Richmond Hill Parks Plan

Better Choice for People at Play
# Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Purpose of the Parks Plan ......................................................................................................... 3
  1.2 Planning Process ...................................................................................................................... 4
  1.3 Guiding Principles .................................................................................................................. 6
  1.4 Plan Organization .................................................................................................................. 8

2.0 RICHMOND HILL’S PARK PLANNING CONTEXT ................................................................... 9
  2.1 Policy Framework .................................................................................................................. 11
  2.2 Richmond Hill’s Population and Planned Growth ................................................................ 12
  2.3 Richmond Hill’s Demographics ............................................................................................ 13
  2.4 Recreation and Leisure Trends ............................................................................................. 15

3.0 THE EXISTING PARK SYSTEM .......................................................................................... 19
  3.1 Park Classification ............................................................................................................... 21
  3.2 Impact of Growth on the Existing Park System ................................................................... 23

4.0 OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES .......................................................................... 29
  4.1 Soccer Fields ......................................................................................................................... 31
  4.2 Baseball Diamonds ............................................................................................................... 31
  4.3 Tennis Courts ......................................................................................................................... 32
  4.4 Basketball Facilities ............................................................................................................. 33
  4.5 Splash Pads/Outdoor Swimming Pools ............................................................................... 33
  4.6 Playgrounds ......................................................................................................................... 34
  4.7 Outdoor Fitness Equipment .................................................................................................. 34
  4.8 Community Allotment Gardens ............................................................................................ 35
  4.9 Skateboard/BMX Facilities .................................................................................................. 35
  4.10 Off Leash Dog Areas ......................................................................................................... 36
  4.11 Permitted Picnic Areas ....................................................................................................... 36
  4.12 Outdoor Skating Areas ....................................................................................................... 37
  4.13 Bocce Courts ..................................................................................................................... 37
  4.14 New Recreation Facility Types ........................................................................................... 38
5.0 PARKLAND NEEDS ........................................................................................................... 39
  5.1 Parkland Needs Analysis Methodology ...................................................................................... 41
  5.2 Destination Parks ........................................................................................................ ................................ 42
  5.3 Community Parks .......................................................................................................... 45
  5.4 Neighbourhood Parks ...................................................................................................... 48
  5.5 Urban Squares and Linear Parks ........................................................................................... 51
  5.6 Town-wide Parkland Needs ................................................................................................. 53

6.0 IMPROVING AND ENHANCING OUR PARK SYSTEM .......................................................... 55
  6.1 5 Key Directions for Enhancing the Park System ........................................................................... 57
  6.2 Planning Future Parks .................................................................................................... ............................. 60
  6.3 Park Redevelopment ....................................................................................................... ............................ 61

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION – MAKING IT ALL HAPPEN ................................................................ 63
  7.1 Parkland Dedication By-law ............................................................................................... ......................... 66

Appendices
  Appendix A – Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment
  Appendix B – Parkland Needs Analysis
  Appendix C – Park Redevelopment
Introduction
1.0

Introduction

As an integral part of the public realm, municipal parks are vital components of complete communities that enhance the quality of life in Richmond Hill. Parks provide enjoyable spaces that support healthy lifestyles, offer opportunities to connect and socialize, enhance the economic value of surrounding properties, contribute to environmental protection, and help to create vibrant neighbourhoods. Parks also serve as principal sites for sports fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, splash pads, and numerous other types of recreational facilities, which enable participation in organized outdoor sports, and provide opportunities for less formal, unstructured physical activity.

Over the past three decades, Richmond Hill has been successful in acquiring an exceptional park system well-suited to the suburban communities that currently dominate the Town’s landscape. Richmond Hill however, is now nearly built out to its urban boundary. The Town’s new Official Plan – Building a New Kind of Urban responds to this fact and sets out a land-use planning framework for accommodating future growth and development through more compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use forms. As parks represent a critical piece of Richmond Hill’s physical landscape, a clear sense of how the park system will need to evolve in the face of this new form of growth is absolutely essential.

Consistent with the land use changes anticipated for the Town, the Implementation Plan associated with the Richmond Hill Strategic Plan 2009 – A Plan for People, A Plan for Change requires the development of several new plans, which will help to guide the Town’s provision of services into the future. The “Parks Plan” is one of these plans. Informed by evidence from data analyses, as well as input collected through community consultation, the policy recommendations of this Parks Plan respond to the Town’s planned urban structure as envisaged by the new Official Plan and align with the goals of the Strategic Plan.
1.1 Purpose of the Parks Plan

The overall purpose of the Parks Plan is to provide direction for the planning and development of Richmond Hill’s municipal park system. The four main goals of the Parks Plan are as follows:

1. Understand the park and outdoor recreation facility needs of Richmond Hill’s population now and in the future.
2. Make recommendations regarding how the Town’s inventory of parks and outdoor recreation facilities should be focused to meet community needs now and in the future.
3. Examine the role and function of the various types of parks in the Town and determine parkland needs in relation to the Town’s planned urban structure.
4. Develop a methodology for deciding when older parks should be redeveloped to meet the changing needs of the community.

The planning horizon for the Parks Plan coincides with that of the Town’s Official Plan and therefore anticipates growth through to 2031. Similar to the Official Plan, recommendations and policy directions in the Parks Plan are intended for implementation over the next 20 years, with ongoing review and update of the Plan expected to occur periodically over the course of that time.

It is important to note that not all green spaces in the Town are considered “parks” within the context of this Plan. The Parks Plan deals exclusively with municipal parks — unencumbered lands secured and owned by the municipality primarily for active recreational use. Parks are lands that are appropriate locations for all types of recreational facilities, and such facilities can be sited in parks without restrictions associated with environmental preservation, hazard issues (i.e., flooding), or cultural heritage protection.
1.2 Planning Process

The planning process followed to develop the Parks Plan is summarized in Figure 1.1.

Consistent with the People Plan process used to develop the Town’s Strategic Plan and Official Plan, the Parks Plan process reflects the Town’s commitment to community engagement and places a strong emphasis on input collected through public consultations. The community engagement strategy for the Plan comprised a range of communication methods to provide residents, user groups, representatives of the land development industry, and staff with various opportunities for input and participation. Community members were invited to participate in open houses, key informant interviews, roundtable discussions and workshops. Input was also collected through one-on-one interviews, as well as household telephone and online surveys. The Town further engaged residents through various social media avenues, the Town’s web site and local newspapers.

The initial stages of the Parks Plan were conducted simultaneously, and in tandem with, the initial stages of work associated with the Town’s Recreation Plan, which focuses on the provision of indoor recreation facilities and the delivery of recreational programming. The Town retained a consultant to assist in undertaking the background
research component of the two plans, which included community engagement, compilation of a demographic profile of the community, and detailed analyses of current recreation and leisure trends. The findings and results of this background work were presented to the People Plan Task Force in a *Research, Trends, & Community Engagement Summary Report* and *Discussion Papers* on October 11, 2012.

The information in the background summary report and associated discussion papers, as well as municipal benchmarking data, spatial mapping analyses and current recreation facility use information, were then used to complete a series of needs assessments. These technical needs assessments are included as appendices to the Parks Plan and were summarized in the *Outdoor Recreation Facility and Parkland Supply and Demand Analysis* presented to the People Plan Task Force on November 8, 2012. The needs assessments formed the basis for formulation of the final Parks Plan and the policies contained within it.
1.3 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles, which reflect community input and are rooted in modern good planning principles, were developed to provide direction for the policies of this Plan:

**Parks are vital components of complete communities**
Municipal parks cannot be considered in isolation of other facets of a community. They are in fact essential components of complete communities and investment in the municipal park system is important from economic, public health, environmental and community development perspectives.

**Richmond Hill is evolving into a more urban community**
The Town’s current park system, created over the course of decades of greenfield development, is suitable for the suburban form of many of Richmond Hill’s existing neighbourhoods, but may not be adequate to meet the parkland needs of an increasingly more compact community. The Town needs a parkland system that is equitable, consistent, long-lasting and appropriate for the evolving land use context.

**New park types are needed in intensification areas**
In anticipation of continuing intensification, the Town must reassess its current mix and balance of parks and facilities. The Town’s *Official Plan* recognizes a specific need for two new park types – Urban Squares and Linear Parks – within the more urban centres and corridors of the Town. These parks are essential for visual and functional relief from dense building forms, to provide places where people can relax and take respite in commercial/retail areas, to provide space for people to converge and interact, and to create connections between destinations.

**Residents will recreate in many areas of the Town**
Richmond Hill residents will utilize parks outside of their immediate neighbourhood. People living in intensification areas will not only use the Urban Squares outside their condo buildings but will also visit Destination Parks such as Mill Pond and the many Community Parks that provide organized recreation such as soccer and tennis. Conversely, single detached dwellers will use more than their neighbourhood playground and will enjoy Urban Parks when visiting the downtown or other emerging higher density mixed-use areas.
Neighbourhood Parks are not just for low density areas

Neighbourhood Parks are equally important to high density areas as they are to suburban areas. Greenroofs and privately-owned landscaped areas around apartment buildings and condominiums are similar to backyards in suburban areas – they do not replace the need for Neighbourhood Parks. In both land-use contexts, Neighbourhood Parks are places where people can meet and interact with their neighbours, and where there are outdoor recreation facilities and playgrounds close to home.

Indoor recreation space cannot replace outdoor municipal parkland

New high-rise condominiums may provide on-site indoor recreation, however, outdoor public spaces to walk the dog, throw a frisbee, or sit on a park bench under a tree cannot be replaced by indoor space. Additionally, parks provide respite from the dense urban condition and act as urban design focal points that not only beautify, but also provide for a sense of place and community identification – indoor space does not fulfill any of these functions.

The Town will need to purchase parkland in intensification areas

It is difficult to facilitate feasible land dedications in high density situations given the relatively small size of development sites (i.e., a suitably-sized park is often simply unachievable on a single site). As a result, the municipality will need to accumulate cash-in-lieu payments to purchase sites in high density areas to meet parkland needs, and these sites will be increasingly expensive (reflecting the value of land in an urban setting).

Parkland is expensive but worth the price

A high quality, well designed park system provides a better quality of life for the Town’s residents and offers numerous economic benefits to both businesses and the land development industry, as well as to the future property owners.

Park planning should be done on a per capita basis

The amount of parkland needed in a community is directly related to its population. As per capita parkland provision levels fall, the demands on parks become more intense. When a greater number of people are using the same amount of park space, there is more rapid wear and tear on park facilities, and needs associated with park maintenance increase. Additionally, as the population using a park increases, the intrinsic value of the park as a spacious open green area with adequate room for sports and leisure activities, picnics and relaxation is impacted. As a result, park planning is best done on a per capita basis.

The decline in parkland provision levels should be minimized

Decades of low-density, suburban growth in the Town have generated a considerable park system. However, under the current legislation (i.e., the Planning Act), new higher intensity forms of development will not generate the same amount of land per capita. Planning for tomorrow’s park system in Richmond Hill must maximize all opportunities to provide a healthy outdoor recreation experience for the residents of today and tomorrow. Existing parkland should not be sold or developed for other purposes.
1.4 Plan Organization

The Parks Plan is organized into seven chapters as follows:

**Chapter 1.0** provides an introduction to the Parks Plan and defines the purpose of the Plan, the methodology used to develop the Plan, and the Plan’s organization.

**Chapter 2.0** presents the planning context for the Parks Plan in terms of:

- the Town’s broader strategic policy direction and framework,
- anticipated growth in Richmond Hill,
- key socio-demographic trends with potential to influence future community park and recreation facility needs, and
- recreation and leisure trends being experienced in the Town and across the broader region.

**Chapter 3.0** provides an overview of the existing municipal park system in Richmond Hill, with an emphasis on the role and function of the various types of parks in the inventory.

**Chapter 4.0** summarizes the Town’s stock of outdoor recreation facilities and makes recommendations for the future provision of these facilities. The policies presented in this chapter were derived from the detailed needs assessments included with the Plan as Appendix A – *Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis*.

**Chapter 5.0** summarizes the Town’s future parkland needs in terms of park typology. The policies presented in this chapter are based on the detailed needs analysis provided in Appendix B – *Parkland Needs Analysis*.

**Chapter 6.0** sets out recommendations for broad-scale, overall improvements and enhancements to the Town’s park system in terms of:

- key directions and policies for improving and enhancing existing parks,
- guidelines for the siting and configuration of new parks, and
- a recommended process for identifying and prioritizing redevelopment of older parks in the Town (a detailed outline of the process is included as Appendix C – *Park Redevelopment*).

**Chapter 7.0** recommends a parkland dedication rate, which will ensure that the Town has the required resources to meet future park needs.
Richmond Hill’s Park Planning Context
2.0
Richmond Hill’s Park Planning Context

A comprehensive understanding of the needs, character, and evolution of Richmond Hill’s community is essential for successful long-term planning of the park system. This chapter therefore sets the stage for the Parks Plan by describing the overall planning context within which the Parks Plan has been developed. It begins with an overview of the strategic policy framework for the Parks Plan as set out in the Town’s Strategic Plan and Official Plan. Anticipated population growth and the overall land-use planning framework for accommodation of this growth within the Town’s urban structure, are then reviewed. Demographic characteristics of Richmond Hill, which directly impact the provision of parks and recreation facilities, are summarized. Finally, key recreation and leisure trends expected to influence the planning and provision of parks services in Richmond Hill over the coming years are discussed.

A more detailed outline of the policy framework, population growth, demographics, and recreation and leisure trends, which provide the planning context for the Parks Plan is contained within the Research, Trends & Community Engagement Summary Report and associated Discussion Papers prepared by Montieth Brown Planning Consultants in September of 2012.
2.1 Policy Framework

Strategic Plan

The 2009 Richmond Hill Strategic Plan establishes a 25-year vision for the Town. The vision, “Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community”, is supported by four goals:

- Stronger Connections in Richmond Hill
- Better Choice in Richmond Hill
- A More Vibrant Richmond Hill
- Wise Management of Resources in Richmond Hill

The foregoing goals serve well as direction to support the planning of a municipal park system for Richmond Hill.

Official Plan

The Town’s 2010 Official Plan – Building a New Kind of Urban provides the overarching policy direction for land-use planning in Richmond Hill over the next 20 years. The Official Plan defines parks as spaces that help build complete communities, support connectivity and mobility within neighbourhoods, create special places for people, provide economic benefits, and protect the environment. As set out in the Parkland Background Paper for the Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan (approved by Council January 25, 2010), the Official Plan vision for parkland and recreational services was focused on:

- Providing safe and accessible parks and recreation services.
- Providing parks and recreation services in a manner that presents residents with choice, and meets the general interests and needs of a diverse population.
- Celebrating and building upon the legacy of existing parks and open spaces in the Town while addressing the challenges of changing growth patterns, current strategic direction (reflecting the physical, social and economic needs of residents and businesses), and a more urban community.
- Integrating parks and trails with the urban open space system as a component of the Town’s overall Greenway System and creating stronger connections to/between parks, neighbourhoods, and natural areas.
- Contributing to the creation of a more vibrant and interesting community through park planning and design.
- Enhancing the function of parks as focal points and landmarks within the community.
- Involving the community in the design of parks and the planning of recreation services.
- Developing new parks and revitalizing old parks in a fiscally responsible manner.
2.2 Richmond Hill’s Population and Planned Growth

Population Growth

The Town’s historical and anticipated future population growth is summarized in Figure 2.1.

![Richmond Hill’s Historical and Projected Population Growth](image)

Urban Structure Framework

After almost three decades of rapid suburban growth, the Town is nearly built out to its urban boundary. To accommodate continuing growth, Richmond Hill’s *Official Plan – Building a New Kind of Urban* provides policy direction to support and guide the future development of more compact, pedestrian-oriented, and mixed-use forms. The backbone for the new land-use planning framework set out by the Official Plan is an urban structure plan (See Map 2.1) that directs the majority of the Town’s future growth toward the intensification of defined centres and corridors. Limited, small-scale infill within the Town’s existing neighbourhoods is anticipated for areas outside the centres and corridors. The Town’s last remaining greenfield areas — West Gormley and North Leslie — are expected to be developed consistent with the lower-density, suburban patterns found throughout the Town’s existing neighbourhoods.

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

1. The acquisition of new parks and the redevelopment of existing parks will consider the locations of population growth within the Town.
2. The Town will monitor the provision of parkland as it relates to population growth within the urban structure elements of Richmond Hill.
3. The development of Secondary Plans will further inform the amount, type and location of parkland within the urban structure elements.
2.3 Richmond Hill’s Demographics

An assessment of Richmond Hill’s demographic profile is a critical step in identifying present conditions and anticipating future demands for parks and outdoor recreation services. The detailed summary of Richmond Hill’s demographics can be found in Discussion Paper #2 – Community Profile associated with the Research, Trends & Community Engagement Summary Report for the Parks and Recreation Plans, which was prepared by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (September 2012). Key demographic characteristics most likely to impact the Town’s provision of parks and outdoor recreation facilities are:

Age
Age is perhaps the demographic characteristic that is most useful in helping to predict the recreation and leisure preferences of a population given that different age groups use parks in different ways and also tend to demand different types of recreational facilities. One of the most notable trends in Richmond Hill’s population is that older age cohorts (age 45+) are gradually accounting for a larger proportion of the overall population (Figure 2.2) indicating a need to provide more facilities for older adults and active seniors.

Figure 2.2 Historical and Current Population by Age as a Percentage of the Total Population

**Employment and Place of Work**

Richmond Hill’s workforce is dominated by management, business, finance, and administration professionals. Consistently, Richmond Hill is home to a significant commuter population, with 64% of employed residents working in surrounding communities of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and beyond. This employment characteristic of Richmond Hill’s population means there is a large demand for facilities to be available later in the evening as well as for facilities that offer flexible, self-scheduled opportunities.

**Immigration and Ethnicity**

Richmond Hill is home to an ethnically and culturally diverse population. The ethnic composition of the population has the potential to shape the demand and need for specific facilities, services and options. A highly diverse community indicates a need for an equally diverse parks service profile.
2.4 Recreation and Leisure Trends

Discussion Paper #3 – Trends in Parks and Recreation associated with the Research, Trends & Community Engagement Summary Report for the Parks and Recreation Plans (Monteith Brown Planning Consultants, September 2012) provided a comprehensive summary of current park, recreation and leisure trends within Canada, the Province and the Greater Toronto Area. The trends expected to have the most significant impact on Richmond Hill’s provision of parks and outdoor recreation facilities are discussed below.

Focus on Health and Wellbeing
Despite the fact that the average lifespan of Canadians is increasing, there is a growing number of overweight and obese Canadians. Additionally, the Baby Boomer generation, which accounts for a significant proportion of the population, is reaching retirement age, and is looking for opportunities to remain healthy and active. These demographic trends and others, are contributing to a broad awareness of the benefits to pursuing an active lifestyle as well as a demand for a variety of recreational services.

Flexibility and Convenience
Limited free time has been identified as a major barrier to participation for youth and adults, largely due to busy schedules and socioeconomic circumstances. In the statistically significant survey of Richmond Hill residents conducted by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (2012), 29% of respondents listed lack of free time as the major constraint limiting their participation in parks and outdoor recreation pursuits. With evolving households, variable schedules and multiple personal and work-related commitments, many residents increasingly favour spontaneous, non-programmed activities. A park system that meets the needs of the community will be one that offers a range of options for how and when residents participate, as well as one that includes a variety of options easily accessible from home, school or work.
Choice and Inclusivity

An emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility has become a trend amongst park and recreation service providers nation-wide. This trend is being realized from a variety of different perspectives. More active, older adults are demanding options that meet their needs, youth continue to be interested in ‘extreme’ action-based sports and residents of different ethnic backgrounds seek options that are specific to their cultures. Options for the physically disabled need to be balanced with the provision of opportunities for the more active and physically fit segment of the population, who are seeking challenging recreational experiences. The trend highlights the need to offer options and choice for everybody.
Map 2.1
Urban Structure
The Existing Park System
3.0
The Existing Park System

This chapter of the Parks Plan provides an overview of the existing municipal park system in Richmond Hill with the intent of establishing the starting point for assessing the Town’s future parkland needs. The first section of the chapter summarizes the role and function of the various types of parks in the Town’s parkland inventory. The second section of the chapter summarizes existing per capita parkland provision levels and explains how these provision levels will be impacted by the Town’s anticipated future growth.

It is important to keep in mind that the park system is explicitly defined to include those lands owned by the municipality, which are suitable for active, outdoor recreational use. The park system does not include natural heritage lands designated for environmental protection, stormwater management facilities or lands owned by other agencies or organizations.
3.1 Park Classification

The Town’s existing park system is depicted on Map 3.1. The system currently contains a total of 305 hectares (approximately 800 acres) of land, which is classified into the following five different park types:

1. **Destination Parks**

   Although not specifically identified through the Town’s *Official Plan*, preparation of the Parks Plan has led to the conclusion that there are four parks within the Town’s park system – Mill Pond Park, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, Lake Wilcox Park and Richmond Green – which should be classified separately because they have a distinct Town-wide function. These Destination Parks vary considerably in terms of the recreational opportunities they provide, but they are similar in that they contain features and facilities not found anywhere else in the Town. Destination Parks attract visitors from across the Town and beyond because of their unique attractions and because they are typically used as the sites for large events and celebrations. Destination Parks contain an active parkland component as well as additional lands, including stormwater management facilities and natural heritage/environmental lands, which are perceived to be part of the park, but are not actually considered to be parkland because their potential as sites for active recreational facilities is limited. Only the active parkland component of Destination Parks contributes to the Town’s overall parkland provision level.

2. **Community Parks**

   Community Parks function as hubs where residents can meet, interact and engage in a wide variety of recreational activities. In most cases Community Parks are campused with indoor recreation facilities (i.e., community centres, arenas or pools), and contain permitted sports fields (e.g., senior ball diamonds and soccer fields) with lighting and associated parking space, picnic and passive recreational areas, and a mixture of smaller recreational facilities (e.g., playgrounds, hard surface sports courts, splash pads). Community Parks directly serve residents living within a long walk or a short drive (i.e., 1 – 2 kilometres) and are also used by residents across the Town who participate in organized sports or recreational programming. Some types of outdoor recreation facilities located in Community Parks are not available at smaller Neighbourhood Parks (e.g. lit senior sports fields, splash pads).

3. **Neighbourhood Parks**

   Neighbourhood Parks have a myriad of roles, but their primary function is to provide play areas, recreational opportunities and outdoor greenspace close to homes. Neighbourhood Parks provide spaces for people to walk their dogs, offer views of nature from front porches and kitchen windows, are places where local parents meet and watch their children play, contain sports fields used for house league and pick-up games, and are sites for sports courts used by youth and adults alike.
There are two types of Neighbourhood Parks within the Town’s inventory:

a. **Local Parks** – Contain a variety of active recreation facilities as well as passive recreational space, and,

b. **Parkettes** – Are typically smaller in size than Local Parks, and often contain no active recreation facilities other than a playground. The main roles of Parkettes are primarily related to urban design (e.g. Parkettes provide visual relief from adjacent built forms, create views, enhance neighbourhood aesthetics and help to give places a unique identity).

### 4. Linear Parks

Characterized by a linear, rather than compact configuration, Linear Parks facilitate safe and comfortable pedestrian and cycling connections between parks and other community destinations such as commercial and retail areas, public transit nodes, civic spaces, and schools. Recreation nodes positioned along the length of Linear Parks provide play opportunities, public art, fitness equipment, gardens and seating. In some cases, Linear Parks can also act as a physical, green separation between abutting land uses.

Linear Parks encourage physical activity by facilitating active transportation options that reduce distances between destination points. When located effectively within a neighbourhood, Linear Parks provide residents with an opportunity to get some physical exercise while going about their daily activities. At the Town-wide scale, Linear Parks contribute to the provision of active transportation commuter routes and the overall pedestrian and cycling network.

### 5. Urban Squares

Urban Squares serve people living in and visiting the intensification areas (centres and corridors) in which they are situated. The target users of urban squares include not only local residents, but also people working, shopping, dining, and attending appointments or business functions nearby.

Flexibility in size, location and design of urban squares is of particular importance to ensuring that Urban Squares help to realize key urban design goals in densely populated areas. Traditionally associated with bustling, established city centres, Urban Squares are primarily suited to mixed-use areas supporting a high level of pedestrian activity. In these areas, squares are necessary to provide spaces where people can converge and interact naturally, relax and take respite from the bustle of an intensely used commercial area, and stage functions and celebrations.

Unlike other park types, Urban Squares contain a significant amount of hard-scaping (i.e., constructed surfaces and detailed landscape elements). While comfort of use is important to all park types, the design of Urban Squares specifically focuses on provision of flexible seating, shade and shelter from wind and rain. Decorative design elements such as gardens, water features and public art are classic elements of Urban Squares, which are enjoyed by visitors to the square as well as people passing by. A critical key to place-making, Urban Squares give a place an identity and act as landmarks at which people arrange to meet, or use for the purposes of giving directions.
3.2
Impact of Growth on the Existing Park System

As shown on Map 3.1, the Town has a relatively even geographic distribution of parks, owing greatly to a lengthy era of low density greenfield development which saw similar population densities spread equally across the Town.

Map 3.2 shows the existing (2011) per capita parkland provision within each of the Town’s concession blocks and Town-wide. The provision rates within the concession blocks are significant because the arterial roads of the Town act as significant barriers for access to parkland and also define neighbourhood boundaries. Currently, Richmond Hill has an overall population-based parkland provision level of 1.64 hectares of parkland for every 1,000 people in the Town.

The Town is forecasted to grow from a 2011 population of 185,545 to 242,200 in the year 2031. Figure 3.1 shows the impact of population growth on the existing park system in terms of the decline in the Town-wide parkland provision level, which will result between now and 2031 if no new parkland is acquired (light green line). The dark green line on the graph projects Richmond Hill’s current per capita parkland provision rate into the future for comparison purposes. The blue line on the graph shows the anticipated population increase in the Town. The graph is significant because the Parks Plan aims to determine an appropriate target level of parkland provision for the Town. The graph suggests that the target (2031) provision rate should fall somewhere between the existing rate of 1.64 hectares per 1,000 people and the rate that would result if population increases as anticipated and no new parkland is acquired (e.g., 1.28 hectares per 1,000 people).

Map 3.3 shows the impact of anticipated population growth on the Town’s existing park system in the form of parkland provision rates, which would exist in the concession blocks in 2031, should the Town not acquire any additional parks. Overall, the Town’s parkland provision rate would fall from 1.64 to 1.28 hectares per 1,000 people. All of the concession blocks will experience some level of decline in provision rates. However, as expected intuitively, the neighbourhoods in the Town experiencing the greatest growth would also be the areas where parkland provision levels will decline.
most significantly. These neighbourhoods are predominantly along the centres and
corridors – the areas defined as the primary sites for intensification in the new Official
Plan. If no additional parkland is acquired, many of these neighbourhoods will fall well
below the current median range of parkland provision in the Town’s neighbourhoods
as shown by the pink colour on Map 3.3 (the “median range” of 1.15 to 1.43 hectares
per 1 000 people is defined by the provision levels of the 5 neighbourhoods out of the
total of 17 neighbourhoods, which have the median current provision rates).

When parkland provision levels fall, the demands on parks become more intense. With
lower provision rates, a greater number of people are using the same amount of park
space and, as a result, there is more rapid wear and tear on facilities and increased
needs associated with park maintenance. Additionally, as the population using a park
increases, the intrinsic value of the park itself – which is rooted in the perception and
ideal that parks are spacious open green areas with adequate room for sports and
leisure activities, picnics and relaxation – is impacted.

Richmond Hill residents have come to enjoy the parkland provision level they currently
experience, but this provision level is reflective of the Town’s historical acquisition
of parkland at a rate of 5% of the area of greenfield/suburban development sites. While the Ontario Planning Act permits use of an alternative dedication rate in medium
and high density development scenarios (1 hectare for every 300 dwelling units), this
alternative rate will not be sufficient to maintain the Town’s existing provision rate
(e.g., 1.64 hectares of parkland per 1 000 people Town-wide). Just as intensification
will impact the amount of traffic on roads, intensification will also impact the amount
of traffic in parks. A decrease in Richmond Hill’s per capita parkland provision level
can be expected to result from more compact urban forms, but every effort should be
made to minimize the extent of the impact.

Figure 3.1 Impact of population growth on the existing park system

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:
1. The Town will collect parkland at a rate which will minimize impacts to the Town’s per
capita parkland provision levels.
Map 3.1
Existing Town Park System
4

Outdoor Recreation Facilities
4.0 Outdoor Recreation Facilities

The Town of Richmond Hill provides a wide range of outdoor recreation facilities within its park system. Appendix A – Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis provides detailed needs assessments for each of the outdoor recreation facility types the Town currently provides. It also examines whether the Town should provide additional types of outdoor recreation facilities, which are provided in other Ontario municipalities and/or have been requested by Town residents. The results of the needs analyses in Appendix A are summarized in this chapter of the Parks Plan.
4.1 Soccer Fields

Soccer is the Town’s most popular organized sport with the highest participation rate. The Town’s current inventory includes 41 soccer fields, which equates to a provision level of 1 field per 4 500 residents. Based on continuing recreation trends, an apparent deficiency in the Town’s existing supply of soccer fields, and ongoing demand for soccer facilities it is recommended that the Town target a provision level of 1 field per 4 300 residents.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will construct 14 new soccer fields by 2031.
2. All senior soccer fields will be lit facilities.
3. An existing lit senior soccer field in Oak Ridges will be upgraded to artificial turf.

4.2 Baseball Diamonds

The Town currently provides a total of 39 baseball diamonds, which equates to a provision level of 1 diamond per 4 800 residents. Recreation trends indicate that youth participation in baseball continues to decline while adult participation is remaining steady. As a result, an overall provision level of 1 diamond per 5 500 residents is appropriate. Given the Town’s age structure, baseball diamond demand for adult slo-pitch will continue to grow. Therefore, increasing the proportion of lit, senior diamonds in the Town’s inventory to accommodate night play for a commuter workforce will be essential. Community consultation revealed a need to bring diamonds up to current standards, particularly regarding size and configuration.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will construct 5 new baseball diamonds, and upgrade or replace the 5 diamonds which are not currently being permitted, by 2031.
2. The proportion of lit, senior diamonds versus junior diamonds in the Town’s inventory will be increased.
3. Softball diamond sizes will be brought into conformity with national slo-pitch standards wherever possible.
The Town currently provides a total of 79 tennis courts, which include 6 club courts managed by the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club. The Town's current provision level is 1 court per 2 400 residents. Based on recreation trends and demographic analyses, tennis will continue to be popular in Richmond Hill. Better utilization of the existing inventory would be possible if more courts were upgraded to colour-coated asphalt, and the capacity of the tennis club could be increased. Greater utilization of existing courts would allow for a provision rate of 1 court per 2 700 residents that can better meet demand. Projected population growth to 2031 will require the addition of new courts to meet this target provision rate.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will construct 12 new tennis courts by 2031.
2. The proportion of colour-coated to regular asphalt courts in the inventory will be increased, by providing colour-coated courts at a minimum of one park (preferably a Community Park) in each concession block.
3. The feasibility of providing practice walls at Community Park tennis courts will be further investigated as part of an outdoor recreation facility design standards and specifications review.
4. The Town will continue discussions with Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club to determine how the Town and the Club can work together to increase capacity of the Club and utilization of Town courts.
### 4.4 Basketball Facilities

The Town currently provides a total of 47 facilities, including 24 full courts, 7 half courts and 16 skills areas resulting in a current provision level of 1 facility per 4,500 residents. Public consultation indicated that basketball facilities were highly popular amongst youth aged 14 to 24. Users have shown a preference for full courts and therefore, the Town should endeavour to provide an even geographic distribution of full courts to meet this demand. In order to maintain current service levels, a total of 13 additional facilities will be required by 2031.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will aim to construct basketball facilities at a minimum of 13 new sites by 2031.
2. The Town will distribute full courts throughout the Town equitably and in appropriate locations, such as near community centres.

### 4.5 Splash Pads/Outdoor Swimming Pools

The Town currently provides 13 splash pads at a per capita provision rate of 1 per 14,000 residents. All splash pads are well used during the summer months. Demand for splash pads is anticipated to continue and observation shows that they are used by a range of age groups. Population growth will require 4 new splash pads to maintain current service levels.

As recent efforts have focused on splash pads to act in place of pools, no outdoor pools currently exist in the Town. The Town should consider the feasibility of providing an indoor/outdoor pool as part of the construction of any new multi-use community centre.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will construct 4 new splash pads by 2031 (in addition to the 2 that are currently being designed).
2. Splash pads at key locations will be designed to appeal to a broader range of age groups.
3. The feasibility of providing an indoor/outdoor pool at any new community centres will be considered.
**4.6 Playgrounds**

Playgrounds continue to act as the neighbourhood backbone of outdoor recreation in Richmond Hill. The Town currently provides a total of 203 play structures in 121 parks for a per capita provision rate of 1 structure per 900 residents. The key to the success of playgrounds is the ability to locate them within a 400 metre walking distance of a user’s place of residence.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. Playgrounds will be provided within walking distance (400 metres) of residential properties.

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**4.7 Outdoor Fitness Equipment**

The Town currently has outdoor fitness equipment installed in four parks. Although the concept of outdoor fitness equipment is relatively new, observations show that the existing equipment has been well used. Outdoor fitness equipment should continue to be installed on an equitable geographic basis and demand should be monitored to determine an optimum service level for the Town.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. Outdoor fitness equipment will be installed at one park in each of the Town’s major concession blocks.
4.8
Community Allotment Gardens

Community allotment gardens provide an opportunity for both environmental stewardship and active participation in facilitating community led production of fresh, local food. The Town currently operates one community allotment garden in Phyllis Rawlinson Park with twenty five plots (or fifty half-sized plots). There are currently a total of 16 applicants on the waiting list for the existing plots. Community allotment gardens are ideally located close to higher density developments where access to private outdoor gardens is limited.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. A policy to guide the establishment of new community gardens on Town-owned lands will be developed in order to facilitate consistent responses to requests for gardens at specific sites.
2. Options for relocating the Town’s existing allotment gardens to a more central, easily accessible location in proximity to denser residential development will be explored.

4.9
Skateboard/BMX Facilities

The Town currently has one skateboard and BMX facility located in Richmond Green. The facility appears to be well used. An additional facility is planned for Lake Wilcox Park. Consultation with youth indicated that the greatest impediment to use of skateboard/BMX facilities is an inability for youth to access the Town’s lone location in Richmond Green. Although the Town’s population will continue to age, skateboarding has proven to continue in popularity over the past couple of decades.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. The Town will construct 2 more skateboard/BMX facilities by 2031 (in addition to the one planned at Lake Wilcox Park). These facilities could be smaller and more neighbourhood-scale than the existing facility at Richmond Green.
2. The youth area at Lake Wilcox Park will be designed and constructed in the short term (next 5 years).
4.10 Off Leash Dog Areas

The Town currently has two off leash dog areas – one “pilot” facility in the open space south of Tower Hill Road (which is not permanent at this time), and one permanent facility in Phyllis Rawlinson Park. The existing off leash areas are well-used by owners of the estimated 20,000 pet dogs in Richmond Hill. While finding appropriate sites for off leash facilities is a challenge, demand for these facilities is expected to remain high. Off leash facilities are popular not only because they provide opportunities for pets to exercise and socialize, but also because they provide a space where dog owners can interact and share in a common interest.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. The policy regarding provision of off leash dog areas will be reviewed prior to any investigations regarding new facilities.

4.11 Permitted Picnic Areas

The Town currently provides permits for picnics in eight separate parks. Picnic shelter capacity ranges from 10 persons to 150. Facility booking staff indicate that demand exceeds supply on many summer weekends. Picnicking is very popular amongst various ethnic groups and apartment dwellers who do not have backyards. In light of Richmond Hill’s growing ethnic populations and increasing amount of high density development, demand for picnic sites will continue to increase.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. The Town will develop an additional large, sheltered picnic area to accommodate a minimum of 100 people.
2. The Town will improve additional sites with necessary amenities so that they are suitable for smaller (30-50 people) picnic events.
4.12
Outdoor Skating Areas

The Town currently maintains five outdoor skating areas. The Lake Wilcox and Mill Pond skating areas, which are located on natural water bodies, and the Town Park and Crosby Park skating areas, which are created by flooding surfaces, are all very weather dependent. The Richmond Green Skate Trail is artificially cooled and highly used throughout all winter seasons. Demand for outdoor skating is forecast to continue and if the Town wishes to maintain its service level of one facility for every 37,000 residents, two additional artificially cooled outdoor rinks will be needed by 2031.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. The Town will provide two additional artificial skating areas.
2. The Town will investigate the feasibility of creating ice skating rinks on sports fields/courts.

4.13
Bocce Courts

The Town currently has 8 outdoor bocce courts and 4 indoor courts. Bocce is predominantly played by older generations and demand is forecasted to decline amongst younger age groups. The Town’s supply of bocce courts would appear to meet current demand.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**
1. The Town will only install additional bocce courts in response to demand.
4.14

New Recreation Facility Types

Through public consultation, municipal benchmarking and anticipated recreation trends, the Town has identified five additional outdoor recreation facilities that should be provided or at least investigated. Public consultation has indicated considerable interest in the Town developing facilities for beach volleyball and table tennis, as well as a formalized toboggan hill. Public consultation has also revealed an interest in the provision of ball hockey/multi-use courts and BMX/dirt bike tracks.

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

1. The Town will investigate the feasibility of providing an officially sanctioned toboggan/tubing hill.
2. Ball hockey/multi-use courts will be included within the Town’s outdoor recreation facility inventory and installed at appropriate locations in response to demand.
3. Beach volleyball facilities will be provided at parks as appropriate.
4. Table tennis facilities will be sited at Local Parks in urban areas.
5. Provision of a BMX/dirt bike jump track will be investigated only in the event that a group willing to share the capital cost and operations and maintenance responsibilities comes forward.
5

Parkland Needs
The Town’s current park system, created over the course of decades of greenfield development, is suitable for the suburban form of Richmond Hill’s existing neighbourhoods, but may not be adequate to meet the parkland needs of an increasingly more compact community. The Town needs to ensure that its parkland system remains equitable, consistent, long-lasting and appropriate for the evolving land use context.

The Parkland Needs Analysis (Appendix B to the Parks Plan) and the summary of the analysis presented in this chapter of the Parks Plan are premised upon the idea that residents across the Town use all of the Town’s different types of parks, regardless of the development form (i.e., suburban vs more urban) of the area in which they live. The unique facilities in Destination Parks are an obvious draw for people across the Town, and residents of all ages are likely to use a number of different Community Parks to participate in organized sports, to take part in recreation programs or to visit splash pads. While residents tend to specifically use the Neighbourhood Parks that are closest to their homes, they all use Neighbourhood Parks whether they live in suburban neighbourhoods or in the more urban centres and corridors. Neighbourhood Parks are important to compact urban areas in particular as spaces for residents to walk their dogs, as oases of green within the context of the urban landscape, and as spaces for outdoor playgrounds and recreation facilities close to where people live. Urban Squares and Linear Parks will be used by residents across the Town as they visit the more urban, mixed-use centres and corridors for employment, commercial and retail purposes.

It is important to note that this chapter of the Parks Plan seeks to establish parkland acquisition needs, which are only one component of overall park needs. Enhancement, repair and replacement as well as repurposing of parks is the second component of overall park needs. These particular needs are discussed in Chapter 6.0.
The parkland needs analysis is rooted in three principal assumptions, which are derived from the guiding principles of the Parks Plan:

1. Residents across the Town will use all different park types regardless of the type of dwelling they live in or the type of neighbourhood they live in.
2. Private greenspace exists in both suburban neighbourhoods (in the form of backyards) and in the urban context (in the form of private greenroofs, balconies and landscaped outdoor spaces around buildings). In both development contexts there is need for publically accessible, municipal parkland.
3. Since each park type has a different role/function, the appropriate needs analysis for each park type will also be different.

Assumptions 1 and 2 above together lead to the conclusion that all types of development in the Town should share in the provision of parks equally on a per capita basis. Assumption 3 requires that the analysis for each different park type be undertaken by selecting the most appropriate type of needs analysis from a menu of possible types of analyses. The different types of analyses used to determine the Town’s future parkland needs are as follows:

1. **Functional Analysis** – Is the existing parks inventory functioning as intended and are there any areas of the Town where there are gaps?
2. **Population Service Level Analysis** – How much parkland is appropriate to serve residents on a per capita basis (i.e., how many hectares of parkland does the Town need for every 1000 people)?
3. **Distribution Analysis** – Can all of the residents in the Town walk to a park within less than 400 metres / 5 minutes from their home?
4. **Recreation Facility Needs Analysis** – How much parkland does the Town need in order to meet service level targets for specific types of recreation facilities?
5. **Concept Plan Analysis** – In some areas of the Town a planning concept has been endorsed by Council. How much parkland does the Town need to acquire to implement these plans?

The following sections summarize the detailed needs analysis for each different park type. The detailed analysis can be found in Appendix B to the Parks Plan – *Parkland Needs Analysis*.

The analyses described above lead to a statement of need for “raw” land only. Enhancement, repair, replacement and repurposing investment must also be incorporated into consideration of park needs and are addressed in Chapter 6.0.
5.2 Destination Parks

5.2.1 Existing Inventory

The locations of the Town’s existing Destination Parks – Mill Pond Park, Richmond Green, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, and Lake Wilcox Park – are shown on Map 5.1.

The Destination Parks have a total area of approximately 145 hectares of which 74.2 hectares is active parkland.

5.2.2 Needs Analysis

A function-based analysis was used to review the Town’s needs for Destination Parks. Although the Town has an historic core natural area park in Mill Pond, a highly programmed athletic complex in Richmond Green, a rural environment park in Phyllis Rawlinson and a lake-based multi-use park in Lake Wilcox, two deficiencies/ opportunities are apparent.

Many municipalities have a central area civic square/park that provide opportunities for public gatherings, concerts/performances, and festivals, as well as formal and informal recreation. This civic square function is one that does not currently exist in Richmond Hill and is both needed and desirable.

More prevalent in Europe than North America are parks focused on cultural heritage. With the closing of the famed David Dunlap Observatory and the subsequent acquisition of the lands associated with the Observatory, the Town of Richmond Hill has an opportunity to develop a park that showcases the rich scientific history of the site as well as the unique urban area natural environment.

NEW DESTINATION PARKS

i) Civic Precinct

On-going planning efforts to develop a prominent civic square at the southwest corner of Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive foresee a Destination Park to augment the existing parkland (i.e., Mount Pleasant Park), Central Library, and Wave Pool. This area has the ability to accommodate a new Richmond Hill Town Hall as well as an additional community building. Opportunity also exists for a new outdoor skating venue, a youth area, picnic areas, a splash pad and an outdoor amphitheatre, as well as a public square for outdoor civic gatherings and celebrations and improvement of the existing playground and tennis courts.

LAND REQUIREMENT: 6.0 HECTARES
\textit{ii) David Dunlap Observatory Park}

Lands identified by Council through the David Dunlap Observatory development application as forming part of the cultural heritage precinct, combined with the existing David Dunlap Observatory Park and a local park within the development area, will together provide an opportunity for a unique Destination Park. The park will draw visitors from across the Town because of the unique cultural heritage features on the site (the Observatory itself and the observatory administration building) as well as the broader cultural heritage landscape (the only designated cultural heritage landscape in the Town). This Destination Park will also include the existing David Dunlap Observatory Park and the contiguous Local Park identified in the development application.

\textbf{LAND REQUIREMENT: 4.0 HECTARES}

\textit{iii) Expansions to Existing Destination Parks}

Minor expansions to Lake Wilcox Park and Richmond Green are intended to regularize the boundaries of these parks.

\textbf{LAND REQUIREMENT: 1.5 HECTARES}

\textbf{Total Destination Park Land Need = 11.5 hectares}

7.4 hectares of this need is currently Community Park that simply needs to be reclassified into the Destination Park category and 4.1 hectares is a land acquisition need.

\textbf{IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:}

1. The Town will acquire approximately 4.1 hectares of new parkland for Destination Park purposes and 7.4 hectares of parkland in the Community Park inventory will be reclassified as Destination Park to establish the new Civic Precinct and David Dunlap Observatory Destination Parks.
5.3 Community Parks

5.3.1 Existing Inventory

All parks offering one or more facilities that draw a significant proportion of users from beyond walking distance (i.e., lit sports fields, splash pads, and/or indoor recreational facilities) were considered to be Community Parks for the purposes of defining the inventory.

The Town currently operates 24 Community Parks with a total, combined area of 97.2 hectares (240 acres). This results in an existing population-based service level of 0.5 hectares of Community Park for every 1,000 residents.

The Town’s existing Community Parks range in size from 0.7 hectares (Eyer Homestead Park) to 9.0 hectares (David Hamilton Park) with the average Community Park being approximately 4 hectares in size. On average, each Community Park has a service radius of approximately 1.3 kilometres around the park. Existing Community Parks are shown on Map 5.2.

5.3.2 Needs Analysis

Community Parks are large parks with a variety of facility types, which provide opportunities for an entire family to engage in the activity of their choice. Ideally, one should not have to traverse the Town to a multi-use area, splash pad, lit playing field or picnic area. Therefore, Community Parks should be distributed equitably across the Town. Accordingly, a distribution analysis was undertaken to understand future needs for Community Parks.

NEW COMMUNITY PARKS

The last major area of suburban-style greenfield development will occur in the north-east portion of Richmond Hill. This generates not only a demand for future Community Parks but also an opportunity to acquire the land to meet that demand. Much of the future demand for new soccer fields and ball diamonds can be accommodated in this area.

New Community Parks will be needed in the planned North Leslie and West Gormley communities. Based on population growth, development densities and service level provision, it is estimated that the North Leslie Area will need two Community Parks while the West Gormley area will require one Community Park.

i. North Leslie – 2 Community Parks

ii. West Gormley – 1 Community Park

LAND REQUIREMENT: 12 HECTARES
EXPANSIONS TO EXISTING PARKS
There are three neighbourhood areas in the Town, where the closest Community Park is significantly further away from residents than the Town’s average service radius for Community Parks of 1.3 km. These areas can be seen on Map 5.2 and are as follows:

iii. East Oak Ridges
iv. West Downtown
v. Urban Fringe (between Gamble/19th & Stouffville/Jefferson)

While there are obvious distribution-based needs for Community Parks in these three areas, the needs are most likely to be met through expansions to existing Neighbourhood Parks, rather than creation of new parks of Community Park size.

LAND REQUIREMENT: 6 HECTARES

Total Community Park Land Need = 18 hectares

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:
1. The Town will acquire approximately 18 hectares of new parkland for Community Park purposes to create new Community Parks in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas and expand existing parks in the West Downtown, East Oak Ridges and Urban Fringe areas.
Map 5.2
Community Parks

Note: Calculations are based on the total parkland within each park that is considered developable. For the Neighbourhood Park class that total is 97.2 ha. The total population as of 2011 was 185,545.

Town-wide Per Capita Service Level:
0.5 ha/1000 population
5.4 Neighbourhood Parks

5.4.1 Existing Inventory

Map 5.3 shows the Town’s current Neighbourhood Park inventory. The Town currently operates 138 Neighbourhood Parks, covering a total land area of 117 hectares. The current population-based service level for Neighbourhood Parks is 0.63 hectares per 1 000 people.

Within the Neighbourhood Park inventory, the Town has 49 Local Parks, with an average size of 1.5 hectares. The total area of the Town’s Local Parks is approximately 83 hectares. The existing service level for Local Parks is 0.45 hectares per 1 000 people. The Town’s 89 Parkettes account for approximately 34 hectares of the total Neighbourhood Park area. Parkettes have an average size of 0.4 hectares and are currently provided at a service level of 0.18 hectares per 1 000 people.

5.4.2 Needs Analysis

Local Parks and Parkettes are considered separately in the needs analysis because they have different primary roles/functions.

LOCAL PARKS

Since the primary role of Local Parks is to provide parkland and outdoor recreational opportunities within walking distance of residents, the most appropriate type of analysis for Neighbourhood Parks is distribution-based. The distribution analysis can be used for the majority of the Town; however, the street network and property fabric for the North Leslie and West Gormley areas have not yet been established so it is not possible to undertake a distribution analysis to determine Local Park needs in these areas. A concept plan-based analysis based on the Secondary Plans for these areas must be used instead.

Local Parks are the fundamental building block of the Town’s park system, which ensure that residents across the Town have access to outdoor recreational facilities (including playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, basketball facilities, mini and junior soccer fields and tennis courts) within walking distance of their homes. As such the Town should continue to acquire Local Parks with the primary goal of providing access to parkland within a 400 metre walking distance of all residences. Map 1 (Appendix B) analyses the distribution of parks in the Town by assessing which residential properties
in the Town are within a 400 metre (approximately 5 minute) walking distance from a park. The following Local Park was identified:

i. 10 Local Parks identified on Map 2 of Appendix B

The Local Park needs in the North Leslie and West Gormley areas were identified using a concept plan-based analysis of the Secondary Plans:

ii. North Leslie – 4 Local Parks  
iii. West Gormley – 2 Local Parks

LAND REQUIREMENT: 24 HECTARES

NEW PARKETTES

The main role/function of parkettes is to provide visual relief, views, and other urban design-related functions within neighbourhoods. It is extremely difficult to determine where parkettes will be needed for these purposes until the road network and property boundaries for an area are specifically defined. An estimate for future Parkette needs is best arrived at through a population-based service level assessment, which establishes the following Parkette need:

iv. 0.18 hectares per 1,000 people

LAND REQUIREMENT: 10 HECTARES

Total Neighbourhood Park Land Need = 34 hectares

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

1. The Town will acquire approximately 34 hectares of new parkland for Neighbourhood Park purposes to create 16 new Local Parks and maintain the existing population-based service level for Parkettes.
Map 5.3
Neighbourhood Parks

Note: Calculations are based on the total parkland within each park that is considered developable. For the Neighbourhood Park class that total is 117.1 ha. The total population as of 2011 was 105,543.
5.5
Urban Squares and Linear Parks

5.5.1 Existing Inventory
Since Urban Squares and Linear Parks are new parkland classifications, which were established by the Town’s new Official Plan to meet the needs of more compact, urban areas, the Town currently has a limited inventory of both of these park types. Parks within the Town’s existing inventory, which are considered to be Linear Parks are: the Humber Flats EcoPark, MacLoed’s Landing Carriage Way, Newkirk Park, Sussex Park and portions of the Beaufort Trail system. The Town currently has only one park that is considered an Urban Square and that is the Theatre Plaza adjacent to the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.

5.5.2 Needs Analysis
The Town does not have a significant existing service level for either of these park types, therefore needs can not be estimated using a population-based or distribution-based analysis. The Town’s need for Urban Squares and Linear Parks can however, be determined using a concept plan-based analysis because Council has approved a concept plan for the Richmond Hill Centre, which includes a proposed park system for the area. The concept plan-based analysis uses the following steps:

1. The total area of new parkland anticipated through the concept plan is first estimated.
2. The parkland area is converted to a population service level, based on the anticipated population of the area at full build out.
3. The population service level is then applied to the other intensification areas of the Town using the estimated future population of those areas to determine a total amount of parkland that is required.

The concept plan-based analysis uses the amount of parkland approved through the concept plan for the Richmond Hill Centre, and applies that to an appropriate population-based parkland service level for all intensification areas in the Town.

A functional analysis of the Town’s employment land areas was undertaken to determine needs for Urban and/or Linear Parks in these areas.
Concept plan and functional analyses revealed the following requirements for Urban Squares and Linear Parks:

i. Richmond Hill Centre – 3.6 hectares
ii. Other Intensification Areas (Centres and Corridors) – 5.2 hectares
iii. Employment Lands (East Beaver Creek Linear Park) – 2.4 hectares

**LAND REQUIREMENT: 11.2 HECTARES**

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will acquire approximately 11.2 hectares of new parkland for Urban Squares and Linear Parks within the intensification and employment areas of the Town.
5.6

Town-wide Parkland Needs

In order to meet Richmond Hill’s parkland needs through to 2031, the following parkland will need to be acquired:

- Destination Parks 4.1 hectares
- Community Parks 18.0 hectares
- Neighbourhood Parks 24.0 hectares (Local Parks)
  - 10.0 hectares (Parkettes)
- Urban & Linear Parks 3.6 hectares (Richmond Hill Centre)
  - 5.2 hectares (Other Intensification Areas)
  - 2.4 hectares (Employment Areas)

**TOTAL PARKLAND NEED = 67.3 HECTARES**
Improving and Enhancing our Park System
Improving and Enhancing our Park System

The creation of new parks requires more than raw land. The previous chapter identifies only how much parkland is required to fulfill the projected need within the Town. However, the completion of a needs assessment requires an account of the total cost of creating parks to fulfill the needs of a growing and changing population.

As Richmond Hill continues to evolve, the Town’s delivery of park and outdoor recreation services needs to be monitored and adjusted accordingly. The community engagement process for the Parks Plan was an extremely effective means of evaluating the Town’s current provision of park and outdoor recreation facilities. It highlighted positive aspects of the parks services that are working well and revealed key, overall directions for how the existing park system should be improved and enhanced. The key directions arising from the community engagement process, and policy recommendations associated with these key directions, are discussed and summarized in the first section of this chapter.

As the Town grows, it is also important to ensure that new parks are appropriately integrated into the existing park system and land-use fabric. While the Official Plan provides a vision and high-level policy direction for the park system, more specific guidelines for determining where and how new parks are located in the context of new developments are needed. The second section of this chapter addresses this need by establishing recommended guidelines for locating and configuring new parks. The guidelines align with the guiding principles of the Town’s Official Plan to ensure that the Town’s park system contributes to achieving the overall land-use planning vision for “building a new kind of urban.”

The Town also has a responsibility to make sure that individual parks continue to respond to the needs of the people using them. Some of the parks in Richmond Hill were constructed 20 to 30 years ago and have not been significantly renovated since. Furthermore, many of these older parks are in neighbourhoods that have undergone significant transformation over the past few decades. When the neighbourhood around a park changes, demands on the park can be expected to change as well. Population increases, for example, result in increased wear and tear on parks and the facilities within them. Demographic shifts can result in under-used facilities or conversely, an unmet demand for facilities that people want to use. The Town will need to budget accordingly, not only to repurpose parks, but also to maintain the level of quality Richmond Hill residents have come to enjoy. The final section of this chapter therefore sets out a strategy for identifying and prioritizing investments in the Town’s older parks.
6.1
5 Key Directions for Enhancing the Park System

The Research, Trends and Community Engagement Summary Report and associated Discussion Papers, prepared by Montieth Brown Planning Consultants, includes a comprehensive summary of the results from the Parks and Recreation Plan community engagement process. Overall, the results of the community engagement process indicate that, while there is a general level of satisfaction with the provision of parks and outdoor recreation services in Richmond Hill, there is some room for improvement.

The results of the engagement are summarized below in terms of 5 Key Directions, which are specifically relevant to parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Issues that repeatedly emerged as areas for improvement during the community engagement process are organized and addressed through policy recommendations associated with each of the 5 Key Directions.

DIRECTION 1: Improve the design standards and the overall quality of outdoor recreation facilities.

Throughout consultations, it was evident that there is an appreciation for the amount and variety of parks and outdoor recreation facilities throughout Richmond Hill. Richmond Hill residents consistently indicated that the quantity of parks and recreation facilities in the Town is highly valued and, recognizing that continued growth will place increasing demands on facilities, they commonly expressed a desire to see current levels of services maintained. At the same time, the community frequently expressed a desire to see higher outdoor recreation facility standards. The quality of facilities in Richmond Hill was often compared to that of other municipalities and increased amenities and higher quality standards in other jurisdictions were noted. Specific issues with the size, condition, and standards of outdoor recreation facilities are discussed in Appendix A – Outdoor Recreation Facility Needs. Some of the quality improvements more frequently requested included: increased baseball diamond sizes, better picnic facilities (e.g., barbeques), higher quality tennis court surfacing, tennis practice boards, shading for benches at major baseball diamonds, and water access at premier sports fields.

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

1. The Town will undertake a review of Outdoor Recreation Facility design standards and specifications.
**DIRECTION 2: Increase the comfort, convenience and safety of Richmond Hill’s parks**

The expectations of residents and user groups appear to be increasingly sophisticated and high quality amenities to support park and facility use are an important consideration. As a result, a key theme was to design/redesign parks and facilities to be comfortable, convenient, safe and accessible spaces.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will increase the provision of shade structures and seating in parks where possible.
2. Appropriate parking standards for parks will be determined through a Town-wide parking strategy.
3. The feasibility of providing recycling in parks will be investigated.
4. Winter ploughing routes will be reviewed and updated to provide access to park areas commonly used in the winter.
5. The Parks Use By-law (Municipal Code Chapter 942) will be reviewed and updated.

**DIRECTION 3: Foster inclusivity through better choice**

This direction should be interpreted broadly as it is intended to capture a range of concerns, comments and suggestions made by the public including:

- Suggestions that parks need to be inclusive spaces designed to reduce social and physical barriers that certain populations may face,
- Recognition of the diversifying age, ethnic and income structures of the Town’s population,
- Richmond Hill’s largest parks that offer a wide range of different recreational opportunities are most cherished,
- Richmond Hill needs to continue to be open to new ideas for spaces and facilities in parks, and
- The Town should continue to expand its recreational opportunities for specific segments of the population including youth and older, active adults.

The common element amongst the items above is that people seem to be looking to ensure that there are options for everyone within the park system. Overall, residents are looking for better choice across the Town park system as a whole, as well as better choice within individual parks.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The needs of diverse communities will be considered in the design of new parks and the redevelopment of existing parks.
2. Additional facility types (including, but not limited to, outdoor fitness equipment, beach volleyball, table tennis, multi-use courts, and toboggan hills) will be included within Town Parks.
**DIRECTION 4: The Town’s park and outdoor recreation facility opportunities should be better promoted.**

Many of those consulted indicated that a lack of awareness exists with respect to existing facilities and programs. Through the consultation process it became evident that many residents are not fully aware of the array of parks and outdoor facilities the Town provides. Although many residents are familiar with the parks within their own neighbourhood, many did not know of parks and outdoor recreation facilities beyond their neighbourhoods.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will develop a marketing and promotions plan for outdoor recreation opportunities.
2. The Town will develop and install consistent signage for Town parks that is instructive, welcoming and carries the Richmond Hill brand.

**DIRECTION 5: The Town’s park system should contribute to connectivity**

Connectivity is important to the Town’s residents. Residents believe that parks should be easy to walk to, they should provide connections to other destinations, and they should help link ecological systems. Many residents indicated that they enjoy the passive attributes of parks and enjoy connecting with nature, as well as using the active facilities, and that they see parks as playing a key role in providing connectivity between ecosystems. Naturalizing areas within the parks to create habitat and opportunities to connect with nature emerged as a trend through the community consultation process.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. While Richmond Hill’s parks serve primarily as sites for active play, the Town’s network of park space will also provide support for pedestrians, offer opportunities to connect with nature, and contribute to the Town’s natural heritage.
2. The contribution that parks can make to the connectivity of the recreational trail system will be considered through the Greenway Master Plan.
3. The Town will undertake a study to identify opportunities for ecological enhancements within the park system.
6.2 Planning Future Parks

Careful consideration regarding where new parks are located and how they are shaped can result in numerous place-making, mobility and environmental benefits for the overall community. Well-sited and well-configured parks can help to create and frame views, provide for community identification, connect and facilitate pedestrian movement within a community, and help to preserve elements of the natural environment (e.g., trees and special places).

Appropriately, locating and configuring parks will also help to ensure a more comfortable and enjoyable experience within the park itself. In planning parks it is important to consider the potential impacts of wind and shade from adjacent building as well as the need to establish a clear delineation between public and private space. Adequate views into and out of the park are important for safety reasons and to prevent unauthorized and inappropriate activities from occurring in the park. Access to the park is important so that people can get to the park easily and to ensure that the park is part of, rather than separate from, the rest of the community.

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

The Town shall strive to locate and configure new parks in a manner that leverages their benefit to the community through the following guidelines:

**Complete Communities**
- Site parks where they will most effectively minimize walking distances from residential properties to a park.
- Minimize park perimeter in relation to park area and configure parks with regular shapes (to maximize space for a variety of outdoor recreation facilities).
- Ensure that the Town’s centres and corridors are provided with an appropriate mixture of all park types.

**Environment**
- Locate parks to create and preserve special places.
- Site parks to preserve mature, native trees that would otherwise need to be removed to facilitate development.

**Place-making**
- Maximize the perimeter street frontage of parks so that they serve as focal points within the neighbourhood.
- Locate parks to preserve and enhance views to natural features, heritage buildings and architectural landmarks.
- Minimize negative shading and wind impacts within the park.
- Site and configure parks to ensure a clear delineation between public and private space.
- Use parks to enhance the vitality, character, urban design and public realm in centres and along corridors.

**Connectivity**
- Facilitate pedestrian access on all sides of parks wherever possible.
- Locate and configure parks to improve pedestrian connectivity within neighbourhoods, centres and corridors, and within the context of the Town’s pedestrian and cycling network.
- Site parks to provide connectivity within the Greenway System when possible.
6.3 Park Redevelopment

As Richmond Hill evolves it is not only important that the Town continues to build new parks to serve its growing population and evolving urban structure, but also that its existing park supply is periodically examined to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate to changing demographics, built form and recreation needs. Therefore, one of the goals of the Parks Plan is to establish a methodology for determining when older parks in the Town should be redeveloped.

“Park redevelopment” projects are distinctly different from standard park facility repair and replacement (R&R) projects and new park design and construction projects. Rather, park redevelopment projects reinvent parks to meet changing demands, driven by increased population or shifting demography. Park redevelopment projects involve a comprehensive redevelopment of an existing park and may include standard facility replacements, changes to facility types within the park, reconfiguration of elements within the park (e.g., changing the location of facilities, re-grading and/or re-alignment of pathways), and/or redesign of passive spaces within the park.

As described in detail in Appendix C to this Plan - Park Redevelopment, a multiple-stage approach is an appropriate and efficient methodology for determining when older parks should be redeveloped. The first stage of the process selects a subset of parks that are potential candidate redevelopment sites, the second stage scopes the candidate sites down to a list of priority projects to be included within the Town’s 10 Year Capital Plan, and the third stage prioritizes the projects on the priority list over the 10 year capital planning timeframe. The multi-stage process for prioritizing park redevelopment projects is summarized and illustrated in Figure 6.1.

**IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:**

1. The Town will undertake an annual review, coordinated with the annual 10 Year Capital Planning process, to determine and prioritize park redevelopment projects in accordance with the multi-stage process outlined in Figure 6.1 and detailed in Appendix C.
Figure 6.1 Process for identifying the prioritizing Park Redevelopment Projects

Stage 1
Establish Candidate Parks
- Candidate parks must be 30 years old or more

Stage 2
Determine Priority Park Redevelopment Projects
- Redevelopment projects that meet any one or more of the four criteria will be included in the 10 Year capital Plan

Stage 3
Prioritizing Park Redevelopment Projects
- Redevelopment projects will be prioritized within the 10 Year Capital Plan based on the 4 considerations.

Criteria #1:
Has the park been expanded and/or reconfigured as a result of a land acquisition?

Criteria #2:
Has the land use, population density and/or demographics around the park significantly changed?

Criteria #3:
Is the redevelopment of the park financially prudent given the age of the park facilities, scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities and the current operations and maintenance demands of the park?

Criteria #4:
Will the redevelopment of the park assist in meeting the target service level for a particular park facility?

How many priority criteria (from Stage 2) does the project meet?

Does the timing related to scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities coincide with the redevelopment project?

Is there public support/demand for the redevelopment project?

Will the redevelopment facilitate stronger connections within the neighbourhood?
7.0
Making it all Happen

Acquisition of new parkland and cash-in-lieu of parkland will occur consistent with new development in Richmond Hill over the life of this Plan. Central to implementation efforts will be the passage of a park dedication by-law under the Planning Act. This By-law must provide the Town with the ability to collect both the land it needs and the cash it requires to enhance and repurpose existing parks over the next 20 years. There is no other source of funding for these purposes, other than property taxes.

Next steps also include the development of a Parkland Acquisition Strategy. The Parkland Acquisition Strategy will lay out, in a more precise fashion, where the Town will need to acquire the parkland needed as outlined in this Plan.

Continued monitoring of park and outdoor recreation needs consistent with the broader vision of this Plan will be required to inform the Town’s 10 Year Capital Forecast with regard to the development of new parks and the redevelopment and repurposing of others. Limited resources will require careful choices.
7.1 Parkland Dedication By-law

Sections 42 and 51 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990 allow municipalities to require that land be conveyed for park or other recreational purposes at a rate of two percent of the land for commercial or industrial development, and at a rate of five percent for all other development. Section 42 of the Act also provides the legislative framework for municipalities to require that land be conveyed to the municipality for park or other recreational purposes at an alternate rate of one hectare for each 300 dwelling units proposed, or at such lesser rate as may be specified in a by-law.

In lieu of the conveyance of land for park or other public recreational purposes, the Planning Act also gives municipalities the opportunity to require the payment of money equal to the value of the land otherwise required to be conveyed. Cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication payments are typically required where the conveyance of land would be too small to provide for a functioning park, the site is not in an area with a defined land need, or the development site is too small in size to achieve a reasonably sized park conveyance.

As set out in the Planning Act, cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds must be held in a dedicated reserve account and used either for the purchase of parkland, or for other park and recreational purposes. The use of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication for other park and recreational purposes is essential in order to fund needed capital investments in parks, which can not be funded by other sources (i.e., development charges). In intensifying areas, redeveloping and repurposing older parks, as well as adding new levels of service to the Town’s existing park system (e.g., Urban Squares and Linear Parks), will be just as important to meeting community needs as acquiring new land for parks. The Town will therefore need cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication for these purposes in addition to needing land/cash-in-lieu for land acquisition purposes. The parkland dedication rate required by the Town to fulfill its park needs up to the year 2031 therefore consists of both a raw land component (i.e., a parkland need) and an additional cash component (i.e., other park and recreational costs that do not have an alternative funding source).

*Land Needs:*

As summarized in Chapter 5, the Town needs to acquire an additional 67.3 hectares of parkland.
Cash Needs:

In addition to parkland acquisition, the Town also requires cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds for the following purposes:

1. To cover the component of new, growth-related park development and park redevelopment projects that is not otherwise funded.

2. To fund the cost of park development and recreation facility construction associated with service levels and park types that have not been part of the Town’s previous standards (e.g. the significant cost associated with the construction of Urban Squares).

Based on the Town’s 10 Year Capital Forecast, historical use of cash-in-lieu, and anticipated future park needs it is estimated that the Town will need approximately $45 million to cover the cash needs described above through to the year 2031.

Therefore, the amount of land or cash-in-lieu of land that should be funded from the parkland dedication by-law is equivalent to the cost of 67.3 hectares of land, plus $45 million. Based on current land values, the monetary value of total needs is estimated at $375 million. This will require a parkland dedication rate of 0.99 hectares per 300 dwelling units, based on a projected dwelling unit increase of 23,400 units between 2011 and 2031. Alternatively, this rate can be expressed in terms of a rate based on the Town’s projected population growth of 56,655 people between 2011 and 2031: 1.37 hectares per 1,000 people.

IT IS THE POLICY OF COUNCIL THAT:

1. The Town enact a park dedication by-law that utilizes the full alternate rate of 1 hectare per 300 dwelling units as provided for in the Planning Act, but recognizes the need to plan for parkland on a per capita basis.

2. The Town undertake a Parkland Acquisition Strategy that identifies where parkland can be acquired through the development approval process and where the Town will need to purchase parkland.

3. The Town monitor park and outdoor recreation needs and identify such needs in its 10 Year Capital Forecast.
Appendix A

Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis
Appendix A

Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis

Table of Contents

Appendix A Table of Contents .............................................................................................................................. 1

1.0 Outdoor Recreation Facilities .......................................................................................................................... 3

2.0 Soccer Fields .................................................................................................................................................. 5

3.0 Baseball Diamonds ....................................................................................................................................... 10

4.0 Tennis Courts ................................................................................................................................................. 15

5.0 Basketball Facilities .................................................................................................................................. 19

6.0 Splash Pads .................................................................................................................................................... 22

7.0 Playgrounds .................................................................................................................................................. 25

8.0 Fitness Equipment ....................................................................................................................................... 28

9.0 Community Allotment Gardens .................................................................................................................. 31

10.0 Skateboard/BMX Facilities ......................................................................................................................... 34

11.0 Off Leash Dog Areas ................................................................................................................................ 36

12.0 Picnic Areas ............................................................................................................................................... 38

13.0 Outdoor Skating Areas ............................................................................................................................... 41

14.0 Bocce Courts ......................................................................................................................................... 43

15.0 Other Outdoor Recreation Facilities ......................................................................................................... 44
1.0 Outdoor Recreation Facilities

This purpose of this appendix of the Parks Plan is to assess the Town's needs with respect to the various different types of outdoor recreation facilities and to establish a target provision level for each type of outdoor recreation facility. Facility types currently provided within the Town’s park system, as well as various other recreation facility types not presently offered by the Town (i.e., provided in other Ontario municipalities and/or requested by Town residents), are examined.

In this appendix, the Town’s needs with respect to each outdoor recreation facility type are assessed individually using the standard methodology described in Figure 1. The first step of the process seeks to understand the Town’s current situation through a summary of the Town’s existing inventory, a comparison of the Town’s current provision rate to that of other municipalities, and an examination of the current level of use of the Town’s existing inventory. The second step of the assessment is forward-looking and seeks to evaluate the future demand for each recreation facility type through an analysis of recreation and demographic trends, and a summary of input received through public consultation. Finally, the various factors influencing the Town’s current and future service provision are incorporated into an overall needs analysis, which supports the final recommendations for each facility type.

**Figure 1. Outdoor recreation facility needs assessment methodology**

Step 1 – Where are we now?
- Summary of existing inventory
- Municipal benchmarking of current Town provision rate and inventory
- Examination of current use of the Town’s current inventory

Step 2 – Where will we need to be in the Future?
- Analysis of future demand based on recreation and demographic trends
- Summary of public input

Step 3 – How do we get where we want to be?
- Needs assessment (comparison of where we are now to where we want to be)
- Recommended target provision rate

In reviewing the sections of this appendix it is important that benchmarking comparisons in particular are given appropriate weight within the overall needs assessment process. Benchmarking provision levels against those of other municipalities provides a general comparison, which is helpful in determining where the Town’s provision rate stands within the range of provision rates existing in other, comparable municipalities. Benchmarking, however, does not examine, or account for, differences in demand and use of the facilities amongst municipalities. When using benchmarking numbers as a comparator, local circumstances need to be carefully considered relative to those of other jurisdictions. The municipality doing the best job in providing services is not necessarily the one offering the highest service level; rather, it is the one most efficiently meeting the needs of its community. The methodology used herein therefore considers benchmarking in the initial stage of the process, as a means of evaluating the Town’s current situation, instead of in the second or third stage of the process, as a means of determining the level of service the Town should provide in the future.

The “household survey” referred to throughout this appendix was a random telephone survey of Richmond Hill residents conducted by Montieth Brown Planning Consultants in June/July 2012. The results of the survey are statistically significant +/- 5.19 times out of 20.
Table 1 provides a summary of the outdoor recreational facilities, which are currently provided within the Town’s park system, and which are individually assessed in sections 2 to 14. Section 15 of this appendix assesses whether or not the Town should be providing additional outdoor recreational facility types.

### Table 1. Existing Outdoor Recreational Facilities within the Town’s Parks System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreation Facility Type</th>
<th>Town Supply</th>
<th>Additional Comments/Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lit</td>
<td>Unlit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Fields</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Diamonds</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Facilities</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splash Pads</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>121$^2$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Fitness Stations</td>
<td>4 sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Allotment Gardens</td>
<td>1 site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboard Parks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Leash Dog Areas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permitted Picnic Areas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Skating Areas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ropes Course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Hockey/Multi-use Court</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bocce Courts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$All numbers include facilities which are currently in design or construction stages

$^2$ Total number of park sites with playgrounds
2.0 Soccer Fields

2.1 Existing Soccer Field Inventory

The Town’s existing inventory of soccer fields is illustrated on Map 1 and described in Table 2.

Details regarding the number of lit fields within the Town’s soccer field inventory are of importance since lit fields increase the level of service by providing additional permit opportunities. While a lit field can be permitted from 7:00 – 9:00 pm as well as from 9:00 – 11:00 pm, an unlit field can only be permitted during the early evening timeslot.

Table 2. Current Outdoor Soccer Field Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Type</th>
<th># of Fields</th>
<th>% of Overall Inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Fields</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Artificial Turf (lit)</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>32% 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (lit)</td>
<td>10**</td>
<td>68% 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (unlit)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Facility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Fields</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permitted School Board Fields</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (unlit)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total School Fields</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fields</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes the Richmond Green East field (currently being upgraded)
**Includes one field currently in design, expected to be constructed in 2013/2014

In Richmond Hill, soccer fields are considered to be Town-wide facilities (i.e., provision levels within individual neighbourhoods are not as important as the overall Town provision level) given that the need for participants to drive to facilities to play league games is unavoidable and generally accepted. However, in recognition of the geographic division between the two major soccer clubs in the Town, the Town has historically endeavoured to ensure adequate provision of fields within each of the two areas (Oak Ridges and Richmond Hill south of Gamble Road/19th Avenue). Since the north-south geographic division of playing fields helps to minimize drive times for members of both clubs, and therefore contributes toward environmental sustainability, it continues to remain appropriate for the Town to consider soccer field provision levels within each of the two areas.
Map 1
Soccer Fields

*This includes 13 fields that are permitted by the Town, but owned by the schoolboard.
2.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

There are currently 53 permitted soccer fields in Richmond Hill, which equates to an existing overall provision rate of one soccer field for every 3,500 residents. Table 3 compares the Town’s overall supply of soccer fields and its existing soccer field provision rate to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision rate to the lowest. It is important to note however, that the provision rates benchmarked for Vaughan, Oakville, Markham and Richmond Hill include numbers for school board soccer fields permitted by the municipalities. Richmond Hill’s provision rate for municipally owned and operated soccer fields is one field for every 4,500 residents.

Amongst the benchmark municipalities, Richmond Hill’s provision of soccer fields is just below the median when permitted school board sites are included; but is the lowest of all the municipalities when school board sites are not included. Richmond Hill however, has the highest proportion of lit fields of all the benchmark communities (32%).

Some municipalities (e.g., Vaughan) rotate one or more of their fields out of use each season for intensive maintenance and therefore, seasonal field provision levels in these municipalities are actually slightly lower than reflected in Table 3.

Table 3. Municipal Benchmarking of Soccer Field Provision Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th># of Permitted Soccer Fields</th>
<th>% Municipal Fields Lit</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaughanb</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakvilleb</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markhamb</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hillb</td>
<td>53c</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Provision rates (expressed as # of residents per facility) are rounded to the nearest hundred
b Permitted school sites are included for Markham, Oakville, Richmond Hill and Vaughan
c Includes one field currently in design, expected to be constructed in 2013/2014

2.3 Current Soccer Field Use

Of respondents to the household survey, 35% indicated that at least one member of their household had played soccer outdoors within the past 12 months (and 15% played soccer indoors within the past 12 months), confirming that soccer is the organized sport with the highest participation rate in Richmond Hill. Participation in soccer ranked sixth when compared to all types of outdoor recreation and leisure activities addressed in the survey (only walking/hiking, swimming, running/jogging, cycling and picnicking were more common activities).

Soccer fields in the Town are primarily permitted by the two major soccer clubs in the Town – the Richmond Hill Soccer Club and the Oak Ridges Soccer Club. Permitting statistics for Richmond Hill’s soccer field inventory for the month of July (peak permitting month) during the 2012 soccer season are summarized in Table 4. As indicated, all sizes of the Town’s soccer fields are utilized at near optimal rate (>70% of available time is booked) during prime time hours of the peak permitting season. Additional 2012 prime time demand for mini soccer fields in Oak Ridges was accommodated to some extent through use of three baseball diamond outfields as soccer practice sites. Soccer fields are permitted less frequently on weekends (43 – 76% of available time depending on field size) and are rarely booked on weekdays. The availability of soccer fields on weekends is largely due to the fact that the Oak Ridges Soccer Club does not currently schedule programming on Sundays.
Parks Operations and Maintenance staff have advised that there are currently maintenance challenges associated with the Town's soccer fields as a result of persistent, heavy use over the course of the playing season.

### Table 4. Richmond Hill Soccer Field Permitting Statistics for July 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diamond Type</th>
<th>Prime Time* Hrs Available</th>
<th>Prime Time Hrs Booked</th>
<th>**Weekend Hrs Available</th>
<th>Weekend Hrs Booked</th>
<th>***Weekday Hrs Available</th>
<th>Weekday Hrs Booked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit Senior</td>
<td>8 800</td>
<td>5 235 (60%)</td>
<td>9 856</td>
<td>3 917 (40%)</td>
<td>15 840</td>
<td>2 765 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlit Senior</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>262 (49%)</td>
<td>1 012</td>
<td>110 (11%)</td>
<td>1 980</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>4 600</td>
<td>2 316 (50%)</td>
<td>8 206</td>
<td>272 (3%)</td>
<td>15 840</td>
<td>807 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prime time hours – Lit: Mon.-Fri. 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm; Unlit: Mon.-Fri. 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
**Weekend hours – Lit: Sat.& Sun. 9:00 am to 11:00 pm; Unlit: Sat. & Sun. 9:00 am – 8:30 pm
***Weekday hours – Mon.-Fri. 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

### 2.4 Future Demand for Soccer Fields

Recreation trends suggest that interest in soccer has grown over the last decade and will continue to grow in the future. Both the Richmond Hill Soccer Club and the Oak Ridges Soccer Club have indicated that their participant numbers have grown steadily over the past three years at a rate approximately proportional to the Town’s overall population growth. Further, they anticipate that interest in participation will continue to grow in the future. Both clubs note that they have maintained registration waiting lists for at least the past three years, which suggests that growth in soccer participation may have outpaced overall population growth in the Town, if resources had been available to facilitate greater participation.

Age demographic trends in the Town, on the other hand, suggest that soccer participation rates may have reached a threshold or be levelling off in the near future. This is because the predominant age range of soccer participants falls between 4 and 18 years, and the rate of growth in the Town for these age cohorts is decreasing in relation to overall population growth (see Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2 of the Parks Plan).

### 2.5 Public Consultation

Of the household survey respondents, 32% indicated that they would support increased municipal expenditure on soccer fields (there was greater support for increased funding of 15 other facility types).

The Oak Ridges Soccer Club has indicated there is a need for additional soccer fields in the Oak Ridges Area. Specifically, they recommend more mini and micro fields as a first priority (however; it should be noted that senior and junior fields can be partitioned to form mini and micro fields respectively). The Oak Ridges Soccer Club has also indicated a desire for additional full fields and an artificial turf field to facilitate expansion of their programming for the 14 to 18 year old group. The Club’s preference would be for one large central facility with multiple fields where they could host tournaments and festivals.
The Richmond Hill Soccer Club had been vocal in past years regarding an anticipated future shortage of soccer fields in the Town, but has more recently conveyed a message of general satisfaction with the Town’s soccer field provision. This change in attitude is likely due to the recent upgrading of three of the Town’s senior facilities to artificial turf, the conversion of two baseball diamonds to soccer training facilities, and the addition of weekend – and specifically Sunday – sessions to the Club’s programming. While the Club is generally satisfied with the outdoor field provision in the Town, they have expressed a desire for a multi-field or large field indoor facility that would support year-round programming. The Richmond Hill Soccer Club has also indicated that their governing association has recently approved an expansion to the junior age category, which may increase the future demand for junior fields, with a corresponding decrease in their need for mini fields.

2.6 Needs Assessment

The expected increase of 56,655 people in the Town’s population by the year 2031 means that the Town will require an additional 12 soccer fields by 2031 to maintain its existing provision rate for municipal fields. However, Richmond Hill’s current Town-wide soccer field provision rate of approximately one field for every 4,500 residents (not including school board fields) seems to be slightly low, as evidenced by the following observations:

- Ongoing maintenance issues due to the heavy use of the fields;
- The current need for soccer clubs in the Town to limit registration on the basis of field availability;
- Town permitting data indicating that existing fields are booked at near maximum capacity during peak season prime hours;
- Recreation trends indicating that participation in soccer is expected to continue to grow;
- School board soccer fields account for a significant proportion of the soccer fields the Town permits (23%) and there is no guarantee that the school boards provision of soccer fields will increase at a rate proportional to growth; and
- Continued requests for additional fields made by soccer clubs (particularly the Oak Ridges Soccer Club at the present time).

The need for the Town to increase the soccer field provision rate is balanced to some extent by the fact that the proportion of the Town’s population in age groups most commonly participating in soccer is declining relative to the Town’s overall population.

2.7 Recommendations

- The Town should aim to increase its provision of municipal fields from 1 field for every 4,500 residents to 1 field for every 4,300 residents. This will require the construction of 14 new fields by 2031.
- The Town should augment its outdoor soccer field service level by lighting all senior fields and upgrading a lit, senior field in the Oak Ridges area to artificial turf.
3.0 Baseball Diamonds

3.1 Existing Baseball Diamond Inventory

The Town's existing inventory of baseball diamonds is illustrated on Map 2 and described in Table 5. Similar to soccer fields, diamond lighting significantly increases the level of service provided by essentially doubling permit opportunities during peak permitting hours.

In Richmond Hill, baseball diamonds are considered to be Town-wide facilities given the generally accepted need for league participants to drive to facilities to play games. While the distinction between the geographical ranges of the baseball leagues in the Town is not as clear as it is in the case of soccer, the Town endeavours to distribute diamonds proportionally between the Oak Ridges area and the remainder of Town in order to minimize driving times.

Table 5. Richmond Hill Baseball Diamond Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diamond Type</th>
<th># Diamonds</th>
<th>% Overall Inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Diamonds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Hardball (lit)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Softball (lit)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Softball (unlit)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Hardball</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Softball</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permitted School Board Diamonds</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

There are currently 44 permitted baseball diamonds in Richmond Hill, which equates to an existing overall provision rate of one baseball diamond for every 4,200 residents. Table 6 compares the Town’s overall supply of ball diamonds to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest, but it is important to note that Oakville, Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill include permitted school board diamonds in their inventories. When school board diamonds are not included in Richmond Hill’s inventory the Town’s provision rate is one diamond for every 4,800 residents.
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PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Map 2
Baseball Diamonds

*This includes 5 diamonds that are permitted by the Town, but owned by the schoolboard.
Table 6. Municipal Benchmarking of Ball Diamond Provision Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Ball Diamonds</th>
<th>% of diamonds which are lit</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakvilleb</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markhamb</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughanb</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hillb</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>7 200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Provision rates (expressed as # of residents per facility) are rounded to the nearest hundred
b Markham, Oakville, Richmond Hill and Vaughan include permitted school sites in their overall ball diamond inventory

Richmond Hill’s overall ball diamond provision level is just below the median in relation to the other six benchmark communities and remains in the same relative rank whether permitted school diamonds are included or not. With the exception of Brampton, Richmond Hill has the highest proportion of lit facilities within its inventory. As mentioned above, lighting significantly increases the level of service for individual ball diamonds by providing additional permit opportunities. A lit field can be permitted from 7:00 – 9:00 pm as well as from 9:00 – 11:00 pm, while an unlit field can only be permitted during the early evening timeslot.

3.3 Current Baseball Diamond Use

Only 14% of respondents to the household survey indicated that at least one member of their household has played some form of baseball within the past 12 months. This is the fifth lowest participation rate of the 21 individual parks and recreation activities that respondents were asked about directly through the survey (only organized interest programs, organized senior’s programs, football, rugby and skateboarding ranked lower).

In 2012, there were 14 groups/associations that booked multiple baseball diamonds on multiple nights of the week throughout the course of the entire ball season. An additional 10 groups/associations booked one field, for one night of the week, over the entire season. There were also some groups that booked fields for one time use over the 2012 season. The outfields of three junior baseball diamonds in Oak Ridges were permitted by the Oak Ridges Soccer Club as soccer practice sites, rather than being permitted for baseball use during the 2012 season.

Permitting statistics for Richmond Hill’s ball diamond inventory over the 2012 baseball season (22 weeks, May 7– October 7) are summarized in Table 7. The peak time for baseball permit bookings is during the months of June and July at the later prime permitting period (8:30 pm – 11:00 pm). The permit demand for lit senior softball diamonds exceeds diamond availability for these time slots specifically; but overall, senior softball diamonds were only booked 60% of the available prime time during the 2012 season.
Table 7. Richmond Hill Ball Diamond Permitting Statistics for the 2012 Playing Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diamond Type</th>
<th>Prime Time* Hrs Available</th>
<th>Prime Time Hrs Booked</th>
<th>**Weekend Hrs Available</th>
<th>Weekend Hrs Booked</th>
<th>***Weekday Hrs Available</th>
<th>Weekday Hrs Booked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit Senior</td>
<td>8 800</td>
<td>5 235 (60%)</td>
<td>9 856</td>
<td>3 917 (40%)</td>
<td>15 840</td>
<td>2 765 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlit Senior</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>262 (49%)</td>
<td>1 012</td>
<td>110 (11%)</td>
<td>1 980</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>4 600</td>
<td>2 316 (50%)</td>
<td>8 206</td>
<td>272 (3%)</td>
<td>15 840</td>
<td>807 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prime time hours – Lit: Mon.-Fri. 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm; Unlit: Mon.-Fri. 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm  
**Weekend hours – Lit: Sat. & Sun. 9:00 am to 11:00 pm; Unlit: Sat. & Sun. 9:00 am – 8:30 pm  
***Weekday hours – Mon.-Fri. 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Two diamonds (Chapman Park and the lit east diamond at Ozark Park), which meet the Town’s current design standard for senior-sized diamonds, can not be permitted to adults because adult use frequently results in balls being hit beyond the outfield. Permit data for the east Ozark diamond reveals that although the diamond is lit, it is not optimally permitted during the late permit slot (due to the fact that it is only used for junior play). During peak play season (May-August), the late time slot for the lit east diamond at Ozark Park was only booked 33 out of 81 times (40% of the available time).

While lit senior softball diamonds are in high demand, the Town’s supply of junior diamonds is notably underused. During the 2012 season, only one of the Town’s junior diamonds was reserved on a weekend and it was only reserved for Saturdays. Additionally, the Town is currently not permitting four sub-standard junior fields (not included in Table 7), which could be permitted if necessary. Three of these fields are considered “sub-standard” because there is no designated parking at the sites, while one is considered “sub-standard” due to grades in the outfield. The diamond at Hillcrest Heights is currently not permitted and does not have permitting potential given its location between two ravines and its extremely small size.

3.4 Future Demand for Baseball Diamonds

Over the past decade, use of the Town’s baseball diamonds has declined to the extent that the Town has reduced its baseball diamond service level over the course of the last five years through the conversion of diamonds to soccer practice facilities. Recreation trends suggest that while participation in baseball continues to decline amongst youth, adult participation in baseball is now remaining relatively steady (i.e. participation is increasing at a rate similar to the rate of increase of the adult 25 – 55 age group cohorts). Adult baseball is popular and expected to remain popular due to the fact that, in the case of softball and slo-pitch in particular, it is a sport that can be enjoyed by people with a wide range of athletic abilities and sporting experience. The Town’s largely commuter workforce has a significant impact on the future need for lit senior baseball diamonds as evidenced by the popularity of the later permitting time slots.
3.5 Public Consultation

The Oak Ridges Co-Ed Slo-Pitch League has indicated that they currently maintain a waiting list of potential participants whom they cannot accommodate due to lack of available senior diamonds. Similarly, participation in the York Region Men’s Slo-Pitch League is also limited due to lack of senior diamond availability. Both of these associations, as well as other baseball leagues operating in the Town have requested upgrades to diamond quality (e.g., increased diamond sizes, shade structures, additional waste and recycling bins, water access). Senior ball leagues have indicated a preference for the late evening permit times (available only at lit fields) as later playing times are better for participants who require significant time to commute home from work.

Only 14% of household survey respondents indicated they would support increased municipal expenditure on baseball or softball diamonds. Increased expenditure on baseball facilities received less support than all of the other 24 facility types, with the exception of cricket pitches. Attendees of the Youth Summit felt the Town’s parks contain too many baseball diamonds.

3.6 Needs Assessment

Community feedback, measured use of the Town’s existing diamonds, and recreational and demographic trends suggest that the Town’s current provision of junior softball diamonds (one diamond for every 8 800 residents, not including school board diamonds) is too high. By contrast, the same factors indicate that the Town’s current service level for senior softball diamonds (one diamond for every 10 300 residents) is slightly lower than desirable. Additionally, although some of the adult softball leagues (particularly the Oak Ridges Co-Ed Slo-Pitch League and the York Region Men’s Slo-Pitch League) perceive that diamond shortages limit their registration numbers, the analysis of permit data shows that lit senior softball diamonds were only booked 60% of the available prime time during the 2012 season. This suggests that more efficient diamond booking and league game scheduling could help to alleviate some concerns about senior diamond shortages. It is however recognized that preferences for late permit time slots (due to the Town’s large commuter population) are at least partly responsible for the perceived lack of diamond availability.

Overall, evidence indicates that the Town’s current baseball diamond provision rate is actually slightly high. A more suitable target provision rate can be achieved by eliminating the five diamonds, which are not currently being permitted, from the Town’s inventory. This would result in a target provision rate of approximately one diamond for every 5 500 residents and would mean that the Town would need to add 5 new diamonds to its inventory by 2031 and upgrade the 5 diamonds that are not currently permitted (or replace them).

A target provision rate of one diamond for every 5 500 residents, without further adjustments to the diamond inventory, would still leave underutilized junior diamonds in the inventory. A rebalancing of the reduced provision rate is therefore also necessary so that the senior diamond provision rate is increased, while the junior diamond provision rate is decreased. In particular, the Towns ball diamond inventory should contain closer to 44% of both junior and senior softball diamonds, rather than the existing 51% to 36% proportion.

Concerns about ball diamond sizes heard through public consultation, as well as the fact that some of the Town’s senior diamonds cannot be used for adult play, provides evidence for the need to re-evaluate the Town’s design standards for diamond sizes.
3.7 Recommendations

- Town design standards for baseball diamonds should be reviewed and updated to bring field sizes into conformity with national standards (e.g., NSA Canada).

- The Town should target an overall baseball diamond service level of one diamond for every 5 500 residents, while rebalancing its baseball diamond inventory so that it contains closer to an equal proportion of junior and senior softball diamonds. This will require the construction of 5 new diamonds, and the upgrade or replacement of the 5 diamonds which are currently not permitted, by 2031.

4.0 Tennis Courts

4.1 Existing Tennis Court Inventory

The Town's existing inventory of tennis courts is illustrated on Map 3 and described in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Type</th>
<th># Courts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lit Colour-Coated Asphalt (Club)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lit Colour-Coated Asphalt (Public)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlit Colour-Coated Asphalt</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lit Asphalt</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlit Asphalt</td>
<td>24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*includes two courts currently being constructed at Tannery Park

4.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 9 compares the Town's overall supply of tennis courts to that of six other comparable municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Number of Tennis Courts</th>
<th>Club Courts¹ (% of Total)</th>
<th>Colour-coated Courts (% of Total)</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>68 (50%)</td>
<td>136 (100%)</td>
<td>1 542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
<td>15 (19%)</td>
<td>2 363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>31 (39%)</td>
<td>2 349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>15 (19%)</td>
<td>15 (19%)</td>
<td>3 864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30 (53%)</td>
<td>30 (53%)</td>
<td>4 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25 (64%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4 507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>9 033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Courts located on municipal land, but Club membership required for use at certain times
²Estimated based on 70 courts for which surface type is known
³Includes 2 clay courts
 Disclaimer
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PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Map 3

The number of tennis courts at each site is indicated by the number within each point. 

- Waterbody
- Parkland
- Club Operated Court
- Public Court
Richmond Hill’s tennis court provision rate ranks just over the median in relation to the six benchmark municipalities. Richmond Hill’s tennis court inventory has one of the lowest percentages of club courts — although this means that the Town has one of the highest percentage of courts which are available for public use at all times it also means that there is a low level of organized tennis available to assist in building interest in the sport and helping to increase usage of courts.

With regard to court surface material, the municipalities surveyed range widely in terms of the percentage of their tennis court inventory with colour-coated asphalt. Mississauga colour coats all of its tennis courts, while Oakville colour coats only its club-operated courts. Richmond Hill falls in the middle of the range, with 31% of its court inventory being colour-coated.

4.3 Current Tennis Court Use

The Town permits its outdoor tennis courts for commercial use purposes (i.e., private tennis lessons). Over the 2012 summer season, courts at four different Town parks (Silver Streams Park, Newberry Park, Mount Pleasant Park and Bayview Hill Park) were permitted for a total of approximately 2 100 hours. The majority of permit use of courts falls within the weekday morning and early evening (i.e., 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.) time slots. Two of the courts at Bayview Hill Park are booked during weekday business hours during July and August for use by the Town’s Summer Camp program.

Town Parks Operations and Maintenance staff note that courts at David Hamilton Park, Newberry Park and Mount Pleasant Park are very heavily used on weekday evenings.

The tennis courts at David Hamilton Park are available for public use during the summer. During the winter months, the Blackmore Tennis Club installs a dome over these courts to facilitate club use (in accordance with an agreement between the Town and the Club). Courts at Crosby Park are predominantly used by Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club, but are made available for general public use on a regular/daily basis over the course of the summer season.

Of respondents to the household survey, 29% indicated that at least one member of their household has played tennis within the past 12 months. This is one of the higher participation rates of the various types of parks and recreation activities surveyed (ranking 8th out of the 21 activities specifically asked about).

4.4 Future Demand for Tennis Courts

Tennis has historically been a popular sport in Richmond Hill and is expected to remain popular given the strong participation rate determined through the household survey and membership rates reported by the tennis clubs in Richmond Hill (the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club for example indicates it has experienced a 33% increase in club membership between 2009 and 2012).

4.5 Public Consultation

A fairly consistent theme evident from the public consultation results was that Richmond Hill should seek to improve the quality of its existing tennis courts, before constructing additional courts. Responses to the on-line survey included more comments about quality of the Town’s outdoor tennis courts than about anything else. A total of 36% of household survey respondents indicated they would support increased municipal expenditure on outdoor tennis courts.
The Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club has suggested that tennis courts at community parks (where there is parking, lighting and multiple courts) should be upgraded to colour-coated asphalt and that the surfacing of all courts in the Town needs to be maintained more frequently and to an increased standard (i.e., courts need to be resurfaced as soon as cracks form because cracks severely impact play). The Club has also indicated that they have outgrown the facility at Crosby and would like an additional large outdoor tennis facility (6-9 courts with a clubhouse) in the Town, which they could use for leagues, lessons, programs and public access.

The Town has also received requests that practice boards be included at tennis courts.

### 4.6 Needs Assessment

With the exception of club-managed courts, tennis courts are neighbourhood facilities and therefore should be distributed across the Town in approximate proportion with neighbourhood populations.

Within its inventory of courts fully accessible to the public (i.e., not including the courts that are managed by the tennis club), the Town currently has a much higher proportion of regular asphalt tennis courts (48 out of 67, 72%) in comparison to colour-coated asphalt courts (19 out of 67, 28%). Additionally, the proportion of colour-coated courts in the Town's overall tennis court inventory (i.e., including both club and public courts) is lower than that in other municipalities. Given theses inventory statistics, as well as the public input regarding the Town's tennis court inventory (comments received through both the Parks and Recreation Plans community engagement process and prior to the initiation of the master planning process), a more equal allocation of the two court types seems highly desirable. The need for indoor tennis facilities will be assessed through the Recreation Plan.

The increase in tennis court quality could be balanced by a slight decrease in the Town's overall tennis court provision level. As has been pointed out by the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club single and dual courts at Neighbourhood Parks are typically only used by residents in the immediate vicinity of the park given that others can not accurately predict availability of the courts. Once single and double courts are equitably distributed across the Town, the need for additional courts focuses on high quality, multi-court facilities that residents drive to in order to be guaranteed a good playing surface and court availability. The Town’s current tennis court provision level of approximately one court for every 2 400 residents could therefore be reduced slightly to provide for the provision of a greater proportion of higher quality (i.e., colour-coated surface), lit courts with practice boards. To achieve a target tennis court provision rate of one court for every 2 700 residents (which would maintain Richmond Hill’s existing position amongst the benchmark communities) the Town would need to construct 12 additional tennis courts by the year 2031.

### 4.7 Recommendations

- The Town should aim to provide a more equal proportion and distribution of colour-coated asphalt vs. regular asphalt courts within each neighbourhood (i.e., major concession block). In general, the courts at one park in each block (preferably a Community Park, where there are 4 or more lit courts and parking is available) should have colour-coated surfaces and practice boards. This will mean changing the surface material of courts at a number of sites when the court surface is scheduled for replacement.

- The Town should target a tennis court provision level of approximately one facility for every 2 700 residents. This would require the construction of 12 new courts by 2031.

- The Town should continue discussions with the Richmond Hill Lawn Tennis Club to determine the feasibility of providing a new indoor/outdoor facility (9-16 courts) for the Club to use in partnership with the Town (pending the outcome of the Recreation Plan), or provide a second Club facility approximately the same size as the existing facility at Crosby Park.
5.0 Basketball Facilities

5.1 Existing Basketball Facility Inventory

The Town’s existing inventory of basketball courts is illustrated Map 4 and summarized in Table 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basketball Facility Type</th>
<th># of Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills Areas</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ Court</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Court</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 11 compares the Town’s overall supply of basketball facilities to that of six other comparable municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest. Outdoor basketball facilities have been benchmarked based on the number of sites containing basketball facilities, rather than the number of facilities themselves. The use of sites in the benchmarking exercise was necessary in order to provide a reasonable comparison, as there are a number of different types of basketball facilities and not all municipalities track inventory of the various types, nor do all municipalities provide the same range of types. In Richmond Hill, the number of sites with basketball facilities (Table 11) appears less than the total number of basketball facilities (see Table 10) because some sites have more than one facility or facility type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of sites with Basketball Facilities</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Site)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4 418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10 192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24 948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The benchmark municipalities vary widely in terms of their outdoor basketball facility service level. Richmond Hill’s service level is very similar to that of Vaughan, but is much higher than that of the other municipalities.
Map 4
Basketball Courts
5.3 **Current Basketball Facility Use**

Of respondents to the household survey, 25% indicated that at least one member of their household has played basketball within the past 12 months ranking basketball participation right in the middle of the various types of parks and recreation activities surveyed.

Parks Operations and Maintenance staff have commented that overall, outdoor basketball facilities in the Town’s parks are well used. Full basketball courts tend to be particularly well used (e.g., Newberry Park) and are more likely to generate issues associated with heavy use such as noise issues, garbage and litter, cars parked on streets and associated complaints from residents.

Basketball facilities on school sites supplement the Town’s inventory.

5.4 **Future Demand for Basketball Courts**

Youth ages 14 to 24 are the most common users of basketball facilities. Although the proportion of the Town’s population represented by youth is decreasing (See Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2.0 of the Parks Plan), it is difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of whether this trend will impact use of basketball facilities given that we do not have a good understanding of the use of these facilities at the present time.

5.5 **Public Consultation**

Public consultation for the Parks and Recreation Plans resulted in very few comments specifically about the Town’s outdoor basketball facilities. One Launch Event attendee requested basketball facilities at David Hamilton Park, another noted that “some basketball courts are too small,” and the Town received one telephone request for basketball facilities within the Jefferson Forest area (north of 19th Avenue, east of Yonge Street).

Attendees of the Youth Summit indicated that basketball facilities should be components of both indoor youth centres and youth-friendly parks. Several respondents to the on-line survey indicated a need for more youth facilities particularly in the Oak Ridges area.

Of household survey respondents, 34% indicated that they would support increased municipal expenditure on outdoor basketball facilities.

5.6 **Needs Assessment**

Basketball facilities are recreational facilities that residents should be able to walk to within their own neighbourhood, and therefore, courts should be distributed across the Town in approximate proportion with neighbourhood populations. The distribution of full courts (vs. skills areas and half courts) should also be relatively equal across the Town to provide youth with better ability to play full games, should they desire to do so.

Historically, the Town has endeavoured to maximize the availability of active play and recreational facilities in its parks, which has contributed to Richmond Hill’s relatively high basketball facility service level (since basketball facilities require only small spaces compared to other facility types). Tri-hoop skills courts in particular work very well in small spaces while allowing for three separate groups to play at the same time.
Overall requests for additional youth facilities suggest that the Town should target a basketball facility provision rate similar to its existing provision level. Maintenance of the Town’s current outdoor basketball provision level of one facility for every 4,500 residents would require construction of basketball facilities at 13 additional locations to accommodate the Town’s expected population growth of 56,655 by the year 2031.

5.7 Recommendations
- The Town should maintain its existing basketball facility service level of approximately one facility for every 4,500 residents. This would require the construction of basketball facilities at 13 additional sites by 2031.
- Full basketball courts should be evenly distributed across the Town and should be strategically placed to ensure that they are in appropriate locations to minimize disturbance to neighbouring residents.

6.0 Splash Pads

6.1 Existing Splash Pad Inventory
The Town currently has 11 splash pads and is in the process of designing/building 2 additional splash pad facilities to serve the Town’s current population. The location of these 13 splash pads is illustrated on Map 5.

6.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking
Table 12 compares the Town’s overall supply of splash pads to that of six other comparable municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Splash Pads</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>14,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>87,319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes Lake Wilcox Park and Block 16 Community Park sites, which are currently being designed and are expected to be constructed in 2013/2014

The Town of Richmond Hill currently has the second highest level of provision for splash pads in comparison with the other seven benchmark communities (only Oakville currently has a higher provision rate). In reviewing the benchmarking of municipal splash pads, a number of factors that influence the usefulness of this data should be considered. First, in comparison to other outdoor recreation facility types, municipal provision of splash pads is relatively new (e.g., Richmond Hill’s first splash pad constructed in the mid-1990’s). As a result, current provision rates are not necessarily reflective of the targeted municipal provision rates. Secondly, one of the main reasons municipalities began constructing splash pads was to reduce demand for stand-alone outdoor swimming pools which are high cost, labour intensive facilities; however, many municipalities still maintain a limited inventory of outdoor pools in addition to their splash pads. Richmond Hill does not have any public outdoor pools.
6.3 Current Splash Pad Use
As would be expected, use of the Town’s splash pads is heavily weather dependant, but all splash pads are well-used during the hot summer months.

6.4 Future Demand for Splash Pads
Splash pads are expected to continue to be popular facilities in the future. Further, in following with recent interest in designing splash facilities to appeal to residents across a wider age range, demand for splash pads within the Town may increase. Demand for splash facilities from older residents will be heavily contingent upon creativity in design, function and placement.

6.5 Public Consultation
During the Parks and Recreation Plans community engagement process several participants indicated their opinion that the Town should have more splash pads (Launch Event – 2, Online Survey – 3, Telephone Survey – 50% of the households interviewed indicated support for additional municipal spending on splash pads). Additionally, Staff receive requests for additional splash pads on a fairly regular basis over the course of the year, particularly when people call to ask about the timing for the construction of a new park or during the open houses associated with new park design and construction projects.

Splash pads, indoor swimming pools and outdoor swimming pools all ranked among the types of facilities for which residents are most willing to increase municipal funding (positive responses were received from 49%, 49% and 42% of household survey respondents for these facility types respectively).

6.6 Needs Assessment
Outdoor swimming pools serve a similar, although not identical, recreational role to splash pads; however, there are currently no public outdoor swimming pools in the Town of Richmond Hill.

A target provision rate of one splash pad per planning district with a residential population >10 000 would be reasonable for the Town for a couple of reasons. First, the grid structure of Richmond Hill essentially establishes neighbourhood boundaries in the Town, therefore this service level would ensure that all neighbourhoods are treated equitably from a walking distance perspective. Second, this target makes sense on a population basis as it would maintain the existing service level of approximately one splash pad for every 14 000 residents over the 10 year planning horizon. The target would establish a requirement of 17 splash pads (4 new splash pads, plus the 2 already in design/construction) by 2031, at which time the Town’s population is projected to be 242 200. The resulting 2031 provision rate would be 1 splash pad for every 14 463 residents (close to the existing service level of 1 splash pad for every 14 272 residents).

The existing splash pads in Richmond Hill are designed to appeal to young children, but a more recent trend in recreation and leisure service provision has been to design water facilities to include more sophisticated aquatic play features that appeal to both children and adults. The City of Toronto, for example, has several splash pads in urban parks, which support multi-generational use (e.g., Dundas Square, Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Commons). Given the high level of public support for water-related recreational facilities in Richmond Hill and the lack of outdoor public pools in the Town, splash pads that target a broader range of users may be appropriate at some locations in the Town. Additionally, the Town should consider the feasibility of providing an indoor/outdoor pool (i.e., a pool that has both an outdoor component and an indoor component that can be opened to the outside during summer months) at any new community centres that are built, particularly in North Leslie where a splash pad already exists at Richmond Green.
Map 5
Splash Pads

This includes Lake Wilcox Park and Block 16 Community Park sites, which are currently being designed and are expected to be constructed in 2013/2014.
The traditional style splash pads designs are preferably sited in community parks (where there are washroom and/or changerooms available) and in proximity to permitted picnic areas (as it is common for groups booking picnic locations to request a site near a splash pad).

Operations and Maintenance staff have expressed concerns about the electricity use and labour intensive upkeep associated with recycling of water at the Town’s water play facilities.

6.7 Recommendations

- The Town should aim to maintain its current splash pad service level of 1 facility for every 14 000 residents, which would require the construction of 4 new splash pads by 2031 (in addition to the 2 planned facilities, which are already being designed).
- Splash pad designs that target multi-generational use should be investigated and implemented where appropriate (e.g., the Civic Precinct, downtown, Lake Wilcox Park).
- The Town should further consider the feasibility of providing an indoor/outdoor swimming pool at any new community centres being constructed.
- The current practice of recycling water in water play facilities should be further investigated through a full cost-benefit analysis, which assesses the full ecological footprint associated with water recycling, now that the Town has some experience in operating and maintaining such facilities.

7.0 Playgrounds

7.1 Existing Playground Inventory

The Town currently has 203 play structures at 121 parks. There are four types of playgrounds constructed in the Town, classified as follows: junior, senior, combination junior/senior and adventure. The location of these facilities is illustrated on Map 6. The playground at Crosby Park is fully accessible and modelled on the principles of inclusive-design.

7.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 13 compares the Town’s overall supply of playground facilities to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Play Structures</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>2765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Town of Richmond Hill currently has the highest population-based provision level for playgrounds in comparison with the other six benchmark communities. It should be noted, however, that municipalities traditionally evaluate their playground service level in terms of walking distance from residential properties as opposed to the per capita rate. Mississauga and Oakville both have a target parkland service radius of 800 metres without crossing a major barrier. Vaughan has a 500 metre target service radius and Markham has a 400 metre target service radius.

7.3 Current Playground Use and Future Demand

It is very difficult to gauge the use of playgrounds. Based on feedback received at park design open houses it is clear that many residents of Richmond Hill expect to be able to walk to a playground in their own neighbourhood. Staff frequently receive calls from residents of new subdivisions inquiring about when the playground for their neighbourhood will be constructed. Although demographic trends demonstrate a decline in Richmond Hill’s youngest age cohorts for which playgrounds are constructed, there will continue to be a need to provide playgrounds within walking distance of residential properties.

7.4 Public Consultation

Playgrounds were rarely mentioned during the Parks and Recreation Plans community engagement process; however, respondents to the household telephone survey indicated support for increased expenditure on playgrounds more frequently than anything other than natural parks and open spaces. Additionally, the need for shade over play structures in new parks (without adequate tree cover) was consistently expressed at public consultation events.

7.5 Needs Assessment

Playgrounds, particularly at the neighbourhood-scale, serve a central and essential role within communities. They provide play space for children as well as facilities around which parents and care-givers meet and interact. Residents expect, and should be provided with, access to playgrounds within a short walking distance from their homes. The Town’s 400 metre walking distance target service level for playgrounds therefore continues to remain appropriate.

Shade for parks, and for playgrounds in particular, is of increasing importance to residents of Richmond Hill. Through various avenues of communication, residents have indicated that, in choosing playgrounds to utilize with their children, the availability of shade over the playground is the second most important factor (after proximity to their home) they consider. There are currently very few shaded playgrounds in the Town (only those in the Town’s older parks, with mature trees, are shaded at all). The Town should therefore investigate and test (through installation in parks lacking natural shade) various types of new tension shade structures that are now available on the market. New Community Parks should also include gazebos/shade shelters in close proximity to playgrounds to provide supervising parents and care-givers shelter from the sun as well. The campusing of gazebos/shade shelters with playgrounds will also assist in enhancing the Town’s provision of picnic areas as discussed in Section 12.

In determining the type of playground (i.e., junior, senior, combination or adventure) to be installed in new parks, consideration should be given to existing equipment in the vicinity (including the type of structure in nearby Town parks and on school board properties). In general, standard junior and senior equipment should be installed in Local Parks, custom/standard junior, senior and adventure equipment should be installed in Community Parks, and custom educational/imagine play equipment should be installed in Parkettes where there are already standard equipment types within 400 metres.
7.6 Recommendations
- The Town should continue to provide playgrounds within walking distance (400 metres) of residential properties.
- The Town should install tension shade structures over new playgrounds in Community Parks, which do not have natural shade.

8.0 Fitness Equipment

Outdoor fitness equipment is sturdy cardiovascular and weight-training machinery, which is constructed to withstand extreme temperatures and other weather events. It can be installed in clusters, or individual pieces of equipment can be positioned along a linear route or loop to create a training circuit. The equipment is a relatively new type of recreation and physical training facility being installed in municipal parks across North America.

8.1 Existing Fitness Equipment Inventory

The Town currently has fitness equipment installed in four parks. In two of these parks (Toll Bar Park and Dove Park), the fitness stations were designed specifically for use by soccer clubs as training facilities. More recently, fitness stations, which are intended for use by older adults in the local community, were installed in Dorothy Price Park on a pilot basis. The design for Laurentian Park (construction expected to be completed in 2013) includes fitness stations for adults largely as a result of requests from residents of the neighbourhood. The location of the Town’s existing outdoor fitness equipment is illustrated on Map 7.

8.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Of the six benchmark municipalities being used for the Parks Plan, Vaughan, Brampton and Mississauga have installed outdoor fitness equipment. Additional benchmark research has found that many other municipalities in Ontario have begun to install outdoor fitness equipment within their parks, including Toronto, Oshawa, Newmarket, Hamilton, Pettawawa and Middlesex Centre. Over 80 open-air “Fitness Zone locations” have been built in American cities such as Los Angeles, Denver, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans and Newark, New Jersey. Since outdoor fitness equipment has only recently become available, most municipalities have installed it at only one or two sites to date; however, many of those contacted indicated that the equipment is very popular and that they are receiving requests to install it at additional sites.

8.3 Current Fitness Equipment Use and Future Demand

Outdoor fitness stations are supported and advocated by a number of different organizations including the Trust for Public Land, which launched a “Fitness Zone” project specifically to encourage the construction of more of these facilities in 2010, and various health professionals including physicians and epidemiologists. These facilities have quickly gained widespread support across North America since they are seen as an effective mechanism for helping to combat obesity issues because they make exercise enjoyable and easily accessible to everyone in the community.

Of respondents to the household survey, 34% indicated they had participated in aerobics, fitness or weight training within the last 12 months (this was the sixth most commonly embarked upon type of park and recreation activity). Also, fitness activities were one of the five recreational activities that residents most commonly indicated that their household regularly pursued outside of Richmond Hill (2% of household survey respondents).
General observations from a number of Town staff indicate that the equipment at Dorothy Price Park is being used regularly (particularly by local seniors). The proposals to install fitness equipment in both Laurentian Park and Dorothy Price Park were very well received by residents when they were presented at the design open houses for these parks.

Demographic data suggests that Richmond Hill’s population is aging and therefore there is a need to provide additional recreational opportunities and facilities for adults and seniors, who want to remain active.

### 8.4 Public Consultation

Fitness activities ranked among the top five activity types that household survey respondents indicated they would like to see offered in Richmond Hill. Additionally, the desire for the Town to provide increased variety and better choice of unstructured recreation facilities within parks was a common theme heard across all of the consultation activities. Specific requests for more outdoor fitness equipment in the Town’s parks were made at the Launch Event and the Youth Summit consultation events held for the Parks and Recreation Plans, including a specific request for adult fitness stations at Harrington Park.

### 8.5 Needs Assessment

The results of the survey and public consultation exercise indicate that there is a recognizable demand for outdoor fitness equipment in the Town’s parks. Trends in recreation and leisure are also highly supportive of this type of facility. The versatility and small size of fitness stations also makes them a very appealing option for increasing the variety of facilities within parks and making individual parks more multi-functional – a common theme of responses from public consultation. Fitness equipment would be an appropriate addition to Community Parks, Local Parks and Linear Parks.

The inclusion of outdoor fitness equipment to the Town’s inventory of outdoor recreational facilities is consistent with the following Town strategic goals and objectives:

- **Stronger connections in Richmond Hill**
  - Respond to the changing needs of the community through adapting services and programs

- **Better choice in Richmond Hill**
  - Develop and promote a range of organized and informal sports, recreation and culture programs with an emphasis on alternatives that people will use throughout their lives.

### 8.6 Recommendation

- Outdoor fitness equipment should be installed in Town parks. Efforts should be made to distribute such equipment evenly across the Town and priority locations should be determined based on public demand/support for such facilities. Since the Town is just beginning to establish a service level for this facility type it would appropriate to install it at one location within each of the Town’s major concession blocks.
Map 7
Other Recreational Facilities

Map 7
Other Recreational Facilities

*The number within each point represents the number of bocce courts at each site

PARKS PLAN – APPENDIX A / FITNESS EQUIPMENT • 30
### 9.0 Community Allotment Gardens

#### 9.1 Existing Community Allotment Inventory

Community allotment gardens are large garden beds divided into plots. The individual plots are then leased, rented or loaned for a period of time (yearly or by growing season) to individuals for non-commercial gardening (food and other plants). Each user is responsible for maintaining his or her own plot, while common areas, water and tools are shared amongst everyone and are generally maintained by the landowner or group appointed to manage the garden.

The Town currently operates one community allotment garden at Phyllis Rawlinson Park (Map 7). The total area of the allotment garden is 0.1 hectares (30.5 metres by 30.5 metres). Ancillary amenities provided at the garden include 3 water tanks, watering containers, one bench and an information kiosk. The garden has 25 full plots (6 metres by 6 metres in size) or 50 half plots (6 metres by 3 metres in size).

The Town’s Parks Operations and Maintenance Division undertakes annual maintenance at the garden including:

- Filling the on-site water tanks as needed;
- Providing woodchips to gardeners;
- Mowing surrounding and immediate areas next to the garden plots;
- Preparing garden plots in the spring including tilling and plot layout.

The Town’s Natural Environment Section is responsible for the administration of the community garden and facilitates garden plot allotment, offering workshops in collaboration with Evergreen and responding to concerns from garden users throughout the season.

#### 9.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 14 compares the Town’s provision of community allotment gardens to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest. It should be noted that only gardens on municipal lands are included in the table. There are community allotment gardens on private lands in many municipalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Community Allotment Gardens</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60 840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>175 779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>178 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>185 545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3 Current Community Allotment Garden Use and Future Demand

The community allotment garden at Phyllis Rawlinson Park was completely full during the 2011 and 2012 seasons. During the 2012 season, sixteen families that wanted a plot at the existing garden could not be accommodated and were placed on a waiting list.

Community allotment gardens offer an avenue for both environmental stewardship and active participation in facilitating local, community-led production of fresh and healthy food. With growing support for urban agriculture and community building activities, the demand for gardens is expected to expand accordingly.

Experience in other municipalities has demonstrated that demands for community gardens rise as population densities increase and a larger segment of the population lives in high-rise condominium and apartment buildings where residents do not have their own private outdoor garden or yard. It should be noted however, that the most successful community gardens are those which are established in response to grassroots organization and demand for the facility. A core group of individuals committed to the ongoing use and operation of an allotment garden is essential to sustainability of the garden over time.

9.4 Public Consultation

In the summer of 2012, a public survey was conducted to determine if Richmond Hill residents are interested in having more community gardens established throughout the Town and what services they would like to see them provide. The public survey was advertised for 3 weeks from July 27th to August 17th and 110 people responded to the survey.

Below is a summary of the survey results:

- 110 individuals responded to the survey
- 90% of respondents indicated that they have never rented a community garden plot before
- 43% of respondents were between the ages of 45 to 65 years
- 23% of respondents live in a condo or apartment, 13% in a town home and 64% in a single detached or semi-detached home
- The top three reasons identified by survey participants for leasing a plot were: to eat healthier, be able to grow their own food, and to feel better about where their food comes from
- The top two places where survey participants would like to see new community gardens established are in municipal parks and within community center grounds
- 40% of respondents indicated that Phyllis Rawlinson Park is a good location for a community garden, while 23.8% felt it wasn’t and 36.2% were unsure
- Survey participants were presented with a list of parks and were asked to consider which ones they thought would be the best place to accommodate a community garden. Richmond Green Community Park selected as the number one choice, followed by Harding Park and very close behind was Town Park. Also worth noting is that 49% survey participants indicated that Lake Wilcox Park would not be a good place to accommodate a community garden
- Other sites suggested by survey participants include: fire halls, upper Richmond Hill/Oak Ridges, undeveloped rail lands (at Yonge Street and 16th Avenue by the condos), Richvale in the ravine, heritage farm properties, roof tops, Elgin West Community Centre, Hillcrest Heights Park, and Langstaff Community Park
- 50% of survey participants identified that they would be willing to travel up to 5 km to a community garden, 40% where willing to travel 5 to 10 km
55% of respondents indicated that they would prefer raised plot gardens, 45% preferred in ground

The top three garden amenities survey participants would like available at a community garden are water, compost and a fence around the garden for security. Of lesser importance were mulch, gardening tools and workshops, and

The most common unsolicited concern that survey participants identified about community allotment gardens was theft and vandalism.

9.5 Needs Assessment

The development and establishment of community gardens in Richmond Hill is supported by the Town’s Official Plan (2010) through policies focusing on local food production:

3.2.3.9 - The Town encourages the growing of produce through urban agriculture, including communal gardens.

3.2.3.10 - High density residential development shall be encouraged to provide permanent and viable growing space with solar access and related facilities such as rainwater harvesting systems and storage areas for tools.

Community gardens meet Richmond Hill’s Strategic Plan goal of building stronger connections in Richmond Hill serving as a common place where the local community can meet and connect on a regular basis to socialize and share knowledge and food. Community gardens also satisfy the Strategic Plan goal of managing our resources wisely by growing and supporting the production of local food.

Based on the information gained through public consultation, interviews with staff and agencies, benchmarking research and general observations made throughout the garden season, several common themes and directions have been identified with respect to the current garden located at Phyllis Rawlinson Park and future community garden needs throughout the Town. The following is a summation of these common themes and directions:

- Community gardens need be located close to people and neighbourhoods where access to outdoor gardening space is limited. For example, in high density neighbourhoods and close to condominium complexes;
- The preferred location for communities garden is close to public transit and along a main aerial road (like Yonge Street);
- The preferred location for community gardens is on public land;
- Garden’s should be located in an area that is less conducive to weed encroachment – the current garden location at Phyllis Rawlinson Park, being a natural setting, presents a very challenging gardening experience, especially for new gardeners;
- Raised plots and in ground garden plots are both equally preferred gardening options;
- Access to municipal running water is essential and preferred compared to water tanks that have to be refilled regularly;
- Compost is one of the most essential items needed for a successful garden;
- Theft and vandalism are a major concerns for community gardeners.
9.6 Recommendations

- The Town would benefit from a community garden policy that defines how new gardens are established on Town-owned land. The policy should identify the criteria that must be met for potential sites to be considered.
- Community feedback indicates that the existing allotment garden (currently at Phyllis Rawlinson Park) should be relocated to a more central location in Richmond Hill, in proximity to a high-density neighbourhood. Sites to consider include: Richmond Green, Harding Park, Town Park, Hillcrest Heights, fire halls etc.
- The Town should explore options for the provision of community allotment gardens in proximity to mixed-use and multi-unit developments.
- The current allotment garden at Phyllis Rawlinson Park should be maintained at its current service level until decisions about future gardens have been made.

10.0 Skateboard/BMX Facilities

10.1 Existing Skateboard Park Inventory

The Town currently has one skateboard and BMX facility located at Richmond Green. An additional facility is approved to be constructed in the youth area at Lake Wilcox Park, pursuant to the Oak Ridges Community Centre and Park Master Plan.

10.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 15 compares the Town’s overall supply of skateboard/BMX facilities to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Skateboard Parks</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>87,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>104,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>185,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>301,709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amongst the benchmark communities, Richmond Hill currently has one of the lowest population-based provision rates for skateboard facilities. Even with the construction of the new skateboard facility at Lake Wilcox Park, the Town’s provision level of one facility for every 92,773 residents will remain below the median of the benchmark communities.

The benchmarking numbers presented in Table 15 do not consider the size or design features of the individual facilities in each municipality. Size of the various facilities in particular varies widely from small neighbourhood-scale facilities to large facilities intended to serve users throughout the jurisdiction.
10.3 Current Skateboard Park Use and Future Demand

The existing skateboard and BMX facility in the Town at Richmond Green is not easily accessible to most residents/youth, as they must either find a ride to the facility, bicycle or take transit to get there. Youth participating in the Parks and Recreation Plans Youth Summit indicated that lack of transportation was the number one barrier to them visiting parks and participating in recreation activities offered by the Town. Nevertheless, general staff observations indicate that the facility is relatively well-used, particularly on summer weekends.

Only 6% of respondents to the household survey indicated that someone in their household has skateboarded in last 12 months, which was the lowest participation rate of the 21 activities specifically asked about in the survey. The relatively low skateboarding participation rate is, however, to be expected, as skateboarding typically appeals almost exclusively to the very specific demographic of youth aged 10 – 20. To bring the statistic into greater perspective, it should be considered that 26% of households in Richmond Hill include one or more children under the age of 20. Additionally, the need for more recreation facilities for youth was a theme consistently heard through consultation. Several residents identified a need for additional youth facilities in Oak Ridges in particular.

10.4 Public Consultation

Household survey data indicated that teens (aged 13-18) were the least satisfied of all age groups with the park and recreation facilities and services provided by the Town.

Youth attending the Parks and Recreation Plans Youth Summit indicated that an ideal youth centre would contain a skateboard park and that they would consider parks which contain skateboarding areas more youth-friendly than parks that do not. When asked “What do you want to do in parks” through the youth online survey for the Parks and Recreation Plans, skateboarding was the fourth most common response.

Of the household survey respondents, 20% indicated support for additional funding for skateboard facilities. There were several (nine) specific requests for additional skateboard parks made through the online survey and Launch Event for the Parks and Recreation Plans.

10.5 Needs Assessment

Information in the sections above confirms that the construction of an additional skateboard facility at Lake Wilcox Park is necessary. Additionally, evidence seems to indicate that a further increase to the Town’s skateboard facility provision level would be desirable to meet the demand for additional youth facilities and to keep Richmond Hill’s skateboard facility service level on par with other similar municipalities. While the Richmond Green and Lake Wilcox skateboard facilities are large facilities intended to serve residents Town-wide, it would be reasonable for the Town to meet the demand for additional facilities through the provision of smaller neighbourhood-scale facilities in appropriate locations.

10.6 Recommendations

- The Town should target an increase in its skateboard facility service level to one facility for every 60 000 residents through the provision of smaller, more easily accessible, neighbourhood-scale skateboard facilities in appropriate locations.
- The youth area at Lake Wilcox Park (including a skateboard/BMX facility) should be designed and constructed within the short term (i.e., within the next 5 years).
11.0 Off Leash Dog Areas

11.1 Existing Off Leash Dog Area Inventory

The Town currently has two off leash dog areas – a “pilot” facility located in the open space south of Tower Hill Road (the future of which is currently being evaluated) and a permanent facility at Phyllis Rawlinson Park (Map 7).

11.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 16 compares the Town’s overall supply of off leash areas to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Off Leash Areas</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 420</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>101 920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150 855</td>
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<td>Brampton</td>
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<td>174 637</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
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<td>175 779</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>185 545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>288 301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*pilot facility not included

Not including the pilot facility, Richmond Hill currently has one of the lowest off leash dog area provision rates amongst the benchmark communities.

11.3 Current Off Leash Dog Area Use and Future Demand

In 2007 it was estimated that approximately 25% of Richmond Hill households include at least one pet dog (Manifold Data Mining Inc.). A more recent (2012) telephone survey conducted by the Town as part of its responsible pet ownership initiative estimated that approximately 15% of households in Richmond Hill include at least one pet dog.

Data collected from monitoring of the pilot facility at Tower Hill Road suggests that off leash areas are among the most used recreational facilities in the Town. It is believed that the Town’s off leash areas are visited by residents more frequently than any other parks in the Town with the exceptions of Richmond Green, Mill Pond Park and Lake Wilcox Park. In particular, residents of the area around the Tower Hill off leash facility report that the pilot facility is still heavily used despite the opening of the permanent off leash area at Phyllis Rawlinson Park. Providing that the current level of interest in off leash dog areas continues, future demand is expected to remain strong.
11.4 Public Consultation

The Town has undertaken a considerable amount of public consultation with regard to off leash dog areas. An informal online survey conducted between May 6, 2008 and May 23, 2008, prior to the opening of the pilot off leash area south of Tower Hill Road, resulted in 500 responses over the two-week period that it was made available. A total of 441 survey respondents (88.2%) supported the construction of off leash facilities in the Town, and 95% of the respondents in support of an off leash area indicated they would use the area at least once a week. Eight survey respondents (1.6%) were undecided about whether an off leash area should be established within the Town, while 51 respondents (10.2%) were against such a facility.

A number of comments about off leash dog areas were received through the Parks and Recreation Plans consultation process (i.e., at the launch event, and through the online survey). There were several requests for smaller/“micro”-sized off leash areas in each community so that people could walk to an off leash area in their own neighbourhood. There were also about an equal number of comments indicating that off leash areas should not be sited in residential neighbourhoods at all, but rather should be placed in the more rural or industrial/commercial areas of the Town.

11.5 Needs Assessment

There is currently outstanding Council direction to staff (April 11, 2011) “That the criteria of the Off Leash Dog Area Policy be reviewed to determine whether there is public support and public owned lands in suitable areas to allow for multiple off leash dog areas throughout the Town and that staff report back within 24 months.”

Additionally, on June 25, 2012, Council directed staff to “Carry out a thorough assessment of the impacts the opening of the Off Leash Dog Area at Phyllis Rawlinson Park will have on the Tower Hill Off Leash Dog Area and report back to Council with their findings within 14 months of the opening of the Off Leash Dog Area at Phyllis Rawlinson Park.” Since the Phyllis Rawlinson Park Off Leash Dog Area was officially opened on September 29, 2012, the report to Council regarding the ongoing operation of the Tower Hill facility is due before November 29, 2013.

11.6 Recommendation

• That staff report to Council with a recommendation regarding whether the Tower Hill Off Leash Area should be closed or remain open, and with a review of the current Off Leash Dog Area policy by November 29, 2013 (following completion of the Tower Hill Off Leash Area monitoring work).
12.0 Picnic Areas

12.1 Existing Picnic Area Inventory

The Town currently provides permits for 8 picnic sites the location of which is illustrated on Map 8. Table 17 describes each of the permitted picnic sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17. Richmond Hill Picnic Facility Inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozark Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis Rawlinson Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosby Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headwaters Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos Wright Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 18 compares the Town’s overall supply of permitted picnic areas to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18. Municipal Benchmarking of Picnic Area Provision Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 indicates that Richmond Hill’s provision of picnic areas appears to be slightly above the median; however, these figures do not account for capacity of the picnic areas in each municipality, nor do they consider the amenities available at each picnic site. In Mississauga and Oakville, all of the designated picnic areas include picnic tables, washrooms and barbeques. In Mississauga, Oakville and Brampton, some picnic areas are sheltered while others are not. In Richmond Hill, all of the permitted picnic areas are sheltered.
Map 8
Picnic Areas

Picnic Area
Parkland
Waterbody

Disclaimer
This information is provided as a public resource of general information by the Town of Richmond Hill. The information is provided for convenience only, and the Town of Richmond Hill disclaims any responsibility for content, accuracy, currency or completeness. This is not a Plan of Survey.

PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
12.3 **Current Picnic Area Use and Future Demand**

Of the respondents to the household survey, 40% indicated that at least one member of their household had “picnicked” within the last 12 months. Picnicking therefore had the fifth highest participation rate of the 21 different recreation activities directly inquired about through the survey.

Facility booking staff advise that they often have difficulty filling requests for large picnic permits given that there are only two sites in the Town (Phyllis Rawlinson Park and Richmond Green), which accommodate large picnic groups (greater than 30 people). In particular, staff note that over the course of the summer season they frequently receive conflicting requests for booking of the picnic shelter at Richmond Green, as large groups tend to request a picnic site adjacent to recreational facilities (particularly playgrounds and/or a splash pads).

During the 2012 summer season (May – September), the picnic shelter at Richmond Green was permitted for 26 of the 44 available weekend days (59% of weekend days). During the months of June, July and August, the weekend permit rate rose to 70% of weekend days.

The Phyllis Rawlinson Park picnic shelter was permitted 20 out of the 44 available weekend days (45%) during the 2012 summer season and was also booked for 9 weekdays over the course of the summer.

The Town Park picnic shelter was booked 16 days over the course of the 2012 summer season.

The smaller picnic shelters in the Town are rarely permitted. In fact, during the summer of 2012, the smaller shelters were only booked for a combined total of 6 days. Although this does not mean they are not frequently used, since permits are not required for picnics involving less than 25 people, it does suggest that they are not used frequently enough for people to be concerned with the need to book them for exclusive use.

Future demand for picnic facilities, particularly large sites is expected to remain strong and increase as a result of the intensification of the Town (resulting in a larger proportion of the population which will not have its own private outdoor space in the form of backyards). Similarly, recreation and leisure trends across the GTA suggest that demand for picnic sites (particularly for use by large cultural and ethnic groups) is increasing.

12.4 **Public Consultation**

One individual at the Parks and Recreation Plans Launch Event indicated that the Town needs “more places to picnic”, but this was the only comment specifically about picnic areas received though the public consultation process for the Parks and Recreation Plans. There were, however, several comments made through the online survey and at the Launch Event regarding the need for more picnic tables, benches, shade areas and washrooms in Town parks in general.

12.5 **Needs Assessment**

Richmond Green and Phyllis Rawlinson Park are two very different sites, meeting needs for two very different types of picnics. Phyllis Rawlinson Park is a conservation area-type park with no recreational facilities, while Richmond Green is a sports park offering a variety of different active recreational facilities.

Facility Booking Staff note that they frequently receive requests for groups to permit other parks in the Town where there is no shelter or formal picnic facility.
The Town’s current Park Use By-law (Municipal Code Chapter 942) indicates that:

No person shall organize or hold a picnic or other gathering for twenty-five or more persons without the written permission of the Commissioner indicating the park location, date and time.

Therefore, small groups (less than twenty-five people) are not required to get a permit for a picnic area unless they want to reserve exclusive use of one of the designated picnic area shelters. Large groups (greater than 25 people) are only given permits for one of the three larger, designated picnic shelters (Town Park, Richmond Green or Phyllis Rawlinson Park). It is possible (and quite probable) that larger groups use other Town Parks as picnic areas, but do not solicit permits because they are told that the Town does not permit additional sites.

Recreation trends suggest that self-scheduled, unorganized activities are increasingly growing in popularity and a number of Greater Toronto Area municipalities are realizing trends toward increased demand for large group picnic sites.

12.6 Recommendation

- The Town should develop an additional large picnic area with a shelter, which accommodates a minimum of 100 people, and is located in the vicinity of a playground area and/or splash pad, as well as public washrooms.
- The Town should improve additional sites with necessary amenities so that they are suitable for smaller (30-50 people) picnic events.

13.0 Outdoor Skating Areas

13.1 Existing Outdoor Skating Area Inventory

The Town currently maintains outdoor skating areas at Lake Wilcox, Mill Pond Park, Richmond Green, Crosby Park and Town Park, as illustrated on Map 7. The Lake Wilcox and Mill Pond skating areas are established on natural water bodies, while the skating area at Richmond Green is a looping trail with an artificial cooling system. The Crosby Park and Town Park skating areas are approximately 30 metres by 30 metres and are traditional, temporary outdoor skating areas created by flooding flat surfaces.

13.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 19 compares the Town’s supply of outdoor skating areas to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Outdoor Skating Areas</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>262 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Richmond Hill’s provision of outdoor ice skating areas is at the median in comparison to the benchmark communities. Oakville and Mississauga have programs through which outdoor rinks on municipal lands are maintained through partnership arrangements with local community/volunteer groups, while outdoor rinks in the remaining benchmark communities (including Richmond Hill) are maintained entirely by staff.

### 13.3 Current Outdoor Skating Area Use and Future Demand

The Lake Wilcox, Mill Pond Park, Town Park and Crosby Park skating areas are weather dependant. In 2011, for example, extremely mild winter weather conditions meant that none of these skating areas could be made operational. The Richmond Green skating trail however, is operational every winter as the ice surface is maintained through use of an artificial surface cooling system. The Richmond Green skating trail is extremely well used every season and in 2011 (when other skating areas could not set up due to the mild weather) it was particularly well used.

### 13.4 Public Consultation

Through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation process the Town received a number of requests for additional outdoor skating areas. Additionally, during the winter, and particularly during the exceptionally warm 2011 winter, staff received several unsolicited comments from the public indicating that the Town should have additional outdoor skating facilities because the skate trail at Richmond Green is very busy. It has been suggested on several occasions that Richmond Hill should investigate the feasibility of creating smaller artificial rinks on sports courts during the winter months.

Through the consultation associated with the Civic Precinct Project it was made clear that an artificial ice surface on the Town-owned lands at the northwest corner of Yonge Street and Major MacKenzie Drive was strongly supported by the public.

### 13.5 Needs Assessment

Recreational skating can be enjoyed by residents representing all age groups, abilities and interests. Outdoor skating areas extend opportunities for outdoor activity throughout the winter months and therefore encourage use of parks as year-round destinations.

Demand for additional outdoor skating facilities has been confirmed through the results from the public consultation process. Additionally, operation of the Town’s natural skating surfaces is dependent upon cold temperatures, thus placing a capacity constraint on the existing facility at Richmond Green during mild winter seasons. Therefore, there is clearly a need for at least one new artificially cooled skating area in the Town to serve both the existing population as well as the anticipated future population growth of 56,655 persons by 2031. It is anticipated that this second facility will be accommodated within the Civic Precinct. A third artificially cooled skating area (perhaps in Oak Ridges) also appears to be justified. Since neither of these facilities can be expected to be constructed in the short term (next 5 years) the Town should investigate the feasibility of providing additional smaller skating areas (such as those at Crosby Park and Town Park) in the short term.

### 13.6 Recommendations

- The Town should aim to maintain its existing provision rate for outdoor skating areas by constructing 2 additional outdoor skating sites by 2031. One of the new outdoor skating areas should be in the Civic Precinct (southwest corner of Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive).
- The Town should further investigate the feasibility of creating smaller rinks on sports courts during the winter months to augment the existing outdoor skating facility service level.
14.0 Bocce Courts

14.1 Existing Bocce Court Inventory

The Town currently has 8 outdoor bocce courts within its park system, which are shown on Map 7. The 8 courts are distributed within five parks, Ozark (2), Grist Mill (2), Richvale Athletic Field (1), Conner Room (2), and Spruce Avenue (1).

14.2 Provision Rate Benchmarking

Table 20 compares the Town’s overall supply of outdoor bocce courts to that of six other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Municipalities are listed in order from the highest provision level to the lowest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Outdoor Bocce Courts</th>
<th>Provision Rate (Residents per Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Richmond Hill’s provision of outdoor bocce courts is higher than five of the six benchmark communities, but significantly lower than Vaughan’s provision level. Vaughan, Markham and Richmond Hill also have indoor bocce facilities – 17, 4 and 4 courts, respectively – while the other benchmark communities do not provide indoor bocce.

14.3 Current Bocce Court Use and Future Demand

Bocce is predominantly played by older, Italian adults and recreational and leisure trends suggest that interest in bocce has declined and will continue to decline amongst younger generations. Historically, the Town had a higher service level for outdoor bocce courts (the Town’s provision of outdoor bocce courts peaked in 1997 when the Town had twelve courts), but courts have been removed over the last decade as a result of limited use and park redevelopments.

14.4 Public Consultation

The Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation process did not result in any comments, concerns or interest specifically related to bocce facilities.

14.5 Needs Assessment

The lack of any comments specifically associated with bocce provides some evidence that the Town’s current bocce supply is adequate to meet current needs.

There were some comments made at the Parks and Recreation Plans launch event that the Town’s parks generally need an increased variety of recreation facilities within them. Since bocce courts are relatively small facilities that can be accommodated in small parks, they should be considered for inclusion in small urban parks and neighbourhood where there is no potential to site other facilities to provide a level of recreational opportunity.

14.6 Recommendation

- The Town should only install additional outdoor bocce facilities in response to demand.
This section assesses whether the Town should be providing additional outdoor recreation facility types that it does not currently provide.

### 15.1 Existing Outdoor Recreation Facility Inventory

The Town does not currently provide any of the following facility types within its parks:

- Cricket pitches
- Multi-use sports fields (lacrosse, rugby, football, field hockey)
- Beach volleyball
- Toboggan/tubing hills
- BMX/dirt bike tracks
- Table tennis
- Multi-use courts
- Disc (Frisbee) golf
- Equestrian facilities

### 15.2 Benchmarking

Table 21 summarizes the provision of various outdoor recreation facility types in each of the six benchmark communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Cricket Pitches</th>
<th>Multi-use fields</th>
<th>Beach Volleyball</th>
<th>Tobogganing/Tubing Hills</th>
<th>BMX/Dirt Bike Jump Tracks</th>
<th>Table Tennis</th>
<th>Disc Golf</th>
<th>Equestrian Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markham</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> The four beach volleyball courts in Burlington are located at the privately-operated Wave Sports Centre

<sup>b</sup> Burlington has a privately operated outdoor BMX facility; Markham has a privately operated indoor BMX facility; Oakville is currently looking for a site for an outdoor municipal BMX facility

<sup>c</sup> Burlington’s disc golf course is within Bronte Provincial Park
Additional research into the extent to which Ontario municipalities provide the various outdoor recreation facility types listed in Section 14.2 offered the following supplementary information about municipal provision of each facility type:

**Cricket Pitches**
Cricket pitch provision levels in the benchmark communities are strongly correlated with demographics. Communities in which large proportions of the population are of East Indian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani) decent tend to have more cricket facilities.

**Multi-Use Fields**
Most of the larger municipalities in Ontario have at least one multi-use field on which they permit lacrosse, rugby, football and soccer. In many cases the multi-use field is encircled by a running track. In medium-small municipalities, multi-use fields are generally provided by secondary schools.

**Beach Volleyball**
Beach volleyball facilities are commonly provided on municipal lands across Ontario.

**Tobogganing/Tubing Hills**
Mississauga has hills that are specifically designed, maintained and marketed for the purposes of tobogganing and Brampton operates a “tubing” hill, which is part of its ski hill operation at Chinguacousy Park. The other benchmark municipalities are aware that hills in their parks are utilized for tobogganing and/or tubing, but they do not acknowledge that any of the sites are specifically designed or maintained for that purpose. Beyond the benchmark communities, there are numerous Ontario municipalities that operate hills specifically designed and maintained for the purposes of tobogganing and/or tubing – Niagara Falls, Peterborough and Georgina are a few of many available examples. Some municipalities sign hills on their property specifically to prohibit tobogganing, while leaving other hills unsigned, thereby permitting tobogganing in some areas but not specifically endorsing it.

**BMX/Dirt Bike Jump Tracks**
Municipal provision of BMX / dirt bike jump tracks is highly variable amongst municipalities across Ontario. Some municipalities have outdoor facilities on municipal lands operated entirely by the municipality or maintained and operated through collaboration between the municipality and a community/volunteer/private group. Other municipalities have left the provision of BMX/dirt bike facilities to private industry/interest organizations, and in some cases BMX/dirt bike facilities are public-private partnerships. In almost all cases, the provision of BMX/dirt bike facilities seems to be the result of significant lobbying by local youth and/or organized interest groups. In Mississauga, local youth assist with the construction of BMX/dirt bike jump tracks.

**Outdoor Table Tennis**
Benchmark research conducted for this plan did not find any Ontario municipalities, which have installed outdoor table tennis facilities. However, outdoor table tennis equipment has only recently become widely available for use by municipalities.

**Disc (Frisbee) Golf**
There are disc golf courses in numerous municipalities across Ontario including Brantford, Ajax, Kingston, London, Newmarket and Toronto; however the majority of these facilities are not located on municipal lands; rather, they are most commonly located on lands owned by private golf and country clubs.

**Equestrian Facilities**
Very few municipalities in Ontario provide equestrian facilities although there are some which do including Ottawa, Fort Erie, Caledon and Central Huron. There has been ongoing debate in Ottawa regarding whether the municipality should continue to offer equestrian programs. Caledon and Fort Erie maintain equestrian trails only (no actual equestrian stable of training facility).
15.3 Public Consultation

The results from the public consultation process associated with the Parks and Recreation Plans are summarized below according to facility type.

Cricket Pitches
No specific requests for cricket pitches. Of the 24 facility types asked about specifically through the household survey, cricket pitches received the lowest support for additional funding. Only 12% of survey respondents supported additional funding for cricket pitches.

Multi-Use Fields
Only 9% of respondents to the household survey indicated that someone in their household had played football or rugby within the last 12 months. The Town generally receives a few permit requests per year for lacrosse, football or rugby (and usually requests have been for rugby); however, many of these permit requests are not from Town residents.

Beach Volleyball
The Town received three requests for beach volleyball courts through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation. There have been sporadic requests for beach volleyball facilities in the Town over past years.

Toboggan/Tubing Hills
The Town received five requests for toboggan hills through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation activities. Additionally, the Civic Precinct public consultation process resulted in a number of concerns from the public about the small hill on that site not being available for tobogganing in the future.

BMX/Dirt Bike Jump Tracks
Over the last couple of decades the Town has received sporadic requests from a number of youth for the construction of a BMX/dirt bike jump track. Discussions regarding whether the Town should have a BMX/dirt bike jump track date back to the early 1980 when the Town’s Parks and Recreation Committee considered the feasibility of constructing a track in the Town.

Outdoor Table Tennis
The Town has not received requests for outdoor table tennis facilities; however, there were requests for additional indoor table tennis opportunities made through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation.

Disc (Frisbee) Golf
The Town has never received a request for disc/Frisbee golf facilities.

Equestrian Facilities
One individual at the Parks and Recreation Plans Launch Event specifically requested that the Town develop equestrian trails; however, this was the only specific reference to equestrian facilities heard through the public consultation associated with the Parks and Recreation Plans. Of the 24 recreational facility types asked about specifically through the household survey, equestrian trails received the third lowest support for additional funding, with 15% of survey respondents expressing support for additional funding for equestrian trails.
15.4 Needs Assessment

One of the main goals of Richmond Hill’s Strategic Plan is to provide residents with better choice. In parks better choice can be facilitated in a number of ways; but, one of the most obvious ways of providing better choice is to provide a wider variety of recreational facility types. Additionally, one of the most common themes heard through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation process was that residents want a variety of recreational options across the Town and within specific park sites. The assessment in this section therefore is undertaken on the premise that the Town should expand the range of recreation facility types it provides.

**Cricket Pitches and Disc (Frisbee) Golf**

The results from the public consultation process and municipal benchmarking together suggest that the Town should not endeavour to provide cricket pitches or disc (Frisbee) golf. However, since disc golf is a relatively low cost facility type, which does not drive a large demand, further consideration could be given to a disc golf facility should a community desire for such arise.

**Toboggan/Tubing Hills**

Notwithstanding concerns about risk and liability, the provision of toboggan/tubing facilities in two benchmarked communities and community interest suggests that opportunities for the provision of a Town-operated toboggan/tubing facility should continue to be explored. While it is acknowledged that residents currently use some small hills in the Town’s parks for the purposes of tobogganing an officially endorsed hill, with appropriate consideration given to safety in planning would likely be more desirable.

**Multi-use Fields**

There are opportunities to utilize existing Town facilities (e.g., soccer fields, and particularly artificial turf soccer fields) to accommodate rugby, lacrosse or football games. Additionally, there are also existing football fields available for use at some of the Town’s secondary schools. Limited demand for a rugby/lacross/football facility as well as the fact that these sports can be accommodated on existing fields if desirable suggests that the Town does not need a specific field designated for these purposes. The feasibility of the Town permitting soccer fields for rugby, lacrosse or football use will be assessed through the Recreation Plan.

**Beach Volleyball**

Beach volleyball is gaining popularity and becoming increasingly common as a facility type provided by municipalities. In Richmond Hill there is one beach volleyball court available for use by the public (located on the Alexander Mackenzie Secondary School grounds). The fact that Richmond Hill resident Josh Binchuk competed in the 2012 Summer Olympics in beach volleyball also lends some support to the provision of beach volleyball facilities in the Town. Additionally beach volleyball facilities are relatively small (i.e., easily sited) and not particularly costly (estimated construction cost of one court is $30,000 - $50,000) and as such would be a suitable recreational component for small urban and neighbourhood parks.

**BMX/Dirt Bike Jump Tracks**

While there has been sporadic demand for a BMX/Dirt Bike Jump track over the course of the last two decades there have been no requests for this facility type recently or through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation process. Additionally, these facilities are relatively large and costly and most of the municipalities that provide them do so through some sort of partnership with an interested group.
Ball Hockey/Multi-use Courts
The Town currently has one ball hockey rink, which is in operation during the summer months. It is at Richmond Green in the location that is used as a snow storage site in the winter. Through the Parks and Recreation Plans public consultation process it became apparent that not many people are aware that this facility exists. It is not a multi-use court of the new style that is now available on the market, but rather is created using movable boards that are installed in the spring and removed in the fall of each year. The new multi-use courts, which have only very recently become available (and therefore have not been installed in many municipalities), can facilitate a variety of sports (including volleyball, ball hockey, badminton and basketball) through adjustments to movable parts. As there is almost no information upon which to base the success of these facilities, the Town could install one or more pilot facilities and monitor their use.

Table Tennis
Outdoor table tennis facilities are relatively low cost, small facilities that would be appropriately sited in the Town due to demand for indoor facilities as well as the Town’s significant Asian population (table tennis is traditionally popular in Asian cultures).

Equestrian Facilities
Although there was some interest in equestrian expressed through public consultation, the interest was very limited. Benchmarking suggests that equestrian is typically provided through private businesses rather than by municipalities. The capital and maintenance costs associated with equestrian facilities are also a preventative factor for this facility type, particularly since no group has expressed an interest in partnering with the Town to operate such a facility.

15.5 Recommendations
- The Town should further investigate the feasibility of providing an officially sanctioned toboggan/tubing hill at one of the Town’s parks. In particular, the Phyllis Rawlinson Park Master Plan should include an investigation as to whether Phyllis Rawlinson Park is an appropriate site for this type of facility.
- Beach volleyball should be provided within neighbourhood parks, linear parks and community parks as appropriate.
- The Town should provide a BMX/dirt bike jump track in the event that a group, which is willing to assist in the ongoing maintenance of such a facility, comes forward. The need for youth facilities in Oak Ridges indicates that the most appropriate location for such a facility would likely be in Oak Ridges.
- Table tennis should be provided within Town parks.
- Ball hockey/multi-use courts should be installed in Town parks as pilot facilities.
Appendix B

Parkland Needs Analysis

Table of Contents

Appendix B Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................................. 3

2.0 Needs Analysis ............................................................................................................................................... 5

3.0 Total Parkland Needs ................................................................................................................................... 12
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Assumptions

This appendix to the Parks Plan focuses on determining Richmond Hill’s future needs for additional parkland. The needs analysis is rooted in the following assumptions, which are derived from the guiding principles of the Parks Plan:

Assumption #1
Residents across the Town will use all different park types regardless of the type of dwelling they live in or the type of neighbourhood they live in. People living in intensification areas will use parks Town-wide. Like other residents of the Town they will be attracted to Destination Parks (which provide unique facilities) and they will utilize Community Parks across the Town to participate in organized sports. Access to Neighbourhood Parks is as important to residents of high density areas as it is to residents of suburban areas. Neighbourhood Parks are needed in more compact urban areas to provide spaces for residents to walk their dogs, to provide an oasis of green within the context of the urban landscape, and to provide space for outdoor playgrounds and recreation facilities close to where people live. Urban Squares and Linear Parks will be used by residents living in the centres and corridors as well as people visiting the centres and corridors to work, dine and shop.

Assumption #2
Private greenspace exists in both suburban neighbourhoods (in the form of backyards) and in the urban context (in the form of private greenroofs, balconies and landscaped outdoor spaces around buildings). In both development contexts there is need for publicly accessible, municipal parkland.

Assumptions #1 and #2 together lead to the conclusion that all types of development in the Town should share in the provision of parks equally on a per capita basis.

Assumption #3
Since each park type has a different role/function, the appropriate needs analysis for each park type will also be different.

Assumption #3 requires that the analysis for each different park type be undertaken by selecting the most appropriate type of needs analysis from a menu of possible analysis types. The different types of analyses, which can be used to determine the Town’s future parkland needs are as follows:

1. Functional Analysis – Is the existing parks inventory functioning as intended and are there any areas of the Town where there are gaps?
2. Population Service Level Analysis – How much parkland is appropriate to serve residents on a per capita basis (i.e., how many hectares of parkland does the Town need for every 1000 people or how many hectares of parkland does the Town need for every 300 dwelling units)?
3. Distribution Analysis – Can all of the residents in the Town walk to a park within less than 400 metres / 5 minutes from their home?
4. Recreation Facility Needs Analysis – How much parkland does the Town need in order to meet service level targets for specific types of recreation facilities?
5. Concept Plan Analysis – In some areas of the Town a planning concept has been endorsed by Council. How much parkland does the Town need to acquire to implement these plans?
1.2 Methodology

Since it is assumed that different park types need to be analyzed differently, the parkland needs analysis must use the various park typologies (e.g., Community Park, Neighbourhood Park) as a starting point. For each different park type the most appropriate analysis must be selected based on the role and function of the park. Table 1 indicates the needs analysis types which will be used to evaluate the specific needs related to each of the Town’s park types. The applicable needs analyses are generally listed in order of importance to the evaluation for each particular park type; however in most cases, the population service level analyses are undertaken as a final step, not because it is the least important, but because it is most useful as a means to evaluate how the results of the other analysis types compare to existing services levels. Concept plan analyses are used in circumstances when the information required to undertake the most appropriate type of analysis is not available. For example, the street network and property fabric for the North Leslie and West Gormley areas have not yet been established so it is not possible to undertake a distribution analysis to determine needs for Local Parks. The Secondary Plan for these areas is however approved by Council and can be used in the place of the actual street network.

Table 1. Park types and the analyses used to determine needs associated with each park type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Applicable Needs Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination Parks</td>
<td>1. Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Population Service Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Parks</td>
<td>1. Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Recreation Facility Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Population Service Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Parks</td>
<td>1. Distribution (Local Parks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Concept Plan (N. Leslie &amp; W. Gormley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Population Service Level (Parkettes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Squares and Linear Parks</td>
<td>1. Concept Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Functional (Employment Lands)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The future land needs associated with each different park type can then be added together to determine a total future parkland need for the Town in hectares. The total need in hectares can then be converted into a population-based parkland dedication rate using anticipated population growth in the Town.
1.3 Parkland Needs vs Park Needs

It is important to note that this appendix seeks to establish parkland acquisition needs, which are only one component of overall park needs. It therefore does not arrive at a final recommended parkland dedication rate. Once the parkland acquisition needs have been established, other Town needs, which can be met through use of cash in lieu of parkland, need to be factored into the analysis before a parkland dedication rate can be established. In addition to parkland acquisition, the Town also uses cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds for the following purposes:

- To purchase lands for the purposes of completing recreational trail systems
- To cover 10% of the cost of new, growth-related park development
- The cost of park development and recreation facility construction associated with service level increases
- To cover the cost of park redevelopment projects that is not associated with population growth or standard repair and replacements.
- For the acquisition of machinery used to operate and maintain parks.

An additional contribution to cash in lieu of parkland dedication should be considered in the recommended parkland dedication rate in order to cover these costs in the future.

2.0 Needs Analysis

2.1 Destination (Town-wide) Parks

The existing inventory of Destination Parks includes Lake Wilcox Park, Mill Pond Park, Phyllis Rawlinson Park and Richmond Green. The total existing Destination Park area in the Town is 74.2 hectares, which equates to an existing population-based service level of 0.40 hectares per 1 000 people.

Function-based Analysis

As discussed in Section 3.1, specific Town parks are considered to be, and designated as, Destination Parks because they provide a recreational service, facility or opportunity that draws users from across the entire Town and beyond. Given this specific primary role/function, it is possible to undertake a function-based analysis, which assesses whether the Town aims to acquire/improve any lands with the intent of drawing Town-wide recreational use. This analysis assumes that any Destination Parks expected to be established over the course of the Parks Plan planning horizon would already be contemplated in some way by Council (given their large scale and Town-wide scope).

There are two new Destination Parks, which are contemplated over course of the Parks Plan planning horizon:

1. Civic Precinct

On-going planning efforts to develop a prominent civic square at the southwest corner of Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive foresee a Destination Park to augment the existing Central Library, Wave Pool and existing parkland (i.e., Mount Pleasant Park). This area has the ability to accommodate a new Richmond Hill Town Hall as well as an additional community building. Opportunity also exists for a new outdoor skating venue, a youth area, picnic areas, a splash pad, playgrounds, tennis courts, an outdoor amphitheatre as well as a public square for outdoor civic gatherings and celebrations.

To create the Civic Precinct Destination Park approximately 6.0 hectares of land will become new Destination Park land. 3.8 hectare of this area is currently Community Park (Mount Pleasant Park) and 2.2 hectare of this land is currently library/civic use space and will need to be committed to the Parks Inventory.
2. **David Dunlap Observatory Park**

Lands identified by Council through the development application as forming part of the cultural heritage precinct will provide an opportunity for a unique Destination Park. The park will draw visitors from across the Town because of the unique cultural heritage features on the site (the Observatory itself and the observatory administration building) as well as the broader cultural heritage landscape (the only designated cultural heritage landscape in the Town). This Destination Park will also include the existing David Dunlap Observatory Park and the contiguous Local Park identified in the development application.

Creation of the David Dunlap Observatory Destination Park will involve re-classifying 3.6 ha of Community Park as Destination Park and acquisition of 0.4 ha of new parkland (which has already been secured through the Corsica development application).

There are also expansions to two of the Town’s existing Destination Parks, which have been contemplated:

3. **Expansions to Lake Wilcox Park** –
   Approximately 1.0 ha of additional Destination Park. Further details are confidential.

4. **Expansion to Richmond Green** –
   The most recent draft concept plan for North Leslie contemplates adding approximately 0.50 hectares of land to the north edge of Richmond Green in order to regularize the property boundary and facilitate a straight alignment for the abutting road allowance.

*Population-based Analysis*

- Population increase 2011 (185 545) to 2031 (242 200) = 56 655 people
- Therefore to maintain the existing Destination Park service level of 0.4 hectares of parkland per 1 000 people, an additional 22.7 ha of land would need to be made part of Destination Parks by 2031
- Table 2 summarizes the changes to the Destination Park inventory resulting from the function-based analysis above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination Park</th>
<th>Community Park lands to become Destination Park (ha)</th>
<th>New Parklands (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Precinct</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Dunlap Observatory</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Wilcox Park</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Green</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Pond Park</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **The total Destination Park area in the Town will grow by approximately 11.5 hectares. Resulting in a 2031 service level = 74.2 ha + 11.5 ha / 242 200 X 1000 = 0.35 ha per 1 000 people**
- **Parkland dedication/cash in lieu of parkland dedication will be needed to facilitate 4.1 hectares of the anticipated growth in Destination Parks.**
2.2 Community Parks

The Town currently has 24 Community Parks with a total area of 97.2 hectares. **This equates to an existing population-based service level of 0.5 hectares of Community Park per 1 000 people.** Existing Community Parks in the Town have an average service radius of approximately 1.3 km.

**Distribution Analysis**

- There are three neighbourhood areas in the Town, where the closest Community Park is significantly further away than 1.3 km. These areas can be seen on Map 5.1 and are as follows:
  - The downtown area west of Yonge Street and north of Major Mackenzie Drive (Downtown West)
  - The northeast section of Oak Ridges, north of Lake Wilcox and east of Yonge Street (East Oak Ridges)
  - The area north of Gamble Road/19th Avenue, both east and west of Yonge Street (Urban Fringe)

- New Community Parks will also be needed in the remaining greenfield development areas in the Town (North Leslie and West Gormley)

- Therefore the Town’s distribution-based needs for Community Parks are:
  - North Leslie – needs 2 Community Parks
  - West Gormley – needs 1 Community Park
  - East Oak Ridges – needs 1 Community Park
  - West Downtown – 1 Community Park
  - Urban Fringe (between Gamble/19th and Stouffville/Jefferson) – 1 Community Park

- The average size of existing Community Parks in the Town is 4 hectares; the median size of the existing Community Parks in the Town is 3.6 hectares

- Assuming new Community Parks should be 4 hectares in size (based on average and median), the land required to meet the Community Park needs listed above is approximately 12 hectares (4 hectares for the 3 parks in North Leslie and West Gormley and 2 hectare each for the remaining parks, which are expected to be realized through expansion of existing smaller parks)

**Therefore the total distribution-based Community Park need is 18 ha.**

**Recreation Facility Needs Analysis**

Appendix A to the Parks Plan (Outdoor Recreation Facilities Needs Analysis) establishes recommended target provision rates for the various types of outdoor recreational facilities that are typically found in municipal parks. Recreation facility needs can be met within all park types, but Community Parks provide the best opportunities for meeting target service levels associated with larger facilities due to their larger size and the fact that they commonly contain parkland that is essential to the programming of such facilities.

The majority of the 22 facility types discussed in Chapter 5 do not drive a need for additional park land:

- Tennis courts, basketball facilities, splash pads, playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, bocce courts, ball hockey/multi-use courts, beach volleyball and table tennis have no likelihood of driving a land demand because they are of a size that can generally be accommodated even within any size of parks.

- Community allotment gardens will not require additional lands since Chapter 5 recommends that the existing service level of one municipally-operated allotment garden for the Town be maintained.
• Recommendations regarding provision levels for off leash dog areas are being deferred until completion of the ongoing monitoring work for the existing pilot facility and therefore the need for land in association with off leash dog areas will not be further discussed herein.

• Areas that can be permitted for picnic purposes can be created at virtually any park and therefore the need for picnic areas is unlikely to drive a land demand.

• The Town’s park system currently contains sites that could be officially designated as toboggan hills or where toboggan hill could be created (e.g., the east section of Phyllis Rawlinson Park). The Chapter 5 recommendation regarding toboggan hills is focused on determining whether hills on Town property should be officially recognized and maintained for tobogganing purposes and does not result in a need for additional lands.

• Chapter 5 recommends that the Town not proceed with the provision of cricket pitches, multi-use fields, bmx/dirt bike tracks, disc/Frisbee golf and equestrian facilities at the current time, so there is no need to acquire land to site these facility types.

The potential land demand associated with outdoor recreation facility target provision levels is therefore limited to the need for additional soccer fields, lit senior baseball diamonds and an additional outdoor skating facility. The Town’s additional outdoor skating facility needs are expected to be accommodated through the Civic Precinct Destination Park and smaller facilities, which use existing facilities. Therefore, it is only soccer and baseball needs that need to be considered in the context of Community Park needs. It is expected that the need for these two facility types can be met through the provision of the six additional Community Parks identified in the distribution analysis above in combination with siting of additional facilities within parklands that have already been secured but are not yet developed. Therefore recreational facility needs do not drive an additional Community Park land need.

Population-based Analysis (check of Distribution analysis recommendation)

• Population increase 2011 (185 545) to 2031 (242 200) = 56 655 people

• Therefore to maintain the existing Destination Park service level of 0.5 hectares of parkland per 1 000 people, an additional 28.3 ha of land would need to be made part of Destination Parks by 2031

• Additionally, it should be noted that the current David Dunlap Observatory Park (3.6 hectares) and Mount Pleasant Park (3.8 hectares) are anticipated to become Destination Park in the future. Therefore the Town actually needs 28.3 + 7.4 = 35.7 hectares of Community Park by 2031 to maintain the existing Community Park service level of 0.5 hectares per 1 000 people.

• If the Town acquires 18 ha of Community Park (to meet the distribution needs) the Town will have a total Community Park area of 107.8 hectares and a Community Park service level of 0.45 ha/1000 people in 2031.
2.3 Neighbourhood Parks

Local Parks and Parkettes are considered separately in the needs analysis because they each have different primary roles/functions.

The Town currently has a total of 138 Neighbourhood Parks, 49 of which are considered Local Parks and 89 of which are considered Parkettes. The total area of Neighbourhood Parks in the Town is approximately 117 hectares (83 ha Local Park; 34 ha Parkette). The average size of the Town’s Local Parks is 1.5 hectares (median size = 1.7 hectares). The average size of the Town’s Parkettes is 0.4 hectares (median size = 0.3 hectares). The overall existing service level for Neighbourhood Parks is 0.63 hectares per 1 000 people. The existing service level for Local Parks is 0.45 hectares per 1 000 people, and 0.18 hectares per 1 000 people is the existing service level for Parkettes.

A. Local Parks

Distribution Analysis

Local Parks are the fundamental building block of the Town’s parks system, which ensure that residents across the Town have access to outdoor recreational facilities (including playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, basketball facilities, mini and junior soccer fields and tennis courts) within walking distance of their homes. As such the Town should continue to acquire Local Parks with the primary goal of providing access to parkland within 400 metres walking distance of all residences.

Since the primary role of Local Parks is to provide parkland and outdoor recreational opportunities within walking distance of residents, the most important type of service level analysis for Neighbourhood Parks is distribution-based.

Map 1 analyses the distribution of parks in the Town by assessing which residential properties in the Town are within a 400 metre (approximately 5 minute) walking distance from a park. All viable walking routes on public lands (including trails, sidewalks, roads and pathways) are used in the analysis. Properties shown on the map in orange are within 400 metres walking distance of a Town park, properties shown in blue are not.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the distribution analysis presented in Map 1:

- Of the existing residential property area in the Town (approximately 3 400 hectares), 62% is within 400 metre walking distance of a park and 38% is not.
- The major distributional gaps in the Town’s current parkland provision are as follows (generally listed from north to south and illustrated on Map 2 using numbers which correspond to the list):
  1. On the east side of Yonge Street, north of King Side Road
  2. On the east side of Yonge Street, south of King Side Road
  3. The Harris Beech area (southwest of Jefferson Sideroad and Yonge Street)
  4. The west side of the downtown area (south of Elgin Mills Road and west of Yonge Street)
  5. Along the west side of Bayview Avenue north of Major Mackenzie Drive
  6. Along the west side of Bayview Avenue south of 16th Avenue
  7. The southwest corner of the Town (south of Carville Road and east of Bathurst Street)
• There are also a variety of smaller areas that are not within 400 metres walking distance of a Town park. While many of these can be resolved through better pedestrian connections, others are unlikely to be resolved without the addition of new parkland. Areas where additional parkland needs are anticipated are as follows:

  8. In the Richvale area (west of Yonge Street and South of Major Mackenzie Drive) between Weldrick Road and Harding Boulevard
  9. North and south of Briggs Avenue (east of Bayview, north of Highway 7) – partially acquired
  10. Southeast of Richmond Hill Centre (i.e., west of Yonge Street and north of Highway 7)

• Map 1 also clearly illustrates that the Town’s employment lands in the Newkirk and Beaver Creek Business areas have limited parkland service levels (i.e., the Brodie House Park is the only park that currently exists within the Town’s employment areas), therefore there is a distributional need in these area. However, the need for parks in employment areas is significantly different than in residential areas because these areas have a predominantly daytime population (rather than a predominantly evening population) and the daytime population has only limited time available for recreation or leisure (i.e., lunch and break times). This need will therefore be dealt with in the Linear Park category.

The 10 distributional gaps in the Town’s park system identified above will need to be resolved through the provision of additional Local Parks. The average size of a Local Park is around 1.5 hectares. **Therefore there is a need for an additional 15 hectares of Local Park across the Town’s existing residential areas.**

**Concept Plan Analysis**

Neighbourhood Parks will also be required within the West Gormley and North Leslie greenfield areas.

• North Leslie — The approved secondary plan for the North Leslie area contemplates 8 parks and 5 parkettes. More detailed review of the North Leslie Secondary Plan (i.e. through the Master Environmental Servicing Plan process, which is currently underway as well as through the Parks Plan process) has determined that there is a need to consolidate some of the parks and parkettes in the Secondary Plan (i.e., to make fewer, larger parks) in order to provide adequate space for siting of the needed recreational facilities. It is estimated that the North Leslie Area will need two Community Parks (approximately 4 hectares in size, as discussed in Section 6.2) and 4 Local Parks (totaling approximately 6 hectares in size at approximately 1.5 hectares in size).

• West Gormley – The approved secondary plan for the West Gormley area includes three parks. One of which will be a Community Park and the other two will be Local Parks. The total Local Park need for West Gormley is therefore 3 hectares.

• Need for parkettes in these areas is considered as part of the Town-wide consideration.

**Therefore, there is an additional need for 9 hectares of Local Park in West Gormely and North Leslie.**

The Distribution and Concept Plan above arrive at the conclusion that the Town needs to acquire 24 hectares of Local Park.

• Population increase 2011 (185 545) to 2031 (242 200) = 56 655 people

• Therefore to maintain the existing Local Park service level of 0.45 hectares of parkland per 1 000 people, an additional 25.5 ha of land would need to be made part of Destination Parks by 2031

• The acquisition of 24 hectares of additional Local Park as recommended from the previous analysis would result in a population-based service level of 0.44 hectares of Local Park for every 1 000 residents
B. PARKETTES

The main role/function of parkettes is to provide visual relief, views, and other urban design-related functions within
neighbourhoods. However, it is extremely difficult to determine where parkettes will be needed for these purposes until the
road network and property boundaries for an area are specifically defined. The best estimate for future Parkette needs is
perhaps arrived at through a population-based service level assessment.

- Population increase 2011 (185 545) to 2031 (242 200) = 56 655 people

- Therefore to maintain the existing Parkette service level of 0.18 hectares of parkland per 1 000 people,
  approximately 10 ha of Parkette would additionally be needed by 2031.

If the recommended needs for Local Parks and Parkettes as established above are fulfilled, the Town will have
an overall Neighbourhood Park service level in 2031 of 0.62 hectares per 1 000 people.

2.4 Urban Squares and Linear Parks

Concept Plan-based Analysis

The Town does not have a significant existing service level for either of these park types because these two park types were
only recently defined in the new official plan and because these are park types characteristic of intensifying urban areas (rather
than suburban areas). As a result, the need for these park types can not be estimated using a population-based or distribution-
based analysis. However, the need for Urban Squares and Linear Parks in the Town’s intensification can be determined through
a concept plan-based analysis given that Council has approved a concept plan for the Richmond Hill Centre.

The Town completed the Richmond Hill Regional Centre Design & Land Use Study in order to develop a visionary, yet realistic
development concept for the Richmond Hill Centre, and to provide policy direction for the Town’s new Official Plan and future
associated with this study was endorsed by Town Council on February 22, 2010. Recognizing that one of the most important
elements in making the Richmond Hill Centre a vibrant, welcoming community will be its network of parks and open spaces,
the Final Recommendations Report for the Richmond Hill Centre describes a recommended conceptual open space network.
The recommended open space network includes plazas, courtyards, sidewalks, trails, public squares and parks as anticipated
necessary to support the needs of existing and future residents.

The concept plan-based analysis assumes that the amount of parkland approved through the concept plan for the Richmond
Hill Centre is an appropriate level/amount of parkland for all intensification areas in the Town. The total area of new parkland
anticipated through the concept plan is first estimated. The area is than converted to a population service level, based on the
anticipated population of the area at full build out. The population service level is then applied to the other intensification areas
of the Town using the estimated future population of those areas to determine a total amount of parkland that is required in
those areas.

When a concept plan-based analysis is being used, the need for different types of park types can be considered simultaneously.
The concept plan-based analysis could be used to determine the total area of parks required in the intensification areas;
however, we have already determined needs related to other park types in previous sections so the analysis is being scoped
to look specifically at Urban Square and Linear Park needs.
• The total area of parks anticipated to be acquired within the Council-endorsed concept plan for the Richmond Hill Centre is 4.5 hectares.

• The majority of the parks within the Richmond Hill Centre concept plan, with the exception of the Yonge West Park (Local Park, 0.5 ha) and Maple Parkette (Parkette, 0.37 ha) are Urban Squares and Linear Parks. The total area of Urban Squares and Linear Parks in the Richmond Hill Centre concept plan is therefore 3.6 hectares.

• Given that the Richmond Hill Centre is expected to have a total population of 15,800 people at full build out (beyond 2031), 3.6 hectares of Urban Squares and Linear Parks is equivalent to a population-based service level target of 0.23 hectares of Urban Squares and Linear Park per 1,000 people.

• If we assume that the other growth areas of the Town (i.e., Downtown Local Centre, Oak Ridges Local Centre, Key Development Areas, Local Development Areas and Corridors) require approximately the same population-based service level for Urban Squares and Linear Parks as Richmond Hill Centre, the total required Urban Square and Linear Park area for other intensification Areas is: 22,500 (2031 population) X 0.23 / 1000 = 5.2 hectares

Function Analysis

Analysis of the Town’s employment areas resulted in identification of a need for a Linear Park in the East Beaver Creek area. In the southeast corner of the Town, the Beaver Greenway trail system terminates in a dead end at Highway 404. A Linear Park connecting the end of the trail system back out to the road network would be desirable for a number of reasons:

• It would improve the safety of the trail system and emergency access to the trail system significantly,

• It would facilitate easier maintenance of the trail and surrounding lands (including a stormwater management facility that the Town currently needs to access for maintenance purposes via an easement over private lands),

• It would enable an additional entry point to the trail system thereby promoting increased use (currently the trail can only be accessed at one point off Mural Street which is a significant distance north of the Highway 7 intensification corridor. An access at the south end of the trail system would make this trail within walking distance of the Highway 7 corridor),

• It would create the potential for a walking/cycling loop that would provide excellent opportunities for physical activity, recreation and leisure for the employees of businesses in the Beaver Creek Business Park.

The length of the Linear Park would need to be equivalent to the depths of the properties in this area (approximately 100 metres) and the width of the Linear Park would therefore need to be significant to create an enjoyable space and not be a tunnel-like experience. It is therefore estimated that this parkland need is approximately 2.4 hectares.

The Town currently has 17.2 hectares of Linear Park.

The total Urban Square and Linear Park need for the Town is 11.2 hectares. This will result in a 2031 population-based service level of approximately 0.12 hectares per 1,000 people.
3.0 Total Parkland Needs

Destination Parks 4.1 hectares
Community Parks 18.0 hectares
Neighbourhood Parks 24.0 hectares (Local Parks)
10.0 hectares (Parkettes)
Urban & Linear Parks 3.6 hectares (Richmond Hill Centre)
5.2 hectares (Other Intensification Areas)
2.4 hectares (Employment Areas)

**TOTAL Parkland Need = 67.3 hectares**

Acquisition of 67.3 hectares of parkland will result in an overall Town-wide per capita parkland service level of 1.54 hectares per 1 000 people in 2031.

*Parkland Dedication Rate Required to Fulfill Land Acquisition Need*

**PER 300 UNITS**

\[
\text{Rate} = \left( \frac{67.3 \text{ hectares} \times 300}{82,400 - 59,000} \right) = \frac{20,190}{23,400} = 0.86 \text{ hectares / 300 units}
\]

**Per 1 000 People**

\[
\text{Rate} = \left( \frac{67.3 \text{ hectares} \times 1,000}{242,200 - 185,545} \right) = \frac{67,300}{56,655} = 1.19 \text{ hectares / 1 000 people}
\]

Note that these rates are the rates required in order to facilitate the Town’s parkland acquisition needs. Additional park needs (enhancement, facility upgrades/replacements and repurposing) must be accommodated through increases to these rates.
Map 1
Walking Distance to Parkland: All Properties

*400 m walking distance
Map 2
Local Park Needs

Legend:
- Distribution-Based Local Park Need Area
- Waterbody

Disclaimer:
This information is provided as a public resource of general information by the Town of Richmond Hill. The information is provided for convenience only, and the Town of Richmond Hill disclaims any responsibility for content, accuracy, currency or completeness. This is not a Plan of Survey.

PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PARKS PLAN – APPENDIX B / PARKLAND NEEDS ANALYSIS • 15
Appendix C

Park Redevelopment
# Appendix C

## Park Redevelopment

### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C Table of Contents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Park Redevelopment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Background Research</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Multi-Stage Approach</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Recommendation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### 1.0 Park Redevelopment

As Richmond Hill evolves it is not only important that the Town continues to build new parks to serve its growing population and evolving urban structure, but also that it periodically examines its existing park supply to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate to changing demographics, built form and recreation needs. One of the main goals of the Parks Plan therefore, is to establish a methodology for determining when older parks in the Town should be redeveloped.

It is important to note that a “park redevelopment” project is distinctly different than a standard park facility repair and replacement (R&R) project. All facilities constructed within parks have an expected life span and need to be replaced at the end of that life span to ensure they are safe, in good working condition, and that they do not appear old or run down. R&R projects result in an old facility being replaced with a new facility of similar type and function. Park redevelopment projects on the other hand, are much more comprehensive. They address the park as a whole, and may include standard facility replacements, changes to facility types within the park, reconfiguration of elements within the park (e.g., changing the location of facilities, re-grading and/or re-alignment of pathways), and/or redesign of passive spaces within the park. As Richmond Hill evolves it is not only important that the Town continues to build new parks to serve its growing population and evolving urban structure, but also that it periodically examines its existing park supply to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate to changing demographics, built form and recreation needs. One of the main goals of the Parks Plan therefore, is to establish a methodology for determining when older parks in the Town should be redeveloped.

### 2.0 Background Research

To determine an appropriate methodology for prioritizing park redevelopment projects the following background research was undertaken:

1. **Municipal Benchmarking** – Management staff at the six (6) municipalities selected as benchmarks for the Parks and Recreation Plans, as well as additional municipalities, were consulted during 2012 to determine how they select and prioritize park redevelopment projects.

2. **Staff Consultation** – Staff representing the various sections of the Town involved in park planning, design, construction, and operations and maintenance, discussed park redevelopment during the Staff Roundtable held on July 17, 2012. Staff members of the Town’s Executive Management Team (EMT) were also specifically asked their thoughts about park redevelopment during the EMT interview/discussion for the Parks and Recreation Plans on July 12, 2012.

3. **Council Member Consultation** – Members of Town Council, were asked to respond to the question “At what point does an older park warrant redesign/re-purposing (i.e., how should the Town determine when older parks need to be redesigned/repurposed)?” during interviews conducted on July 10, 11 and 12.

4. **Consultant Recommendations** – The “park renewal threshold” component of the Parks and Open Space Priorities Study, which was completed for the Town by The MBTW Group in 2005, was reviewed. Relevant recommendations from the Key Findings and Directions Report prepared for by Montieth Brown Planning Consultants (2012) were also considered.
2.1 Municipal Benchmarking

Of the eight municipalities consulted, only Milton has a defined list of criteria that it uses to prioritize redevelopment projects, but it should be noted that Milton considers park redevelopment projects within the context of all of its park projects rather than having a separate evaluation system. Staff at the City of Toronto advised that they are currently working on studies that will better define their system for prioritizing park redevelopment needs. Mississauga and Markham staff noted the need for such studies in their municipalities.

Projects to redevelop older parks have proceeded in other municipalities for the following reasons:

- In response to concerns voiced by neighbourhood associations, sometimes with the support of Ward Councillors.
- Changing demand or demographics triggers a major facility conversion, which acts as a catalyst to look more broadly at the entire park
- Significant operating costs associated with the park as a result of aging infrastructure and/or risk issues
- Due to the availability of external funding specifically targeted at renewal and/or development of aging infrastructure (i.e., Ontario Infrastructure Funding)

2.2 Staff & Council Member Consultation

Town Staff and Council Members recommended that parks should be considered for redevelopment when:

- The park and the existing facilities within it are not being used (as a result of changing demographics, quality of facilities, or choice of facilities) or there are issues with conflicting uses in the park
- There is potential to add new, needed facilities to the park
- Residents are inquiring about when the park will be improved or are expressing concerns about the park (e.g., facilities in the park are aging, the park is not being used, the park is not of the same quality as other parks in the Town)
- Operational/maintenance demands of the park are high/onerous as a result of existing design issues or aging facilities
- Replacement projects are clustering around the same time (it was pointed out that the second playground replacement in a park coincides with curbing replacements and generally occurs when the park is around 30 years old)
- Vegetation/tree cover has become significantly mature (approx. 30 years) or a catastrophic (e.g., flooding, invasive species issue) event has significantly impacted vegetation
- There is redevelopment, proposed development and/or significant change in the land-use fabric or demographics of the area around the park
- There are safety/risk issues associated with the park
2.3 Consultant Recommendations

In 2005 The MBTW Group completed a *Parks and Open Space Priorities Study*, which examined the Town of Richmond Hill’s park, open space and trail network to establish clear priorities for design and construction over the following ten year period. A portion of this study focused on the older parks in the Town and made recommendations regarding how the Town should establish a “park renewal threshold.” Although the study was never approved by Council the recommendations of the report provide valuable information that is useful in helping to establish a process for selecting and prioritizing park redevelopment projects. The following paragraphs are excerpts from the *Parks and Open Space Priorities Study*:

Having closely examined many of the Town’s park sites on a first-hand basis, it is apparent that Richmond Hill’s parks often reach the point where a general renewal of park infrastructure also coincides with a need to consider the impact of changes in the character and demographic profile of the overall neighbourhood. This generally occurs at the 30 year anniversary of the park’s initial construction and matches the typical life cycle of a neighbourhood as families arrive, mature, and are gradually replaced by the next generation. It is also the mean replacement age for most of the hard landscape elements found in typical Richmond Hill parks. Consequently, a holistic re-examination of the relevance and quality of these parks is recommended no later than every 30 years. This threshold has been built into the new model as a “default” review interval, although specific community requests, special local needs, safety, and/or maintenance issues may trigger an earlier review.

Assessing priorities for repair, replacement and retrofitting of existing parkland [needs to be] designed as a multi-part decision making process. Described as “filters”, the steps in this process [should] include a progressive hierarchy of decisions that are designed to be systematic, orderly and readily updated on an annual basis.

3.0 Multi-Stage Approach

An appropriate and efficient methodology for determining when older parks should be redeveloped requires a multiple-stage approach, in which the first stage selects a subset of parks that are potential candidate redevelopment sites, the second stage scopes the list down to a list of priority projects to be included within the 10 Year Capital Plan, and the third stage prioritizes the projects on the priority list over the 10 year capital planning timeframe. Figure C.1 illustrates the multi-stage park redevelopment and prioritization process contemplated.

3.1 Stage 1 – Candidate Park Redevelopment Projects

Stage 1 of the park redevelopment prioritization process aims to determine a subset of Town parks which are candidate sites for redevelopment. In conducting the background research for this component of the Parks Plan evidence was gathered which points toward the 30 year age threshold as being the most appropriate criteria for determining a list of candidate redevelopment sites.

Parks which are 30 years old are appropriate redevelopment candidates for the following reasons:

- 30 years is the approximate length of a human generation and is therefore the approximate timeframe over which community demographics around specific parks can be expected to change significantly as families arrive, mature and are gradually replaced by the next generation.
- Newly planted trees within parks can be expected to reach a mature size, at which they will significantly impact the availability of shade within a park, when they are around 30 years old.
- 30 years is the anticipated replacement age for many of the hard landscape elements in parks.
Often coinciding with the replacement of hard landscape elements in a park (e.g., curbing), the second playground replacement in a park is expected to occur at around the 25 - 30 year timeframe (i.e., playgrounds have a 12 – 15 year expected lifespan).

There are currently around 30 parks in the Town, which were constructed 30 or more years ago and have not yet been redesigned / redeveloped since.

Note that parks in the Town, which have an existing master plan (e.g., Lake Wilcox Park) or for which a master planning process is anticipated (e.g., Phyllis Rawlinson Park and other special parks in the Town) should be subject to redevelopment as indicated in the Master Plan rather than being considered candidate redevelopment sites through this process.

3.2 Stage 2 – Priority Park Redevelopment Projects to be Included in the 10 Year Forecast

Stage 2 of the process utilizes criteria to determine which of the Candidate Park Redevelopment Sites are priority projects. Redevelopment projects meeting any one or more of the four criteria should be considered “Priority Redevelopment Projects” and included in the 10 Year Capital Forecast. Note that there is no significance to the order in which the criteria are numbered and presented.

Priority Criteria #1: Park expansion and/or configuration change

Redevelopment projects which involve a park that has been expanded in size due to recent land acquisition should be included within the 10 Year Capital Forecast. Use of this criterion is based on the assumption that a land acquisition to expand the size of the park would have been undertaken in order to resolve a parkland deficiency in the area. Additionally, the new lands themselves would trigger a “growth” project, which should be integrated with any necessary repairs, replacements or changes within the existing portion of the park to take advantage of design and construction efficiencies.

Priority Criteria #2: Land use, population density and/or demographics in the service catchment for the park has changed significantly

Redevelopment projects which facilitate better consistency between changing community demographics immediately around the park and the facilities within the park, should be given priority. Additionally, a changing demographic in the neighbourhood around a park suggests that the facilities within the park should be re-evaluated to ensure that they are appropriate and relevant to the new population. It can be expected that in most cases where this criterion applies, the population around the park will be becoming denser, and a more dense population will likely mean that the park will be subject to more intense use. In these cases a redevelopment project will provide an opportunity for the Town to invest in high quality, more durable park elements that withstand the intense use of a denser urban community. Park redevelopments in changing neighbourhoods will also provide an opportunity for the new members of the community to share in the sense of ownership for the park that the long-time residents of the area may have already developed.
Priority Criteria #3: Redevelopment of the park is financially prudent given the age of the park facilities, scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities and the current operations and maintenance demands of the park

As parks and the facilities within them age the operational and maintenance demands associated with the park increase. As with other infrastructure, there comes a point in the lifespan of outdoor recreation facilities, when maintenance issues occur so frequently, that it makes financial sense to replace the entire facility. If, when a park hits the 30 year age threshold, there is a cluster of facility replacement events simultaneously converging over approximately a three year period it is financially efficient to proceed with a total park redevelopment rather than several individual replacement projects.

Additionally, within an individual park, there are often maintenance issues that are not associated with specific facilities, which have a defined replacement period. For example, grading issues, drainage issues or issues arising because trees or other vegetation have become diseased or hazardous are not candidates for resolution through the standard facility replacement process; but can be resolved through a park redevelopment project. Parks that have these kinds of issue should be considered priority redevelopment projects.

When Parks Operations and Maintenance and Parks Design and Construction staff conduct their annual site visits associated with repair and replacement projects, parks on the Stage 1 candidate redevelopment projects list should be evaluated in the context of this criterion to determine whether the Town should proceed with the standard repair and replacement or whether a redevelopment project is more appropriate.

Priority Criteria #4: Redevelopment of the park will assist in meeting the target service level for a particular park facility

As determined through the needs analysis, the Town of Richmond Hill needs to increase its inventory of certain outdoor recreation facility types in order to meet target service levels. These facility types include:

- Soccer Fields
- Senior Baseball Diamonds
- Splash Pads (in specific areas)
- Skateboard/BMX facilities
- Outdoor Ice Skating Rinks
- Picnic Areas

Park redevelopment projects which have the potential to incorporate these facilities (i.e., meet target provision levels) should be given priority.

3.3 Stage 3 – Additional Considerations
In Stage 3 of the process for prioritizing park redevelopment projects, additional considerations are used to help determine an appropriate year within the 10 Year Capital Forecast for each of the redevelopment projects that meet one or more of the Stage 2 criteria.

1.0 Number of applicable priority criteria (from Stage 1)
A park redevelopment project that meets any one of the four Stage 2 Criteria will qualify for inclusion within the Town’s 10 Year Capital Forecast. Projects that meet more than one of the Stage 2 criteria should be given higher priority in the 10 Year Forecast (i.e., anticipated as projects in earlier years) and projects that meet all of the criteria should be given the greatest priority (i.e., with design anticipated in the earliest/first year of the 10 Year Capital Forecast).

2.0 Timing related to scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities
Pursuant to Stage 2 Criteria #3, some projects will qualify to be within the 10 Year Capital Forecast because they are financially prudent given the age of the park facilities, scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities and the current operations and maintenance demands of the park. The year in which replacements are scheduled should also play a role in determining the year that the redevelopment project should be placed within the 10 Year Capital Forecast.

3.0 Public support for the redevelopment
Residents advise the Town of their desire to see park improvements through a variety of means. For example, they may bring safety concerns about a park to the attention of Parks Operations and Maintenance staff or their Ward Councillor, they may indicate that a specific park is becoming old or run-down at a public consultation event, they may report concerns about the over/under-use of a facility in a park to AccessRH, or they may submit a petition seeking a specific park improvement to Town Council. All of these types of comments need to be reported to and tracked by the Parks Planning and Natural Heritage Section so that they can be used to help determine the need for specific park redevelopment projects.

Park redevelopment projects that have the support of, or are being requested by the community should be given priority; however, the level of public support should be carefully gauged in order to ensure that the level of priority it generates is appropriate.

4.0 Redevelopment will facilitate stronger connections within the neighbourhood
In some older parks the pathway network through the park has become outdated and could be redesigned to facilitate better connections through the neighbourhood to other park and neighbourhood destinations (i.e. schools, variety stores, retail areas, churches etc.). Including this criterion for establishing park redevelopment priorities is directly consistent with the Strategic Plan goal of developing Stronger Connections in Richmond Hill.
Figure 1. Park Redevelopment and Prioritization Process

Stage 1
Establish Candidate Parks
- Candidate parks must be 30 years old or more

Stage 2
Determine Priority Park Redevelopment Projects
- Redevelopment projects that meet any one or more of the four criteria will be included in the 10 Year capital Plan

Stage 3
Prioritizing Park Redevelopment Projects
- Redevelopment projects will be prioritized within the 10 Year Capital Plan based on the 4 considerations.

Has the park been expanded and/or reconfigured as a result of a land acquisition?

Criteria #2:
Has the land use, population density and/or demographics around the park significantly changed?

Criteria #3:
Is the redevelopment of the park financially prudent given the age of the park facilities, scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities and the current operations and maintenance demands of the park?

Criteria #4:
Will the redevelopment of the park assist in meeting the target service level for a particular park facility?

How many priority criteria (from Stage 2) does the project meet?

Does the timing related to scheduled repair and replacements for the park facilities coincide with the redevelopment project?

Is there public support/demand for the redevelopment project?

Will the redevelopment facilitate stronger connections within the neighbourhood?
4.0 Recommendation

The Town will undertake an annual review, coordinated with the timing of the annual 10 Year Capital Planning process, to determine and prioritize park redevelopment projects in accordance with the multi-stage process outlined above.