservation Authority (Terrestrial Natural Heritage System, Strategic Directions 2004)* and the *Credit Valley Conservation Authority Terrestrial Ecosystem Enhancement Model (TEEM) Mississauga*.

Natural Heritage Systems approaches have commonly focused on structural connectivity to maintain healthy ecosystems. In Mississauga, valley lands form the 'backbone' of the natural heritage system. The future Natural Areas System must include a robust Greenlands System and consider ways to link the parks, valley lands, and other natural areas to the Lake Ontario shoreline. In order to accomplish this objective within the context of a growing, intensifying community, it will be essential to protect the ecological integrity of the Natural Areas System from further degradation.

Provision for wildlife corridors along the valleys to support wildlife movement is desirable and inevitable as overall watershed connectivity is improved throughout urban areas. The width of these corridors is recommended in provincial guidelines to be at least 200 m and include any adjoining areas of natural cover. In most urban 'built out' locations, this objective is difficult to achieve, however, there is an ongoing need for a deliberate and planned effort to enhance and expand the naturally maintained lands that are linked to the core Natural Areas. Appropriately maintained public parkland presents the best opportunity to preserve and enhance the natural heritage system in Mississauga. Due to the intensification of new development, particularly in the downtown wards, there is a need to ensure that wherever possible public open space is secured for passive recreation, trail linkages and to buffer the Natural Areas.

Maintaining habitat connectivity is critical for wildlife survival and an emphasis should be placed on protecting and enhancing shoreline and riparian corridor opportunities. The Natural Areas provide inter-regional connectivity along migratory bird corridors and provide habitat and life zones for flora and fauna. As a result of commercial and residential development, many of the remaining linkage opportunities have been reduced to short, narrow corridors, limiting their usefulness for species with specific habitat requirements. However, the natural corridors within the urban space provide flood control as well as ecological function and are important tools for education and support recreation (Briffett 2001).

7.3.1 Identification & Evaluation of Natural Areas

The Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) Terrestrial Ecosystem Enhancement Model (TEEM 2009) was reviewed in regards to the approaches used by this agency to identify and evaluate priority natural features.

CVC has outlined a detailed evaluation system for the identification of high priority lands, through the use of landscape analysis. This generates a numerical value, based on a defined list of criteria, upon which the decision to preserve and/or protect lands is based. Higher numbers indicate a greater value of the lands.

The model identifies ecosystem function components, and evaluated lands are assessed based on the quality of each of the criteria.

Ecosystem Function Components and Criteria

Area and Species Habitat

- Area of woodlands, wetlands and grasslands
- Core area of woodlands
- Riparian habitat, valleylands

Diversity and Representation

- ELC community series diversity
- Uncommon vegetation communities

Local Connectivity

- Distance between habitat patches, corridors
- Matrix quality

Regional Connectivity

- Overlap of habitat patch to regional corridors: Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, Lake Ontario shoreline, Credit River and main branches

Groundwater

- Maximum groundwater recharge for habitat patch
- Habitat patch containing groundwater recharge, discharge, or storage (wetlands)

Surface Water

- Habitat patches containing watercourses or wetlands
- Distance of habitat patches to lakes and/or rivers

The CVC TEEM model recognizes important habitats in terms of both land and water resources. It identifies local connections that might function as corridors for species to move among natural habitats, improving the resilience of the system; and it can identify corridors that connect the system to larger, bioregional natural systems.

The identified Natural Areas System on Schedule 3 of the Official Plan identifies an approximate coverage of approximately 7% of the municipality (increasing to 9% when Special Management Areas are included).

With the application of the more contemporary evaluation criteria such as that used in the CVC TEEM model, the total area of the existing Natural Areas System is increased. The TEEM modeling also provides an increased understanding of the ecosystem functions to better inform decisions regarding acquisition and enhancement initiatives.

An important consideration for municipal natural heritage systems is recognition of the urban context of these features. The existing urban land uses that envelope the natural areas typically creates induced impacts from unauthorized uses (e.g. trails, dirt bikes, etc), result in modified water regime, and reduces connectivity. As such, some the approaches and targets used in natural heritage system identification in rural areas may not be achievable in these urban contexts.

Since the Natural Areas Survey was initiated in the mid 1990s, there have been changes to the policy environment and classification system of natural areas in Ontario, including more inclusive policies in the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), use and application of the Ecological Land Classification to evaluate natural cover, and a more holistic approach to the identification of municipal and regional greenlands systems.

The identification of natural areas within municipalities has historically focused on identifying the higher quality woodlands, wetlands and riparian areas. Early successional components were not always included except as buffer areas. Recent approaches to natural heritage systems, based on the 2005 PPS, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Reference Manual (1999 and 2009 draft) include a broader consideration of the full range of habitats to provide the necessary diversity of habitats necessary for maintenance of the range of species diversity in an area.

There will be a need for the City to align itself with this approach in order to effectively identify all lands that are contributing to the City's natural heritage system.

7.4 Maintenance and Management

Parks and natural areas in Mississauga are closely aligned with one another, with many areas identified with natural attributes also serving as passive recreation areas. Refer to **Figure 2**. As such close integration is required between parks and natural areas management and maintenance strategies to ensure that protection is afforded to ecosystem functions and natural resources, and that optimal benefits are derived from the juxtaposition of public open space lands.

The following outline key considerations in the maintenance and management of parks and natural areas toward furthering environmental protection and enhancement goals.

7.4.1 Connectivity

The City of Mississauga NAS (2008) and other studies (e.g. NRSI 2009) identified the importance of connection between otherwise isolated natural areas. NRSI (2009) recognized the potential for active parks to play a role in connectivity. Although active parklands do not provide optimal ecological connectivity, in an urban context these areas may be the only available opportunities. As such, management of the parklands plays an important role in building connectivity, primarily determined through their proximity to natural areas or, better still, their location between two otherwise isolated natural areas. Park management and maintenance must consider the possible benefits that would arise from naturalizing strategic areas.

7.4.2 Supporting Ecological Processes

Natural areas play a number of important ecological processes, such as nutrient and energy flows. In the urban context where decisions on lands adjacent to natural areas have for the most part been made, the ability to go back and retrofit these areas may be limited. However, in park management there are greater opportunities to retrofit parks to assist with maintaining or enhancing ecological processes within neighbouring natural areas.

Creating new linkages, maintaining existing corridors and preventing further fragmentation between natural areas will hopefully provide a fundamental network of sustainability which could be paramount to the survival and security of this fragile urban ecosystem.

Grading and drainage of active park areas and potential implications to the natural areas should be considered in park management. Any needed modifications to maintenance practices in parks adjacent to natural areas should also be considered.

In the urban context, active park areas may also play an important buffer role or connection role (see below) with neighbouring natural areas. There should also be recognition of the role that green parkland, whether naturally vegetated or not, plays in shading/cooling, increasing permeable surface area, and filtering run-off, providing that they are managed in a sustainable manner.

7.4.3 Naturalization and Rehabilitation

There exists a delicate balance between parklands used for recreation and natural areas reserved to protect the ecological integrity of the faunal and floral communities persisting within the City.

Alternative maintenance practices in strategic locations may assist in bolstering the natural systems. For example, parkland management needs to consider the possible ecological role of early successional habitat created by deferred maintenance.

In many urban forest strategies, early successional, non-wooded habitats are not included, and as such are not considered in meeting urban canopy targets that many municipalities have, or are setting. Integrating natural heritage system objectives with these approaches is essential to ensure that aggressive urban tree canopy targets do not endanger the non-wooded habitats.

Naturalization efforts in parks and passive use areas may or may not be preferred by park managers or local park users. However, parklands adjacent to existing natural areas, especially those with the potential to provide wildlife corridors and linkages between natural areas should be identified and earmarked as priorities for naturalization and rehabilitation. The City is planning to undertake a Naturalization Study to address potential opportunities and priority areas for naturalization within the parks and open space system.

7.5 Strategic Directions and Key Recommendations for Natural Areas

7.5.1 Identification and Protection of the Natural Areas System

The trends emerging from the review of issues of Natural Areas in Mississauga, as contained within the related documents, suggest that there is a strong need for continued and increased efforts to protect and increase the proportion of the City occupied by natural habitats. There is also a need to better understand and evaluate the existing natural heritage system in order to inform decisions surrounding

priorities for natural areas protection, land acquisition and enhancement initiatives.

The City through its Natural Areas Survey has identified the natural heritage system that informs the environmental policies of the Official Plan. However, more contemporary approaches to natural heritage system identification and evaluation are widely used by other municipalities and supported by the Provincial Policy Statement, and the work of conservation agencies. As well CVC, TRCA and the Region of Peel have all undertaken studies that could serve to inform protection, securement and enhancement of natural areas in Mississauga. It would be beneficial for the City to align its work with current provincial policy environment, and the work of its partner agencies.

In this regard, a comprehensive Natural Heritage System study is needed that expands on the work undertaken through the Natural Areas Survey, and suggests ways to harmonize the activities of the City in concert with the Conservation Authorities, and the Region in the approach to natural area evaluation and greenlands securement. The updated natural heritage system should be incorporated in the Official Plan, together with any needed updates to environmental policies.

Recommendation #54

- ⇒ Undertake a comprehensive Natural Heritage System study to expand on the work undertaken through the Natural Areas Survey, with a view to harmonizing the activities of the City in concert with the Conservation Authorities, and the Region in the approach to natural area evaluation, natural heritage system identification, securement of lands for natural area protection, and identifying enhancement strategies.

Recommendation #55

- ⇒ Protect the remaining natural areas in the City's Parks and Natural Areas with objectives to manage, maintain or increase biodiversity. Of particular importance is the protection and subsequent management of all woodlands, wetlands and successional habitats wherever possible.

Recommendation #56

- ⇒ Continue to collaborate with the CVC, TRCA, Region of Peel Greenlands Securement Team, and other City departments in the identification of priorities for land acquisition to support a linked greenspace system, and in management of these lands.

Recommendation #57

- ⇒ Acquisitions to support / bolster the natural areas system should be a parkland acquisition priority for the City, particularly given the increased emphasis on, and expectations for access and use to natural areas. First order priority sites will be significant natural areas that are interconnected to the broader natural system comprised of the valleylands and the Lake Ontario waterfront, and lands that reinforce or fill gaps in the Natural Areas System, as identified through the NAS study.

Recommendation #58

- ⇒ As a priority, forests and natural areas need to be assessed for degree of vulnerability to withstand negative impact from encroachment.

Recommendation #59

- ⇒ Work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to develop an environmental response network and protocol to anticipate and effectively manage potential future biological

(i.e. invasive species) and non-biological threats (i.e. natural disasters).

7.5.2 Restoration and Enhancement

To facilitate implementation of objectives outlined in the NAS, there will be a need to align the planning, design and use of parks to be consistent. It is recommended that the City prepare detailed management plans including Conservation Plans for parks that are adjacent to or include Natural Areas with a view to directing management and maintenance activities, and enhancing the potential contribution to the natural heritage system. The Credit River Valley Master Plan is one such initiative that the City has committed to.

Recommendation #60

- ⇒ Initiate Conservation Plans for natural areas with consideration to prioritizing natural areas based on significance, representation, site and condition, and those of greatest value. The Conservation Plans should include, but not be limited to: access, encroachment, appropriate activities, non-native plant control, and restoration initiatives. Restoration initiatives could be started on two or three natural areas for a period of two to three years, and natural areas could then be dealt with on a rotational basis that focuses on those natural areas at greatest risk.

Recommendation #61

- ⇒ Identify locations within other existing and future parks for naturalization/restoration initiatives to increase natural cover. Naturalization (creation of natural habitat from manicured parkland) projects undertaken by the City should involve both the planting/seeding of native species and the control of non-native species.

Recommendation #62

- ⇒ Work with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to develop a City-wide strategy for control of invasive plant species to improve ecological values. This should include management in natural areas as well as providing encouragement and a mechanism for the City and the community to work together toward the removal of invasive species and preventing the planting of invasive, non-native species.

Recommendation #63

- ⇒ Encourage the Conservation Authorities to undertake surveys of rare and significant fauna and flora species, together with the formulation of recovery plans and strategies. Apply the Terrestrial Natural Heritage System approach and data to assist with the formulation of recovery plans for species and vegetation communities at risk.

Recommendation #64

- ⇒ Employ Best Management Practice (BMP) guidelines for environmental management plans in areas with intensive recreational activities or municipal services.

7.5.3 Stewardship, Public Outreach and Education Programs

The City will need to continue to work with its partners and community organizations to build profile for the Natural Areas System, encourage stewardship initiatives, focus volunteer efforts and expand the outreach program into the community.

Recommendation #65

- ⇒ Continue efforts to designate the Credit River as a Canadian Heritage River System so that it will have national

prominence to foster public education, awareness and action around its conservation.

Recommendation #66

- ⇒ In concert with community-based stewardship initiatives, continue efforts toward public education in the conservation and management of natural areas to discourage careless and improper use. This should include the development of a consistent and informative system of signage for parks and natural areas that identifies features and attributes of the natural heritage system, outlines appropriate behaviour, and profiles enhancement initiatives. The information should focus on positive messages and not on prohibition.

Recommendation #67

- ⇒ Strengthen current partnerships with the Conservation Authorities and the Region, and develop new ones with other organizations to foster an integrated approach to natural heritage management and implementation of strategies.

Recommendation #68

- ⇒ Involve children and youth in the outreach programs to encourage sustained commitment to environmental stewardship, e.g. in collaboration with schools and through community-based environmental programs, or recreation programs.

7.5.4 Integration of Natural Area Initiatives

Based on the preceding Strategic Directions, integration of natural area initiatives across all City departments is essential to achieving the strategic directions and goals.

A number of municipalities in southern Ontario are currently updating their strategic/master plans with respect to urban forest (e.g. City of Guelph and Town of Oakville). The City is planning to develop an Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan later in 2009.

Reconciling natural area and park management with urban forest canopy targets is challenged in some municipalities by high urban forest canopy targets and limited tools for implementation. The City needs to review planning tools such as Zoning By-laws, subdivision design guidelines, site plan approval requirements and landscape and engineering standards to ensure that the design of new urban areas support the Natural Area objectives.

Recommendation #69

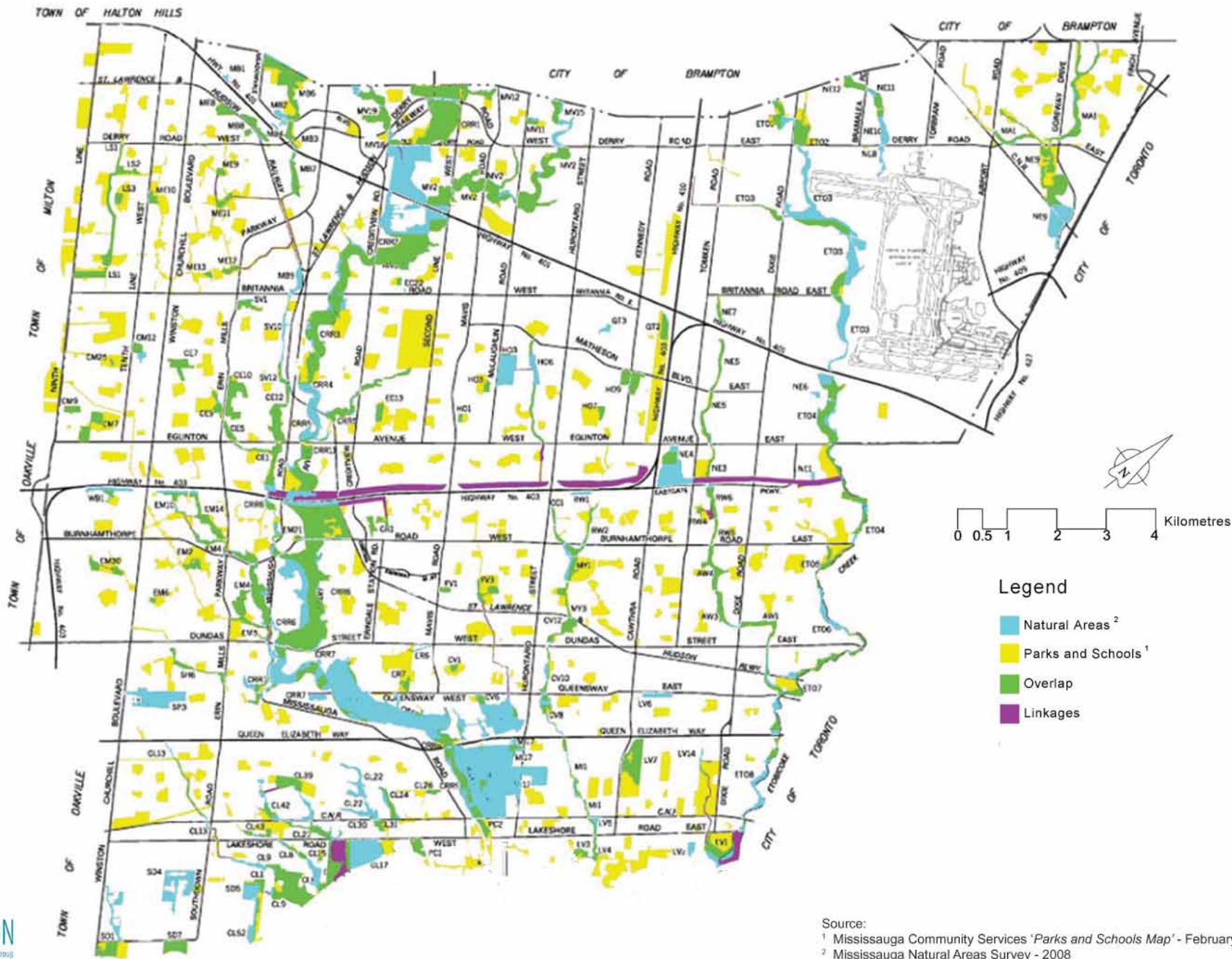
- ⇒ Facilitate the implementation of Mississauga's Million Trees planting program with community partners, with timing as identified in the Strategic Plan. Priority locations should be tied to restoration / enhancement opportunities to bolster Natural Areas.

Recommendation #70

- ⇒ Coordinate natural area and park management efforts with the planned Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan.

Recommendation #71

- ⇒ Review planning tools such as Zoning By-laws, subdivision design guidelines, site plan approval requirements and landscape and engineering standards to ensure that new urban areas support the Natural Area objectives.



Source:
¹ Mississauga Community Services 'Parks and Schools Map' - February 2009
² Mississauga Natural Areas Survey - 2008

APPENDIX A: PARKLAND ACQUISITION EVALUATION CRITERIA AND RANKING

(Adapted from City Staff's background parkland acquisition report)

For properties to be acquired by purchase only - not applied to properties to be acquired through requirements of development

Rationale		Ranking		Total Possible Score	Score
Protects and Enhances the Natural Areas System					
1	Natural Area (as identified in the Natural Areas Survey)	15	Significant Natural Site	15	
		10	Special Management Area/Natural Area		
		5	Linkage		
		0	Not applicable		
2	Other lands not in NAS, but contributing or having potential to contribute to ecosystem functions	10	Location contiguous with / proximal to other natural areas with potential for restoration	10	
		5	Locations not contiguous with / proximal to other natural areas but with potential for restoration		
		0	Not applicable		
Contributes to a Connected Open Space System / Trails System					
3	Supports the Waterfront Parks Strategy	15	Waterfront property	15	
		5	Is tangent to a waterfront property		
		0	Not applicable		
4	Supports trail development	15	Provides a contiguous linkage within an existing system	15	
		10	Provides multiple trail opportunities (e.g. a looped trail system)		
		5	Provides for a single trail		
		0	Not applicable		
Provides for Population Growth and/or Sustainable Community Design)					
5	Provides park or facility needs for existing / anticipated underserved area (based on a geographic distance or population provision standard)	15	Supports population growth, sustainable community design where no / limited dedications exist	15	
		10	Protects / expands function of existing parkland (e.g. increases street frontage by more than 50%;; significantly increases size of park; enhances existing residential / employment area		
		10	Provides parkland / facility / public amenity space in an underserved area		
		5	Protects / expands function of existing parkland (e.g. increases street frontage by less than 50%; increases size of park; enhances existing residential / employment area		
		0	Not applicable		
6	Provides recreational opportunities on a community / city-wide basis	10	Major recreation opportunities (1 lit sports facility, 2 or more unlit sports facilities; or major event / festival / picnic sites)	10	
		5	Minor outdoor recreation facilities; 1 unlit sports field, minor community event / picnic site		
		0	Not applicable		
Opportunity for Acquisition					
7	Commitments made or Council approved	10	Council approved; or existing parkland lease	10	
		5	Moving Forward Document		
		0	Not applicable		
8	Cost of land / capital investment	15	Low (e.g. non-developable land; agricultural land)	15	
		10	Moderate (e.g. constrained or vacant land, greenbelt within residential properties)		
		5	High (e.g. active commercial / residential uses; contaminated lands with high remediation costs)		
		0	Not applicable		